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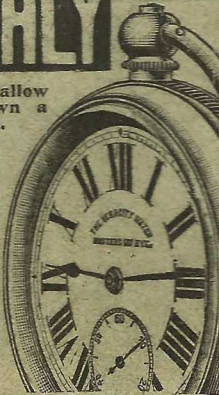
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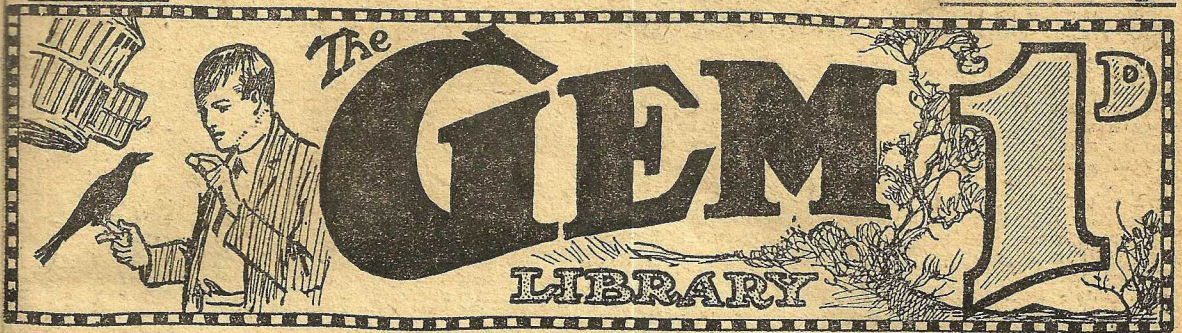
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"GUSSY'S CANADIAN COUSIN!"

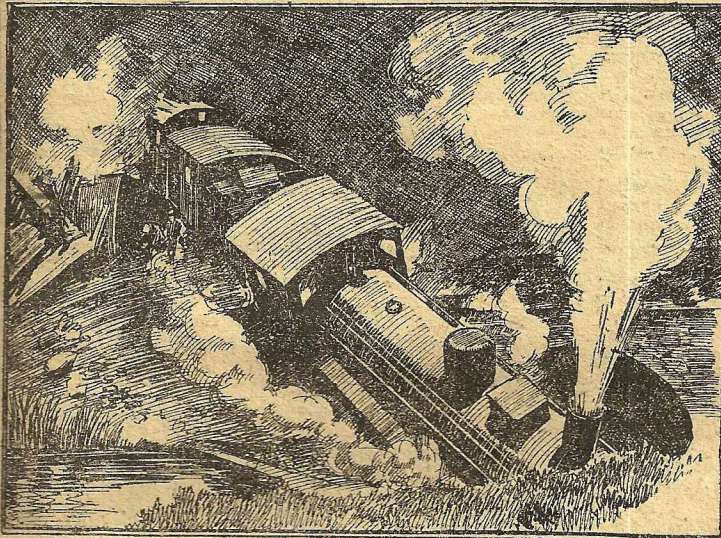
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Complete School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. and
Cousin Ethel, of St. Jim's.

— BY —

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Disgusted with Gussy!

"WOTTEN!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was not usually emphatic. Emphasis did not agree with that repose of manner which Arthur Augustus cultivated with so much success.

But to err is human, and for once Arthur Augustus D'Arcy allowed himself to be emphatic.

"Wotten!" he repeated. "Simply wotten! I don't like it. Wats!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing in the hall of the School House at St. Jim's, with an open letter in his hand. As the letter was from his cousin Ethel, several other fellows had gathered round to hear the news. For Ethel was one of the best chums that Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, had. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther stood looking expectant. Blake and Digby, of the Fourth, waited with more or less patience to hear the news in the letter. Even Herries, who had been going out to feed his bulldog, paused in the passage till he should hear whether there was any news from Cousin Ethel.

"Well?" said half a dozen voices at once.

"Wotten!"

"Isn't that letter from Cousin Ethel?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then what do you mean by saying rotten?"

"He didn't say rotten, he said wotten," said Monty Lowther, with a grin.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Is there any news?" demanded Blake.

"Yaas."

"Is Cousin Ethel coming down here?"

"Yaas," said D'Arcy. "It's wotten!"

The juniors stared at him.

"What did you say?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Wotten!"

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, glancing round the group

of juniors, "I suggest bumping Gussy, for saying that a lady's visit is rotten. He ought to be in the seventh heaven about it, if not in the eighth or ninth; and he says it's rotten. I'm disgusted with Gussy."

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I'm disgusted, too," said Blake. "I think Gussy is an ass, and a fathead, and a chump, and a fjabous burbler, and a babbling jabberwock."

"Weally, Blake—"

"We're all delighted when Cousin Ethel comes," said Manners indignantly. "Why, even the New House bounders are keen about it. And Gussy says it's rotten!"

"Weally, Mannahs, I didn't—"

"It's rotten of Gussy," said Herries. "That's where the rottenness comes in. I'm disgusted with him."

"So are we all!"

"Shame!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Gentlemen, I propose that we bump Gussy for ungentlemanly remarks."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bump him!"

"You uttah asses! Stop it! I will explain— Ow, ow! Yow! Hands off! Leggo! Yah!"

Bump!

Half a dozen pairs of hands had grasped the swell of St. Jim's. He was lifted bodily off his feet, and bumped upon the floor of the passage. A shriek escaped from the elegant junior. It was not the pain he minded so much, but he trembled for his trousers. His eyeglass jerked out of his eye, and fluttered at the end of its cord.

"Yawwooh! Ow!"

"Give him another!"

"Hurrah!"

Bump!

"You uttah asses!" yelled D'Arcy. "Let go! You are simply wuinin' my twousahs! Oh!"

Bump!

"Yawwooh! Wescute!"

Next Thursday:

"GUSSY'S CANADIAN COUSIN!" AND "WINGS OF GOLD!"

The juniors released the swell of St. Jim's, leaving him sitting breathlessly on the floor.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gasped for breath.

"You—you frightful asses! I—I'll give you a fearful thrashin' all round!" he panted. "Bai Jove, I—I'll—"

The elegant junior leaped to his feet. He was dusty, and he was dishevelled. His tie had come unfastened, and his eyeglass was hanging down his back. His collar had burst from its stud, and his hair was ruffled. It was no wonder that he was furious. He rushed at Tom Merry with his fists up.

"You uttah wottah!" he shouted. "I—I—I'll—"

Tom Merry grinned, and dodged behind Lowther. Arthur Augustus hit out, and caught Lowther on the side of the head, and the Shell fellow gave a roar.

"Ow! You ass!"

"Let me get at him! I'll—"

Monty Lowther grasped the infuriated swell of St. Jim's, winding two very slim but very wiry arms round him.

Arthur Augustus struggled violently, but he could not escape from the boa-constrictor-like embrace.

"Welease me, you wottah!" he gasped.

Lowther grinned into the crimson face only an inch from his own.

"No fear!" he said calmly. "You're getting dangerous. And we're disgusted with you. You're ungentlemanly."

D'Arcy glared with rage. For the swell of St. Jim's, the glass of fashion in the lower Forms, the junior whose aim always was to emulate that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere, to be described as ungentlemanly, was too bad. It was insult added to injury.

"You uttah wottah! I—I—I—!" Words failed the swell of St. Jim's, and he struggled furiously to release himself from Monty Lowther's embrace. They waltzed round the passage, bumping into the other juniors, and into the wall and the hat-stand.

Kildare, of the Sixth, came striding down the passage to see what the disturbance was about, and they bumped into him. But that was their last bump. The captain of St. Jim's seized them, one in either hand, by the collar, and held them with a grip of iron. With a terrific wrench Kildare tore them apart, and held them so.

"Ow!" gasped Lowther. "Leggo!"

"Bai Jove! Pway welease me, Kildare, while I thwash that wottah!"

The captain of St. Jim's shook them.

"You young rascals!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean by fighting in the passage? You ought to know better!"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"We've been bumping Gussy," Tom Merry explained; "we're disgusted with him."

"You uttah ass!"

"Disgusted with him," repeated Blake and Herries and Digby solemnly. "Thoroughly disgusted with Gussy. He's ungentlemanly."

"I wepeat that you are silly asses!" shrieked D'Arcy. "You are labahin' undah a misappwehension. I—"

Kildare laughed.

"Well, don't let's have any more of it, or I'll take you in to your Form-master," he said; and he released the two juniors, so suddenly that they sat down upon the floor with a bump.

"Ow!"

"Ah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare walked away. Arthur Augustus rose slowly to his feet, and dusted down his trousers, and groped for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye. In his agitation he jammed it into his wrong eye, and then jerked it out again and jammed it into the right one. The juniors stood round him, looking at him with a stony gaze of condemnation.

"We're disgusted!" said Tom Merry.

"You awful ass! Let me explain!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I said Cousin Ethel was comin', and that it was wotten—"

"Yes, and we're disgusted with you."

"Pway let me finish!"

"Life's too short," murmured Monty Lowther.

"I wepeat—"

"Gussy, we're disgusted with you!"

"I wepeat, I said it was wotten, because Ethel is comin' to—"

"Because Ethel is coming to St. Jim's," said Tom Merry sternly. "I'm surprised and disgusted—"

"No, you ass!" yelled D'Arcy. "Because Ethel is coming to say good-bye."

"What?"

"Ethel's goin' away, and she's comin' to say good-bye. That's what is wotten, you silly asses!" gasped D'Arcy. "This lettah is to say that she's goin' abwoad for a year, and she's comin' down to St. Jim's on Wednesday to say good-bye to us all."

"Oh!"

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CHAPTER 2.

D'Arcy Does His Best.

TOM MERRY & CO. looked dismayed.

As a matter of fact, they had been quite aware that there was some misapprehension as to what Arthur D'Arcy intended to say; but they had not dreamed of this.

Cousin Ethel going away for a whole year—and abroad, too!

It was, indeed rotten!

The dismay in the faces of the juniors somewhat mollified Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. His aristocratic features calmed down and took on their usual expression of serenity. He opened the letter again.

"It's wotten!" he said. "It took me quite by surpris, and in fact thwew me into quite a fluttah, you know! I wegard it as uttaly wotten! I don't approve of Cousin Ethel goin' abwoad to finish her education, but her guardians have not consulted me about it."

"Go hon!" murmured Monty Lowther.

D'Arcy gave him a freezing glare through his eyeglass.

"I wegard myself as bein' entitled to have a voice in the mattah," he said, with a great deal of dignity. "Ethel's fathah bein' dead, and her mother an invalid stayin' in Italy, I wegard myself in the light of bein' her pwotectah. Her bwothah is in Indiah, you know. I wegard this as wotten, and I shall object!"

"Pile in!" said Tom Merry encouragingly. "We shall all object. What about signing a round-robin, and sending it to Cousin Ethel's guardians, to show them that all the St. Jim's fellows object to her going abroad?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughing mattah, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "I think it's a wotten ideah, sendin' gals abwoad to finish their education! As for improvin' her French, I should be quite willin' to give Ethel some tips myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard this as wotten in the extweme! Cousin Ethel is comin' down on Wednesday to say good-bye. I shall pwotest against her goin'!"

"Yes; it's rough on all of us," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"Figgins will be cut up!" Blake remarked.

"Yes, rather!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass a little more tightly into his eye, and gave Blake a stony glare.

"I fail to see how my cousin goin' abwoad affects Figgins, of the New House, in any way!" he said icily.

Blake grinned.

"There are lots of things you fail to see," he remarked. "You fail to see that you are an ass, for instance, and any other fellow at St. Jim's can see it at a glance without the help of an eyeglass."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Still, I agree that it's rotten," said Tom Merry. "I wish it could be stopped. We'd all give Cousin Ethel French conversation if that's all that's needed. But these paters and guardians are all the same, you know. They never think of consulting really sensible and experienced chaps like us."

"Never!" said Manners solemnly.

"I object!" said D'Arcy. "Ethel is goin' abwoad this week with her aunt, Mrs. Quayle. I know Mrs. Quayle. She is a vewy estimable old lady, and she respects my opinion. I am goin' to send her a wiah."

"Why a wire?" said Monty Lowther, who never could resist making a bad pun.

But D'Arcy was too preoccupied to see the pun.

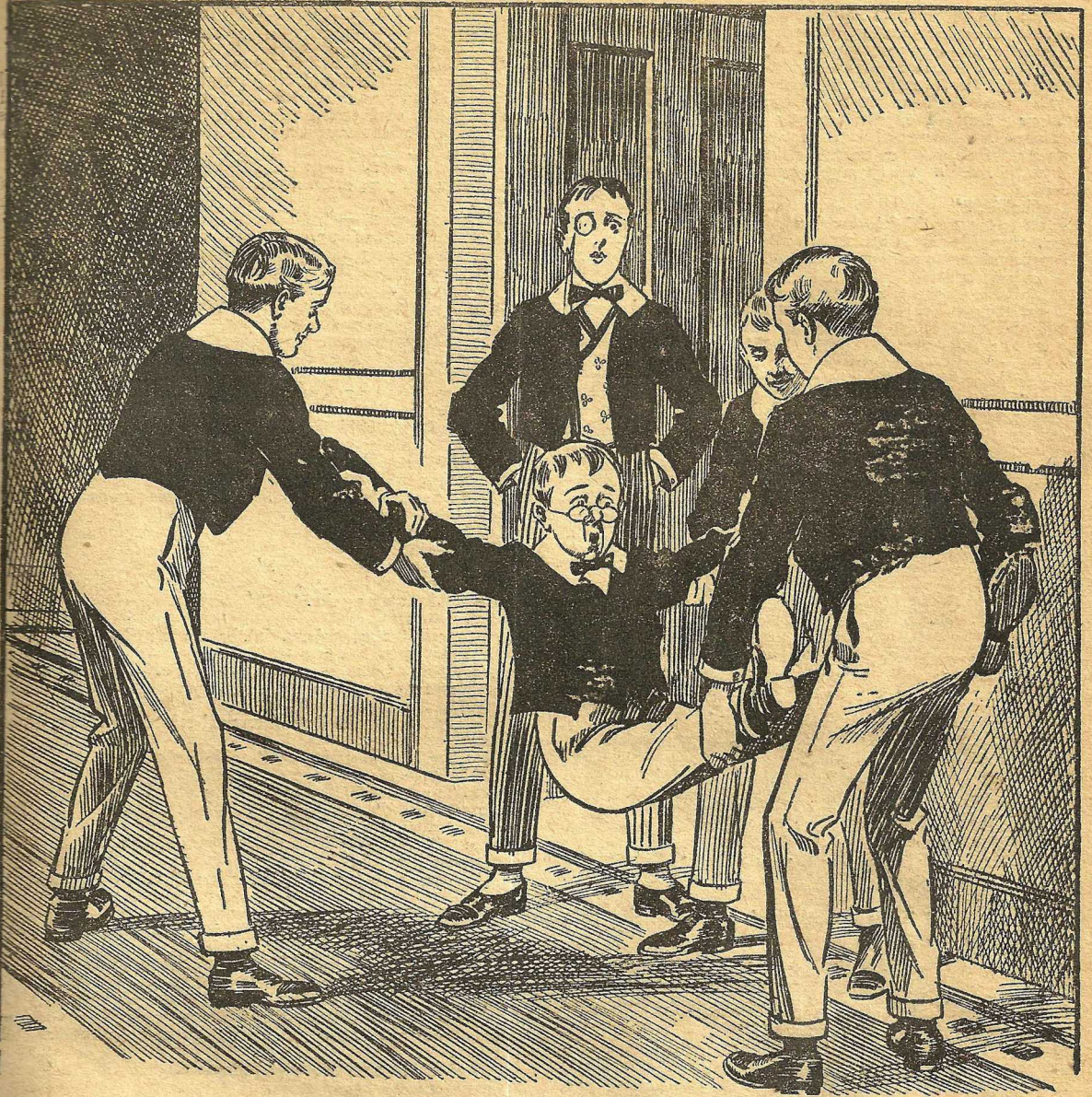
"You fellows can come along with me," he said graciously. "We'll all sign the telegwam, and it's bound to have some effect upon my aunt. Aunt Adelina is a weally good sort, you know. She sends me lots of tips. Will you fellows come down to the post-office with me?"

"What-ho!"

Tom Merry had his doubts as to whether the telegram would make any difference in the plans of Ethel's guardians, one of whom was D'Arcy's father, Lord Eastwood. But he was quite willing to do his best, and so were all the other fellows. Quite a little party walked out of the School House with Arthur Augustus, who was looking very determined indeed. Two or three more fellows joined them in the quadrangle, and hearing what was on, walked down to the village telegraph-office with them. Figgins, of the Fourth, the great chief of the New House juniors, was standing in the gateway, and he looked in surprise at the crowd of School House fellows as they came out.

"Hallo! Going to invade the Grammar School?" he asked.

"No; the post-office," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We're going to send a wire."



Skinpole was just delivering a friendly nod, when Blake and Herries and Digoy seized him, and bumped him down in the passage. "There!" gasped Blake. "We'll stop 'em, somehow from worrying D'Arcy about the trip to London!" "But I only came to tell you it was bedtime!" yelled Skinpole. (See Chapter 6.)

"My kat! The whole family going to send one wire?" asked Figgins, in astonishment.

"Yaas, wathah! We're all going to sign it, deah boy. I weally don't know whether we had bettah send it to Aunt Adelina or to my patah. You can come along and sign it, too, Figgay, if you like."

Figgins grinned.

"Well, it would only cost another ha'penny, unless I put in my Christian name," he remarked. "But what is the wire about?"

"About a yard long, I think," said Monty Lowther.

"Pway don't be funny, Lowthah. This is no time for your wotten jokes," said Arthur Augustus severely. "It's about Cousin Ethel, Figgay, deah boy."

Figgins started. He was interested at once.

"Cousin Ethel coming down again?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, good! I—I mean we shall all be glad to see her!"

"She's comin' to say good-bye."

"Eh?"

"They're sending her abroad for a yeah to finish her education," explained D'Arcy.

"Oh!"

"I'm goin' to wire to them not to, you see. I object stwongly."

"Oh!" repeated Figgins.

"You can come along if you like."

And Arthur Augustus marched out of the gates with the crowd of juniors. But Figgins did not come along. He remained in the gateway, standing quite still, as if petrified. The cheerful expression had faded from Figgys' rugged, honest face, and he looked like a fellow who had received a stunning blow.

D'Arcy & Co. walked down the lane, and arrived at Rylcombe Post-office. Arthur Augustus stopped at the telegram-desk, and took up the pen, and chewed the handle in a very thoughtful way. The other fellows stood round, nearly filling up the half of the grocer's shop which was devoted to the post-office.

"Pway advise me, deah boys," said D'Arcy slowly. "Shall I wiah to Aunt Adelina or to the patah? Pewayps the patah would be best, and I could pitch it stwongah to him than to a lady."

"Good egg!" said Blake. "Give him socks!"

"Yaas; pewwaps it will be bettah to send it to the patah. I shall state my opinion vevy fwankly."

And the post-office pen spurted and scratched over the telegraph-form in the manner of post-office pens.

"Listen to this, deah boys," said D'Arcy, when he had nearly covered the form with writing:

"Dear Patah,—I object stwongly to Cousin Ethel bein' sent abroad. I wegard it as extremely injudicious. I wecommend finishin' her education in England, which is a much bettah ideah. Pway weply by return, as I am vevy anxious."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to laugh at, deah boys. I have put that as stwongly as is consistent with the respect due to one's govannah. You chaps can all sign it. I'll put in a few words to explain."

D'Arcy finished the telegram. It read:

"Dear Pater,—I object strongly to Cousin Ethel being sent abroad. I regard it as extremely injudicious. I recommend finishing her education in England, which is a much better idea. Pray reply by return, as I am very anxious. All the fellows agree with me about it, and are signing their names to show what they think."

A dozen names were appended to the form.

The young lady who attended to the telegraph department, stared at the telegram—as well she might. Arthur Augustus had to change a sovereign to pay for it, but, as he observed to Blake, it was money well spent in a good cause. The telegram having been despatched, the party walked back to St. Jim's. Most of the juniors were grinning, but the swell of St. Jim's was very serious. He felt that he had done all he could, under exceedingly trying circumstances.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy waited very anxiously in the School House for the reply to that lengthy telegram.

Blake was of opinion that he wouldn't get an answer; but he was wrong, for as the dusk descended upon the quadrangle of St. Jim's, the telegraph-boy was seen crossing from the gates with a buff-coloured envelope in his hand.

Arthur Augustus walked in a stately way to the door to meet him, and a crowd of juniors followed to hear the news.

"Is that for me, my boy?" asked D'Arcy.

"Master D'Arcy, sir."

"Thank you; that's wight. Give him a shillin', Blake."

Arthur Augustus opened the buff envelope. He took out the telegram and unfolded it. He gazed at it, and the other fellows gazed at it. Lord Eastwood had replied, and his reply was very terse:

"Thanks!"

That was all!

There was a ripple of laughter in the crowd.

"Short and sweet!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lord Eastwood is more careful of the ha'pennies than Gussy!" grinned Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, I wondah what he means by that!" said Arthur Augustus, gazing at the telegram in great astonishment.

"Does that mean that he is goin' to take my advice, Tom Mewwy?"

Tom Merry roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! No, I should take it to mean that he isn't!"

"But weally, you know—"

"It means that he thinks it was like your cheek to wire to him as you did," Tom Merry explained. "That telegram is sarcastic. See?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause whatever for wibald laughtah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a great deal of disgust. "I must say that I wegard the govannah as hardly playin' the game. Howevah, I have done my best, and I wash my hands of the mattah. I shall wite to my patah sayin' that I wefuse to be weponsible in any way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus walked away to his study frowning, to write that crushing letter to his pater.

CHAPTER 3.

Figgins Doesn't Want His Tea.

"FIGGY, old man—"

"Tea's ready, Figgy—"

Figgins, of the Fourth, did not reply.

Figgins was seated in the armchair, in his study, in the Fourth-Form passage in the New House. His hands were thrust deep into his pockets, and his long legs were stretched out, and his chin was sunk upon his chest. He was in an attitude of deepest and gloomiest thought. It was very unusual for Figgins to be anything but sunny and good-

tempered, and his present looks surprised Kerr and Fatty Wynn, his chums and study-mates.

Kerr had put away his violin, which he had been practising upon, and had helped Fatty Wynn to prepare an extra special tea, with which to tempt Figgins's appetite. Figgins's appetite did not, as a rule, require much tempting—it was a very healthy one, and always in good working order.

But just now the tempting viands on the table did not appeal to him. A splendid steak and kidney pie, warmed up by the fire, and a huge dish of hot buttered toast, and a cake of unusual proportions, did not even win a glance from Figgins.

"Figgy, old man—"

Figgins did not look up. His gaze was fixed upon the fire, as if he were seeing pictures in the glowing coals. Perhaps he was—perhaps, in the heart of the fire, he pictured what was to happen, a train gliding out of a station, a young girl upon the deck of a Channel steamer—himself standing forlorn and heavy-hearted after waving a sorrowful good-bye.

"The pie was warmed up splendidly, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn. "It's just as good as if it were freshly cooked. In fact, I think it's a bit better. I've often noticed that pies warmed up a second time have a richer flavour. Haven't you, Kerr?"

"Yes, rather!" said Kerr. "It's really ripping, Figgy!"

"And it's quite ready, too."

"What's the matter, Figgy?"

Figgins stirred and grunted.

"Anything wrong, old man?" asked Kerr sympathetically.

Grunt!

"Feeling seedy?"

"No!"

"Had a row with anybody?"

"No!"

"Is it old Ratty again?"

"No!"

"Then what the dickens is the matter?" asked Kerr, puzzled. "Blessed if I can make you out at all, this evening, Figgy! It isn't like you to have fits of the blue devils. What has happened?"

"Nothing."

"Well, if nothing's the matter, cheer up, and grin and bear it," said Kerr.

"The pie is simply ripping," said Fatty Wynn, beginning to carve. "Shall I give you a big bit, Figgy?"

"No!"

"How much?"

"None at all."

"Eh?"

"I'm not hungry."

"But—but you haven't had your tea!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"I don't want any."

Fatty Wynn almost dropped the knife.

"You don't want any tea," he said.

"No."

"Then what's the matter with you?"

Grunt!

"You must be ill," said Fatty Wynn anxiously; "a chap must be either ill or dotty, if he wants to miss a meal."

Grunt!

"Do you know what's the matter with him, Kerr?"

Kerr shook his head.

"Blessed if I do!" he said.

"Figgy, old man—"

"I say, Figgins—"

"You chaps go on with your tea," said Figgins wearily, "I'm feeling a bit rotten this evening, that's all. You'd better leave me alone."

"Tell us what it's about, then," said Fatty Wynn, sitting

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down to the table. "I'll go on with my tea, as you suggest it, because I'm jolly hungry. I always get a specially keen appetite about this time of the year, you know. And this steak and kidney pie is really something extra special. Now, what's the matter, Figgy?"

"Nothing."

Kerr dropped a hand upon his chum's shoulder, and shook him a little. Figgins looked up at him, and there was an expression in his eyes that was strangely like that of a dog that suffers and cannot speak. It went straight to Kerr's heart.

"What's the matter, old chap?" said Kerr, in a low voice. "You can tell me. If you've had bad news, you ought to tell your own chums, you know. Is it from your own chums, you know. Is it from your father—something wrong at the bank again?"

Figgins shook his head.

"Well, jaw it out, Figgy!"

"I heard it from Gussy," said Figgins, at last, miserably.

Kerr looked amazed.

"Blessed if I know what you could have heard from Gussy, to get you into this state of nerves," he said.

Figgins was silent, staring at the fire. The colour crept into his cheeks.

"What was it, Figgins?"

"It's about Cousin Ethel?"

Kerr looked anxious.

"Nothing happened to her, I hope?" he asked quickly.

"Oh, no!"

"Then what is it?"

"She's going away."

"Going away?" said Kerr. "Well, she's been away before, Figgy, and nothing happened."

"But this time it's for a whole year, and she's going to Paris," said Figgins miserably. "We sha'n't see her again for a whole year, Kerr. That's an awfully long time, isn't it? Of—of course, a chap misses a friend who goes away for a whole year," Figgins went on hastily, his colour deepening. "Just the same as we should miss Fatty, if he left for two or three terms, you know."

Kerr nodded.

"Is it settled that she's going?" he asked.

"Yes, she's coming down to say good-bye."

"It's rotten!" said Kerr. "We shall all miss her, Figgy."

"Yes," muttered Figgins. "All of us, of course. And— and there have been accidents to Channel steamers before now."

Kerr smiled.

"I think Ethel will be safe enough, Figgy, old man."

"Yes. But—but I don't like the idea of her living in Paris," said Figgins, with a miserable shake of the head. "It ain't a nice place for a girl to go to, among a lot of foreigners, too."

"But she'll be in a school—she won't see anything of the giddy foreigners, excepting the governesses," said Kerr.

"No, I suppose not. Still, I don't like it. I—I've got a feeling that something will happen if Ethel goes away to a place where we couldn't possibly help her if there was any need," said Figgins solemnly.

Kerr tried to grin.

"But what could happen, Figgy?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know! I suppose the Eiffel Tower will fall down some day. Suppose it fell down just as she was walking underneath."

"Well, if it did, Figgy, I don't see that you could help her much, if you were there," said Kerr, suppressing a chuckle with a noble effort.

"I wish she wasn't going," said Figgins miserably. "I shall feel very anxious all the time—just as I should if you or Fatty were going."

"Just the same, of course," agreed Kerr solemnly.

"I don't know what to do," said Figgins.

Kerr started.

"You can't do anything," he said, "except say good-bye. I suppose her guardians have thought this out, and they're not likely to take any advice from a Fourth Former of St. Jim's on the subject. It's a shock to all of us, Figgy, but it will be all right. I dare say Cousin Ethel will send us picture-postcards."

"I don't know what to do," repeated Figgins, as if Kerr had not spoken.

Kerr gazed at him very anxiously.

"Look here, Figgy," he said slowly, "what have you got in your noddle? I can see you've got some idea—what is it?"

Figgins was silent.

"Out with it, Figgy!"

But Figgy did not "out" with it. He remained in deep thought, and that evening, while he was doing his preparation, Kerr glanced several times uneasily at his chum.

Kerr was very keen, and he knew that there was some wild scheme working in Figgins's brain, and he was feeling very anxious.

CHAPTER 4.

Who's the Friend?

"I've got an ideah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that surprising statement in the junior common-room in the School House that evening.

"Not really?" exclaimed Tom Merry in astonishment.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Whose is it?" asked Monty Lowther, with friendly interest.

"Pway don't be an uttah ass, Lowthah. I wepeat that I've got an ideah—a weally wippin' ideah. We'll get permish to go to London and see Cousin Ethel off."

"Hurrah!"

"My patah has diswedged my advice," said D'Arcy. "Ethel is goin'. I'm afraid there's no help for that. They will be startin' fwom Chawin' Cwoss Station, you know, to catch the boat at Folkestone. I wathah think that the Head will see the necessity of lettin' us have a day off on an occasion like this."

"Hurrah!"

"Go and ask him!" said Tom Merry laughing.

"You fellows come with me. Don't talk you know—you are bound to say somethin' to put your foot in it. Leave the talkin' to me, but you can come along and back me up, you know."

"Oh, we'll come," said Jack Blake. "I fancy the Head isn't very likely to let us go to London to see Cousin Ethel off, though."

"I shall point out to him that it is my duty as Ethel's cousin to see her off," said D'Arcy stiffly. "I have no doubt that Dr. Holmes will listen to weason. He is a wathah sensible old boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, deah boys."

The juniors followed Arthur Augustus, nothing loth. Arthur Augustus tapped at the door of Dr. Holmes's study.

"Come in!" said the voice of the Head.

The juniors opened the door and marched in, half a dozen of them.

The Head was not alone.

Figgins, of the New House, stood before the Head's desk, evidently in a state of some agitation.

Dr. Holmes made a gesture to the new-comers.

"Wait a few moments," he said. "Figgins has come to speak to me. Now, what is it you wish to say, Figgins?"

Figgins turned crimson as he looked at the juniors. He had been hesitating before, but now he began to stammer as well.

"If—if you please, sir—"

"Yes, Figgins?" said the Head, kindly enough, as he saw that the New House junior had something weighty on his mind.

"If—if you please—"

"Well?"

"I—I should like to ask a favour, sir."

"Go on, Figgins."

"I want a day off from lessons, sir—"

"Indeed, Figgins!" said the Head in surprise. "I trust you have had no bad news from home?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"There is no sick relation whom you wish to visit?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Figgins, who was far too honestly simple to dream of inventing a sick relation at any time.

"Then why do you want a day free from lessons, Figgins?" asked the Head.

"To—to—to—"

"Please explain, Figgins." The Head glanced at the clock over the bookcase. "My time is somewhat valuable, my boy."

"I—I'm sorry, sir," said Figgins.

"Well, go on."

"I—I want to go to London, sir," blurted out Figgins.

"My hat!"

It was Tom Merry who uttered that exclamation. He had guessed Figgins's motive. Figgy had been brought to the study by the same errand as the School House juniors. Dr. Holmes's glance turned upon the hero of the Shell, and Tom Merry's face became crimson.

"You may go on, Figgins," he said. "What do you want to go to London for?"

"To see a—a—a friend, sir, off."

"To see a friend off?" said the Head, puzzled. "Do you mean to say that a friend of yours is going on a journey, and you want a day away from school to see him off?"



"Oh, no, sir?"

"What, then?"

"Her" off, sir," stammered Figgins. "It's a 'her'—I—I mean it's a girl, sir."

Dr. Holmes fixed a very severe look upon Figgins's flaming face.

"Figgins," he said in measured tones, "I am surprised."

"Bai Jove, yaas, wathah!" broke out D'Arcy indignantly. "I am surprised, too. I regard this as a piece of fearful cheek on Figgins's part. If anybody goes to London to see my cousin off, I'm the pwopah person."

"It's—it's Cousin Ethel, sir," Figgins stammered. "She's going to Paris for a whole year, sir, and—and I want to see her off, if I may, sir. I think perhaps she would like me to, sir."

"Like your fearful cheek to suppose anythin' of the sort, Figgins!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy warmly. "It stands to reason that if Ethel would like anybody to see her off, it must be me. Anybody would think, to hear you talk, that Ethel was your cousin, and not mine."

"Dry up, Gussy!" murmured Blake, as a smile floated over the grave face of the doctor.

"I wufuse to dwy up! If you please, sir, we have come to ask your permish to go to London to see my cousin off, sir. I twust you will give us permish. It doesn't mattah about Figgins. He's only a New House chap, sir, and my cousin hardly knows him."

"Cheese it, you ass!" whispered Tom Merry.

"I wufuse to cheese it!" said D'Arcy. "If anybody goes to London to see Ethel off, I insist upon my wights as her cousin—to say nothin' of the fact that Ethel, of course, would pwefer to have me. On such occasions a girl requires the attention of a fellow of tact and judgment."

Dr. Holmes looked from one to another of the juniors.

"Have you all come to ask permission to take a day away from school?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," came a sort of chorus in reply.

"Well, it is impossible. I never heard of anything so absurd," said Dr. Holmes. "If leave of absence was granted for such frivolous reasons, there would be an end of all school work, I imagine. In the case of D'Arcy, as he is Miss Cleveland's cousin, I might make an exception."

"Thank you vevy much, sir."

Figgins looked very miserable.

"Very well, sir," he said quietly.

And he quitted the study.

"I have your permish to go back to London with Cousin Ethel to-morrow, sir?" asked Arthur Augustus with great satisfaction.

"Yes, D'Arcy," said the Head; "I think I can consent to that, if your cousin is indeed going away for a whole year."

"Yaas, wathah, sir. May I take a fwiend, sir? It will be wathah lonely comin' back all the way fwom London alone."

Dr. Holmes pursed his lips for a moment.

"Very well, D'Arcy," he said, after a pause. "You may choose a friend to take with you, certainly. I shall expect your return by the afternoon train."

"Thank you vevy much, sir."

"Now you may go."

The juniors quitted the study, Arthur Augustus, at least, in a state of great satisfaction.

"Sowwy about you chaps," he remarked. "It's wotten you can't all come. But I suppose we couldn't weally expect it of the Head. Wasn't that a wotten cheek of Figgins, to ask for a day's leave to go and see my cousin off?"

"Awfuff!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm glad you asked permission to take me with you, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and turned it upon the humorist of the Shell.

"I do not wemembah askin' anythin' of the sort, Lowthah," he said.

"Certainly not!" said Jack Blake promptly. "Arthur Augustus meant to take me, as his best chum. Didn't you, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake, I—"

"Oh, cheese it, Blake!" said Digby warmly. "You know jolly well that Gussy was thinking of me all the time."

"Stuff!" said Tom Merry emphatically. "I'm the man!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Of course, I'm going," remarked Manners. "I take it that Gussy was thinking of me all the time."

"Oh, wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wasn't thinkin' of anybody in particulah, as a matter of fact. I shall have to think it over, deah boys, and I will decide the question on its mewits."

And Arthur Augustus walked away in a stately manner, leaving a very warm argument in progress behind him.

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CHAPTER 5.

Many Friends.

HERE was no doubt that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a popular fellow at St. Jim's. Many of the fellows described him as an ass. But they all liked him. But popular as he undoubtedly was, his popularity increased by leaps and bounds that evening. Never had a fellow seemed so thoroughly liked by so many fellows. Without being unduly suspicious, D'Arcy might be excused for attributing some of his sudden access of popularity to the fact that he had a gift at his disposal, inasmuch as it was in his power to select whom he chose for his companion in the trip to London to see Cousin Ethel off. Perhaps Arthur Augustus felt that it was difficult to decide among so many dear friends. At all events, he seemed in no hurry to make his decision.

Meanwhile, while the question remained in doubt, D'Arcy was the centre of great attention. In his own study, No. 6, Blake and Herries and Digby were very nice. Herries offered to take him round to the kennels to see him feed Towser; an offer which Arthur Augustus politely declined. Digby offered to do an imposition for him, which Herr Schneider had imposed upon the swell of St. Jim's. D'Arcy, suspecting ulterior motives, declined. Blake asked for some practical advice on the subject of choosing a new fancy waistcoat—but as Blake never wore fancy waistcoats, D'Arcy was not taken in.

The Terrible Three looked into the study with their best smiles on. Blake and Digby and Herries glanced at them in a rather warlike way. They suspected what the chums of the Shell wanted.

"Can I speak just a word to Gussy?" said Monty Lowther, with great civility.

D'Arcy laid down his pen.

"Pway go ahead, deah boy," he said.

"It's about that little trip to London to see Cousin Ethel off. Have you decided to take a Shell chap?"

"Certainly not."

"If you have," proceeded Monty Lowther, unheeding, "I think that it ought to go by alphabetical order—and L comes before M—"

"Oh, rats!" said Manners warmly. "I think that Gussy ought to take me, because I can take my camera, and take a snapshot of Ethel in the train, to hang up in the study—"

"Better take me," urged Tom Merry. "I sha'n't bring along a rotten camera to bother you or Ethel, and that's a big advantage."

"Upon the whole, deah boys—"

"Or we might toss up for it," said Lowther.

"Upon the whole—"

"Odd man out," said Tom Merry.

"Upon the—"

"We'll draw lots for it, then," said Manners. "Are you agreeable, Gussy?"

"Certainly not. Upon the whole, I shall take a Fourth Form chap. A fellow ought to stand by his own Form."

"Oh, rot!" said Lowther. "Forms are made to sit on, not to stand by."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Yes, don't be funny," said Jack Blake. "Gussy is quite right—this is really what we should have expected of Gussy. It's bound to be one of the Fourth."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But you ought to take an elder chap, to keep you out of mischief," said Lowther. "You know what an ass you are, Gussy. You will put Cousin Ethel and Aunt Adelina in the wrong train, as sure as a gun."

"Weally, you ass—"

"Shall we kick these Shell bounders out, Gussy?" asked Herries, rising.

"Pway do!"

The Terrible Three retired, grunting. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not left long in peace. Kangaroo, of the Shell, came in with Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn. The three Shell fellows were looking so kind and agreeable that it was not difficult to guess what they had come for.

"About that trip to London, Gussy—" began Glyn.

"Wats!"

"If you want one of us to come—"

"I don't!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake. "You Shell fellows can buzz off. It's going to be a Fourth Form chap, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah!"

ANSWERS

"Now, I think that's rot," said Kangaroo warmly. "If you kids go to London without a senior chap to look after you, you are bound to get into some mischief. You know that."

"Do you see the door?" asked Blake politely.

"Now, look here——"

Blake picked up a cricket-stump.

The chums of the end study paused a few moments, to deliver some honest opinions on D'Arcy's intellectual powers, and then retired from the study.

Jack Blake wore a thoughtful expression.

"There's something in what Lowther was saying," he remarked.

"What—about taking a Shell chap?" asked Digby, in astonishment.

"Oh, no! But about going in alphabetical order."

"Oh, rats—unless you begin from the end of the alphabet," said Herries warmly.

"Now, that would be awful rot, Herries——"

"What I think is——"

"I've got a suggestion to make," said Digby. "Suppose you split the difference, and decide on a chap whose name begins with D——"

"Well, of all the asses——" said Blake and Herries together.

The study door opened. Lumley-Lumley, of the Fourth, looked in. Three separate glares were turned upon him.

"Well?" demanded three truculent voices.

"I guess I've come about that trip to London," said Lumley-Lumley affably. "Gussy being such an old chum of mine, I guess——"

"You guess wrong this time," said Blake. "Buzz off."

"I guess——"

Three warlike youths converged upon Lumley-Lumley. He had just time to whip out of the study, and the door closed upon him with a slam.

"We can't have Gussy bothered like this, by a lot of bounders," said Blake indignantly. "Dash it all, we must look after Gussy a little!"

"Quite so!" agreed Digby.

Arthur Augustus smiled.

The door opened again, and Reilly, of the Fourth, came cheerfully in.

"Faith, D'Arcy——" he began.

He had no time to get further.

Three pairs of hands seized him, and he was lifted bodily up, and dropped heavily into the passage, and the door closed upon him.

Reilly lay for a full minute on the cold linoleum, gasping for breath, and wondering whether the occupants of Study No. 6 had gone suddenly off their rockers. Then he rose to his feet, and looked into the study again.

"Sure, you spalpeens!" he began.

He caught a glimpse of Herries rushing upon him with a brandished cricket-stump, and bolted without stopping to finish his remarks.

"They'll stop coming, in the long run," said Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was an interval, and the chums of No. 6 resumed the discussion of who was to go with D'Arcy; D'Arcy grinding away steadily at his German imposition, and taking no part in the discussion. Then there was a tap at the door, and it opened, and a big Fifth Form fellow came in. It was Lefevre, of the Fifth, and the juniors looked at him as if they would eat him, but they were a little doubtful about treating Lefevre as they had treated Reilly.

Lefevre gave D'Arcy a gracious nod.

"I've just looked in to say that I'll come to London with you, D'Arcy, if you like," he said.

"Weally, Lefevre——"

"Of course, it's an honour to you to have a senior go along with you," said the captain of the Fifth. "That's what I say—it's an honour, D'Arcy. But I don't mind. I'll see that you come to no harm."

"Wats!"

"Eh?"

"Upon the whole, I have decided to take a Fourth Form chap."

"Now, look here, D'Arcy——"

"More wats!"

"I'll jolly well give you a thick ear, you cheeky young bounder!" shouted Lefevre, advancing towards the table.

"That's what I say——"

Three juniors jumped up as if by clockwork in defence of the swell of St. Jim's. Three cricket-stumps rose in the air, and Lefevre of the Fifth backed away.

"You—you young hooligans!" he exclaimed. "I——"

"Outside!" said Blake politely.

"Why, I'll—I'll——"

"Travel!"

And Lefevre travelled, as the cricket-stumps came dangerously near. He slammed the door after him with a slam that was heard the whole length of the Fourth Form passage. The chums of the Fourth chuckled softly.

"We shall have some of the giddy Sixth along soon," said Blake, with a grin.

He was right. Just before bedtime, Knox of the Sixth looked in. Knox was a bully, and most unpopular in Study No. 6. But he seemed to have forgotten all unpleasantness as he came in now, and grinned amiably at D'Arcy.

"I hear you're going to London for a day," he remarked.

"Yaas, watahah!"

"Taking a chap with you, eh?"

"Yaas."

"Paying all his exes, of course?"

"Yaas, certainly!"

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Knox, "I'll come."

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye and fixed a stare upon the prefect.

"Weally," he replied, "I'll tell you what—you won't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox scowled.

"Look here, D'Arcy, if I have any of your cheek——"

"I do not respect your chawactah, Knox," said D'Arcy loftily. "You are not the kind of fellow I should choose to associate with my cousin Ethel. Pway wetire."

Knox glared at him.

"Why, you—you——"

"Good-bye!" said D'Arcy.

Knox stepped quickly towards the table, and D'Arcy leaned his head to go on writing. He caught the edge of the table in both hands and dragged it over, sending the inkpot and the imposition upon which Arthur Augustus was engaged to the carpet together. The swell of St. Jim's, thus suddenly deprived of the support to his elbows, fell forward, and descended upon his knees in the spilt ink.

There was a terrific roar from the elegant junior.

"Ow! You uttah wascal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Knox.

And he departed from the study—rather quickly. Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. The knees of his elegant trousers were dripping with ink.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "The uttah wotah! The—the cwinimal! Fancy spoilin' a fellow's twousahs like that! That awful wotah has no more respect for a fellow's twousahs than Hewwies' wotten bulldog has!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake and Herries and Digby burst into a roar as they looked at the inky trousers. They could not help it. Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and glared at them. Then they remembered, and became suddenly grave and concerned.

"It's awful!" said Blake hypocritically.

"Frightful!" said Digby solemnly.

"Outrageous!" said Herries.

"Weally, you fellows——"

"There ought to be capital punishment, or boiling in oil, or something like that, for crimes of this sort," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"It's simply unspeakable!" said Blake. "As Gussy's best chum I resent it, and I shall make Knox——"

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake. You were laughin', and now you are twyin' to spoof me," said the swell of St. Jim's severely.

"Laughing!" exclaimed Blake. "Was I laughing?"

"Yaas, you were!"

"Oh, it was simply a contraction of the facial muscles," said Blake innocently. "Or, if I was laughing, I was laughing to think of the time that we're going to give Knox for committing this crime."

"Weally, Blake——"

"And I think that we ought to get up a subscription to buy Gussy a new pair of trousers in the village," said Blake, looking round.

"Hear, hear!" said Herries and Digby heartily.

D'Arcy sniffed.

"I twust you do not imagine that I could possibly weah twousahs weady-made in a countwy village!" he exclaimed indignantly.

"Well, no, of—of course not," said Blake. "But—but you might hang them up in the study, you know, as—as a kind of testimonial."

"You uttah ass!"

Skimpole of the Shell looked into the study, blinking at the chums of the Fourth through his big glasses. He was just delivering a friendly nod when Blake and Herries and Digby rushed upon him and seized him, and bumped him down in the passage.

"There!" gasped Blake. "We'll stop 'em coming, somehow!"

Skimpole blinked at him, gasping in utter amazement.

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"Dear me! I—I came to tell you fellows that it was bedtime, and you surprise me very much by this unaccountable conduct, Blake. Is anything the matter?"

"You came to—to what?"

"To tell you it is bedtime, and Kildare will be up in a minute," said the unfortunate Skimpole. "I am very much hurt—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared D'Arcy.

"Really, D'Arcy, it is very unfeeling to laugh when I state that I am considerably hurt. I regard the conduct of these fellows as rude and inexplicable. What—"

"Oh!" said Blake. "You didn't come to tell Gussy you'd go to London with him, then?"

"Certainly not!" said Skimpole, in wonder. "Is D'Arcy going to London?"

"My only hat!" gasped Digby. "He hasn't even heard about it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole picked himself up in the passage, breathing in jerks.

"I regard your conduct as extraordinary," he said. "Under the circumstances—"

"Under the circumstances, we'd better go up to the dorm.," grinned Blake. "Thank you for calling us, Skimmy! Good-night!"

"Good-night, Blake! But I do not understand—"

"Exactly! Good-night!"

And the chums of Study No. 6 went to bed.

CHAPTER 6.

A Chance for Figgins.

COUSIN ETHEL came to St. Jim's the next day.

It was a Wednesday, a half-holiday at the old school, and as a rule it would have been devoted to cricket by the chums of St. Jim's. There was, in fact, a junior match fixed between School House and New House for that afternoon. Tom Merry's eleven on one side was to encounter Figgins's team on the other. But the coming of Cousin Ethel to say good-bye to the chums of St. Jim's changed all that. The chums of Cousin Ethel felt that they must devote the last afternoon to her, and they wanted to—and did. The match was played just the same, but it was played by fellows who very seldom had a chance of playing in House matches.

The Terrible Three scratched their names out, and then the chums of Study No. 6 scratched, and seven new players were wanted for the School House. They were easily found—there were plenty of juniors eager for the chance. On the New House side Figgins & Co. found substitutes. And all the rival Co.'s of St. Jim's—all on the most friendly and amiable terms for once—combined to give Cousin Ethel a reception when she arrived.

It was agreed on all sides that a really stunning feed should be stooed to give Miss Cleveland a send-off, and Tom Merry's study was fixed upon as the place. Fatty Wynn, of the New House, was entrusted with the commissariat arrangements. There never was a fellow better fitted for that duty. Fatty Wynn was willing to taste everything to make sure that it was all right, and he could taste dozens of things—to a large extent, too—without seriously affecting his appetite for the feed. Funds were pooled for the occasion. D'Arcy's "governor" had sent him a fiver that morning, perhaps as a compensation for taking no notice of his telegram, and the swell of St. Jim's announced in Study No. 6 that his pater wasn't such a bad sort of an old sport aifah all. The fiver was contributed whole to the feed, so it was easy for Fatty Wynn to lay in large supplies of the very best.

Ethel was warmly greeted by the juniors, and she had a kind smile for all. She was graver than usual; she felt the parting from her old friends as much as they did. Figgins had a most lugubrious face as he shook hands with the girl. Figgins wasn't an adept at hiding his feelings, and he was feeling utterly miserable. In class that morning he had earned two hundred lines for carelessness. Not that he was careless, but he was worried, and he could not put his attention into his work. Poor old Figgins looked with dismay to a future minus the meetings with Cousin Ethel. The friendship between the two was very deep and sincere, and though neither was old enough yet to think of anything but friendship, there was something very special and tender and protecting in Figgins's regard for Ethel.

Ethel smiled as she shook hands with Figgins. She understood the feelings expressed in Figgins's miserable face, and her own heart was a little heavy.

"When you have finished, Figgay, I will shake hands with my cousin," said Arthur Augustus severely. And Figgins coloured like a beetroot, and let go Cousin Ethel's hand. "Jollay glad to see you, deah boy—I mean deah gal," said D'Arcy. "It's wotten about your goin' away. I've wemonstated with the governah."

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Cousin Ethel smiled.

"Indeed! What did he say?"

D'Arcy coloured.

"Well, I cannot say that he tweated my opinion with much defence, deah gal. My telegwam to him seems to have made no difference at all."

"Go hon!" murmured Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I wish we could all come to see you off," said Tom Merry. "Gussy has got permission to come, and to bring a friend. We all want to come."

"Yaas, wathah! I'm sowwy I can't take all the youngstahs," said D'Arcy with a fatherly air that made his friends long to bump him on the spot, "but it's imposs."

"Tea's ready," said Monty Lowther.

Figgins managed to get alone with D'Arcy as the juniors went into the School House, Cousin Ethel escorted by Blake and Tom Merry.

"Gussy, old man—" began Figgins.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon him.

"Well, Figgay?"

"I should like to go to London with you to see Cousin Ethel off."

"Imposs, deah boy."

"But—but I say, Gussy—"

"I'm bound to take a School House chap, you know. That's only playin' the game. And weally, Figgins, I don't think I should take you, anyway. You don't seem to me to have a pvopah wegard for the rights of pwperty."

"What?"

"You seem to wegard Ethel as if she were your cousin instead of mine," said D'Arcy severely.

"Oh! You see—"

"Yaas; I see that it is a gweat cheek on your part, Figgay. I don't like fellows to monopolise my relations, you know."

"I—I—"

"Come on!" called out Fatty Wynn from the study doorway. "Tea's ready, and the eggs are simply prime! And the steak and kidneys—"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

Figgins followed D'Arcy into the study, looking very gloomy. Tom Merry's study was looking newly swept and garnished. Bright crockery and clean cloth gleamed upon the table, and there was an unusual number of sound chairs and whole cups. The study was a little crowded with so many guests, certainly; but the juniors were used to a crowd. Plenty of room was made for Cousin Ethel, and the rest did the best they could. And so far as the feed itself was concerned, that, as Fatty Wynn remarked, approached very near perfection.

Cousin Ethel did not eat very much, in spite of the mountains of good things that were pressed upon her, and in spite of Fatty Wynn's anxious solicitude. The fat Fourth-Former was quite concerned about it.

"It's better to lay a solid foundation before you start," he said. "I've had a holiday in France, and I know what the grub's like there. They feed you up on all sorts of muck, and you never get a bite at anything solid. They expect you to have coffee and rolls for brekker—nothing to eat! Fancy a chap going all the morning on coffee and rolls—without any bacon, or kidneys, or eggs! No wonder we licked them at Waterloo, if that's what the poor beasts were fighting on."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And what they call dinners are all piffle," said Fatty Wynn. "Any number of courses, certainly, but not a good mouthful in any of them. I should think it would pay to open a place in Paris to sell real meat in pieces big enough to be seen."

Fatty Wynn was quite eloquent on that subject. He had all the eloquence of a fellow who had experienced and suffered.

"It's awful to think of you being in Paris for a whole year, and perhaps getting nothing but rolls-and-butter in the morning!" he said. "It's enough to put you in a frightfully run-down state by the time you return to England. I believe that's why English girls are healthier and better-looking than French girls—because they have something to eat every day. I wonder whether it would be possible to send you something to eat by post?"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

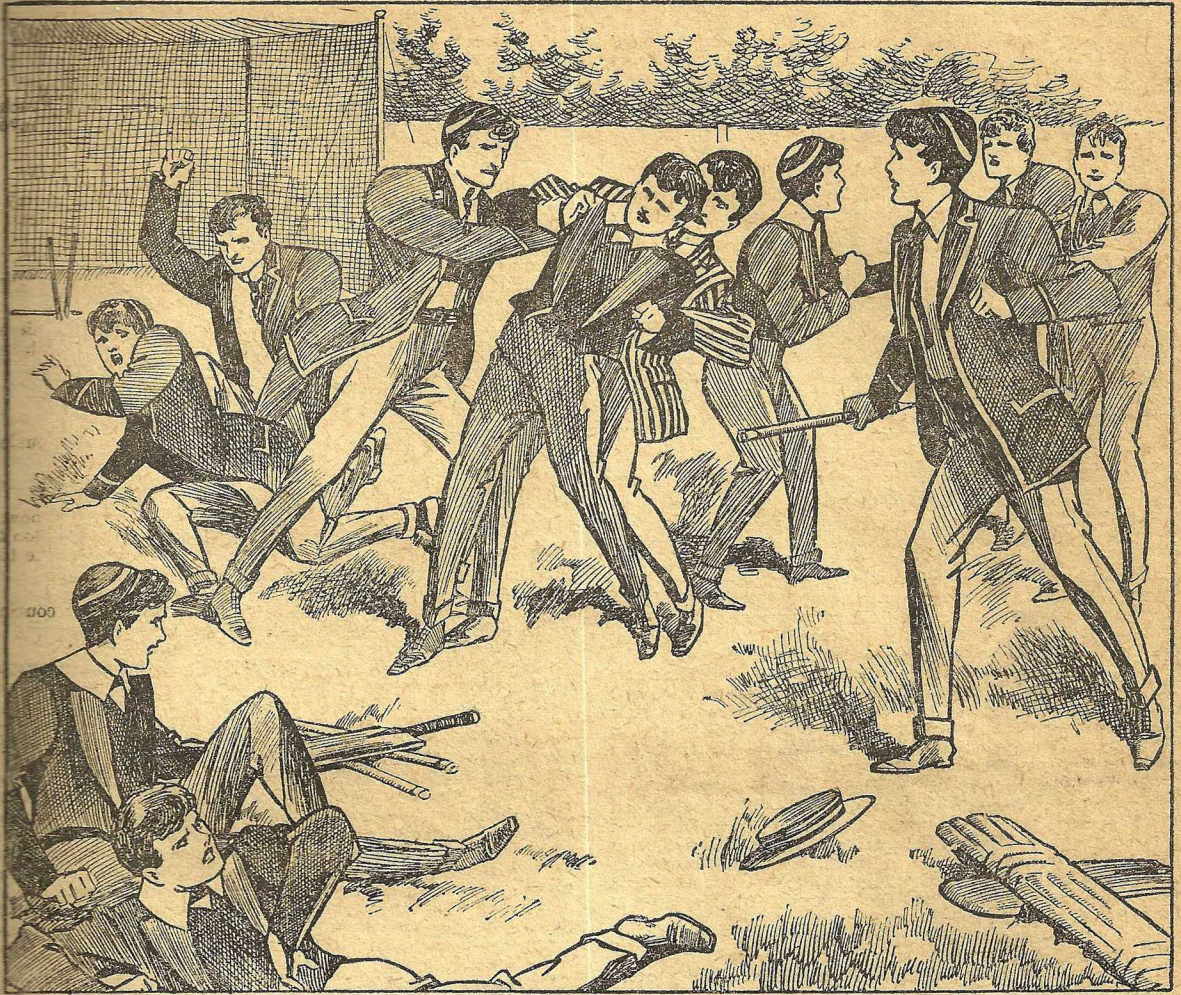
"I dare say I shall get enough to eat," she said. "I am very sorry I am going away from all my friends for so long."

"But you'll like to be in Paris?" asked Tom Merry.

Ethel looked doubtful.

"Well, yes, I shall like it," she said. "Aunt Adelina is very kind. And if I do not like being away from England, they have promised to let me return. But of course, I must make up my mind to it."

"And you're going to-morrow?"



Coker, followed by the Fifth rushed upon the field scattering the Remove cricketers. There was a wild melee, and wickets were torn up to be used as weapons. If the Fifth could not pit their brains against the Remove, at all events their strength was superior! (An incident in the splendid, long, complete tale of school life, entitled "FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEEZE," by Frank Richards, which is contained in this week's issue of "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY. Now on sale. Price one Penny.)

"Yes; the morning train from Charing Cross."

"It's jolly good of you to come and say good-bye to us!" said Blake. "I wish we could all come and see you off. But the Head doesn't understand. These headmasters never do understand things, you know."

"Wathah not!"

"Howevah, I am goin' to see Ethel off," said Arthur Augustus, "so that will be all wight. And I'm takin' one of you chaps—I don't know which. I weally think, upon the whole, that you had bettah toss up for it—unless Ethel can make a suggestion."

Figgins turned his eyes upon Ethel, and then dropped them. What he wanted was very clear, but he would not make Ethel appear to be selecting him. A thoughtful shade came over the girl's face.

"I should like you all to come," she said. "That would be pleasanter. But if only one can come with Arthur, perhaps it would be fairer to choose a boy belonging to the New House, as Arthur is a School House boy."

"Bai Jove!"

"Then both Houses would be seeing me off," said Cousin Ethel sweetly.

"Good egg!" said Blake heroically, with great self-sacrifice. "Cousin Ethel is right."

"Quite right," said Tom Merry, with an effort.

"Ya-a-a-as, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, more slowly.

Monty Lowther winked solemnly at the ceiling.

"Then it's up to you three New House chaps to decide who goes with Gussy," said Lowther, looking at Figgins & Co.

"Well, I'd like to go," said Fatty Wynn. "Besides, the pleasure of seeing Cousin Ethel off, I could see that she had a decent lunch-basket to take in the train. You can't be too careful when you're starting on a journey. And I say—Yaro-o-o-oh!"

Fatty Wynn had not meant to say that. It came out suddenly and unexpectedly. Arthur Augustus put his monocle into his eye, and gazed at Fatty Wynn with great astonishment.

"What do you say yawo-oh for?" he asked.

"Ow! Some silly ass jammed his boot on my toe!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "Was it you, Kerr, you silly ass?"

Kerr was the victim of a strange facial contortion at that moment. He was trying to smile with the side of his face turned towards Cousin Ethel, and to glare with the side towards Fatty Wynn. The result was so alarming that Fatty Wynn half rose, thinking that Kerr was having a fit.

"Kerr, old man, are you ill?" he gasped.

"No," said Kerr. "I'm all right."

"But you looked—"

"Pass the pickles, Fatty," said Tom Merry.

"Here you are. Kerr looked—"

"And the salt," said Monty Lowther.

"All right," said Fatty Wynn. "What are you winking at me for, Blake?"

Blake turned crimson.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "GUSSY'S CANADIAN COUSIN!" A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"I—I think there's something in my eye," he faltered.

"About going to London with Gussy," resumed Fatty Wynn. And then the concentrated glares of half a dozen juniors suddenly enlightened him, and he understood. "About going to London," he repeated, "I think that Figgy ought to go, as chief of the Co."

"Just what I was going to say," said Kerr.

Figgy's eyes sparkled.

"Weally—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I should be jolly glad to go!" said Figgy. "It's jolly decent of you fellows to vote for me! Is it all right, Gussy?"

"Of course it is!" said Blake. "Gussy has agreed."

"Weally, Blake—"

"I propose a health to Cousin Ethel, and a prosperous voyage!" said Tom Merry, rising to his feet, with a glass full of lemonade in his hand.

And bon voyage was drunk with enthusiasm. And if Arthur Augustus had any private opinions to express about the propriety of Figgy's accompanying him to London, he did not have any opportunity of expressing them, and they remained unuttered.

CHAPTER 7.

Off to London.

TOM MERRY & CO. turned out in great force to see Cousin Ethel and Figgy and D'Arcy to the station. As Figgy and D'Arcy were staying the night in London at Lord Eastwood's house, in order to see Ethel off in the morning, it was necessary to take some things with them. Figgy took a little bag, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy took a large one—so large that he might really have been going to Paris himself instead of to Charing Cross Station. The Terrible Three, and the chums of Study No. 6, and Kerr and Fatty Wynn, and Redfern & Co., of the New House, and Skimpole and Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn, and Reilly and Brooks and Thomson, and several other fellows, walked down to the station, and crowded on the platform to say good-bye and wave their hands.

Figgy found an empty carriage, and put Ethel in a corner seat, and himself next to her, and the juniors stood round the carriage till the train started. They had hosts of things to say, and they all said them at once, and Cousin Ethel smiled as cheerfully as she could, though her heart was not light at going so far away from her friends for so long a time. The train whistled, and the juniors had to stand back. Fatty Wynn clung to the door as the train began to move.

"Figgy," he shouted—"Figgy!"

"Jump off, Fatty!"

"Yes—yes; but don't forget the lunch-basket when you see Cousin Ethel off!"

Figgy grinned.

"All right, Fatty!"

"And there ought to be a cold chicken in it, and a bottle of—"

But what there should be a bottle of remained untold, for the Rylcombe porter seized Fatty Wynn and dragged him off the gliding train, none too soon. Cousin Ethel looked out of the window and waved her hand. Fatty Wynn was lying on the platform, and the porter was sitting on him and gasping, and the chums of St. Jim's were waving their caps and their handkerchiefs.

"Good-bye!"

And the train rushed on.

Arthur Augustus settled down in the corner seat opposite Cousin Ethel. Politeness was very strong upon D'Arcy, and although he liked the corner seats, he offered his to Figgy.

"You can have this seat if you like, Figgy," he said.

"Not at all, Gussy," said Figgy, who was seated beside Cousin Ethel, and would not have moved for a small fortune.

"But, weally, it's much more comfy, you know."

"Not at all!"

"Well, you're vewy good, Figgy," said D'Arcy, his opinion of Figgy improving. "Let me see; we change into the express at Wayland, don't we?"

"Yes."

"Well, you shall have the cornah seat in the express, Figgy, so as to be faih."

"Not a bit of it, old man!" said Figgy cordially. "Make yourself comfy."

The local train did not take long to reach Rylcombe. There they changed into the express for London, and again D'Arcy offered Figgy a corner seat. But the unselfish fellow refused. Arthur Augustus, having done what was required by courtesy, settled himself down comfortably. The train whirled on swiftly through the summer landscape, but Figgy, at least, had no eyes for green fields and wooded hills and sparkling rivers.

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FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEEZE! is the Title of the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

To Figgy's mind, Cousin Ethel was going out into the wilderness, where he would not be near to help her if she wanted him—not that she was likely to need help of any kind. But Figgy was very anxious about her for some reason.

"You won't forget St. Jim's?" he said, after about an hour of eloquent silence.

Cousin Ethel shook her head.

"Never!" she said.

"Ethel is hardly likely to forget St. Jim's, when her cousin's there," said Arthur Augustus, in wonder. "Besides, Ethel hasn't a bad memow, have you, Ethel?"

"No," said Ethel, with a smile.

"You must write to me, deah gal," said D'Arcy, "and I'll write to you and give you some tips about seem' Pawis. I did Pawis pwetty thowighly when I was there, and I know the place, you see. There are two or three places in Pawis where you can get good tea. I'll send you the addresses."

"Thank you, Arthur!"

"Not at all, deah gal! I've a jollay good mind to make a bweak, you know, and come to Pawis with you. But I suppose the Head would be watty."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"I rather think he would," she replied.

"By George!" said Figgy, as if a new idea had come into his head.

D'Arcy looked at him.

"Anythin' the mattah, deah boy?" he asked.

"No," said Figgy, turning red.

D'Arcy took off his silk hat, placed it carefully upon the rack, and disposed a travelling-cap gracefully upon his head.

"I forgot to bwing a book with me," he said. "It was owin' to the hawwy of startin'. I suppose you haven't a book about you, Figgy?"

"Yes, I have," said Figgy; "I've got the last number of the 'Magnet.'"

And he handed it to the swell of St. Jim's.

"Sure you don't want to wead?"

"Quite sure."

"Thank you vewy much, then."

Figgy and Cousin Ethel talked, while D'Arcy, on the other side of the carriage, read.

Figgy was not eloquent. He never was a great talker, and when his feelings were moved, he was more dumb than ever. And what he said was only to the effect of how utterly rotten it was that Cousin Ethel was going abroad. But Ethel seemed to find his remarks interesting enough.

"I wish I could come!" said Figgy, for the twentieth time. And for the twentieth time Cousin Ethel replied:

"I wish you could!"

"We shall all miss you frightfully," said Figgy.

"I shall miss you all," said Ethel.

"But you'll write," said Figgy. And then, fearing he had put his foot in it, he added: "To D'Arcy, I mean."

"Yes, I shall write to my cousin."

"You might send some of the fellows a picture-postcard," said Figgy.

"I will send them all a picture-postcard each," said Ethel brightly. "Which one would you like—the Eiffel Tower, or the Jardin des Plantes, or the Place de la Concorde?"

"Oh, any one!" said Figgy. "Just say you're all right on it—if you are all right, of course."

"Oh, I shall be all right."

"Yes," said Figgy, with a sigh, "I suppose you will."

Then there was another long silence. Night had fallen, and the carriage was lighted.

Arthur Augustus had fallen gently asleep. Neither Figgy nor Ethel felt tired. Figgy felt the terminus coming nearer. He had thousands of things to say, and yet he did not know how to say any of them.

"I feel frightfully miserable about your going away," he said at last.

"I don't feel very happy about it," said Ethel.

"I—I suppose you must go?"

"Yes."

"Yes, I—I suppose you must," said Figgy. "I wish I were an older chap."

"Why?"

"Because— Oh, I don't know!"

Another long silence.

"We shall be in soon," said Cousin Ethel.

"Yes."

"The journey doesn't seem to have been very long, does it?"

"Simply lightning!" said Figgy.

A long silence again.

"I—I've got something to tell you," said Figgy.

"Yes?"

"I—I—I—I—"

"Yes?"

"I—I—I—I—"

Arthur Augustus started up.

"Bai Jove, here's the terminus!"

And there it was. They were in London, and whatever it was Figgins had to say remained unsaid. They turned out of the train, and Arthur Augustus put his cap into his pocket and adjusted his silk topper to perfection. Then a taxicab carried all three of them away from the station, and Arthur Augustus was the only one that talked on the way.

CHAPTER 8. Figgins, Too!

CHARING CROSS STATION presented its usual appearance of bustle and animation on the following morning, prior to the departure of the Continental express. A motor-car deposited four travellers at the station entrance. Figgins and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy took charge of wraps and rugs and bags.

"Nevah mind about the luggage," said Arthur Augustus; "I have given John instructions about vegistewin' it to Pawis. Would you mind lookin' aftah Ethel, Figg, while I look aftah Aunt Adelina?"

"Pleasure!" said Figgins. Arthur Augustus was distinguished for his politeness to ladies of uncertain years. Mrs. Quayle was probably quite as well able to take care of herself as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was; but D'Arcy considered it his duty to look after her, and he did it nobly.

Cousin Ethel, as a lesser responsibility, he relinquished to Figgins. Figgins seemed quite equal to the task imposed upon him. He piloted Cousin Ethel to the platform where the Continental express was waiting, and found the carriage where the two corner seats were reserved, and disposed Ethel in one of them, long before D'Arcy and his aunt arrived on the scene. Figgins was trying to look cheerful, in order not to depress Miss Cleveland on her departure from England. But his efforts were somewhat pathetic. Cousin Ethel was very grave and quiet.

Figgins disposed wraps and rugs round Cousin Ethel as if she was going on a Polar expedition. There were twenty minutes yet before the train started. Figgins stood dumb for five minutes, longing to say things, till D'Arcy arrived with Aunt Adelina.

"Bai Jove, you got heah first!" said D'Arcy.

"Did we?" said Figgins.

"Yaas. I thought you were lost. It would have been howwibly wotten if you had put Cousin Ethel in the w'ong twain."

"No fear of that!"

"I am sure Figgins is very careful," said Mrs. Quayle.

"Where is my wrap, Arthur?"

"Bai Jove, it's wound Ethel!"

"And my rug?"

"It's wound Ethel, too. Do you want two waps and two wugs, Ethel?"

"No," said Ethel, laughing; "I didn't notice I had two."

"Well, you are an ass, Figg," said D'Arcy, under his breath, as he relieved Cousin Ethel of half her incumbrances, and arranged them round Aunt Adelina. "Is that all wight, Auntie?"

"Yes, thank you, Arthur."

Arthur Augustus consulted his watch.

"The twain goes in fourteen minutes," he said. "Time for a cup of tea, if you would like me to ordah it."

"I'll buzz off and order it if you like," said Figgins, eager to do something.

But neither Ethel nor Mrs. Quayle appeared to want tea.

"Got the lunch-basket all wight?" asked D'Arcy.

"It's on the rack," said Figgins.

"We sha'n't need it," said Aunt Adelina, with a smile. "There is a buffet on the boat, and there is a long stop, too, at Boulogne."

D'Arcy shook his head wilyly.

"Nothin' like bein' careful," he said. "Besides, I promised Fatty Wynn that I wouldn't forget the lunch-basket. The grub on the boat mayn't be all wight; besides, you may not be able to eat on the boat, if the sea is wuff."

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Quayle.

"Mind you don't forget to send a postcard when you awwive, Ethel."

"Yes; don't forget."

More passengers got into the carriage. The seats were filled up one by one, and the last minutes ticked away. Arthur Augustus departed, to see that the luggage was correctly registered, and returned with the announcement that it was "all wight." Figgins looked at the big station-clock.

"Five minutes!" he said.

If Figgins had been going to execution in five minutes, he could hardly have spoken more lugubriously. Mrs. Quayle looked at him curiously, and Figgins coloured.

"I hope the sea won't be rough," he said.

Aunt Adelina shuddered.

"I hope it won't," she said. "I am not a good sailor."

"I wish I were coming as far as Boulogne," said Figgins.

"I'm a jolly good sailor, you know, and—and I'd look after you."

Mrs. Quayle smiled.

"Oh, we shall be very well," she said. "Ethel is a good sailor, and she will look after me—won't you, Ethel?"

"Indeed I will!" said Ethel.

"Mind how you drive from the station in Paris," said Figgins miserably. "Those cab-drivers in Paris are frightfully careless!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wemembah that," said D'Arcy.

"By your leave, sir!"

The carriage door was closed. Only one minute now! It seemed impossible to Figgins that in sixty short seconds Cousin Ethel would have vanished from his sight. What had he done that Fate should be so cruel to him? It seemed to the unfortunate junior that black clouds were about to descend upon the earth and engulf him, and that the light of day was going.

D'Arcy pulled down the glass of the window, and they shook hands for the last time through the aperture.

Figgins held Cousin Ethel's hand unconsciously.

"You—you'll take care of yourself, Ethel?" he said. "I—I feel frightfully nervous about your going away like this, you know—just—just as much as if you were my own cousin, you know."

"It's all right, Figgins."

"I—I wish I were coming"

"Stand back, Figgay, old man!" said D'Arcy. "There are other people here who want to say good-bye to their friends, old chap!"

"Oh, sorry!" gasped Figgins.

He stepped back, treading on the toe of an old gentleman, who gave him a stony glare, that was quite lost and wasted upon Figgins. He did not even know that he had trodden upon the old gentleman's toe. Figgins had a strange feeling coming over him as if he were going to cry, and he turned scarlet at the thought.

What would Ethel think of him if he blubbered in public like a baby? He watched Ethel from among the three or four people who were saying good-bye to friends in the carriage, his heart in his eyes, and tears very nearly there.

"Stand back, please!"

There was a shriek from the engine.

Arthur Augustus raised his silk hat.

"Good-bye, Ethel, deah gal! Good-bye, Auntie!"

"Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" gasped Figgins. "I——"

The train began to move.

Figgins unconsciously made a movement towards the gliding carriage, and Arthur Augustus pulled him back by the arm.

"It's too late, Figgay! Besides, you've said good-bye! What's the mattah with you, old chap?"

Figg did not reply. He could not. Sky and station, and train and crowd, seemed to be spinning round Figgins at that moment. Cousin Ethel's sweet face, and the little gloved hand waving, looked at him as from a mist. Figgins came to himself with a start, and realised that the train was gliding out of the station, and that Cousin Ethel was going from him—would be gone in a flash.

The guard was jumping into his carriage, nearly abreast of where Figgins stood. How Figgins came to act as he did he hardly knew—he never explained. Perhaps it was a sudden impulse he did not stop to reason with—certainly he had small time for thought. But in that moment of anguish one thing stood out clear to his mind—it was quite impossible for him to let Cousin Ethel vanish from him. He made one spring, and landed in the guard's van after the guard, and that astonished official gasped and slammed the door, with Figgins inside.

Arthur Augustus stood upon the platform, alone, gazing at the vanishing train like a fellow in a dream.

"Figgins!" he gasped.

Figgins was gone. He had gone in the train. Arthur Augustus stood like a statue, with his silk hat raised, dumfounded.

"Bai Jove!"

The train rushed out of the station. The crowd cleared off. Arthur Augustus settled his silk hat on his head, in utter amazement. Cousin Ethel and Aunt Adelina were gone—and Figgins was gone, too!

"Gweat Scott!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in bewilderment. "Figgins must be off his wockah—wight off his wockah, bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

And, still in a state of amazed bewilderment, the swell of St. Jim's made his way from the station, wondering how he should explain to the Head of St. Jim's; and the express thundered off towards the coast, bearing away Cousin Ethel, and Figgins too.

CHAPTER 9.

Across the Channel.

"WELL, 'ere's a go!" ejaculated the guard.

Figgins picked himself up.

He was quite as astonished as the guard.

"Nearly lost it, sir!" said the guard.

"Ye-es," stammered Figgins.

"Got your ticket?"

"Ticket? No!"

"Oh! You're travelling without a ticket, are you?" said the man.

Figgins flushed.

"I—I didn't get a ticket!" he stammered. "I've got the money to pay for one, though! That's all right!"

That was all right. But the other matters were not quite all right. Figgins wondered why he had done it, and what would happen next. What would Cousin Ethel say when she learned that he was on the train? He would have to get off at the first station, of course, and go back by the next train. His wild escapade could not be carried any further than that. As it was, he would be late returning to St. Jim's, and there would be trouble with the Head. How was he to explain to the Head?

It would not be easy to explain. And the thought came into Figgins's mind that he might as well, according to the old saying, be hung for a sheep as a lamb. He had to face the music, at St. Jim's, anyway. Why not go right on to Folkestone and see Cousin Ethel into the boat?

The desire to see her again was very strong upon Figgins. He would be able to satisfy Aunt Adelina. Ethel would be surprised, but—but would she be displeased? Figgins wondered.

Figgins had not in the least made up his mind what he should do when the train stopped at a station. He hesitated, and alighted. He felt that he ought to return to St. Jim's. The folly of what he had done was clear enough to him. He could not go to Paris with Cousin Ethel; or, if he went, he could not stay there. What was the use of prolonging the pain of parting in this way? He stood on the platform, dubitating. Then the thought that Cousin Ethel might look out of the window and see him, smote him with sudden fear, and he made a dive for the train. He took a seat in a second-class compartment. His funds were limited, and he did not know how far he might go. So little did he really, at the bottom of his heart, intend to return to St. Jim's.

The train rushed on through the smiling fields of Kent.

Figgins sat thinking it out.

He thought the matter out in all its bearings, as the afternoon wore away; and by the time the train ran into Folkestone, he had arrived exactly at the point where he had started thinking—that he did not know what he would do.

A great crowd alighted from the train and swarmed down towards the boat.

Figgins walked with the rest.

He caught sight of Mrs. Quayle and Cousin Ethel, and dodged out of sight behind a portly, elderly gentleman till they had passed.

He did not want to meet them just then. Explanations would be too awkward.

Which showed that Figgins, whether he realised it or not, meant to go on the boat.

He went on with the last of the passengers.

He could see Cousin Ethel and Mrs. Quayle in deck-chairs aft, and he skulked out of sight behind the engines till the boat had started.

The Channel steamer moved at last.

It was a sunny afternoon in early summer, and the deck was crowded with cheerful passengers, and bright parasols and hats and dresses glanced in the sun.

Figgins remained by himself, his hands plunged deep into his pockets, till he was asked to show his ticket. Then he purchased one—as far as Boulogne. He had not yet made up his mind about Paris.

He looked at the ticket in amazement. What was he doing there on a Channel steamer, with a ticket to Boulogne in his hand, instead of speeding back with Arthur Augustus to St. Jim's?

He had run away from school!"

That was what it amounted to.

A feeling of recklessness took possession of Figgins. Well, supposing he had run away from school? He could take his punishment afterwards without complaining. For the present, he would see the adventure through. He would see Cousin Ethel as far as Boulogne, if not as far as Paris. Then he would return and take his licking like a man. They would not be anxious about him at St. Jim's, because, D'Arcy would explain that he had gone in the train with Ethel.

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Figgins was amazed at himself—but he was quite cool now.

Having decided to go the whole hog, as he put it to himself, he made his way along the crowded deck towards where Cousin Ethel sat with her aunt.

Ethel did not see him coming.

She was very busy. For the steamer was now fairly out in the chops of the Channel, and Mrs. Quayle was feeling the effects.

The poor lady had turned very pale, and then slightly green, and she asked in a fainting voice for her smelling-salts.

But the salts did not seem to revive her very much.

An obliging steward brought a large basin, the sight of which completed the poor lady's discomfiture.

She was very ill. Cousin Ethel, who hardly felt the sea, attended her with tender kindness. Figgins saw that he could be useful now.

"Shall I get some water?" he exclaimed, dashing up.

Ethel gave a little cry.

"Figgins!" she exclaimed, in amazement.

Figgins coloured. He had forgotten for the moment that Ethel did not know that he was upon the boat.

"Figgins!" repeated Ethel blankly.

"Ye-es," stammered Figgins feebly; "it—it's me." In his agitation he forgot even to be grammatical.

"I—I don't understand!" murmured Ethel. "How did you come here?"

Poor Mrs. Quayle was too ill to notice Figgins; she would not have been capable of feeling surprised if the whole Fourth Form of St. Jim's had turned up and paraded on the deck before her eyes.

"I—I'll explain afterwards," stammered Figgins. "I—I came, you know. Let me look after Mrs. Quayle."

He rushed away for a glass of water.

Mrs. Quayle sipped it, and was a little revived.

"Thank you!" she murmured.

"Let me help her," said Figgins. "Lean on my arm, ma'am. This won't last long; we're past the middle now."

"Oh, dear!" murmured Mrs. Quayle.

She leaned upon Figgins's shoulder. She was a good weight, but Figgins supported her manfully and tenderly. He was very sorry for her sufferings, and very kind and gentle. Ethel looked at him over Mrs. Quayle's bowed head.

The boat rolled on. There was wind on the sea, and the water was a little rough. Sounds of woe were heard from various parts of the deck. Figgins felt one or two slight tremors within, but he crushed them down.

"Figgins!" murmured Ethel.

Figgins met her eyes guiltily.

"I—I came," he said lamely.

It was obvious that he had come, and Ethel smiled a little.

"But—but I did not see you in the train, Figgins."

"I jumped in just as it was going."

"You might have been hurt."

"I—I didn't think of that."

"Where is Arthur?"

"I left him on the station. I suppose he's gone back to school. He will tell them."

Ethel looked very grave.

"There will be trouble over this, Figgins," she said.

Figgins nodded.

"You don't care?"

"No!" said Figgins.

"But why did you do it?"

"I—I—I couldn't let you go."

"It was a very wild and reckless thing to do, Figgins," said the girl. "I—I think I ought to be angry with you."

Figgins looked alarmed.

"Oh, I wish I hadn't done it!" he said, so miserably that Cousin Ethel could not help relenting, and she gave him a kind smile.

"I—I felt nervous about your going abroad, you know," said Figgins. "And—and there's Mrs. Quayle, too."

"Mrs. Quayle."

"Yes. She—she's a bad sailor, and—and I can help look after her."

"Were you thinking of that when you jumped into the train, Figgins?"

"Well, no."

"I am afraid Dr. Holmes won't take it as an excuse, that Mrs. Quayle is a bad sailor, for your running away from school, Figgins."

"I don't mind a licking, Ethel."

"Some water!" said Aunt Adelina faintly.

Figgins had it ready in an instant.

"Thank you, my dear boy. Oh, I—I feel very ill!"

"I'm so sorry," said Figgins gently. "We shall be in soon. Rest on my shoulder."

"It—it seems a very long passage," murmured Aunt Adeline.

"It's nearly over."

There was a silence.

"What are you going to do in Boulogne, Figgins?" asked Ethel slowly.

"See you off to Paris," said Figgins.

"And then?"

"Take the evening boat back, I suppose," said Figgins miserably.

Cousin Ethel nodded.

"That is the best thing you can do, Figgins. I am sorry you have done this."

"You—you don't want me along?"

"I don't want you to get into trouble on my account."

"Oh, that's all right! I don't mind the trouble."

"But I mind—for you," said Ethel softly.

Ethel's hand, caressing Mrs. Quayle's bowed head, came in contact with Figgins's, as he supported the old lady. Figgins's big brown fingers closed unconsciously upon the little white ones.

"But—if I had permission to come—you'd be glad to have me along with you?" said Figgins, his rugged face lightning up.

"Yes, indeed."

"I—I shall get a licking anyway," Figgins said thoughtfully. "That's nothing. But—it won't be any worse if I come on to Paris."

Ethel tried not to smile.

"You mustn't!" she said.

"But it won't make it any the worse for me at St. Jim's."

Mrs. Quayle raised her head, and their hands parted. The poor lady was looking very white and weak.

"I—I wish we could come to land!" she murmured.

Figgins pointed.

"There it is," he said. "There's the quay—you can see the people on it. That building at the back is the Casino. We shan't be long now."

And the Channel steamer bumped on into the French harbour.

CHAPTER 10.

In the Paris Express.

FIGGINS certainly had no right to be in Boulogne-sur-Mer instead of in the Fourth Form-room at St. Jim's; but as he was there, he was very useful to the travellers. He was the right fellow in the wrong place, so to put it. His strong arm helped Mrs. Quayle ashore, and guided her to the train. Cousin Ethel walked firmly on the other side of Figgins carrying the salts, and the wraps, and the rugs, and the various paraphernalia without which ladies find it impossible to travel. Mrs. Quayle leaned heavily upon the strong arm of the Fourth-Former of St. Jim's. It was Figgins who declared to the officials in the douane that the travellers had nothing to declare, and Figgins who found a first-class carriage and placed Mrs. Quayle and her niece in it. The luggage being registered to Paris did not require attention, fortunately.

Mrs. Quayle recovered somewhat now that she was on dry land, and she began to be surprised at Figgins's presence on French soil. But Figgins did not give her time to ask questions. He attended to getting the famous lunch-basket open, and then he rushed off to order tea. Meanwhile, he left a newspaper on the seat next to Ethel, to show that that seat was taken. Which was a very queer proceeding on Figgins's part, as he had not yet decided to go to Paris. But all Figgins's proceedings that day were queer.

The tea, hot and fragrant, that if not strong, had a wonderful effect upon Mrs. Quayle. To get it strong, as Figgins explained, was impossible now that the Channel was passed. He was doubtful whether Napoleon, at the height of his power, could have had a cup of really good strong tea if he had wanted it. Figgins attended to the wants of the two tired travellers as if he had been a born waiter, and did not seem to feel at all tired himself. Indeed, he was not tired; a railway journey and a Channel crossing did not amount to much to a fellow who would feel fit after a slogging game of footer, or a whole day's cricket match.

"But what are you doing here, Figgins?" Mrs. Quayle asked at last.

"Just going to settle with the garcon," said Figgins, pretending to misunderstand.

And he rushed off and did so; and at the same time bought a ticket to Paris; which made a very serious inroad into the money he had left. Figgins was not a rich fellow, but he had had several good tips from kind uncles lately, and he had put all the money he possessed into his pocket, the day before, when he came to London. It was as if he had had a premonition of what he was going to do, though certainly

he had laid no plans. But his money was at a very low ebb now.

But Figgins did not care for that. He did not care for anything very much just now. The joy of seeing Cousin Ethel as far as Paris, and making sure that she was quite safe before he left her, was enough for Figgins. And perhaps there was some wild scheme working in Figgins's mind to stay in Paris; or else to induce Mrs. Quayle and her niece not to stay there. Certain it is, that Figgins had by no means made up his mind to part with Cousin Ethel, and it was equally certain that the journey to Paris would not last for ever—although on Continental railways journeys do seem to last almost for ever.

"Just going," said Figgins, stepping into the carriage.

"You've got your 'Daily Mail,' Ethel?"

"Yes, thank you!"

"But how did you get here, Figgins?" and Aunt Adelaide.

"Crossed in the boat from Folkestone, ma'am."

"Yes, yes, I know that; but I mean, how is it you are not at school?"

"Well, you see— By Jove, we're off!"

Figgins drew the carriage door shut, as an elderly foreign gentleman came along and turned his eyes upon it.

There was no one in the carriage as yet, excepting the three English travellers, and Figgins did not want any foreigners in it.

But that was hardly reasonable; and the elderly foreign gentleman was quite within his rights in trying to open the carriage door.

Figgins did not want anybody in the carriage just then, and this particular foreigner was especially offensive in Figgins's sight.

For Figgins had seen him cast his eye upon Cousin Ethel, and that was an offence in Figgins's sight which was unpardonable.

An elderly French gentleman might have cast an admiring eye upon a fresh, pretty English girl without any great harm done, but to Figgins's mind Cousin Ethel was a sacred object which must not be even looked at.

So he held the door of the carriage fast from inside. The elderly gentleman looked in at him through the window, with a gleam in his watery greenish-grey eyes that was very unpleasant.

"Ouvrez—ouvrez!" he exclaimed angrily.

Figgins shook his head, whether to indicate that he did not speak French, or that he would not open the door, we cannot say.

"Ouvrez!" repeated the French gentleman angrily. "Je demande—"

"The refreshment-room is down the platform," said Figgins.

"Hein! Vous avez dit—"

"Passez down le platform pour le buffet," said Figgins.

"Ciel! Ouvrez la porte!"

"About a dozen steps from here," said Figgins, persisting that the elderly French gentleman was asking him for directions to the station buffet.

"Ah, you are English!" said the Frenchman. "I speak, too, your tongue. Open zen ze door of zis carriage, so I shall enter. I go to Paris."

"Just off," said Figgins.

"My dear Figgins—" said Mrs. Quayle.

Figgins turned round as she spoke, still keeping his grip on the handle of the door, glad of an excuse for turning his back on the importunate French gentleman.

"Yes, ma'am. What did you say? We're just off."

The French gentleman gave another wrench at the door, and finding that he could not open it, he uttered a word in French, which it was fortunate the ladies did not understand, and he hurried down the train and jumped in at the next carriage.

Figgins grinned triumphantly.

"But you had no right to keep him out, Figgins," said Mrs. Quayle remonstratingly.

"There are a lot of other carriages here," Figgins explained. "It will be much nicer for him to travel with French people."

"But really—"

"We don't want any blessed foreigners in here, do we?"

Mrs. Quayle smiled.

"But we are the foreigners here," she said.

"Well, yes. Still, it's better not to have any blessed Froggies buzzing about," said Figgins, "and I don't like that chap."

The train started.

"Too late for him now," said Figgins, with a grin.

But Figgins grinned too soon.

He had forgotten that it was a corridor train, and before the express had been in motion two minutes, the elderly gentleman came down the corridor, and looked into the carriage from the other side.

There was a slight grin upon his face.

He deposited a little leather bag upon a seat, with a graceful bow to the occupants of the compartment.

"La place est libre?" he asked.

"I don't speak French," said Figgins gruffly.

"Zis place is free?"

"Yes," muttered Figgins.

"Zen I take him."

And the French gentleman took "him," and sat down. Figgins grunted.

CHAPTER 11.

Figgins Loses His Temper.

THE Paris express glided on through the dull, uninteresting landscape of Northern France. Perhaps it was because the landscape was uninteresting that the occupants of that particular carriage devoted all their attention to one another.

Figgins had placed Cousin Ethel in a corner seat, and Mrs. Quayle in the other corner seat facing her. He had seated himself beside Cousin Ethel. By this means he prevented any blessed foreigner from sitting beside Cousin Ethel, or opposite to her. But the elderly French gentleman sat beside Mrs. Quayle, and so he was opposite Figgins, and was quite as well able to look at Cousin Ethel as if he had been directly opposite. And he appeared to have selected that occupation as his sole amusement for the journey to Paris.

Perhaps he was annoyed, as he had a right to be, by Figgins's efforts to keep him out of the carriage. Perhaps he was exasperated by Figgins's ill-concealed distrust and dislike for a perfect stranger. And perhaps in return it amused him to make the boy angry and uneasy.

Certainly he acted as if that were the case.

Figgins looked him over several times. To the healthy, sturdy British boy, the elderly French gentleman was an eye-sorrow. He was certainly elderly. His hair, which was very scarce, was carefully brushed to conceal the fact that he was partially bald, and the attempt to conceal the partial baldness only drew attention to it. To make up for the want of hair on the top of his head, he had a great deal on the lower part. He wore a thick moustache, carefully waxed to two points which curled almost to his eyes. He had a beard which was so black that anybody could have seen that it was dyed, and it was trained with the utmost care to a point. That a man old enough to be the father of a big family should take such minute care of his personal appearance offended Figgins's notion of the fitness of things.

The elderly gentleman was dressed with the same scrupulous care. He wore a black frock-coat, that fitted him like a glove, and showed off the elegance of a slim figure—a figure which Figgins, in his mind, characterised as skinny. His trousers were creased as carefully as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's best Sunday bags at St. Jim's. They tapered to the ankles, where they met a pair of patent leather boots, which were of the most elegant shape, and of the most aggressive polish, and which were too small for the wearer—Figgins knew that. That a man of elderly years should cram his feet into boots too small for him filled Figgins with disgust.

The elderly French gentleman moved with grace and elegance, but at the same time with a slight suspicion of stiffness, and once or twice Figgins thought he heard a slight creak—which confirmed him in his suspicion that the Frenchman wore stays. Figgins had heard that Frenchmen wear corsets to improve the elegance of the figure, the words could not adequately express Figgins's opinion on the subject.

The elderly French gentleman wore a brightly shining silk hat, with a brim of exaggerated curl; and—last and most serious offence—an eyeglass. It was not an elegant eyeglass like D'Arcy's, at St. Jim's, but a very large one, with a thick black rim, held on to a double silk ribbon, also black.

His eyes were of a greenish grey, but his eyebrows and lashes were as black as his beard and moustache—dyed with the same dye.

It was evident to Figgins, inexperienced as he was, that the elderly French gentleman was not at all elderly in his own opinion—that he was one of the boys, so to speak, and looked upon himself as quite a gay young fellow—that he was, in fact, one of the elderly "flaneurs" of the Paris boulevards, whom Figgins had noticed during his holiday in Paris some time before, and whose appearance had filled him with scorn.

That an elderly gentleman should have no better business than to get himself up as a young fellow, and walk about making himself obnoxious to decent and sensible people, seemed an outrage to Figgins.

And that he should dare to cast his foolish old eyes on a girl like Cousin Ethel bordered upon sacrilege.

And certainly he did dare. Perhaps it was more to provoke Figgins than anything else. His big black-rimmed eyeglass was incessantly turned towards Ethel. The girl did not seem to be conscious of it, but Figgins was very conscious of it, and it exasperated him beyond words.

His growing fury, which, of course, he had no way of expressing, probably amused the ancient flaneur. Perhaps it elated him with a feeling that he was not yet out of the running, so to speak, since he could make a boy of fifteen jealous and angry.

It was certain that the old boy was trying to catch Cousin Ethel's eye, and it was equally certain that Ethel did not let him do it. Which showed that, in spite of her unconsciousness, she was quite as well aware as Figgins of the unpleasant kind of a "bounder" who was travelling with them.

Having scanned Cousin Ethel and Figgins to his satisfaction, the elderly French gentleman turned his attention to Mrs. Quayle. He might have looked at her to his heart's content without Figgins taking offence at it.

"You go to Paris, madame?" said the elderly French gentleman, breaking silence with an effort at conversation. Figgins knew that he had selected the widow as the most vulnerable point of attack upon the party.

Mrs. Quayle was recovering from the sickness on the boat, but she was tired, and she was quite unconscious of the war of glances that had been going on between Figgins and the elderly French gentleman.

She gave a little nod.

"Ah, la belle Paris!" said the Frenchman. "You know her, madame?"

Mrs. Quayle smiled a little, and admitted that she knew her.

"You live, perhaps, in my city?" said the Frenchman.

"No," said Aunt Adeline.

"But you go there to live, is it not?"

"Yes, for some time."

Mrs. Quayle saw no special reason to snub the polite stranger, but her replies were cold enough to have frozen off an Englishman. But the elderly French gentleman was of the kind that can take a great deal of freezing.

"And your sister, she live in Paris, too?" said the gentleman.

Mrs. Quayle smiled more cordially. Figgins knew perfectly well that the elderly French gentleman was only pretending to take Cousin Ethel for Mrs. Quayle's sister; but the widow

did not know it. How should she, when every glance in her glass showed her that she was very far from looking her age?

"It is not my sister," she explained—"my niece."

The elderly French gentleman was amazed, almost incredulous. If so eminently respectable and sedate a lady as Aunt Adeline could be suspected of bridling, certainly Mrs. Quayle bridled just a little.

Figgins snorted.

"And the little boy; he is your niece's brother?" said the Frenchman.

Figgins ground his teeth.

He was not a little boy. He was nearly fifteen, so far as age went; and so far as size went he was taller than that ancient lounge of the boulevard. And he had already made a mental calculation that in case of a row, it would take him about ten seconds to knock the Parisian gentleman into a cocked hat.

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"Hand her up!" said Mr. Harris, leaning over the wrecked carriage-door to receive the fainting lady. The exhausted Figgins made a desperate effort, and lifted her up for the sporting gentleman to grasp. Mr. Harris seized her in his fat hands, and drew her into safety at last! (See Chapter 15.)

"The leetle mees, she go to school in Paris?" the polite stranger went on.

"Yes," said Mrs. Quayle.

"How delightful for the leetle mees!"

And the elderly French gentleman turned his eyes upon the little miss, but the little miss did not meet his glance.

"And you live in Paris, too, mon petit garcon?" the French gentleman inquired graciously of Figgins, just as if they were on the best of terms.

"No," grunted Figgins.

"But you like to live in Paris?"

"No," said Figgins grimly.

"Ah, vraitment! How frank—how delightfully frank is the English nature!" said the French gentleman, with a beaming smile.

Mrs. Quayle looked a little shocked at Figgins's rudeness.

"My dear Figgins!" she murmured.

Figgins coloured. The Frenchman was making him look rough and boorish, and Figgins had a wild desire to jump up and kick him out of the carriage. In any encounter of that sort Figgins would have had as much advantage as the Frenchman had in the war of words.

The train roared and bumped, and for a time talk was inaudible. Cousin Ethel took the opportunity of speaking to

Figgins while her voice was inaudible to the others on the other side of the carriage.

"You must not look so angry, Figgins!" she murmured.

Figgins made an effort to clear his angry brow.

"Was I looking angry?" he muttered.

"Yes."

"I'm sorry, Ethel!"

"You must not mind that ridiculous old gentleman. Frenchmen are not like Englishmen, you know."

Figgins snorted.

"No, I know that!" he said. "I'm jolly glad to be with you, Ethel. It ain't safe for a girl to travel about this rotten country!"

Ethel smiled.

"But the absurd old man will not do any harm, Figgins. He is only chattering, and strangers do talk to one another in this country, you know. It's a custom."

"A rotten bad custom!" said Figgins.

Cousin Ethel smiled again.

"But you must not look so ferocious, Figgins. It is absurd!"

"Ye-es, I suppose it is," said Figgins.

"There is nothing to be annoyed about."

"Oh, isn't there?" said Figgins. "You're going to be shut

up for a whole year among these—" Figgins paused just in time, and coloured. "Among these foreign people. It's a rotten mistake to send English girls abroad to finish their education. This isn't a country for nice girls to live in."

"Indeed!" said Cousin Ethel.

"No, it isn't!" said Figgins. "Gussy was quite right. I jolly well wish I were your guardian, and I'd rush you back to England by the next train. It's rotten!"

"I'm afraid I cannot listen to you criticising my guardians, Figgins!"

"Well, they ought to know better!" said Figgins recklessly. To his own amazement he was growing angry with Cousin Ethel, why he could not tell. It was almost as if she had some part in the offence given by the ancient Parisian dandy. He had never been angry with Ethel before—he had never dreamed that he could be angry with her. But he was boiling with rage inwardly now, and as polite manners and customs forbade him to hurl himself bodily upon the old "bounder" who had provoked him, perhaps it was only natural that some of his exasperation should turn upon the unconscious cause of the trouble.

What did Cousin Ethel want to defend the old fool for? Figgins demanded of himself. One could never understand girls. Why didn't she realise, as keenly as Figgins did, that it was an offence against all nature for that obnoxious old chump to be breathing the same atmosphere with her at all?

Cousin Ethel's lips closed a little tightly. She had never been angry with Figgins before, but she was perilously near it now.

"Indeed!" she said again.

"Yes, indeed!" retorted Figgins.

"Please drop the subject," said Ethel.

Figgins glared.

"Perhaps I'm in the way!" he said savagely.

Cousin Ethel looked at him. Figgins could have bitten out his tongue the next instant for having said those words; but they were said now, and there was no recalling them. And he was too angry to do the only thing possible—beg Cousin Ethel's pardon on the spot. He avoided her surprised glance and scowled at the landscape.

The train buzzed and hummed and roared. In the carriage there was silence save for the noise and racket of the train.

"You had no right to say that, Figgins," said Ethel at last.

"I think you are silly!"

"Oh!" said Figgins.

"And rude."

"Oh!" said Figgins again, more grimly than before.

"And you ought to be sorry for being rude and silly."

"I'm not sorry."

Cousin Ethel's lips hardened again.

"Very well," she said; "if you cannot be polite, we had better not talk any more until you are in a better temper."

And she drew a little farther away.

Figgins drew in a hard breath. He was furious—furious with the old fool opposite, furious with himself, furious with Cousin Ethel, furious with everything and everybody. He had quarrelled with Ethel—his first quarrel with her—just at the time when he should have been most careful to avoid anything like a quarrel. Jealousy was eating out his very heart. Perhaps it was true—perhaps he was in the way, and she wanted to get rid of him. He knew that it wasn't so, but he was not in a mood to be reasonable; he was in a strange mood, which he did not understand himself, when there was a strange kind of pleasure in torturing himself and her.

She was very quiet. But silence weighed upon Figgins—weighed upon him like lead. He felt a feverish desire to speak—to say cruel things—things that would stab him afterwards when he recalled them—things he knew he should not say.

"It's not my temper that's at fault!" he growled.

Ethel did not reply.

"It's my brains," said Figgins bitterly. "Some of the fellows at St. Jim's say I am an ass, and I suppose they're right. I was an ass to come here—I know that."

Silence from Cousin Ethel.

"I'm an ass not to know when my company isn't wanted," said Figgins.

Ethel's lips trembled a little, but she did not speak. Figgins felt the blood mount to his head; he was very near tears, and furious with himself for being so moved.

"I'll go!" he said.

If Cousin Ethel had made a gesture to stop him he would have stayed. But she did not move or speak. Figgins rose from his seat, and stepped out into the corridor of the train. He stood in the carriage doorway, looking back at Ethel. Her eyes were fixed straight before her, and she did not seem to be conscious of Figgins's existence. With mingled misery and fury in his heart, Figgins took a pace or two along the corridor. He could not return now unless Ethel asked

him to; and evidently she did not intend to do that. The girl's pride was wounded, and she would make no sign.

The noise of the train died away a little. As it slackened, the voice of the elderly French gentleman became audible in the carriage.

The noise of the train died away a little. As it slackened, the voice of the elderly French gentleman became audible in the carriage.

"C'est froid, ici—you permit zat I close ze door!"

The thin, gloved hand of the elderly Frenchman reached to the sliding door that was open upon the corridor of the train. It was pushed shut and it clicked fast—and Figgins was shut out of the carriage.

CHAPTER 12.

The Cloud Between.

FIGGINS stood in the corridor of the train.

The Paris express was bumping along towards Amiens. Flat, uninteresting country lay round the railway-track; little trees dotted the horizon; here and there, in the distance, factory chimneys belched hideous smoke against the sky.

Figgins stood bareheaded in the corridor. He had left his cap in the carriage, and he could not go back for it. He did not even remember it. He stood there, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, his face white with anger. Figgins had never dreamed that there was so much evil in his nature as now boiled up within him. A picture danced before his eyes of the elderly French gentleman going down before his fists, with blood upon his withered, pasty face, and there was pleasure in that mental picture. Why didn't he go back into the carriage, grasp the old fool by the neck, and sling him out bodily into the corridor? He could have done it easily. But it was impossible. And the boy realised miserably that in giving way to his temper as he had done, he had played fairly into the hands of the old "bounder." He had stepped out of the carriage of his own accord, and his pride forbade him to re-enter. And the elderly Frenchman, under pretence that it was cold with the door open, had closed the door upon the corridor, and shut Figgins out of the carriage.

He certainly could not have pleased his rival better than by acting as he had done.

His rival! Figgins laughed aloud at the word. That dyed, painted, cosseted old fool his rival!

Well, if Ethel wanted to talk to that bounder instead of to Figgins, let her! How he wished he had gone back to St. Jim's with D'Arcy! What a fool he had been!

After all, a fellow never could understand girls.

He looked through the glass into the carriage. The train was not making so much noise now, and evidently conversation was possible. The elderly French gentleman had skillfully penetrated Mrs. Quayle's reserve, and engaged that lady in talk, and he was skillfully drawing Cousin Ethel into it without exciting the old lady's suspicions. Figgins's face, glaring through the window from the corridor, and scowling blackly, was quite visible to Ethel; and perhaps it was upon Figgins's account that she allowed herself to be drawn into the talk as the old Frenchman wished. Figgins could not hear what was said, as the door was closed, but he saw that Ethel was speaking.

So she was talking to the bounder as soon as he was out of the carriage! She had wanted him to go, of course, all the time. She hadn't wanted him to come on the boat from Folkestone. And he had run away from school to look after her, and guard her all the way to Paris, and at the first excuse she dropped him, and allowed a beastly Frenchman to talk to her!

What an idiot he had been!

What an idiot he was, would have been a more appropriate reflection. But Figgins did not think so just then.

He would not stay and look on. He would find a seat in another carriage, and at Amiens he would drop quietly out of the train, and wait there for the next train back to Boulogne and England. That was the best thing he could do.

He moved slowly along the corridor, feeling as if a heavy chain, growing in weight at every step, held him to the carriage in which Cousin Ethel was.

The seats in the next carriage were full, filled with a family of tourists, who were talking and laughing merrily. Their cheerfulness jarred upon Figgins.

He went on to the next carriage, and found that the corner seats were taken, but the middle seats left. Four Frenchmen were there, and at that moment Figgins was as desirous for the society of mad dogs as for that of Frenchmen. He passed on, and came to the end of the corridor, and passed over the shaky iron plates into the next car. There he found a corner seat, and plunged into it, and sat down.

There were two or three passengers in the carriage he had entered, and they glanced at Figgins curiously.

The poor fellow was not clever at hiding his feelings. He sat in his corner seat and scowled at space.

He was thinking bitterly.

What was going on in the next car? Cousin Ethel was talking with the old Frenchman, perhaps laughing at his quaint English; and Figgins, growing weirdly suspicious, had already made up his mind that the old rascal spoke in queer English intentionally, in order to raise a smile, and thereby insinuate himself into the good graces of Mrs. Quayle and her niece.

Perhaps he would actually make friends with them. Mrs. Quayle might allow him to call upon her in Paris. He would see Cousin Ethel again—see her, talk to her, make friends with her, perhaps, after Figgins had gone back to England, and was grinding away at his lessons in the old Form-room at St. Jim's.

And at that thought Figgins's heart seemed almost to stand still with rage and dismay.

"Monsieur!"

A Frenchman, seated opposite to Figgins, had been watching his face for some time, and seemed kindly concerned by the remarkable changes that were taking place incessantly in Figgins's expressive features. He leaned forward a little.

"Monsieur!"

Figgins stared at him. He was in no mood to be talked to by a Frenchman.

"Monsieur, vous etes malade?" said the Frenchman sympathetically. "Mal-de-mer, n'est-ce-pas?"

"No!" grunted Figgins.

"Vat you call sea-seeek?"

"I'm not sea-sick."

"Excusez!" said the Frenchman gracefully. "But if monsieur is malade, is it zat I can do somesing?"

"I'm not malade."

"Bien!"

And the passenger drew back into his seat, wondering at the gruff manners of those dreadful islanders, the English.

Figgins coloured a little. The man had meant to be courteous and helpful, and he had not looked at Cousin Ethel. After all, there was no necessity to be rude because an old boulevard loungeur in another carriage was making himself obnoxious.

"Thank you very much," said Figgins; "but I'm all right."

The passenger nodded.

But Figgins knew that the passengers in the carriage were regarding him with curiosity, and after a few minutes he withdrew into the corridor again. He tramped along it in the direction of Ethel's carriage, and stopped. He could not and would not go back. And he felt that if he found the three of them talking and laughing together, he would lose his temper completely, and there would be trouble. And that would place him in a worse light than ever. What would Mrs. Quayle think if he started punching a perfect stranger in a railway-carriage? Very likely she would faint. And Cousin Ethel would look at him scornfully.

The train was slackening speed.

"What is the station we're coming to?" asked Figgins of a fat man in a fancy waistcoat, who was smoking a big black cigar in the corridor. The man was evidently an Englishman, and not a very pleasant variety of Englishman; but anything was better than a Frenchman at that moment to Figgins.

"Ameong!" said the gentleman with the cigar.

"Amiens!"

"Yes."

"Thank you."

"Travelling alone?" asked the man with the cigar, with a curious look at the troubled, bareheaded boy.

Figgins flushed.

"No," he said awkwardly.

"Getting out at Ameong?" asked the sporting gentleman.

"Yes."

"I'm goin' on to Patee," said the stranger, through a cloud of strong-smelling smoke. "Ever been to the races at Anteuil?"

"No," said Figgins.

"Or at Chantilly?"

"No."

"You ought to go. You don't see Paris unless you see the races," said the sporting gentleman. "I'm Fred Harris. You know that name?"

"No."

"No!" Mr. Harris looked surprised. "Mighty few gents in Newmarket and Epsom and Anteuil who don't know that name. Ever had anything on a horse?"

"Only myself," said Figgins.

The sporting gentleman laughed.

"Well, if you're in Paris, and you see me, I'll give you a good thing," he said. "Smoke?"

"No, thanks."

"Well, there's your station," said Mr. Harris.

The train was slackening down into Amiens. Figgins nodded to the sporting gentleman, who was full of good humour, and evidently longing for somebody to talk English to. His talk was not exactly suitable for a boy of fifteen to listen to, but that fact was quite unknown to Mr. Fred Harris, who never changed his style of conversation, whatever company he was in. Figgins moved along the corridor as the train stopped in the station of Amiens, and paused again.

He had to go back to the carriage for his cap. He might have avoided that; after all, he could buy a new cap in Amiens for a few francs. But—but if he did not rejoin the party—if they did not see him at Paris—what would they think? They might fancy that he had fallen off the train and been killed—that there had been an accident. And could he be so rude as to go without saying a word? Cousin Ethel would understand why he went, but Mrs. Quayle would not. She would be amazed and justly offended if he went without even a word of farewell; and, indeed, she was certain to think that something had happened to him.

Figgins hesitated in the corridor.

The reasons he had debated in his mind for not getting off the train at Amiens were good ones; but at the bottom of his heart he knew very well that his real reason was that he did not want to leave Cousin Ethel with the Frenchman. Doors banged along the train.

Mr. Fred Harris paused in the act of lighting a new cigar to call out to the boy along the corridor.

"Hi, kiddy, you'd better hop it if you're going!"

"All right," said Figgins absently.

"She's moving!"

"All right."

The tram glided out of Amiens station. Mr. Harris looked at Figgins with unbounded astonishment.

"Well, my 'at!" he ejaculated.

Figgins walked along the corridor in the opposite direction, to escape Mr. Harris. He had to pass the window of Ethel's carriage, and to save his life he could not have avoided looking in as he passed. The elderly French gentleman was evidently telling a comic story, with both hands engaged in illustration, and his withered face full of smiles. Mrs. Quayle was smiling, and Cousin Ethel was laughing. Both of them appeared to have forgotten completely the fact that there was such a person existing in the wide world as Figgins. Figgins tramped on past the carriage, with the bitterness of death in his heart.

CHAPTER 13.

In the Midst of Life—

THE train bumped on under the westering sun. Figgins longed to walk back along the corridor and glance in at the carriage. But he would not. If Cousin Ethel did not want him, he would not force himself upon her. The miserable lad forgot that if Cousin Ethel wanted him, she could not very well let him know, while there were two or three carriages between them. Perhaps she was leaving him alone to get over his temper, but, if so, he was not succeeding in doing that. He was very angry, and very miserable, and probably Ethel in the carriage was as miserable as he was.

The elderly French gentleman had succeeded in ingratiating himself with Mrs. Quayle. He had succeeded in drawing Ethel into talk, partly because she was annoyed with Figgins. He was now telling droll stories in mingled French and English, and generally airing himself, so to speak, to show the English ladies what a really entertaining fellow he was, and how unnecessary it was to think of the sulky boy who had withdrawn himself from the carriage. That was the full extent of his offending—probably he had no thought in his foolish old mind of greater harm than the desire to spread himself, as it were, and show what a finished Parisian he was. Certainly, his politeness was as exquisite as the fit of his gloves and the polish on his boots, and he said nothing whatever that Figgins need have been offended at, if he had still been in the carriage. If the foolish old fellow had not looked at Cousin Ethel, and entered into a ridiculous competition with a boy, to cut Figgins out with his companion, probably Figgins would have been there, enjoying his funny stories, which lightened the journey very much for Mrs. Quayle, at least. As it was, the ridiculous old flaneur had the field to himself, and Figgins was sulking in the corridor, like Achilles in his tent, with feelings that rose occasionally to an almost murderous pitch.

Cousin Ethel was weary of it—weary of the journey, weary of the absurd old man and his absurd elegance and exaggerated courtliness, and wishing that she had been kinder to Figgins. He had taken so much trouble for her; he had bolted from school because he was so anxious about

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her, and she knew that he would have to face a severe punishment when he returned to St. Jim's. Certainly, he ought not to have criticised her guardians as he had done; certainly his fears for her were ungrounded. But it was his strong affection for her that had made him offend, and how many boys would have taken the risk of that reckless plunge into a foreign country for her sake? Ethel's heart was heavy with thinking of poor Figgins shut out of the carriage, and yet, if he had entered she would probably have averted her eyes from him; such is the peculiar perversity of human nature.

With Ethel miserable in her carriage, and Figgins miserable outside it, the ancient Johnny of the boulevards rattled on, charming Mrs. Quayle, and boring her niece almost to extinction, though she nodded and smiled, in case Figgins should glance in from the corridor. If Figgins should see her apparently amused and entertained, she expected him to know by some mysterious intuition that she wasn't anything of the sort—which is one of the ways that women have.

Three times Figgins tramped back towards the carriage, and three times he stopped before he had reached it, too proud to show himself. And Mr. Fred Harris, having smoked three big, black cigars, and yawned portentously, and longing for somebody to speak to in English, came along to Figgins, and cornered him, as it were, at the end of the corridor.

"Goin' on to Paree?" he asked affably.

"Yes," said Figgins.

"Thought you were getting out at Ameerong?"

"Well, I didn't."

"Got folks in there?" said Mr. Harris, with a jerk of a fat and not over-clean thumb towards the carriage in which the elderly French gentleman was still talking, with the inexhaustible energy of his race.

"Yes," said Figgins.

"Row?" asked Mr. Harris sagely.

Figgins shifted uncomfortably. He had no intention whatever of confiding his secret sorrows to this horsey and good-natured gentleman in the loud waistcoat and glaring necktie, with the silk hat cocked on one side of his well-oiled head.

Mr. Harris changed the subject to horses. Figgins was fond of horses, like most British boys, but Mr. Harris's views on horses did not agree with his own. Mr. Harris only regarded a horse as an object that ran in races, and he gave Figgins wonderful tips about the form of the gee-gees at Auteuil that were quite wasted on the St. Jim's junior. He ornamented his conversation with expletives that shocked Figgins, and the boy would have been glad to escape from him, yet he was feeling so lonely and "rotten" that in one way he was glad of Mr. Harris's company. Mr. Harris might be a sporting gentleman, and extremely loud both in clothing and manners, but, at all events, he was better than that unspeakable old bounder who had forced himself upon Ethel and Mrs. Quayle. Figgins wished from the bottom of his heart that one of the fellows from St. Jim's had been with him. Tom Merry or Blake or Kerr would have been able to advise him what to do. Figgins felt miserably that old Kerr, for instance, would not have been done in this way by a rotten foreigner. Kerr would have turned the tables upon the elderly French gentleman somehow. How Kerr would have done it Figgins did not know; he only knew that he, Figgins, couldn't.

"Stoppin' in Paree?" asked Mr. Harris presently.

"I don't know."

"Young lady your sister?"

Figgins coloured.

"No."

"Cousin, perhaps?" said Mr. Harris.

"Oh, no."

"Looking after her to Paree—ch?"

"Yes."

Mr. Harris grinned. Perhaps he thought that Figgins was adopting a peculiar way of looking after the young lady. Figgins thought so, too, and he resolved upon the spot to return to the carriage. He gave Mr. Harris an abrupt nod, and went slowly down the corridor, and stopped at the sliding door.

The elderly French gentleman was still going strong. Both his hands were busy in illustration, for all the world, as Figgins thought with utter disgust, as if he were practising some new kind of gymnastics. Mrs. Quayle was looking interested and amused, and Cousin Ethel was laughing—positively laughing!

Figgins jammed open the sliding door of the carriage with a sharp jam.

He entered.

He had expected his sudden entrance to have a startling

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effect, like that of the messenger of evil tidings who drew Priam's curtains at the dead of night.

But it didn't!

The elderly French gentleman did not even pause in his flow of language, and Cousin Ethel did not look at Figgins. Mrs. Quayle gave him a nod and a kind smile, and turned her attention to the entertaining Frenchman again. Mrs. Quayle only thought about Figgins that he had been tired of sitting in the carriage with a girl and an old woman, and had gone to wander up and down the corridor to escape from boredom. It was only natural that it should be so with a schoolboy full of health and spirits, Mrs. Quayle thought, and she did not mind in the least.

Figgins stood in the corridor, glowering, and feeling himself in the way. He tried to catch Cousin Ethel's eye, but Cousin Ethel's eye was steadily fixed on the landscape that was passing in dusk beside the gliding train.

Cousin Ethel would have given anything to make a sign to Figgins to come and sit beside her, and be good-tempered again. But suppose he hadn't noticed it—and he was angry enough to be rude. So the girl made no sign, and Figgins stood there, aching with pain and anger, and wishing that he had kept out of the carriage.

He caught sight of his cap on the rack, and reached it down. That would make an excuse for his having entered the carriage, any way, and he could retire without confusion. If only Ethel would have looked at him, he would have taken his old place, and remained, but she didn't.

He grabbed his cap, and stepped out of the carriage again, without having spoken a word. He did not wait for the Frenchman to close the sliding door after him this time—he jammed it shut himself.

He jammed the cap on his head savagely, and strode along the corridor with his hands in his pockets, and bumped into the conductor, who was coming along, and whom Figgins in his blind anger did not see.

The train official staggered, and caught at a carriage door for support.

"Monsieur!" he ejaculated.

Figgins glared at him instead of apologising. The conductor of the train was, of course, a Frenchman, and all Frenchmen were to Figgins at that moment mortal enemies. At that moment Figgins could have led a charge at Waterloo with eminent satisfaction.

"M'sieur!" said the little officer faintly.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snarled Figgins.

"Monsieur—"

"Oh, rats!"

Figgins tramped on, and the conductor shrugged his shoulders, and rolled his eyes, and murmured to himself remarks about the manners of the unspeakable English.

Figgins halted in the corridor, panting. Mr. Harris, who had lighted a fresh cigar, of which he seemed to have an endless supply, chuckled.

Figgins glared at him. He was as ready to quarrel with Mr. Harris as with anybody else; but the sporting gentleman was too good-humoured to be quarrelled with.

"We shall be late in Paree, young 'un!" he remarked.

Figgins grunted.

"Lost half an hour when we left Ameerong," said Mr. Harris. "These blessed French trains! If I was President of the Republic, I'd send over to London for some business men to manage the railways! Groo!"

"Not a bad idea," said Figgins.

"It's a good idea!" said Mr. Harris. "We shall be late in Paris! Man waiting for me at the Gare du Nord, too, on business! Pah! They're picking up speed; but when a French train tries to pick up speed, something generally happens. Was stuck up for two hours once on this same blooming route! Fellers got out of the train and gathered flowers, you believe me! Fancy that on a Henglish railway! Not even on the South-Eastern! What?"

And Mr. Harris blew out a volume of black smoke, which almost suffocated Figgins, and made him beat a hasty retreat.

The train was certainly picking up speed. It was bumping and bumping on through the gathering shadows with something like the pace expected of an express train. The landscape was blotted out now. Only dim forms of trees loomed occasionally through the dusk.

Figgins stood in the corridor and pondered. They would be in Paris soon. The train would not be more than half an hour late at the Gare du Nord—perhaps only a quarter, considering how fast she was going now. What was he to do when the train stopped at the North Station in Paris? Rejoin Cousin Ethel and Mrs. Quayle? Certainly Aunt Adeline would expect him to; and if he didn't, that insufferable Frenchman might have made himself sufficiently agreeable by this time to be allowed to escort them to their future residence. Figgins clenched his fists hard as he

thought of that. He could imagine the old Johnny, on rare occasions, hanging about for a chance meeting with the English "mees"; taking advantage of her English frankness and innocence to push his acquaintance with her; perhaps, if her guardian was not watchful, to lead her into some of the mischief that was always afoot in Paris. Visions of a girl being whirled away in a taxicab by a villain with black moustaches floated in Figgins's mind. He had already painted the elderly French gentleman, in his mind, with all the lurid colours appropriate to a Mephistopheles. And perhaps Figgins's fears were not so absurd as Mrs. Quayle would have deemed them, for French is French and English is English, and never the twain shall meet. But groundless or not, Figgins's fears for Cousin Ethel were quite enough to throw him into a cold perspiration of fear and anxiety. And she was laughing and chatting with that unspeakable wretch, while he was suffering these mental tortures on her behalf. Figgins was as angry with Ethel as with the ancient ornament of the boulevards, and as angry with Mrs. Quayle as with either. If this was the way Ethel's aunt was going to look after her, he was quite right to feel nervous about her being left in Paris—that city of all the iniquities.

Figgins almost groaned aloud as he thought of it. And he was so helpless. Cousin Ethel would not even listen to him. She would have laughed at his fears, even if she had understood them, which was doubtful. And she allowed herself to be amused with that old idiot! She could not see the villain peeping out from behind the imbecile—as Figgins could, or thought that he could. Or, perhaps, she did not choose to see; for there never was any understanding girls, Figgins told himself sorely.

And suddenly, as Figgins thought and thought it over till his brain seemed spinning, there came a sudden terrific bump, and the speed of the train was checked, and a wild yell rang from every carriage.

Crash!

Crash!

And Figgins, deafened and dazed, found himself lying on his back on a grassy bank, looking dizzily up at the stars, and wondering what had happened, while yell after yell, and shriek after shriek rang out upon the air of the night.

CHAPTER 14.

In Deadly Danger!

CRASH!

Crash!

What had happened?

Cousin Ethel started to her feet as the crashing came, and the train whirled, and rocked, and swayed like a ship in a storm.

Was it an accident?

There was not a doubt about that. A cry left Cousin Ethel's lips as she sprang up. Mrs. Quayle fell back in her seat, fainting with terror.

Now was the time for the elderly French gentleman to show the stuff he was made of. And he did.

Ethel caught one glimpse of his face—white, and stiff, and glaring with fear—as he made a wild leap into the corridor of the train.

He had forgotten the estimable madame and the charming miss, before whom he had been spreading his elegant politeness a minute before.

Ethel shrieked to him.

"Help—help!"

He did not even hear

He was gone in a second, and the carriage was rocking and swaying, the glass crashed, and the lamp was extinguished. Wild shouts and shrieks rang along the train, the floor trembled, screams for help rang in three or four languages.

The train had heeled over on the steep embankment. From the darkness of the night came a sudden glance of dancing flame. Two of the foremost carriages were on fire. The engine had left the line, and fortunately breaking free, had rolled down the steep bank by itself. The train was curling up upon itself, with crashing, and rending, and tearing, amid dreadful shrieks and cries. Ethel's carriage was on its side, and she clung to her aunt and cried wildly for help.

"Help! Oh, help! Figgins—Figgins! Oh, Figgins!"

That was the name that fled to her lips.

And her cry was not unheard.

Figgins had lain for some seconds, half-stunned, upon the grassy bank. He had been tossed there like a ball from a racket, but the thick grass and the slope had broken his fall. He had staggered to his feet, to find the train a sprawling wreck, and steam hissing madly from the overrunning engine, and two carriages on fire, and dreadful cries pouring out from the smashed carriages.

Ethel!

That was his only thought. He did not care whether he was hurt or not himself. He did not even know that the blood was running down his forehead in a red stream. Ethel! Where was Ethel! Oh, what a madman, what a villain he had been to leave her side for a moment! Ethel! Where was Ethel?

From the darkness and the wreck came her cry.

"Figgins! Help! Figgins!"

Thank Heaven she was living yet—even if hurt! Figgins plunged madly towards the wreck of the train. Partly on the line, partly hanging over the steep embankment, the broken express seemed poised by a miracle, ready to plunge down the steep slope at a touch. It would go—it must go! And if the passengers were not clear of it when it went, they were dead men. For there were a hundred feet to be rolled to the bottom of the slope—whither the engine had already gone—and the train and its occupants would be smashed when the bottom was reached. The passengers were swarming out of the reeling carriages on the safe side wherever they could, and crowding upon the down line; but there were many imprisoned by jamming doors, who could not get out. And that wild cry told Figgins that Cousin Ethel was one of them.

The boy clambered up the embankment again, and plunged into the wreck. The train had fallen upon the side of the corridor, and the windows on the other side were high in the air. Groans came from the unfortunates pinned under broken seats and baggage displaced from the racks.

Where was Ethel?

"Ethel—Ethel! I'm here! Where are you?"

"Figgins! Help!"

Figgins clambered upon the slanting side of the carriage. The windows were smashed, the apertures jagged with broken glass. Figgins's hands were cut as he climbed, but he never noticed it. His fingers dripped red as he held on and looked into the carriage from the upper side.

On the far side of the carriage, below him, two huddled figures lay—Mrs. Quayle and Cousin Ethel. They had been thrown down there as the train whirled over. There was no one else in the carriage. No sign of the elderly French gentleman who had driven Figgins forth, and who was therefore bound by every law to stand by the two women there. The elderly French gentleman was already in safety, and it was left to the sulky English boy to save the girl and the woman—if they could be saved.

"Ethel!" said Figgins hoarsely. "Ethel, my darling!" He did not know what he was saying. "Oh, Ethel, are you hurt?"

"No—no! But my aunt is hurt. She has fainted," came back a strangled voice. "I—I cannot lift her."

"I'm coming in!"

Ethel shrieked.

"Don't! The train will roll down! You will be killed!"

Figgins knew that that was likely enough. But he did not reply. He plunged head and shoulders through the window, tearing his clothes, tearing his skin upon the jagged edges of the glass.

He came head downwards into the carriage, and there was a shout from the crowd of passengers who had seen the brave action. But there was only one of them who had the presence of mind to help him. In the lurid glare cast by the burning carriages further on, Mr. Fred Harris leaped towards the train. With his black cigar clenched between his teeth, and his rakish silk hat on the back of his head, Mr. Harris clambered on the train to help Figgins.

"I'm here, cocky!" he shouted. "I'm here to lend a hand!"

And his voice was glad enough music to Figgins's ears. For he needed help sorely.

He clambered down into the slanting carriage, and got a footing upon the door that gave on the smashed corridor. Mrs. Quayle lay insensible there, and Ethel was clinging to her and to one of the almost perpendicular seats.

"You first, Ethel," muttered Figgins.

"No—no! Help her—"

"Yes, after—but you can help yourself, and you must go first. You've got to squeeze through that window—there's a man outside to help you."

Figgins caught Cousin Ethel round the waist—there was no time for ceremony—and lifted her up by main strength to the broken windows above.

"Mind you don't cut your hands," he gasped.

Ethel put her hands up through the broken window. Mr. Harris, outside on the side of the carriage, which was now in the position of a roof, caught her hands, and pulled her up, and the slim girl passed through the broken window more easily than Figgins had been able to pass.

Mr. Harris lowered her from the train to the clear line, two or three passengers rushing forward to take her from his hands.

Among them was the elderly French gentleman, who had

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now recovered from his terrible fright, and was again as smooth, and polished, and polite as ever.

"Ciel! Ze English mees!" he exclaimed joyously. "You are save—let me save you—let me support you—"

Ethel, hardly knowing what she did, pushed him away with both her hands.

"Don't touch me!" she gasped.

"Mon Dieu! My dear mees—"

"Let me alone! You are a coward!" panted Ethel.

And the elderly French gentleman melted away.

Inside the carriage, Figgins was struggling with the weight of the fainting Mrs. Quayle. The unfortunate lady was quite unconscious, and there was blood upon her face. Figgins did not know how seriously she might be hurt; but she was still living, he knew that. She was no light weight, but Figgins seemed to have the strength of a giant just then. He dragged her up, and supported her, so that Mr. Harris could reach down through the broken window and grasp her arms.

The sporting gentleman gave a low whistle of dismay.

"She won't come through this 'ere," he muttered.

Figgins set his teeth.

It was only too true. The door was jammed, and could not be opened, and there was no room for Mrs. Quayle to pass through the window as the slim young girl had passed. She was imprisoned in the overturned carriage—on the edge of the slope down which the whole wreck might go plunging at any moment.

"Get out, kid!" whispered Mr. Harris.

Figgins shook his head.

"Get an axe, or something," he panted. "Smash in the door—for mercy's sake be quick!"

"You'll go together, if you stay there—"

"Get an axe!"

"I'll do my best," said Mr. Harris. "My 'at, but you're a good plucked 'un!"

He scrambled off the carriage. Cousin Ethel was standing there, with clasped hands, and colourless face, and burning, tearless eyes.

"Figgins!" she panted.

"Don't take on, miss," said Mr. Harris, "we'll have him out in a jiffy!"

He dashed in search of an axe.

"Figgins! Figgins!" cried Ethel.

"It's all right!" came back Figgins's voice. "Stand back from the train, Ethel. Do you hear? Stand back, in case—"

"Figgins!"

"I'm all right. We can't get Mrs. Quayle through the window. We shall have to smash the door in. Don't be afraid—I won't leave her!"

Ethel sobbed with sheer terror. She could not ask Figgins to leave the poor, fainting woman—she was torn with terror and anxiety for them both. Figgins would be killed—Figgins would be killed—that was the thought that hummed and throbbled in her brain.

It seemed ages before Mr. Harris returned with an axe; but it was only a couple of minutes. The work of rescue was going on all along the train, passenger and passenger was being brought out, and laid in safety on the grass. Men had already dashed away for help, and to signal the accident along the line. Mr. Fred Harris clambered on the train again, to the ruin of his sporty coat and trousers. His silk topper was gone now, but the cigar was still clenched between his teeth.

Crash, crash!

The sporting, betting, swearing Mr. Harris, whose character was decidedly disreputable, and whose language was far from choice, was a hero in these moments—one of the old bulldog breed, in spite of his glaring waistcoat and his impossible tie. He wielded the axe as Thor might have wielded his hammer, careless of the fact that every crashing blow might have helped to send the carriage toppling over, to carry its occupants and himself into sudden eternity.

Crash! Crash!

Within the carriage, Figgins, white as death, but cool as ice, held the unconscious lady in his arms. Sprawling on the carriage outside, Mr. Harris hacked and hewed like a giant. Crash! Crash!

CHAPTER 15.

Good Old Figgins!

COUSIN ETHEL stood and watched.

At moments her heart throbbled and throbbled, and at moments it almost ceased to beat.

Two who were very dear to her were in the wreck there—one unconscious of danger, the other risking his life every second in the cause of duty.

Oh, if Figgins were killed—

The pain of that grinding anxiety was more than she could

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bear. The girl moaned aloud as she stood and watched, helpless to aid, able only to suffer.

Crash! Crash!

Splinters flew fast under Mr. Harris's doughty blows. Two or three of them tore his own purple face as they flew.

Crash! Crash!

Would the door never yield? How long was this to last? Ethel passed through an eternity of suffering in those dreadful minutes.

Crash!

"It's coming!" yelled Mr. Harris.

He dropped the axe and wrenched the carriage door open. Figgins gave a gasp of relief.

"—And her up!" said Mr. Harris.

He hung over the door to receive her. Figgins made a big effort, and lifted the fainting lady up for the sporting gentleman to grasp.

Mr. Harris seized her in his fat hands, and drew her from the carriage, and many hands were held out to receive her from him. Mrs. Quayle, still unconscious, was laid in the grass under the stars, the lurid light from the burning carriages shedding strange gleams upon her colourless face.

"Now, out you come, young 'un!" said Mr. Harris, reaching a hand down to Figgins.

And he helped the St. Jim's junior to clamber out.

They jumped clear of the train.

"Ethel!"

"Oh!"

Ethel caught both his hands, and pressed them to her lips.

"Ethel! Dearest!" whispered Figgins.

Then a bright colour flooded into the girl's face, and she hurried to where Mrs. Quayle lay in the grass. Figgins would have given worlds to follow her; but the rescue work was still going on, and every strong and brave hand was wanted.

There was a sudden yell down the train.

"Prenez garde!"

"Voilà! Il tombe!"

"Stand clear!" yelled Fred Harris. "She's going!"

Crash! Rumble, crash!

One of the carriages went plunging over the edge. The couplings held, and the weight of the falling car dragged the rest of the train over.

With horrid crash on crash, the express went rolling down the bank.

Fortunately, the passengers were all clear now. Injured and uninjured, dead or disabled, all of them were on the safe side of the line. Mr. Harris grasped Figgins's arm, and his voice was a husky whisper as he muttered:

"If you'd been still in there, young 'un!"

Figgins shuddered.

He turned towards where the injured lay, sick at heart. His narrow escape came home to his mind, and it made him almost sick. Ethel was kneeling beside her aunt, supporting her head, and crying softly.

"Is she much hurt?" whispered Figgins.

Ethel looked up at him through her tears.

"No!" she whispered. "They say it is only a cut—you saved her life, Figgins."

"Thank goodness I had the chance."

"Oh! And you might—you might—"

"Don't think of that, Ethel! It might have been worse for all of us," said Figgins, with a shudder. "There are two poor chaps killed. What became of that old Johnnie who was in the carriage with you? I looked for him—he wasn't in the wreck. I would have helped him if I'd found him, Ethel."

Ethel's lip curled.

"He didn't need any help," she said. "He ran at once."

"Oh, did he?"

Figgins felt a queer sort of satisfaction on hearing that the elderly French gentleman had run. Everybody else in the train had acted bravely enough; but the flaneur of the boulevards was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. To Figgins it was incomprehensible that a man could run and leave women in danger.

Mrs. Quayle opened her eyes.

"Ethel! Oh, what has happened?"

"It's all right!" said Figgins softly. "It was an accident on the line. Something was wrong on the metals, and the train went over. Ethel's safe—you're safe, ma'am! It's all right."

"Oh, dear!"

And Mrs. Quayle fainted again. Figgins was in fear that Ethel would faint, too; but she did not. She was keeping herself under hard control.

"Ethel," whispered Figgins, after a pause, "just say that—that you forgive me for being such a beast! I oughtn't to have left you for a single instant. I was a howling cad! Oh, Ethel, I'm so sorry!"

"I was to blame," said Ethel.
 "No, you weren't," said Figgins stoutly. "I was a rotter! I—I should never have imagined that I could be such an awful outsider! I ought to have been with you when it happened, but I wasn't. Oh, Ethel! It was my beastly temper! I—I don't know what was the matter with me. I'm so sorry, Ethel."

Ethel pressed her hand to his lips.
 "Don't!" she whispered. "I—I shall cry if you go on like that!"

Figgins looked alarmed.
 "I won't say another word," he said hastily. "Only I—I'm sorry, and I'm so disgusted with myself, Ethel! I wish somebody would punch my head. I'm an idiot and a brute! Oh, Ethel! But—but I say, wasn't it jolly lucky that I came with you, after all?"

Cousin Ethel pressed his hand.

When help came the injured passengers were taken to the nearest village to be cared for. The telegraph flashed the news of the accident to all corners of the Continent, and they flashed the news to England that Ethel and Figgins were safe, and Mrs. Quayle only slightly injured, and recovering. The news made a sensation at St. Jim's. For the papers told in full of the heroic conduct of the British boy—Mr. Fred Harris had given all details to the reporters, though Figgins himself would not say a word. The hero of the hour was the British boy who had risked his life to save a fainting lady and a girl—and that British boy was Figgins of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's—Figgins of the New House!

No wonder the New House fellows strutted in the old quad, with lofty pride.

All St. Jim's was looking forward to the return of Figgins. Dr. Holmes, who had been intending to give Figgins the thrashing of his life for his wild escapade, was now looking forward to his return so that he could shake him by the hand, and congratulate him before the school—an ordeal to which Figgins would probably have preferred the caning he had escaped.

But it was some days before Figgins returned. He had obtained permission by wire to remain with Cousin Ethel and Mrs. Quayle until the latter lady was quite recovered and able to travel; and St. Jim's learned with satisfaction that the accident had made it necessary for her to return to her friends for their care, and that Cousin Ethel was returning with her. New arrangements would have to be made before Cousin Ethel was placed in Paris, and perhaps they never would be made. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy announced his intention of talking very seriously with his pater on that subject.

It was a great day for St. Jim's when Figgins came back.

He arrived by the afternoon train, and Dr. Holmes, in the fulness of his heart, gave the whole school a half-holiday on the great occasion. Half St. Jim's met Figgins at the station, and the moment the train came in there was a rush for his carriage. Tom Merry & Co. struggled for the honour of lifting him out, and carrying him on their shoulders out of the station.

"Chuck it!" roared Figgins, struggling out of their grasp.

"Don't play the giddy goat, you know! Chuck it!"

"Hurrah!" roared Kerr.

"Huwwah!" yelled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, tossing his silk hat into the air, careless of whether it ever came down or not. "Hip, hip, huwvah!"

"We've got a ripping feed ready for you, Figgy!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Bravo, Figgins!"

"See the conquering hero comes!" yelled Jack Blake.

Figgins turned crimson.

"Oh, chuck all that rot!" he said.

"Hurrah!"

"Give us your fist, Figgy!"

"Bravo!"

"I'll give you my fist in your eye if you don't shut up, you silly asses!" said Figgins. "I'm glad to be back. I—"

"Did you get anything decent to eat over there?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I remember," said Figgins. "I say, you chaps, Cousin Ethel isn't going to Paris after all. Mrs. Quayle is knocked up by the shock, and Ethel is going to stay with her to nurse her well again. And—and very likely she won't go abroad at all now. Mrs. Quayle won't be able to go with her—and she doesn't want to go! Isn't it ripping?"

"Yaas, wathah! Wegulah wippin', deah boy! I was goin' to tell my governah—"

"Good old Figgins!"

And in the midst of a wild and enthusiastic crowd Figgins was marched to the school. And on the School House steps Dr. Holmes and the masters stood ready to receive him in state. Figgins would gladly have dodged into the New House and escaped, but there was no help for it. The cheering crowd brought him up shoulder-high to where the Head of St. Jim's stood, and Dr. Holmes shook hands with Figgins in sight of the whole cheering school.

"Figgins," said the Head, "you did very wrong in going away without leave. But in view of the circumstances, I shall overlook that, but it must never occur again. I am proud to shake you by the hand, my boy—I am proud to have you among my boys at this school. And I am sure that all your schoolfellows are as proud of you as I am!"

And the yell that all St. Jim's gave showed that the Head was quite right.

THE END.

Next Thursday.

"GUSSY'S CANADIAN COUSIN!"

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD,**

—the most amusing, long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co., and their rivals at St. Jim's, ever published. Full of screamingly funny incidents. Do not miss reading it!

Order your copy of 'The Gem' Library in advance.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

OUR GRAND SERIAL STORY.

WINGS OF GOLD!

The Story of the Most Terrible and Amazing Journey Ever Made By Man.

Edited from the Notes of Maurice Fordham, Esq.

By SIDNEY DREW.

CHARACTERS IN THIS GRAND STORY.

MAURICE FORDHAM and **LANCE MORTON**—Two healthy and wealthy young Britons, owners of the yacht *Foamwitch*, and the wonderful aeronef, *Wings of Gold*.

PROFESSOR LUDWIG VON HAAGEL—The famous German scientist, also noted for his clumsiness.

CROOKS—The ship's cook.

JOSEPH JACKSON or **SHOREDITCH JOSE**—A Cockney member of the crew, whose constant companion is a game bantam named the *Smacker*.

TEDDY MORGAN—Ship's engineer.

WILLIAM TOOTER—The hairy first mate.

The *Foamwitch* is on an expedition with the object of exploring the strange land which is believed to lie beyond the barrier of eternal ice near the South Pole.

As soon as the first land is reached the construction of the aeronef, *Wings of Gold*—which has been carried in pieces on the *Foamwitch*—is proceeded with, and in it begins a wonderful voyage into the heart of the Antarctic.

Fearful creatures, thought to be extinct since prehistoric times, are encountered when the adventurers reach a mysterious mountain country never before trodden by the foot of civilised man.

Once the aeronef is wrecked; but, by dint of much in-

genuity and hard work, is repaired, and her head is turned towards the North. A terrific wind, however, springs up, and *Wings of Gold* is forced through a ravine in the mountains, and the crew find themselves flying over a large inland lake, surrounded by the vast, unknown mountains. They encounter such fearful creatures here that they decide to go back and return to the *Foamwitch*; but investigation reveals that the ravine is now blocked up, and they are prisoners in that vast enclosure.

Their tinned provisions have all gone bad, and the adventurers are in a bad case, when, cruising gently along, they come upon first an isolated human being, a jet-black giant nine feet high, and then upon a whole city, which they name the *City of Triangles* from the way it is laid out. Suspicious at first, the race of black giants and their king soon become well-disposed towards *Wings of Gold*, Crooks particularly making a great impression. A native servant is given to him, and is at once christened *Tarrytop*. The king of the giants, commonly known as *Big Ben*, arranges a game-drive on a colossal scale. At early dawn dark masses move out from the city towards the forests, while "*Wings of Gold*" hovers ahead. Lance, Maurice, Von Haagel, and Crooks land to join in the hunt, the latter promising Morgan to "shoot him two ikky-what-is-ems for supper."

(Now go on with the story.)

Big Game!

Big Ben laughed when they scrambled up beside him. All along the cutting spears were flashing. Lance raised his binoculars. The clamour was much louder. He could just make out the stems of the towering trees. The moon from where they stood seemed to be resting on one of the peaks like a lamp. A few weird shapes circled high in the air. They looked like bats, but he knew they were huge winged lizards. Then there was a shriek, and Von Haagel went rolling headlong down the sandhill into the cutting.

"Hurt, dad?"

"Ach, no, dear boy; but der breath is out of me knocked!" sighed the professor's voice. "I choost save mine life dot time. I see der rascal come out of his hole. Shuf! Der terrible, terrible land!"

"It's a good job you've got no neck to break, daddy," said Lance, "or you'd have broken it five minutes after you were born. Let us dust you down. Are you certain you're not damaged?"

Von Haagel looked ruefully at his telescope. He had bent that almost double.

"Never mind," said Fordham. "It will come in handy for looking round corners. Let me knock the dust off you. If you will go playing with scorpions, you can't help getting into trouble. That's better!"

There was a crash of sound. Four men dashed forward and threw up sand and earth with their broad spear-heads. In three or four minutes they had erected a barricade, forming loopholes by inserting stones. The king pointed to the loopholes.

"We can see, and without scaring the beggars when they begin to arrive," said Lance. "You come next to me, dad, for you haven't got a gun—Hallo!"

"See anything, old chap?"

Lance did. Something vast, huge, and lighter in colour than the background of stems, had moved out of the forest.

"Big game!" he said quickly. "It's a mastadon!"

"Phew!"

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The brute trumpeted loudly.

"Pull up your socks! Why not?" growled Crooks. "The circus is coming!"

More of the monsters trumpeted. Louder and shriller and nearer swelled the clamour of the beaters. Then Lance saw a dozen shapes looming against the background of ebony. The mammoths broke into a heavy lumbering gallop that seemed to shake the very earth.

"They're heading straight for us!" said Lance.

In his excitement, Von Haagel tried to look through his telescope. The warriors never stirred. Thud, thud, thud, thud! pounded the great, elephantine feet, with a faster reverberation. Then the brutes swerved. There was a scurry in the cutting as the warriors darted right and left. The mountainous brutes dashed over the hill and pounded away.

"Where are they—where are they?" gasped the professor.

The lens of his telescope was pointed at the moon. Crooks laughed.

"There was a man in the moon," he remarked, "but there was no elephants. Why not?"

"Haw, haw!" laughed his Majesty.

The mastadons, being vegetable feeders, were not fierce. Evidently they were not what the warriors required, for they had been allowed to pass. In any case, could the puny spears, axes, and arrows have slain them?

The beaters were closing in.

Lance was staring through his glasses.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "What's this?"

"What's what?"

"Look for yourself, old chap. Blessed if I can make it out. It's just in the corner on the left."

Another terrible denizen of the forest had been scared from his dark haunt by the uproar. Huge, shadowy, and shapeless, it slid away along the edge. Maurice got a good view of it for an instant. It was like a crocodile, with the neck of a giraffe. Then it emerged boldly into the moonlight and gave a roar.

"What is it, dad?"

Maurice handed the professor the binoculars. Von Haigel rolled and sprang erect.

"It's der dinosaur!" he shouted. "Sublime, vunderful, and glorious! Der great dinosaur! Ach, look, dear lads—look! Again I am right! Oh, suplime! Is he not more than fifty feet? I have said always dot der dinosaur was more than fifty feet. Look and dell me! Oh, glorious!"

The awful nightmare horror, dreadful in its hugeness, and hideous in its ugliness, could not have been less than sixty feet in length. Once more the warriors scattered. There was a thunder as it rushed up, and then, like a sick man's phantom, it was past and gone.

"Was that good eating? Why not?" inquired the incorrigible cook.

Then came another herd of mastodons. Von Haigel never ran harder in his life. As they pounded up the slope, the king stood erect. A lean figure bounded up beside him—the cook. Snorting and trumpeting, the herd came on, making the earth. They split asunder. Big Ben dashed the bar of his axe in the ribs of one. The storm of dust assailed. King and cook were still standing there, unshaken.

"Shake!" grinned the cook, "and feel my pulse! Why not?"

"Haw, haw!" said the smiling giant.

The warriors laughed again. The cook's calmness and cool had added to his reputation. Bows and arrows were loosed. A roar like the thunder of angry surf rolled out from the forest, and was suddenly silenced.

Not a man stirred. The acronef showed no lights. It was the hush that precedes the gale. Von Haigel snorted and snuffed violently, for after his run he was very much out of breath. A little later, Crooks struck a match on the leg of his trousers to light a clay pipe.

"The dog-apes!" said Lance tensely. "One—two—five of them!"

They broke from cover and advanced slowly, as if a little alarmed. Once or twice they seemed inclined to head back; but they changed their minds. They came nearer and nearer, and then the foremost stopped and howled.

"Scented us!" said Maurice.

The king bent his bow till the barb of a five-foot arrow touched the wood. They saw the shaft go like a grey shadow. There was a hideous yell from the wounded brute. The dog-ape, at least, was fearless and ferocious. For a minute it was chaos of twanging bows, flying spears and sand shrieks, snarls, human cries.

"My stars!" said Maurice, dropping his smoking rifle. "We've wiped 'em out! Anybody damaged?"

They were carrying three men away. Two were dead, the other wounded.

"Where's the professor?" shouted Lance, startled.

"There was a bootsole," growled Crooks, glaring at the sand. "Sometimes there was feet in boots. Why—huh!"

Mr. Crooks had put his nose too close to the mysterious hole that protruded from the sand. There was undoubtedly a foot in the boot, and a leg behind the boot. With his eye full of tears, Crooks held his nose. He had been too sensitive. A very fat calf, clad in grey trousers and a striped sock, waded and wiggled in the morning light.

"If he hasn't strangled or suffocated himself this time, he'll lie decently in bed," said Maurice.

They seraped the learned man out. How he had buried himself was a mystery. When unearthed he still had his telescope—or the wreck of it.

He was looking for worms, to go a-fishing!" said the cook with a groan. "It was unkind to tread on my poor nose! Noses do not grow on trees! Why not? Because they was not fruit or nuts. Oh, dear—oh, dear! I shall not take the prize at the beauty show now!"

"Shaf, I am glad!" said Von Haigel, his face beaming again. "You are of poking in your nose too fond. It will be to you a lesson dot if you—"

His voice was drowned by a sudden din. The next instant the white men saw a sight which they never forgot.

A Right Royal Hunt—How Crooks Makes Tarrytop Wash Himself, and How His Action nearly ends in a Hideous Tragedy.

The valley was alive, surging, teeming, boiling with animals.

This was a game country, indeed. They stared in utter wonder. The animals were mostly deer, but here and there a mammoth towered above them. Then a semi-circle of fire went out of the forest. The army of bearers had done their work. Five thousand torches glowed luridly, lighting up the valley.

"Wonderful!" said Lance.

He had little chance to say more. On swept the deer, terrified by the yellow and whirling torches. The living wall struck the hill, and surged over it to meet a wall of steel.

They had soon had enough of it. It was butchery.

"I'm going aboard, Morry," said Lance. "This slaughter is sickening."

"I'm about tired of it, too," said Fordham. "Come on, dad!"

They turned away. Teddy Morgan, Tooter, and Jackson were too deeply interested to notice them at first. At one spot the maddened deer had managed to break the line, and thousands of them had escaped. At length Morgan sank Wings of Gold.

"It's just over," he said; "and, by thunder, it was a real hunt! They got enough meat to last 'em six months."

"Unless they play the same silly trick as the Redskins used to play, Teddy—kill a buffalo for its tongue, and waste the rest!"

"I don't think Benjamin is fool enough," said Maurice.

The warriors were collecting the victims. It was probably the most successful deer drive ever known. The carcasses were laid in rows. Wings of Gold sailed forward. The warriors and beaters formed up and saluted her with a clash of spears and a wave of torches.

"M'yes!" said Lance thoughtfully. "It's very fine, but a bit too much of a good thing."

And all of them agreed with him.

"Shaf! Der city will be like ein butcher's shop to-morrow," said Von Haigel. "Everybody will be cutting up der deer to salt and smoke. Ach! It will be one great butcher's shop!"

"All the more reason for us to be out of it," said the engineer.

"Why wait for morning at all?" growled the cook. "There was meat, and we 'as 'ands. Why not?"

Morgan nodded. A few minutes later the cook was selecting a few of the best carcasses. Willing helpers soon had them on board, and in the store-room.

"We needn't say good-bye," said Maurice. "We'll have to see them again, and bring Tarrytop back. Jump up, dad!"

As the acronef rose they gave a cheer. The natives answered by a yell and a clash of spears. Crooks leaned over the rail to blow a kiss to the king. They rode above the City of Triangles, and Morgan steered the vessel to the great ravine.

Was there no passage through these mighty walls?

At dawn Morgan scanned the peaks eagerly. It was slightly misty. He saw nothing except the piled-up masses, the dark green of the forest below, and the dull browns and greys, and above them the dazzling snow. Wings of Gold had again crossed the lake. Tooter's voice roaring "Tumble up! Tumble up!" roused the sleepers. With a yawn and a lazy stretch Tooter got out of bed.

"William," he said, as Mr. Tooter appeared, "your voice wants sand-papery and oilin' bad. I should call on the carpenter to look at—"

"Don't you worry about my voice," said Mr. Tooter. "You let voices alone and make coffee!"

Crooks winked, and tramped away to the water-tank. Presently he was using soap and towel vigorously on deck.

"I 'opes you slept comfortable, Teddy," he remarked, with a grin.

"I could do with a sleep now, anyhow," said Teddy Morgan. "It's lazing about that tires a chap, and we've been taking it a sight too easy of late."

"Don't worry! I'll hustle 'em up. Why not?"

When Morgan had gone for his spell below, Crooks took a long look round. There was a big canoe about a mile away. Crooks guessed that it contained fishermen. There was little else of interest. The glass was steady, and though it was rather too warm, a better morning could not have been wished for.

"Hi, you black image! Haw, Tarrytop!" shouted the cook.

"Yissir, yissir!" squeaked a voice, and the cook's slave bobbed up the ladder.

"Sluice down!" said Mr. Crooks.

Tarrytop's smile faded a little. He did not like the sluicing down process.

"Now, get to it!" said the cook. "Where's the soap I gave you? Why not?"

Sighing mournfully, Tarrytop pointed to his mouth, and patted his stomach.

"What?" roared the one-eyed man. "You've eaten it?"

"Yissir," said the fat native.

"Bill," called Crooks, "come along 'ere! You see it? Why not?" Mr. Tooter nodded. "Look at it well! Why not? Yesterday I gave it a pound bar of soap. He has eaten it. Haw, haw! That was fine conduct. That was a

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fine way to start out in life. He 'as eaten the soap. 'Ear, Jackson?"

Little Jackson stared in amaze at the gentleman with the curious appetite.

"His tastes is queer, not 'arf!" he said, at last.

"He has got to be cured," growled the cook. "Why not? He was fonder of eatin' soap than he was of washing. It was a disgustin' 'abit! Willie, ge' me another bar, and I will leave you a lock of my back 'air in my will. Haw, haw!"

Mr. Crooks took off his belt, and Tarrytop moaned. The soap was brought, the bucket of water was placed on the grating, and Jackson was left to see the washing properly carried out.

"Nah git to it," said Jackson, "or I'll chase yer abart in no time!"

Tarrytop very dejectedly began to lather his arms and hands. Once he managed to take a big bite out of the soap unseem. He did not eat it because he relished the flavour, but he had a vague idea that the supply would soon run out, and that the more he ate the sooner that happy time would come.

Jackson smoked and whistled. Higher and whiter rose the lather.

"Put yer head into it; it won't bite!" he said.

"Yissir!" groaned Tarrytop.

He did. Gripping the sides of the pail he very gingerly ducked his scalp. The bantam was in the wheelhouse. It strutted out, and crossed the deck. It became very interested in Tarrytop's little toe. Tarrytop had had the misfortune to let a saucy drop on his foot, and that particular toe was agonisingly painful. The bantam did not mind. Drawing back its neck it brought down its beak once, and that once was ample.

There was a smothered yell. For an instant Tarrytop stood on his head in the pail. Then he turned clean over, planting both his feet in Jackson's back. A deluge of soapy water and a bar of soap poured down the ladder, and a voice from below yelled:

"Himmel! Spa! I am—dunder! What haf—choo! Teufel of ein plackguard! Help!"

"There was somebody out without an umbrella. Why not?" said the cook.

He was perfectly accurate in his statement. The tripod of a camera on which was impaled the piece of soap was the first object to arrive. The next object was Von Haagel himself, soaked, dripping, and wrathful. Jackson, quite winded, sat on the deck, trying to recover his breath. Tarrytop was on his hands and knees coughing and spluttering.

"Who—shah! A-a-a-ah! Ach! Who do dot?" roared the professor. "Tell we who do—"

Then his foot slipped on a greasy step. The slip made him shoot the tripod forward. Poor Jackson had his mouth wide open. The soap went into it. Another violent effort of the professor's to keep his equilibrium twisted the tripod round, and placed the soap into the whiskers of Mr. Tooter, who was laughing uproariously.

He stopped laughing—that is, the soap stopped him.

The plucky professor made a third attempt to save himself from falling. On this occasion the tripod fairly buzzed through the air. The soap parted company with it, and Crooks, who was absolutely staggering with laughter, which had filled his solitary eye with tears, received the bar on his left ear.

The whole affair did not last a second. Von Haagel by a miracle did not fall. Jackson roared, Tooter coughed, Mr. Crooks had his mirth suddenly silenced, and after one long triumphant crow, the bantam gave Tarrytop another dig with his toe.

"Wa-a-ah!" shrieked the native, nearly jumping out of his skin.

Von Haagel had managed to get the soapy water out of his eyes. He saw Tarrytop brandishing the tripod as if to strike him. The native only meant evil towards the bantam.

"Ach, villain, you would strike me, hein?" roared Von Haagel. "Take dot—und dot!"

A blow on the ribs made the luckless native roar. The professor was tremendously excited. He snatched up the weapon.

Tarrytop did not wait; he dashed off.

"Whoa!" shouted Mr. Crooks. "Stop!"

Tarrytop took no notice.

"Stop!" yelled Crooks, taking aim with the soap.

It was a poor shot. The bar struck one of the uprights. The soap, which had been badly treated, was getting soft. It flattened out and broke into two weird pieces, thin and jagged in shape, one of which wrapped itself over the back of the professor's head, while the other spread itself over Tooter's face.

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FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEEZE!

is the title of the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

Tarrytop took the thirty feet dive over the stern rail, and plunged into the lake.

In a moment the cook was himself again. He darted to the levers.

"Man overboard! Man overboard!"

He had a voice like a foghorn. Lance and Maurice leapt up the ladder. Tooter peeled the mask from his face, and seized a coil of rope.

"Who is it?" gasped Lance.

"Only the nigger, sir. He'll be all right. Why not?"

"There he is!"

The native rose to the surface. He was a good swimmer. The aeronef dropped over him.

"Catch!" shouted Tooter.

The rope spun down. Tarrytop seized it. Then he uttered a cry so full of horror and warning that Jackson almost went overboard. Tarrytop tossed away the rope, and began to swim for his life.

"Crooks, we're done! Raise her!"

There was almost the same terror in Lance's voice. All looked round. A great yellow, dripping, rope-like thing cowered for an instant high above the suspensory screws.

Then came another—a third—a fourth—while they stood paralysed with dread.

"I can't shift her! Done!" cried Crooks.

The screws were shrieking, but the vessel did not rise. Crooks dashed Tooter away, and closed the slide just in time. A wave, that otherwise would have poured tons of water into her, roared knee-deep over the deck. Another of those yellow, horrifying ropes dropped down, and they heard one word from the professor's white lips.

"Octopus!"

"Axes! Axes!"

It was Crooks again. Up washed a second wave. Those ghastly ropes hung over the rail, and sagged down in the centre to grip the deck. They quivered and swelled, thinned and swelled again. The body of the awful monster was hideous, but he had the vessel in his terrible clutch, and was sucking her down.

"Axes! Axes!"

Crooks was at work already. He slashed with all his strength, and cut through one of the tentacles. The thing lashed up like a great serpent, flinging Crooks off his feet, and there was a sickly odour of musk.

He was up again.

"Axes! Axes! Cut 'em away!"

Lance found an axe. There were no more on deck. In vain the screws whirred and spun and shrieked. Then the slide was shot back, and Teddy Morgan leapt out. Again a yellow rope, studded with enormous suckers, rose out of the water and fell across the deck.

The aeronef was struggling like a water-bird in the clutch of a voracious fish, but her struggles were of no avail. Crooks, fighting like a demon, remembered that the galley portholes were open, and that Wings of Gold was shipping water at every plunge. She dipped lower. It was all over.

The airship now lay on the surface of the water. Suddenly four canoes crowded with men dashed up.

And then black figures came bounding over the rails, hacking and slashing with double-edged spears.

Hercules and Big Ben were foremost among the natives, the former wielding his great axe like a giant, the latter showing little less prowess with his spear, which he held close to the blade. The yellow ropes were hard, but one by one they were slashed through, and, with a jerk, Wings of Gold tore herself free and darted upwards. Morgan's fingers tightened on a lever, and the upward flight of the airship was stopped when she was a couple of hundred feet above the water.

Lance and Fordham shook Big Ben eagerly by the hand, and the natives fully seemed to understand the significance of the act.

"Why not?" Big Ben grunted, a wide smile showing all his teeth.

"Blow me if 'e ain't 'it my sentiments to a capital tee!" Jackson grinned. "Why not? Strike it, but it ain't 'arf—"

"Reckon they're trying to strike a bargain in return, sir," Teddy Morgan remarked, leaving his levers for a bit. "Look at the whole lot of them waving their arms and making faces!"

"You're right!" answered Lance.

He looked at the score of natives on deck. Every man of them, including the two chiefs, was pointing away to the City of Triangles.

"I'll be hanged if I see what they're at!" Fordham said.

"What do you think of it, dad?"

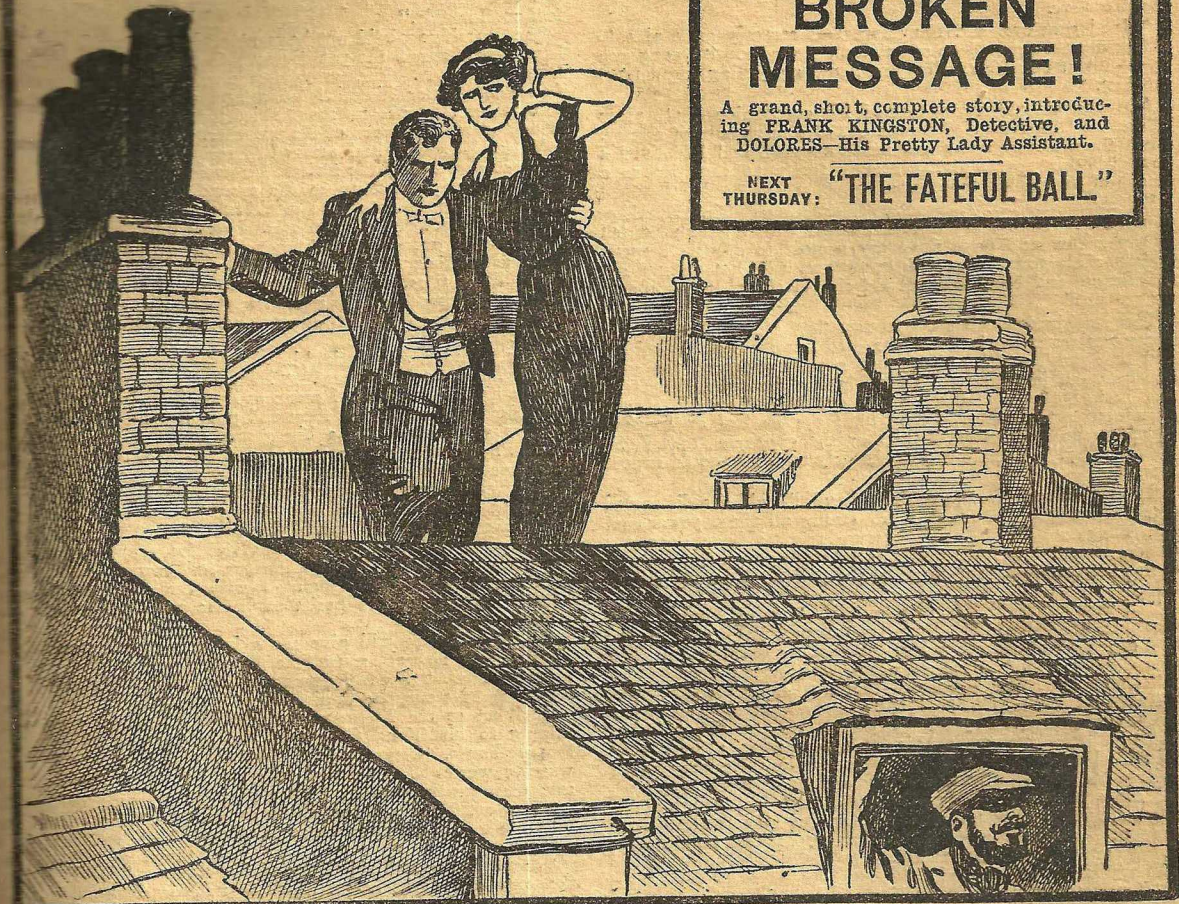
"How should I to them speak?" Von Haagel answered, in despair. "They're not of a Deutch of England."

(Another exciting instalment of this story next Thursday.)

THE BROKEN MESSAGE!

A grand, short, complete story, introducing FRANK KINGSTON, Detective, and DOLORES—His Pretty Lady Assistant.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE FATEFUL BALL."



CHAPTER 1.

The Telephone Call—The Strange Cry—At the Offices of Mr. Roger Burrige,

B UZZ-Z-Z-Z-Z!
 The telephone-bell rang sharply, and Frank Kingston, who had been writing at his desk, laid down his pen and placed the receiver of the instrument to his ear. The time was about six o'clock in the evening, and the May sun shone slantingly in at the window.
 "Hallo!" exclaimed the famous detective. "Who is that?"
 "Yes, I am Frank Kingston! Eh? I beg your pardon!"
 "Come at once!" exclaimed a hoarse voice over the wires.
 "For Heaven's sake, come—at—once!"
 "Calm yourself!" said Kingston firmly. "Kindly explain—"
 "I cannot! There is no time! I am Mr. Rog—"
 The speaker's voice suddenly broke off, and a cry of pain came quivering over the telephone-wires. Frank Kingston didn't move a muscle, but sat at his desk still holding the receiver to his ear.
 "Hallo!" he cried. "Hallo!"
 But it was useless. The detective could tell that the receiver at the other end had not been replaced, and, to say the least, it was significant. That strange cry could only have come from a man who had been either violently startled or knocked on the head.
 Kingston did not waste any time.
 In five seconds he was talking to the girl at the exchange.
 "That you, exchange?" he inquired quickly. "No; I don't want a number, miss. Can you tell me who that man was that was just speaking to me? An accident has evidently happened at his end, for he could not even tell me his name. What was his number?"
 There was a moment's silence.

"Seven-five-double-eight-four East Central!" said the exchange girl.
 "Thank you, miss!"
 Kingston jerked the receiver on to the instrument and rapidly looked up the number in his directory; 75884 East Central proved to be Mr. Robert Burrige, stockbroker, of Throgmorton Street.
 "That's the man, sure enough," Kingston told himself. "This affair looks just a little fishy. When Mr. Burrige was speaking to me he was panting as though he had just finished a mile race. The most obvious deduction is that he had been engaged in a struggle with someone else."
 He crossed the room, and less than a minute later was stepping into a taxi outside. The traffic happened to be somewhat slack, and the little vehicle made good time. It pulled up outside the offices of Mr. Roger Burrige, stockbroker, and Kingston entered the hall of the building. Mr. Burrige's rooms were on the first floor, and the detective paused before a glass-topped door on which the stockbroker's name was painted.
 All the other offices were deserted, and not a sound could be heard in the building, except the hallkeeper below, who was whistling softly to himself. Kingston tapped on the door, and, receiving no answer, turned the handle. The door opened, admitting the detective into a rather bare office.
 He looked round with a quick, comprehensive glance, then strode across the office to a door on the other side. At one time there had evidently been one large room, but now half was partitioned off, providing an inner office. This door, too, was unlocked, and the next moment Kingston murmured an exclamation.
 There, lying on the floor of the inner office, was the body of an elderly, grey-haired man, and an ominous stain showed itself on the white forehead.
 In two seconds Kingston was kneeling beside the unconscious man,

A brief examination told Kingston that no real harm was done. Mr. Roger Burrige was suffering from a blow on the top of the head, which had stunned him, and slightly cut the skin. A few drops of brandy worked wonders.

In five minutes the stockbroker was sitting in a chair facing the detective.

"Good gracious, Mr. Kingston, I—I scarcely seem able to collect my thoughts!" he exclaimed agitatedly. "I rang you up— But I had better let you know everything, right from the first."

And the stockbroker informed his companion that, years before, he had defrauded a man out of a large sum of money. Since then, however, he had made amends, and had lived a good life for years, giving money freely to charities as a means of easing his conscience.

"I mean it, Mr. Kingston!" exclaimed Mr. Burrige earnestly. "Before my Maker I swear that I have repented of my crime, and have done my utmost to atone. I speak plainly with you, because I know you will not betray my confidence, and because a scoundrelly blackmailer has me in his power!"

The stockbroker went on to say that at the time of his crime one man, Lewis Tressimer, had known of it. Burrige had thought Tressimer dead, but now it appeared the man had been out in America. Lately he had arrived in England, and had, by pure chance, found out that Burrige was a prominent stockbroker. Being hard up, he had approached Burrige and threatened him with exposure unless he "dubbed up." Tressimer was the only man who could expose Burrige.

"I'm absolutely in the ruffian's hands!" said the distracted man helplessly. "I admit I did wrong all those years ago, Mr. Kingston, but I don't deserve this. I have done my utmost to make up for my slip, and I want your help, because it was impossible for me to go to the police. You will realise that."

"Of course," said Kingston quietly, "and I know you're speaking sincerely, Mr. Burrige. I will help you to the best of my ability to rid you of this rascally blackmailer. But please tell me what happened when you rang me up."

"Thank you, Mr. Kingston—thank you!" cried the other. "But you ask— Oh, yes! At about a quarter to six, when the offices were empty, and I myself was on the point of leaving, Tressimer walked in and demanded a bundle of valuable bonds which I had in my possession. He had already written me to say he wanted them, and, to be brief, I refused, and he attacked me. We struggled, and, by chance, Tressimer slipped and caught his head against the fender. In a moment I was at the telephone, having decided on the spur of the moment, to ask your aid."

Frank Kingston nodded.

"Tressimer came to himself more quickly than you supposed?" he queried. "And sprang upon you while you were at the 'phone'?"

"Exactly—exactly! He delivered a severe blow, and I fell like a log. The next thing I remember is you bending over me. Tressimer, of course, has taken the bonds and made himself scarce. Mr. Kingston, I beg of you to do your utmost! The bonds are of extreme value, and I dare not say anything, for fear of Tressimer betraying me!"

"You are in an unfortunate position, Mr. Burrige," said Kingston quietly. "and I can—"

"Good heavens!"

The stockbroker felt in his pocket feverishly, and produced a bundle of papers. A moment's examination and then another exclamation burst from his lips.

"What is it?" asked the detective quickly.

"I—I—well, upon my soul!" gasped Mr. Burrige, in bewilderment and relief. "The—the scoundrel has not taken the bonds, after all! Ah, I realise what has happened! A bundle of bonds, exactly similar to these, were on my table, and Tressimer has taken them. By George, what luck—they're worth nothing!"

He looked through the papers again, and Kingston smiled at his very obvious relief and amazement. Mr. Burrige could hardly realise it—yet it was not at all surprising. In Tressimer's haste he could easily have taken the wrong bundle.

Suddenly the stockbroker looked serious.

He remembered that Tressimer would discover his mistake, and, in all probability, would come back for the genuine articles. So he asked Kingston to take charge of them until the blackmailer was laid by the heels. The detective readily consented.

"On the whole, I think it will be a wise plan," he remarked. "Tressimer will not guess that I have the papers, and I can run him to earth with very little trouble. I should advise you to hurry home, Mr. Burrige, immediately. I am going to a reception to-night, and shall keep these bonds

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 223.

on me the whole time. I do not think Tressimer will act until to-morrow."

"No, oh, no!" agreed the stockbroker. "Please do not upset your arrangements, Mr. Kingston. To you my trouble is but a trifle. While you have charge of the bonds I shall feel comfortable."

Mr. Burrige would not have uttered those words could he have seen through the partition which divided the inner office from the outer. For, crouching close against it, was Mr. Lewis Tressimer himself! He had overheard everything. The scoundrel made no more noise than a shadow, and even Kingston was unaware of his presence.

When Kingston had arrived Tressimer had been on the point of descending the stairs. On seeing the detective, however, he had darted up to the second floor and waited for the newcomer to enter the stockbroker's apartments. Then, with the silence of a mouse, he had crept into the outer office. The knowledge that he had taken the wrong bundle of papers came as a shock to him, and his face had worked with rage for a little time. Then Kingston stated his intention of keeping the bonds on his person while he was at a reception. Tressimer's rage cooled down, and he cautiously left the offices.

"By thunder, what luck!" he chuckled, as he walked briskly along Throgmorton Street. "Kingston's going to a reception to-night—eh? Well, I mean to have those papers—they're worth every cent of ten thousand pounds, and I think I can see my way clear. It's a big game, and I mean to play it out. Pity I made such a dashed silly mistake, though; would have saved a lot of trouble."

But Tressimer was a happy-go-lucky individual, and enjoyed anything risky and exciting. Therefore he wasn't exactly sorry that events had taken the turn they had. But the blackmailer had been out of England for years, and didn't know the reputation Frank Kingston had earned for himself. Had he been better acquainted with the great detective's history he might have hesitated before proceeding with his scheme.

"Teddy Clegge will give me a hand in this," murmured Tressimer to himself, as he lit a cigarette and jumped aboard a motor-bus. "Ge! I guess that detective fellow will have a considerable surprise to-night!"

Arriving at the Elephant and Castle, Tressimer was soon talking to his friend Clegge in the back room of a dingy lodging-house. Clegge was a Yankee and didn't believe in wasting words. He listened to what his companion had to say, then neatly lowered a dose of whisky.

"I'm on, Tress, old pard!" he exclaimed heartily.

"You'll help me right through with it?"

"Sure!"

"Good for you, Teddy!" cried Tressimer. "We'll fix up the details straight away. There's nothing like being prepared in advance for a job of this kind. What do you say?"

"Good enough, Tress—let's get to it!"

CHAPTER 2.

At the Reception—Kingston and Dolores Leave—In the Old House at Stepany.

"REALLY, Frank, it is getting late," said Miss Kathleen O'Brien, as she sat in a quiet corner at Sir Thomas Inchcombe's Grosvenor Square mansion. Frank Kingston, her fiance, was by her side. The reception was a brilliant affair, and both Kingston and Dolores had enjoyed themselves.

"Yes," he replied, glancing at his watch, "and several people are already preparing to depart. Fraser ought to be outside with the car in five or ten minutes. For myself, I shall be quite ready to be off home."

Both the detective and Dolores were in evening-dress, and the girl had never looked more beautiful than she did to-night. It is scarcely to be wondered that very many glances were turned in her direction—glances of admiration for her, and glances of envy directed at Frank Kingston.

Five minutes later, just as they were thinking of departing, a footman approached Kingston. In his hand he held a tray.

"Letter for you, sir," he said.

Kingston took it, and saw that it was marked "Urgent," and had been brought by hand. He tore the flap open, and read the few words which were written on a sheet of note-book paper.

"Can you come at once to No. 24, Mountney Lane, Stepany? That scoundrel Tressimer has managed to get me here, and now he threatens me with— Someone coming! Shall throw this out of the window.—BURRIDGE."

Kingston re-read the little note with a thoughtful frown.

"Now, I wonder if it's a fake?" he asked himself. Still,

I don't see how it can be. Tressimer doesn't know I'm here, and he doesn't know that Burrige knows I am here. Therefore— Yes, I think I had better run over to Stepney. If the scoundrel has really got Burrige, things might go pretty hard with him."

The detective, of course, was totally unaware that Tressimer had overheard his conversation with the stock-broker. He questioned the footman, and learned that a small boy had brought the note.

Dolores, who already knew about the bonds which Kingston had in his pocket, was curious to know what the note meant. Kingston explained, and the girl immediately stated her intention of accompanying her lover to Stepney. "No, Dolores," said Kingston quickly. "I shall take you home now, first."

The detective had half an idea that the note was a decoy—he suspected trickery somewhere, and did not like the idea of Dolores running into danger. If the note was faked, then it would be a good opportunity of having an argument with Tressimer.

"Oh, but, Frank—"
 "There's danger, dear, and—"
 "Danger!" echoed Dolores lightly. "I should just love to go with you! Just fancy talking of danger!" She laughed. "Why, when I'm with you, Frank, I feel as safe as possible!"

Dolores would not be denied, and at the expiration of three minutes both she and Kingston were seated in the big Rolls-Royce landaulette, rapidly being driven to No. 24, Mountney Lane, Stepney. Kingston was by now almost sure that the note was simply a ruse of Tressimer's to trap him. The detective laughed softly at the idea.

The car came to a halt about half a mile from the house. Kingston stepped out of the car, and closed the door, leaving Dolores inside. The street was deserted, for the hour was late—or, rather, early—and the lamp-posts were surmounted by lights which did not afford much illumination.

"Now, you remain here, Dolores, for twenty minutes," said Kingston, buttoning his overcoat over his evening-dress. "If, at the end of that time, I haven't returned, you'll know that something is wrong."

"I shall call some policemen, and force an entrance to the house," declared Dolores. "But what are you going to do now, Frank?"

"I was thinking of getting into the back-yard of No. 24—provided it possesses a back-yard—and entering the house by way of a window. I shall then be able to explore at my leisure. Don't you worry, little girlie; I shall be all right."

Frank Kingston walked off briskly. He looked upon the whole matter as a trifle, which could be dealt with without much trouble. He had interviewed Sir Nigel Kane, the Chief Commissioner of Scotland Yard, earlier in the evening, and now carried a warrant for Tressimer's arrest. Kingston found that Mr. Burrige would be quite safe, even if Tressimer "blabbed"; that so many years had now passed that the blackmailer's knowledge was useless. Nobody would have believed his story.

"The scoundrel has been playing upon Burrige's fears," Kingston told himself. "This warrant I have in my pocket will cause him to see things in a different light."

He walked on swiftly.
 Meanwhile Dolores sat in the car, waiting. She didn't much care for the inactivity, but she had been given something to do, and was satisfied. If, at the end of twenty minutes, Kingston didn't appear, she was to call the police.

Suddenly there was a sound of running footsteps, and a man appeared against the Rolls-Royce.

"I say, mate!" he gasped to Fraser. The latter stepped into the road, then, like a flash, the newcomer's arm was raised, and Fraser dropped to the ground, momentarily stunned. With the same swiftness, the assailant—it was Clegge—wrenched open the side door of the landaulette.

Dolores had seen what had happened, and in a second her little revolver was ready.

"Stand back!" she cried.
 "Put that down, or—"
 Clegge made as if to clamber into the car.
 Dolores pulled the trigger.
 Crack!

A tiny puff of smoke rose, and Clegge gave vent to a wild yell. The bullet had lodged itself in his left arm. He staggered back, roaring with agony, then realised that it was quite time for him to make himself scarce. He made as if to run.

But Fraser had come to himself, and the faithful chauffeur threw himself at the injured scoundrel.

"Keep him until a policeman comes, Fraser," exclaimed Dolores, stepping quickly to the ground. She could see a form in the distance, and knew that Fraser would soon have

assistance. In a moment she was in the driving-seat of the car, and the clutch slid in.

The motor hummed over the ground rapidly, Dolores driving with perfect ease. It pulled up outside the house—a dingy building in a still dingier street. In the front patch of "garden" were several boards to say that the house was to let.

Dolores leapt lightly to the pavement, and opened the rusty gate. Up the steps she went, and cautiously tried the handle of the door. She had intended whistling for the police, but she wanted to ascertain if any commotion was going on first. To her surprise, the door opened and she found herself looking into a dark hall.

Then a hand reached out, and the girl was jerked forward. She uttered a little cry, but the next second the door was slammed, and Tressimer swore savagely under his breath. He had sent the note to Kingston, of course, and had lurked near the empty house until the detective came along. The scoundrel had had no inkling of Dolores being with him. He had followed Kingston, and had seen him clamber over the wall into the back-yard. Tressimer had then immediately entered the house from the front. Next thing he heard was the car stopping, and, seeing Dolores entering the gate, he had prepared himself.

"Got you!" he snarled, and the ominous barrel of a revolver was placed near her face. Tressimer wore a false beard, and a small mask obscured the upper portion of his face.

"Upstairs!" he ordered harshly, and Dolores, just a little startled, could do nothing but comply. But the knowledge that Kingston was near was very comforting. An idea had just entered Tressimer's head, and he came to a halt at the top of the stairs, where the light of a street-lamp streamed in from the landing window.

"Now, then," he shouted, "I'm going to make you—"
 Before he could say any more a form appeared below, and Frank Kingston placed his foot on the bottom stair. Tressimer had shouted especially to bring the detective.

"Stop!" he commanded. "My revolver is close against this young lady's head, and if you attempt to come upstairs I shall shoot!"

"You scoundrel!"

"Very likely," said Tressimer, recovering his coolness. "Now, throw that bundle of bonds you have on the floor! Do you hear me, Mr. Frank Kingston? I give you five seconds, then again I shall be forced—"

Kingston produced the bonds, and dropped them on the floor.

"Now your revolver!"
 Kingston dropped his weapon. Tressimer certainly had the upper hand for the time being. Dolores' position was far from pleasant, for the heavy weapon was held so that its cold barrel was almost touching her cheek.

"That's right!" chuckled Tressimer, delighted with the success of his ruse.

"I must now request you to come upstairs, pass me, and continue until you arrive at the attic. And don't try any tricks, for this revolver will go off if you start monkeyin' around!"

In a few moments Kingston was at the top of the house. The scoundrel released his hold on Dolores, and ordered her to join Kingston.

"There's a skylight up there," he chuckled. "You can escape by the roof."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Kingston under his breath.

He turned quickly, and stepped into a little room. Here a short staircase led out on to the leads. Kingston's composure had not left him for a minute; he still looked upon the whole affair as trivial. In less than a minute he was on the roof, and Dolores was by his side. Tressimer had followed them up, and now he slammed the heavy door of the top room, and turned the key in the lock.

"You're dished nicely!" he murmured.

But Kingston and Dolores had walked across the leads for a few paces, and now they could see below, into the street. Tressimer stood for a moment looking out of the attic window, and a snarling oath left his lips as he saw Fraser, with two policemen, hurrying towards the house.

"Here!" Kingston called. "You'll find your man inside!"

"My goodness!" gasped one of the constables.
 "One of you go round the back," ordered Kingston sharply. "I'll guard the skylight."

In this manner Tressimer was trapped like a rat.
 "A tame affair, sir," said one of the constables.

"Yes, officer," murmured Kingston, as he descended the stairs with Dolores. "Ah, there are the bonds, lying on the floor, together with my revolver. Well, Mr. Burrige, you will have an early caller to-morrow morning," added the great detective to himself. "I'll take your property round first thing."

THE END.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 223.

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Thursday.

"GUSSY'S CANADIAN COUSIN!"

By Martin Clifford,

is the title of next Thursday's amusing complete school tale of all agog over the coming of his relative from across the seas, but he—and all St. Jim's as well—receives a severe shock when the Colonial gentleman actually introduces himself, and the excitement is considerable. My readers will understand why when they read

"GUSSY'S CANADIAN COUSIN!"

in next week's issue of THE GEM Library. Please order this number in advance.

Straight Talk Upon a Vexed Question.

At the risk of reopening a vexed question, I propose to devote a short space to the question of the closed-down Correspondence Exchange, which recently formed a feature of the paper. The matter is still evidently agitating the minds of some of my readers, and I have had a number of letters, as I expected to have, upon the subject. A few readers have abused me roundly for my action in discontinuing the Exchange, while others have reproached me bitterly, and threatened to stop reading THE GEM Library if I did not immediately start the Exchange again. It is hardly necessary for me to state that I did not take the drastic step that has aroused my readers' ire without the most careful consideration and the most cogent reasons, and that being so, it is not likely that even the dire threats mentioned above will move me from my decision—a decision which I have already explained was the only possible one in the circumstances. For my chums' disappointment I am truly sorry, but I can only say that I am in no way to blame for it, and that all my honourable readers would have taken the same action as I did under similar circumstances. I am proud to say that in contrast to the angry letters mentioned above, many loyal readers have written to assure me of their confidence, realising, disappointed as they are, that I would never have discontinued so popular a feature as the Correspondence Exchange without the strongest possible reasons, and the earnest conviction that such action would prove ultimately to be in their best interests. Below I give the first part of one of these sensible, sympathetic letters, which is interesting for other reasons also. The letter is from E. L., of Sheffield.

"Dear Mr. Editor,—This is the first time I have had the pleasure of writing to you, although it is not the first time I have attempted to do so. I have been putting it off time after time, until now I feel so inspired by the tales now appearing in THE GEM and 'The Magnet' Libraries, that I must straightaway write while I have the opportunity to do so. As regards the closing of the Free Correspondence Exchange, I am afraid it will cause a great deal of disappointment, I myself being one of the disappointed, but in such a case I quite agree with you. You cannot do better than close the Exchange down. I have been a loyal reader of your Libraries, THE GEM and 'The Magnet,' for about a year, during which time I don't think I have missed one number—in fact, I could not rest without having them every week. I was employed at a shop where the assistant used to buy these Libraries. I once asked him to lend me a copy, which he did. Since then I have always been a reader. I think there is no nicer reading for anyone. I have only one friend, who one day chanced to pick up a GEM that I had been reading. 'Hallo!' he said. 'More blood and thunder, Billy?' 'Nothing of the kind,' I answered. 'Just read that one, and you will soon convince yourself of that.' He read it, and is now, I am pleased to say, a reader. The number happened to be that of 'The Schoolboy Nihilist,' and he said that the amusing puns made by Lowther and the joke played on Levison by Kerr made it more and more interesting. The

serial story, 'Wings of Gold,' and the Kingston detective story make THE GEM so interesting."

Thank you for your confidence and for a very interesting letter, William E. L. You say in a postscript that you hope to have the pleasure of writing me again. Please remember that the pleasure is mine, and that I shall be only too glad to hear from you at any time.

A Matter of Opinion.

"Nescio" (Newcastle).—No, "Nescio," I am afraid I cannot make a definite pronouncement on so controversial a subject as to who are the best six goalkeepers in the Southern League, even to settle your argument. Opinions upon such a point as this differ very widely, and any amount of argument cannot alter the fact that the solution of the question must remain a matter of opinion.

How to Rear Silkworms (continued from last week).

As stated last week, the silk cocoons should be removed from the conical paper bags about eight days after the silkworms commenced to spin. The cocoons should now be divided into two lots—i.e., those to be used for breeding purposes—which, of course, must not be interfered with—and those from which the silk is to be taken. In selecting the cocoons which are to come under the first heading—that is, for breeding—an equal number of male and female chrysalis should be chosen. As a general rule,

THE LARGER COCOONS

will be found to produce female moths, but it is impossible to be absolutely certain. The safest plan is to reserve a few more of the larger than the smaller cocoons, so as to be on the safe side. Each of the female moths will lay about three hundred eggs. Now, having put aside the cocoons for breeding purposes, the rest should be dropped for a moment or two in boiling water, in order to kill the chrysalis. They should then be transferred to a basin of warm water, heated to about seventy degrees, to soak. When soft, the coarse outer silk must be stripped from the cocoons, exposing the delicate silk within. The end of a good thread must be extracted from this, when the silk will be ready for the winder.

THE SILK-WINDER

can be bought from a toyshop, or can be made as follows: Procure two flat pieces of wood about eight inches long and a quarter of an inch wide, and fasten them to one another at the centres at right angles. Repeat this process with two more pieces of wood, so that you have two similar crosses. Then bore a hole through the centre of each cross, and connect them together with a piece of stout wire, so that they are parallel to one another, and about three inches apart. Now cut four smooth, flat pieces of wood about half as long as the spokes, and of similar width, and fasten them with glue from the end of the spoke of one cross to the corresponding spoke of the other. Next, in a flat piece of board fasten two upright pieces for supports, and bore holes through these to take the axle of the wheel, which should be capable of working freely. A roughly-made handle fitted to one end of the axle completes the spinning-wheel. Now for

THE ACTUAL SPINNING.

The thread from the inner cocoon should be fastened to one of the cross-pieces of the wheel, which is then turned steadily, so that the silk thread is wound off the cocoon on to the wheel. This operation requires some care, and the operator should move the cocoon about in the basin with his unoccupied hand as he winds, so that the thread changes its position on the reeler. As soon as one cocoon is used up another can be wound on to the reeler, until a large skein is formed, when the silk should be removed and drawn out into a loop, when it will be ready for use.

THE EDITOR.

5
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