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A COSY TEA PARTY.

COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS

A New and Interesting
Story for All.
— BY —
MARTIN CLIFFORD

Tom Merry and Co's Preparations.
WEALLY, Lowther—
gasped D'Arey.
"I've got no more handker-
chief," said Lowther. "I can't find
any, you frabjous duffer!"
Tom Merry, having finished dust-
ing, tossed the decidedly grimy hand-
kerchief back to its owner.
"There you are, Monty, my boy."
Lowther took the handkerchief, and
looked warlike; but as he saw the
end of a cambric handkerchief peep-
ing out of D'Arey's pocket, his frown
changed to a grin. He crept gently
and quietly behind the swell of St.
Jim's.
Tom Merry and Manners watched
him in silence.
Lowther suddenly seized the elegant
Forth-Former, and pulled him back
of the fender, upon the hearthrug.
D'Arey gave a yell, the toast went
in one direction, and the fork in
another.

"Ow! Weally—"
Lowther, quick as thought, jerked
D'Arey's handkerchief from his
pocket, and crammed the soiled one
in its place, and then dashed
D'Arey to his feet.
"Sorry, old man!" he said.
"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur
Augustus. "You uttah ass! You
frabjous duffah! I weally think I
ought to give you a feahful thwash-
in!"
The swell of St. Jim's had not the
slightest suspicion of the change
made in the handkerchiefs. He was
thinking only of his rumpled jacket
and his dusty trousers. He glared at
Lowther with great wrath.
"You uttah ass!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
D'Arey made a step towards the
humorist of the Shell. Monty
Lowther retreated through the door-
way, laughing.
"Here, don't forget that toast!"
exclaimed Manners, as D'Arey made
a movement to pursue Lowther down
the passage.
"Weally, Mannah—"

"You'll be late with it for tea."
"Oh, vevy well! I will give
Lowthah a feahful thwashin' anothah
time," said Arthur Augustus. And
he returned to his occupation.
The swell of St. Jim's made round
after round of toast. His face was
steadily growing to a beetroot colour
from the heat of a fire; but he
stuck manfully to his task, and the
pile of toast on the plate on the
fender grew and grew.
Meanwhile, Tom Merry and
Manners laid the cloth and set out
the crockery—rather a cracked and
varied array of crockery. Tom Merry
eyed it with a very doubtful expres-
sion.
"Nip along the passages, and see
what you can get, Manners, old
man," he exclaimed.
"Right you are!" grinned
Manners.
And he went. He returned in
about five minutes laden with various
crockery-ware. He also had a large
Delft jug containing a bunch of big
daisies.
"By Jove, that's nice!" exclaimed
Tom Merry. "I never thought of
having flowers in the study, but it

will look ripping. Where did you
get them?"
"Borrowed 'em from Kildare's
study."
"Kildare there?"
"No."
Tom Merry laughed.
"I hope Kildare won't miss
them," he said.
"Oh, he's not the chap to cut up
rusty before girls!" said Manners
easily. "Afterwards, it won't
matter. Look here, we shall want
some chairs."
"Get 'em from somewhere."
"Good!"
Manners departed. There was the
sound of a soft voice in the passage.
D'Arey jumped up off the fender,
very hot and perspiring.
"Bai Jove, the gals, you know!"
Tea in Tom Merry's Study.
COUSIN ETHEL and Dolores
came along the Shell passage,
escorted by quite a little crowd
of juniors. They arrived at the
doorway of Tom Merry's study. The
study really looked very cosy, freshly
dusted as it was, with a bright fire
burning and the tea-table laid, glow-
ing with crockery of every colour and

pattern. Tom Merry met his visitors
with a cheerful grin, and D'Arey
with a blush. The blush was caused
by the heat of the fire during the
toast-making operations.
"Please come in," said Tom
Merry. "I'm afraid you will find it
a little crowded."
"Oh, no!" said Ethel.
"Not at all," declared Dolores.
Her black eyes took in the whole
study at one glance, and she wondered
in her mind why Cousin Ethel chose
to have tea in that poky little room—
used poor Tom Merry's study—instead
of in the big, airy room in the Head's
house.
But a gentle smile remained on
Dolores's red lips while she was mak-
ing these mental criticisms, and no
one—excepting, perhaps, Korr—had
any idea of what she was thinking.
Odd expression in Korr's eyes as he
glanced at the Spanish girl.
"We've got rather a decent spread
New Readers should turn to
the foot of next page."

A New and Interesting Story for All. (Continued from the front page.)

COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS

A TALE OF TOM MERRY'S CAUM

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD

this time," Tom Merry remarked, with a smile, and Gussy has made heaps of toast."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How hot you look, Arthur!" Ethel exclaimed, with a smile.

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

And Arthur Augustus took out his handkerchief, and wiped his warm brow.

Then there was a shriek of laughter in the study.

"D'Arcy had wiped a trail of grime all across his aristocratic features, and the change in his aspect was simply startling."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I entirely fail to see what you duffahs are cacklin' at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look in the glass!" gasped Cousin Ethel.

"Bai Jove, Ethel—"

"Look in the glass—"

Arthur Augustus obeyed. Then he gave a jump.

"Gwatt Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Some fearful ass has put the wong handkerchief in my pocket!" gasped D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, I'll give the wottah a fearful thwashin'!"

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

The two girls were laughing as heartily as anybody. D'Arcy gave one more look into the glass, and then rushed from the study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Figgins. "I know Gussy will be the death of me. I wonder who played that little jape on him."

"I wonder!" said Monty Lowther, who had come into the study with the crowd.

"It was rough on poor old Gussy. Hallo! What's that?"

There was a wild tramping and crashing in the passage, and Manners came tearing up with a chair under each arm, and dashed into the study with his prizes.

After him came Hancock and Jones minor at top speed.

"Stop him!" yelled Hancock.

"Stop him!" roared Jones.

"We'll— Oh!"

They halted in the doorway at the sight of the two girls, and blushed.

"Oh, sorry!" gasped both of them; and fled.

Manners panted, and set down the chair.

"Got 'em!" he gasped.

"Prouh, now!" asked Blake.

"Yes, if you two chaps sit on the window ledge."

"Good!" "We can do that."

Cousin Ethel was placed in the best chair, and Dolores in the next best, at the table. The armchair had been flung out into the passage to leave more room. The juniors seated themselves round the table, or about the room, or at the window. There were ten boys and two girls in all, and the party was large for the size of the study; but it was no use quarrelling with the accommodation.

Arthur Augustus came in, with his face freshly washed, and clean as a new pin, looking newly awestruck and garbled, so to speak. A general grin greeted his reappearance, and he replied to it with a lofty stare through his eyelids.

"You don't mind sitting on the best locker, do you, Gussy?" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh! I—I mean, not at all, dear boy!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Here's your chair, Gussy, next to Miss Pelham. Sit down, old son."

"Thank you vewy much, Tom Mewwy!"

Tom Merry had arranged D'Arcy's place next to Dolores. D'Arcy was the greatest lady's man at St. Jim's.

and he knew Dolores better than the other fellows. And Ethel was quite satisfied with Figgins looking after her. Tom Merry thought his arrangement rather diplomatic.

The tea was made, and its pleasant scent pervaded the study. Cousin Ethel poured out the tea.

There was a cheerful fire of chatter round the tea-table. Football was naturally the topic, and for some time it was hardly noticed that Dolores was very silent.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was entertaining her with an account of the goals he would have kicked if it hadn't happened that he didn't kick them. He observed at last that Dolores was replying only in monosyllables, and toying with her teaspoon.

"Another cup of tea, dear girl?" he asked.

"No, thank you!"

"May I pass you the cake?"

"Thank you, no!"

"Speakin' of cake," said D'Arcy, "wundah me of a wathah good story."

There was a fellow named Wobinson—I forget whether his name was Wobinson or Wadcliff, but it doesn't weally mattah—and he had a cake on his birthday. It was a very large cake with plums, you know. Are you fond of plum-cake, Miss Pelham?"

"No," said Miss Pelham.

"It is vewy nice," said D'Arcy.

"Well, this fellow Wadcliff—or Wobinson—I forget which, but it is not weally material to the story."

He had a plum-cake on his birthday. He had a few friends—"

"Pass the watercrust, D'Arcy!"

"Certainly, dear boy!"

"And the salt."

"Here you are."

"Oh, Gussy can't kick for toffee!"

Fatty Wynn was saying. "Why, if he'd put the ball at me like—like a New House chap, I should have had to play it over the bar."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"That would have been a corner for you, though," added Fatty Wynn reflectively. "I don't suppose it would have been much use to you chaps."

"Oh, wats!"

"Chese it, Fatty!" grinned Figgins. "Order! Pass the sugar!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyelids into his eye, and gave Fatty Wynn a withering glance, which was quite wasted upon Wynn, who was just then beaming in great delight upon the cake. D'Arcy turned back to Dolores.

"I was tellin' you about my friend Wobinson," he remarked.

"Were you?" said Dolores.

"Yaas, wathah! About a birthday cake, you know."

"Indeed?"

D'Arcy was discouraged.

He did not pursue the story of Robinson, or Radcliff, and the birthday cake. He tried Miss Pelham on several other topics, but found them all uninteresting to her. The swell of St. Jim's became a little silent himself towards the end of the meal.

He was discouraged. If the young lady wouldn't talk herself, and wouldn't listen to him when he talked, there were difficulties in the way of a conversation.

Cousin Ethel glanced at her friend once or twice. Dolores coloured

on— under her glance, and made an effort to be cheerful and chatty, and succeeded to some extent. But the tea was nearly over now, and ere long it finished, and the crowded company in the study broke up.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy confided to Tom Merry. "I weally don't think I get on vewy well with Miss Pelham, you know."

"No?" said Tom Merry.

"No, I was tellin' her the stow about Wobinson and his birthday cake, you vewmehab."

"Yes, I remember," said Tom, rather hastily.

"It's all wight," said Arthur Augustus, with some dignity. "I wasn't going to tell you oval again, Tom Mewwy. But Miss Pelham seemed quite bored, and I didn't finish tellin' her the stow."

"Go hon!"

"Don't you think it's wathah we-markable?"

"Simply amazing!"

And D'Arcy adjusted his monocle, and gave the hero of the Shell a very dubious glance. But after that D'Arcy did not inflict very much of his society upon Dolores Pelham.

"I want another chap to come with me in the twap when I dwive the gals home," he said to Blake, a little later. "Would you like to come, dear boy? I have a pass from Kildare for two, on purpose."

Blake grunted.

"Of course, I'd like to come," he said.

"Then come, dear boy."

Blake shook his head.

"No," he said heroically, "take Figgins."

D'Arcy started.

"Figgins?"

"Yes, Figgins!"

"Bai Jove! Do you think Figgys is wathah stuwk with Miss Pelham, pewpawps?" said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It's barely possi- be-side Figgys at ten," said D'Arcy slowly. "She was awfully bored with me, you know. It seems odd that anybody should prefer Figgys; but there's no accountin' for tastes, is there?"

"Not at all," said Blake.

"It you'd like to let Figgys come instead of you, I mean, I'll take him."

"Do!" said Blake.

"Vewy well!"

And while the girls were gone into the Head's house for their coats and hats, D'Arcy approached Figgins, who was standing chatting with Kerr and Wynn, with a somewhat lugubrious expression upon his honest face.

"Figgins, old man!"

"Hallo!" said Figgins, rather gruffly.

"I was wonderin' if you'd care to come in the twap to St. Freda's," said D'Arcy. "Blake thinks you might like to."

Figgins jumped.

"Me!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah, dear boy!"

"Oh, I say, Gussy, this is awfully decent of you!" Figgins exclaimed.

"Not at all, dear boy. I shall be divin' you, you know, and there ought to be somebody to talk to the gals, of course. I'm sure you'll like to have a dwive with Miss Pelham," said D'Arcy humorously.

"Glad to do it," said Figgins.

"Well, any friend of Cousin Ethel's must be nice," he said at last.

And Blake nodded, and it dropped at that.

Dolores—little thinking, and still less caring, what impression she had made upon the St. Jim's fellows—sat in the cushioned seat, with her coat about her and the thick rug over her knees, for the night was cold. All Arthur Augustus's attention was given to the horse, for the country road was almost pitchy dark, and he had to think wholly of his duties as a driver. Figgins was left to entertain the two girls during the drive—a thing that it was difficult for Figgins to do.

For though Figgins, in his big, honest way, regarded all girls with a feeling akin to veneration, and worshipped Cousin Ethel in particular, still that did not help him as a conversationalist. In fact, Figgins—like many fellows who can do things—did not excel as a talker. He felt it incumbent to talk now, however, and he manfully did his best.

"Jolly game, wasn't it?" said he.

"Miss Pelham," said Figgins vaguely. "Oh, yes, of course. I'll come with pleasure, Gussy, and I think it's very decent of you."

"Not at all, dear boy!"

And Figgins dashed off for his coat and cap.

Off-Side.

"Q UITE weedy, dear gals?"

Cousin Ethel and Dolores came out of the Head's house, wrapped in their coats for the drive home to St. Freda's. Both of them looked very charming, and many of the fellows gathered round, envied D'Arcy and Figgins that drive.

Figgins came racing up with his coat on.

"Right!" he gasped. "Here I am!"

Dolores looked at him.

"Are you coming?" she said.

"Ye-es," said Figgins, his enthusiasm considerably dashed by Miss Pelham's tone. "Gussy has asked me, and—"

"We shall be glad," said Cousin Ethel.

"Why, of course," said Dolores, with a charming smile.

And Figgins recovered again.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Figgins will talk to you while I dwive, you know. I'll let you dwive comin' back, Figgys; but while the ladies are in the twap, I think we had better take every care."

Figgins laughed; he didn't want to drive; far from it.

"All right, old kid," he said.

"Quite weedy, dear gals?"

"Quite," said Cousin Ethel.

The juniors gathered round. There were many good-byes to be said. Ethel had said good-bye to Mrs. Holmes and the Head; but there were quite a crowd of juniors in the quad, to see her off.

"Good-bye, Cousin Ethel!"

"Good-bye!" said Ethel brightly.

"And thank you all so much for the pleasant afternoon we have had."

"It's you that's made it pleasant, Cousin Ethel," said Tom Merry.

D'Arcy turned his eyes back upon the Shell fellow.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy, I wegard that as a weally gwaceful remark!" he said. "You do not often express yours so well as you did enough."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, if you pass it, it's all right, Gussy," he said.

"Yaas, wathah! You see—"

"Good-bye, again," said Cousin Ethel.

She waved her hand from the trap. Dolores did not wave her hand. Perhaps she thought she did not know the juniors of St. Jim's well enough.

D'Arcy took the ribbons, and the trap moved off through the dusk, the lamps gleaming off ahead as he drove away.

Tom Merry and his chums looked after them as they went. When the gleaming lights of the trap were lost in the darkness of the road, the juniors turned back to the house.

"What a ripping girl Cousin Ethel is," Tom Merry remarked.

"Yes, rather," said Blake. "How do you like her friend?"

Tom Merry paused for a moment before replying.

"Well, any friend of Cousin Ethel's must be nice," he said at last.

And Blake nodded, and it dropped at that.

Dolores—little thinking, and still less caring, what impression she had made upon the St. Jim's fellows—sat in the cushioned seat, with her coat about her and the thick rug over her knees, for the night was cold. All Arthur Augustus's attention was given to the horse, for the country road was almost pitchy dark, and he had to think wholly of his duties as a driver. Figgins was left to entertain the two girls during the drive—a thing that it was difficult for Figgins to do.

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"Jolly game, wasn't it?" said he.

Cousin Ethel smiled in the darkness. She knew that Figgins would talk, and she knew that he would talk football; because it was the subject that interested him of all others, and that generally insured all the rest of the talk as well. But she knew what the Dolores, already bored to death with the afternoon's game and the talk about it.

"Yes," said Ethel slowly, thinking of some means to change the talk to a subject more agreeable to Dolores.

"You'd like to come over and see another match?" Figgins asked eagerly.

"I would," said Ethel, "certainly."

"How good! We can easily arrange it," said Figgins. "Miss Pelham is fond of seeing a good game, too. I propose!" he added, as an afterthought.

If it had been light enough, he would have seen Miss Pelham's lip curl. But luckily it was too dark.

"Oh, yes!" said Dolores.

Ethel made a movement. She did not like to hear Dolores say so. She knew that Dolores disliked the mere mention of the subject. Yet politeness called for some remark; and Ethel would not judge her friend harshly.

"You like to see the fellows play football?" Figgins said.

"I have very seldom enjoyed anything so much," said Dolores.

"Your good!" said Figgins, in his honest, unsuspicious way. "It will be such a pleasure to us, Miss Pelham, if you will come over with Cousin Ethel next time."

"Oh, I shall surely come if Ethel will bring me," said Dolores softly.

"I think St. Jim's is a grand old place. I love it!"

Figgins was feeling very happy. He felt that he had not liked Miss Pelham hitherto as much as she deserved. She was evidently a nice girl now, and quite worthy to be a friend of Cousin Ethel's.

Ethel was silent.

To her candid mind every one of Dolores's remarks was unpleasant; she knew that they would not be sincere. But she could not very well hint as much to Figgins.

So she said nothing. She would not become a party to a game in which Figgins was to be made a fool of.

That was evidently Dolores's object. It amused her widow, wayward spirit to take this advantage of Figgins's unsuspectingness.

"And the boys are all so nice," said Dolores deliberately. "Especially that nice boy with the handsome blue eyes. What was his name?"

"Oh, no! Are his eyes blue?"

"Why, they're as blue as the sky," said Figgins, in astonishment.

"Are they really?" said Dolores carelessly. "No, I mean the good-looking boy who was standing near us, and did not play."

Figgins wrinkled his brow.

"A School House boy?" he asked.

"He has a curmish in his coat."

"Why, that was Mellich."

"What a pretty name!" said Dolores.

Still Ethel did not speak. She knew Mellich well. Mellich, the fellow who was called the end of the Fourth at St. Jim's. Dolores had not exchanged two words with him, and certainly had a peculiar taste if she considered him handsome. But Dolores had noticed that there was no love lost between Mellich and Figgins. That was why she was praising Mellich now. Figgins would never have dreamed of it. That a girl could deliberately try to ruffle his temper by praising a fellow he disliked would never have occurred to Figgins as possible. Why should Dolores want to ruffle his temper, as far as that went?

"I dare say it's a pretty name," said Figgins very briefly.

"Is he a friend of yours?" asked Dolores.

"Well, you see, he's a School House chap."

"But you have friends in the School House?"

"Oh, yes!"

Dolores laughed.

"But you do not like Mellich, I see. Of course, it is not because he is so good-looking; I am sure that wouldn't influence you."

"Blessed if I can see that he's good-looking," said Figgins. "I've never heard anybody say so before. Why, stand him beside Tom Merry, or Blake, or Kerr, and he'd look nothing!"

Dolores laughed again.

"Not that you ask matter, of course," Figgins added.

"Why don't you like him?" asked Dolores.

GLANCE OVER THIS.

Dolores over to St. Jim's College, where Arthur D'Arcy, her cousin, is at school, and the Spanish girl is introduced to all Ethel's boy friends.

The two girls watch a football match between the rival houses of St. Jim's—the New House and the School House, after which they are

invited to tea in Tom Merry's study. The juniors prepare for the tea. D'Arcy is sitting on the fender, making toast, when Monty Lowther enters the study.

"Good old Gussy!" he exclaims. "Go ahead! Are you fond of making toast?"

(Now go on with the story.)

Ethel Cleveland is a new girl at St. Freda's, and on her first day at school is attracted by the personality of Dolores Pelham, a high-spirited girl of Spanish descent. Ethel subsequently saves Dolores from deep disgrace, and the two become firm friends.

Ethel one afternoon takes

Cousin Ethel's Schooldays

A TALE OF TOM MEYER'S COUNTRY
by MARY CURRIE

"I haven't said that I don't, Pelham."
"But you don't?"
"Well, no, I don't."
Ethel could not touch Dolores's hand, as she wanted to, without Figgins knowing that she was giving her friend a signal. That would never have done.
"But why?" said Dolores.
"Oh, we don't get on!" said Figgins, who was not to be drawn, however cleverly, into talking about a fellow he disliked, behind his back.
"Fellows don't get on, sometimes, you know, Miss Pelham."
"Never mind," said Miss Pelham.
"Tell me about football!"
Figgins laughed in his good-natured way.
"That's rather a big order," he said. "What shall I tell you?"
"About the game—how it is played," said Dolores. "Ethel was explaining to me, but I did not follow very clearly. I should like to hear the rules of the game, especially the off-side rule."
Now, if there was a subject Figgins was great upon, it was the off-side rule. He wanted much less than that to start him. He forthwith launched into a disquisition upon football in general, and the off-side rule in particular. He waxed eloquent upon that subject, and did not notice how very silent Cousin Ethel was.

Dolores made just sufficient remarks to keep Figgins in full tide. Figgins, in the innocence of his heart, imagined that Ethel and Dolores were both as intensely interested in the topic as he was himself. Ethel, indeed, would have been; she liked to hear Figgins talk football. But she knew that Dolores was only drawing Figgins out, and she knew how difficult Dolores found it to stifle her yawns, even while she was amusing herself at Figgins's expense in this way. What was the matter with Dolores? Cousin Ethel felt miserably that this was the least pleasant day she had ever spent in company with the St. Jim's juniors. She was growing angry—angry with Dolores, angry with herself, angry with Figgins. She was indignant upon Figgins's account, and she was angry that she could not see that Dolores was only drawing him out, and yet she liked him all the better for not being able to see it. Melancholy would have seen it at once.

There was an exclamation from the gloom where D'Arcy sat.
"Bai Jove! Here we are!"
And the trap stopped before the gates of St. Freda's.

Figgins Wonders.

Figgins jumped down to ring the bell, and the old porter of St. Freda's came to the gates. He was an old soldier, with a wooden leg, and although he still carried himself with some military correctness, his movements were very slow, and Figgins rang three times before he appeared at the gates. A lantern glimmered through the bars into the dark road and upon the glimmering horse and harness.
"It is all right, corporal," said Cousin Ethel. "You know us."
"All right, miss," said Corporal Brick. "Wait a minute, young sir." And the corporal fumbled for the keys and opened the gates. D'Arcy drove in, and Figgins swung himself up behind.
"That drive's jolly soon over," he said.

He addressed Cousin Ethel, but it was Dolores who replied. Ethel did not move her lips.
"Yes," said Dolores. "It was much quicker returning than going—I mean, it seemed so. Thank you so much!"

"Nothing to thank me for," said Figgins. "Nothing I enjoy so much as a good jaw about football, you know. It's a grand game."
And Figgins would probably have started off again, but just then the trap drew up before the house, and the door was opened. Figgins and D'Arcy jumped down and assisted the girls to alight. Miss Penfold was standing in the lighted doorway. The boys lifted their hats to her.
"I trust we are not late, dear madam!" said Arthur Augustus.
"We have brought home the young ladies safe and sound," said Miss Penfold smiling.

"No, you are not late," she said. "Come in, Ethel. Dear me, how pale you look! Was it very cold in the trap?"
"Oh, no!" said Ethel quickly. Figgins glanced at her hastily, lighted bulb he could see that Cousin Ethel was a little pale.
His look of eager alarm melted into a smile.
"I am all right, Figgins," she said. "Come in, Dolores. Good-night, Arthur! Thank you both so much for seeing us home."
"Yes, indeed!" said Dolores.
"Bai Jove, you know, the pleasure was all on our side," said D'Arcy, in very dull divinity.
"Yes, rather!" said Figgins.
"Good-night, Ethel! Good-night, Miss Pelham!" He shook hands with the girls.
"Good-night, Miss Penfold!"
The juniors moved to the doorway again. Figgins had some slight hope that Cousin Ethel would follow him to the door for one good-bye more. But she did not move, remaining very close to Miss Penfold.
The juniors clambered into the trap, and D'Arcy drove off.
"That was a wippin' d'wile here, Figgins," he remarked. "The horse wequired all my attention, so I wasn't able to help you."
"That's all right, Gussy," said Ethel. "I trust you did not bore the girls too much?"
"Eh? Oh, we had a jolly talk!" said Figgins. "Miss Pelham is awfully interested in football."

"That's all right, then," said Ethel. "I remember she didn't say much this time, as it happens."
"No?"
"But perhaps she was tired," said D'Arcy.
"Miss Pelham was very interested," said Figgins.
"Good!"
"She doesn't seem to know much about football, but she's eager to learn, and she likes the idea of coming over to St. Jim's for another football match."
"Yaas, I shouldn't wonder," said Figgins.
"Figgins made an irritable movement."
"Look here, Gussy, what are you getting at?"
"Weally, Figgins—"
"What are you thinking about?"
"Suppose!" said Arthur Augustus candidly. "I am gettin' wathah hungry. This keen air gives a chap an appetite, you know."
"Oh!" said Figgins.
"Yaas, wathah!"
The trap rattled on, D'Arcy driving in silence, and Figgins sitting under the rug without speaking. It was Figgins who spoke first again.
"Miss Pelham is a ripping girl, Gussy."
"All gals are wippin', dear boy."
"Well, yes, but some are more ripping than others. Miss Pelham is very nice—not so nice as Cousin Ethel, of course; but that's impossible."
"Quite impossible!" agreed D'Arcy.
"Cousin Ethel is a stunner!"
"Yes, isn't she? Besides," said Figgins argumentatively, "Miss Pel-



Cousin Ethel sat looking into the fire, lost in thought.

"What?"
"What?"
"I mean, she is, is she?" said D'Arcy, buying himself with the reins. "Quite a slip of the tongue on my part, dear boy. Gee up, there—gee up!"
"We had a ripping talk," said Figgins, rather warmly.
"Very good, dear boy."
And Arthur Augustus did not pursue the subject.
"I thought Cousin Ethel looked a little tired when we left her," said Figgins, after a long pause.
D'Arcy winked at the dark trees along the lane.
"Did she weally, dear boy?"
"I thought so."
"Well, pewpaws she was tired."
"Yet she didn't look tired when we started."
"When you started talkin' football, do you mean?" said Figgins sharply.
"No!"
"When we started from St. Jim's," D'Arcy chuckled softly.
"Pewpaws somethin' has tired her since," he remarked.
"Oh, shut up!" said Figgins crossly.
"Certainly, dear boy."
And the drive continued in silence for some time after that. But presently Figgins broke the silence.
"I say, Gussy—"
"Yaas, dear boy."
"I know Cousin Ethel's talking football; we've talked it lots of times, and she talks as much as I do, or more."

ham's Ethel's friend, and so she must be nice."
"All the same!"
"Yaas?"
"Oh, nothing!"
Another long silence. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy devoted his attention to the horse. Figgins sat with his hands in his pockets, and with a thoughtful frown corrugating his rugged brows.
"Look here, Gussy—" he exclaimed, at last.
"Yaas, dear boy?"
"Is it possible—" Figgins paused.
"Yaas?"
"Is it possible—" Figgins paused.
"Well?"
"Is it possible—" Figgins paused.
"Weally, Figgins, that depends upon what you are talkin' about, you know," said D'Arcy, with great patience. "Pewpaws, you might explain a little further."
"It isn't possible that I've offended Cousin Ethel in any way, is it?"
"Bai Jove! Why should you think so, dear boy?"
"I don't know."
"Then don't think it," said D'Arcy. "Cousin Ethel knows you're always putting your foot in it, you know, if you've been clumsy. To be quite frank with you, Figgins, I've often wondered how gals can stand often wathah seems to stand you all out, but Ethel seems to stand you all out. I shouldn't worry."
(Another long instalment of this absorbing tale next week.)

THE EDITOR'S TWO COLUMNS.



When in doubt, or when you feel inclined to criticise, address: The Editor, EMPIRE Library, 23-29, Bouverie Street, London, E.C.

"TWO LITTLE WAIFS."

OUR new story will start in next Wednesday's issue, and I feel sure that the author, Reginald Wray—I dare say well known to many of you—will score a distinct success, for

"TWO LITTLE WAIFS"

seems to me one of the best tales of its kind that I have ever read.
The main characters in the story are Phil Fernay and his sister Lucy. These two—two little waifs—are left alone in London, and have a very hard time of it. Phil, notwithstanding the fact that he has to look after his blind sister, is anything but downhearted; and I am certain that you will read with pleasure the story of his fight against cruel circumstances.
Another character in our new story which will appeal to all of you is a cheery, happy youngster, known as Peter Shorenditch. Peter always has a laugh on his happy face and a merry word for the downhearted.
Now, having told you this much about the story which will appear in these pages next Wednesday, will you take my word for the rest, and make a special point of ordering your copies of the EMPIRE Library in advance?

LETTERS FROM MY READERS.

It is impossible for me to answer individually all the letters of congratulation I have received about the story in the EMPIRE Enlarged Library, but I can, and do, thank you all for your kind appreciation and the help so many of you have given me by recommending this paper to new readers. Beyond writing to me, there is very little that a reader can do that is so helpful to an editor as personally recommending their favourite paper to non-readers, and again I tender my sincere thanks to the many who have done me

THIS GOOD TURN.

In return for your interest in this paper, I can only say that, apart from doing my best in the matter of providing you with good stories—stories that you like—I shall be pleased to help you in any way I can with advice, information, or good counsel, by post.
Some few letters, of course, that are of general interest I can answer in these two columns; but, as you will see, space is so limited that I suggest that the better way is for all my correspondents to enclose in their letters to me a stamped, addressed envelope.
You will notice in this issue two new features, one being a little short story of popular Gordon Gay, and the other a series of five pictures by our comic artist, I should very much like to know what you think of Gordon Gay and Wandering Willie. If you do not feel inclined to write me a long letter, then just drop me a postcard.

CAN YOU WRITE A LIMERICK?

Most of you can make a good Limerick, or can remember a good one that you have heard. Well, send it up on a postcard addressed to
The Editor, EMPIRE Library,
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I will pick out the best Limerick received each week and publish it on this page, awarding half a crown prize to the sender.
THE EDITOR.

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A TALE OF
Harold Saxon's Adventures in Search of the Tree of Strength.
By F. ST. MARS.

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE.
Harold Saxon, gentleman adventurer, with the two Hartings—father and son—is making an expedition into Central Africa in search of the Tree of Strength—the semedene—of the nature of which he has already heard. The expedition is joined at its base by Gonawonga, a native hunter, and his two sons.
After many adventures by the way, the land of Morri—the home of the semedene—is reached, and the nature of the country begins to change. The country is a vast plain of rolling hills, and the hills are of a brownish-black color.
(Read on from here.)

In the Land of Morri.
THE rocks themselves gradually changed to biscuit-colour, and then to grey, and finally to black. Black as coal they were, but not like coal. They were like glass, black glass. Under foot powdered and splintered and cracked like glass. Moss covered the ground in places, especially near the river, which ran black but clear, and was good to drink.

The trees became huge forest giants, black as the rocks. Harold thought they were ebony. They were not scattered, as before, nor did they grow in impenetrable forests reaching for miles. They grew in rows, with open spaces between them, and the ground was green as grass. The trees were deep green clothed in all.

"All just like it was before," said Harold, as he rode at the head of the column with the others. "How do the men seem to take it, Jimmy?"
"Take it like a dose of 'rhubarb,'" replied Jim, who had just ridden up from the tail end of the column. "Nothing but the fear of your friend of Scorpion an' his little toothpick." "Jim had christened the chief's tooth-like-looking weapon the 'toothpick,' and so it was always called afterwards—only, as I see, the fear of them two keeps 'em beggars from skinning' down their loads an' doin' a bunk."

"Um! Question is, 'ow long'll that fear 'old 'em, 'Arold?'" the Native one asserted.

A SHORT INSTALMENT FOR MY OLD READERS.



By CHARLES HAMILTON.

The Squire's Secret.
LET the police know," he went on. "I'm going to tell them everything now. Let them arrest him—don't let him get away."

"Listen," said Talbot. "Rupert may never be arrested, for he has with such a terrible accident last night that he will be a dead man by this morning."
"Black gave a start."
"Then all is safe. You will come to your own home, and—"
The nurse touched Talbot upon the arm. "He understood, and nodded."
"I must go now," he said gently. "I will come and see you again if you wish."
Lacy stirred slightly as Dr. Talbot entered the room, followed by a nurse. His eyes rested upon Talbot with a curious expression.

And Harold shook his head.
"Hard to tell. About till a greater fear comes along, I suppose."
He was scanning the dense shades of the trees, which always grew straight up to the clearings, and stopped dead, as if trimmed that way and ill at ease. Once or twice he heard at his horse and looked sent Loyal in among the shadows, finding anything.
"What's the matter? Lost anything?" Jim asked, after a bit.
"No; only I was wondering if those Morrians are watching us by any chance. You know how they did last time."

Jim shrugged his shoulders.
"Oh, I take it that's all in the contract," he replied. "Only I wonder they get to know there's people as they can't see all round 'em?"
"Well," said Harold, "I don't mean to have them all over our camp at night this time like they were last. You know those electric bells and wire I've brought? They'll just beat 'em. I've brought the rig-out to help guard us. If we stretch the wire around and attach it to the bells, no one can very well enter the camp without knocking against a wire and making the bells ring."
"That's a useful dodge, but look 'ere now!" Jim was pointing ahead. "Never mind about these nigs. Did ye ever see a sight like this 'ere? Talk about Drury Lane pantomime! This is a pantomime—a blessed wonderland, if ye like!"
"Rather a creepy one, though," finished Harold.

The clearings, as has been said, ran all round the belts of timber, so that the whole somewhat resembled a great river cut up with innumerable rocks and islands. Thus they were always able to walk in the open, and never once penetrated the shadows of the mighty trees smothered with mass upon mass of vines, creepers, ferns, festoons of bearded moss, and flowers of every colour—mostly purple—over and among which flew birds and insects of rainbow hues. But it was not this that Jim meant. It was the sights ahead—the sights as they turned each bend of the gloomy black trees. Now it would be a herd of elephants, tusks gleam-

ing in the sunlight, uncertain whether to charge, or remove. Mostly they removed. Once they didn't, and one was removed from life by old Harling to prevent the herd from attacking the whole caravan.

Then it would be one of the giant black bears that Stanley wrote about, or a leopard, black as night—all the leopards were black here—or a rhinoceros smothered in black mud, or from wallowing in pools by the black river.

From the rocks and ravines, as they passed them, rose scores and scores of jet-black ravens and crows, whilst huge black vultures circled continually overhead.

"Yes," said Harold, "we've reached the Land of Black again with vengeance. From now on Now begins the dangerous part of the journey. What has gone before doesn't count. Nobody knows what may happen at any moment now. Listen!"

He held up his finger as he spoke. From somewhere over the trees came a high pile of gloomy rocks came a deep, booming, drumming sound.

"Gorilla," said he; and they knew he spoke truth.
That night they pitched camp in the very centre of the largest clearing they could find. They had no wish to be near cover when the dark came, for goodness alone knew what fresh horrors might come as well as the dark, especially near cover.

The porters went about with their teeth chattering, and collected enough firewood for three camps. "They're afraid—my word, they're afraid! I don't wonder at it—lugged if I do!" said Jim. "Now 'ere I wish I were 'ome—straight I do!"

But Harold laughed, as he superintended the placing of the cases of ammunition as a floor for his tent. He always did this, for ammunition and guns were vital to their very existence, and he liked to have them where he knew they were safe.

Each case was made up into a package of from fifty-five to sixty pounds weight, which is the load for an African porter to carry. Harold was picking up these loads by ones, twos, and threes and fours, and without an effort placing them as he wanted them placed.

Then something went wrong with the top of his tent-pole, and catching one of the heaviest porters—a man weighing little under twelve stone—round the waist, he held him up to put things straight, as one would hold up a little child to see the King pass, over the heads of a crowd.

And later one of the horses became restive, pulled its pickets up, and bolted because a fly stung it. It dragged one man that hung on to its rope some way before he let go, and knocked another flying who tried to stop it. Then it came by Harold, growling for all it was worth.

Harold poised, Harold leaped. Harold caught the beast's head-rod in his right hand. Then Harold stopped, digging his heels into the ground as he did so. So did the horse stop. He stopped with a jerk that flung him sliding on his back, kicking, and wondering what on

earth or under it had happened. The end of that rope might have been fastened to a mountain, but it wasn't. Harold had hold of it, that was all.

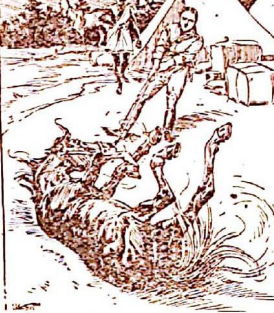
Jim, who was getting used to these little miracles, merely shrugged his broad shoulders.
"Semedene again," grunted he, and lit his pipe.

But the chief and his sons looked on in interested amazement, watching Harold's every movement, for to them strength was the greatest of assets of life; they admired it beyond all things. Next to strength, they admired craft and skill with weapons. Harold had all these gifts, and his strength was greater than the strength of any two men they had ever heard of; therefore he was a person to be much respected—almost worshipped. I believe they would have followed him to the death, and I know Gonawonga twice offered him the governorship of half his kingdom.

Little did Harold know, however, how soon he would have need of that strength. He spent the evening fixing up his electric wires, and went to sleep confident that nobody—not even the Morrians, than which no human beings are more perfect "creepers"—could enter the camp unannounced.

Alone!
HAROLD awoke suddenly with that feeling one has at home when there is a cat in the room. He could not tell how long he had been asleep—probably hours.

It was very still. All was quiet. Nothing seemed to have happened.



Harold dug his heels into the ground, and the runaway horse slipped with a jerk that flung him kicking on his back.

There was a yellow moon burning outside, he could see it through the flaps of the tent, for he had taken jolly good care to arrange his arrival at Morri coincident with a moon. He had no wish to "do" Morri in the dark. It was a bad enough place even in the light of open day.

Harold lay wide awake, his breath coming rather quickly, uneasy, alert—yet he could not tell why. Then he became aware of a shadow, black as the night itself, creeping flat to earth across the moonlight.

The shadow passed as he caught

up his rifle—it happened, luckily, to be his powerful .35 Winchester—and there was another shadow.

Harold sat up.

"What the blazes are they?" he muttered to himself.
He sat and stared, and as he stared he saw more shadows—long, sinister, the infinitely steady—move across the moonlight. Then he got to his knees. It required infinite caution, this getting to one's knees, for the air was tingling to one's flesh. His rifle was at full cock, lucky, and he was quite ready for anything.

Suddenly Loyal, who was lying asleep just outside the tent because of the heat, gave a yell—not a bark, but a yell. And there were growlings, much deeper than any Loyal could make, and the sounds of a scuffle.

Harold was at the door of his tent in a single bound, and, as he sprang, it seemed to him as if the night air about him got up and ran away. He was conscious of this at the moment, but in far too much of a hurry to stop to investigate. Something that must have been standing at his head and under the side of the tent, and something else went out on the other side. He half saw, half guessed, as he leaped, tall shadows running, like the shadows of men.

Arrived at the tent door, he peered out, and instantly looked straight into the glaring eyes of a black leopard—and a mighty bay always quick and cat-like in his movements, and never more so, possibly, than now. His rifle was at his shoulder and the shot fired in no more time than it takes to snap one's finger. He did not aim as you of the miniature rifle clubs know aiming. He rarely did. Simply he stared hard between those great staring eyes, as the leopard crouched for a spring, and, throwing up the rifle, and without looking at it or removing his gaze, fired. And the full metal-patched bullet, weighing 250 grains, crashed straight through between the eyes to the brain. Forthwith the leopard stood on end, spun half round, and fell backwards—dead.

It was a beautiful shot, but Harold had no time to rejoice at it. Loyal was at death grips with another black leopard, and others were all over the place.

Bang! went the rifle, and the second leopard left Loyal and began running round in circles.

Harold had no time to take further notice of him, for out of the tail of his eye he was aware of something hurtling at him through the air. He spun round like any top, and fired, springing aside on the spot. The result was to bring a springing leopard down heavily at his feet. But it was only wounded in the fore paw; before Harold could fire again it was upon him.

Followed a wonderful sight. Harold sprang again to one side, but the beast crouched out one side, wounded paw, much as you will see a cat do with a mouse at home, and tripped him so that he fell. Even as he fell, however, Harold's lightning-like brain was at work, and, twisting in mid-fall with an el-like twist, he thrust the stock of his rifle between the great, reeking jaws of the beast.

(A very interesting instalment of this splendid story next week.)

Talbot nodded; he could not trust himself to speak.

"Years ago," said the Squire of Lynwood, "before you were born, Lynwood, there were two brothers at Talbot—Arnold the elder, and Henry the younger, my father. They lived with their uncle, the then Squire of Lynwood. The elder—the heir—quarrelled with his uncle, and left Lynwood, and never returned. He was married against his uncle's will, and was cast off during the old man's lifetime, though, as the estates were entailed, they were bound to come to him when the uncle died."

Talbot nodded again. He wondered what this could have to do with him; and perhaps how a faint light was breaking through the darkness that had long shadowed the secret of his life.

"The younger nephew married according to his uncle's wish—the lady whom the

old gentleman had in the first place selected for the elder. He was a dutiful nephew, and he knew upon which side his bread was buttered. The old squire could not cut off the entail, but he was determined that the Lynwood estates should come to the nephew whom he loved. How was it to be done? He fell into his last illness—a fatal one, but lingering; he lay for two years in the shadow of death, brooding over the thought that when he was gone the estate would go to the

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A NEW STORY OF THE SCHOOLBOY ACTOR.

GORDON GAY'S CHRISTMAS JOKE



A Tale of
Rylcombe
Grammar School
by Prosper Howard

CHAPTER 1.

Tadpole Makes a Resolution.

"I HAVE decided—"
"Toast please, Taddy!"
"I have decided—"
"After you with the butter!"

"I have decided—"
"Marmalade this way!"
Tadpole, the genius, or, as his chums had it, the nuisance of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, sniffed indignantly as he passed the marmalade. He did not relish having his remarks interrupted so carelessly by Gordon Gay, the schoolboy actor.

Gordon Gay noticed his expression and grinned.

It was Christmas Eve, and the schoolboy actor and his friends of the Fourth Form—Jack and Harry Wootton and Horace Tadpole—were discussing a hearty breakfast in the Head's dining-room at the Grammar School.

Lane and Carboy, of the Fourth Form, were also of the party who were spending Christmas as the guests of Frank Monk, the headmaster's son, in the otherwise deserted Grammar School.

"Never mind, Taddy; have another try," remarked Frank Monk, with a laugh. "What have you decided?"

"I have decided to make an important resolution for the New Year," said Tadpole, with the air of one making an announcement that might change the fate of nations.

There was a general grin round the table.

"Good for you, Taddy! It's a bit precious, but let's hear your precious resolution!" exclaimed Gordon Gay.

"I have resolved that for every one of my wonderful pictures that I sell during the coming year I will paint a duplicate, and present it free gratis to the school."

CHAPTER 2.

Tadpole's Masterpiece.

FOLLOWING Tadpole's startling announcement, the juniors stared at one another in breathless silence. The next moment there was an unrestrained roar from six throats simultaneously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

So this was Tadpole's wonderful resolution!

Tadpole, in spite of his friends' efforts to undeceive him, persisted in regarding himself as an artist of supreme, if unappreciated, talents, and the juniors of Rylcombe Grammar School never knew to what wild heights his fancy would soar next.

But this latest of his, as Harry Wootton murmured hysterically, "fairly took the bun!"

The Grammar School genius drew himself up in intense indignation at the way the announcement of his great resolution had been received.

"My dear fellows—" he began coldly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear asses—"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"I regard you as a set of silly dummies!"

And Tadpole strode out of the breakfast-room.

For at least five minutes after their indignant chum had left them the juniors round the breakfast-table shrieked helplessly.

"My—my hat! Taddy really is too rich!" murmured Frank Monk at last, wiping his eyes with his handkerchief. "But we don't want to hurt the silly duffer's feelings. Let's go after him and smooth him down."

"Right—ho!"

And the juniors trooped off to find the offended genius.

They discovered him, as they guessed they would, up in his bedroom, which he had rigged up as a sort of temporary studio as well.

He was contemplating an enormous canvas, roughly framed, which he had set up on two chairs. The canvas was covered with a large amount of paint of all colours, and took up a great part of the little room.

Tadpole drew himself up with an offended air as the juniors filed into the study with grave faces; but he was a good-natured and forgiving fellow for all his eccentricities, and, accepting their apologies with a good grace, he was soon beaming again.

"I was just looking over my pictures when you came in," he said, with a beaming smile. "It is the season for Christmas presents just now, of course, and I quite expect a buyer or two might drop in this afternoon."

"Rats!" murmured Harry Wootton softly, but not quite softly enough.

"Did you speak, Wootton?" asked Tadpole, putting his hand to his ear, while the other juniors frowned on the luckless Harry.

"I—I—I was just saying, of—of course," stammered Harry, "you never know when a—buyer might come in, d-do you?"

Tadpole nodded his head in agreement.

"Quite right, Wootton! I have a feeling that a genuine buyer will drop in and buy one of my works this afternoon—perhaps my latest."

And Tadpole indicated the enormous canvas with a wave of his hand.

Harry Wootton nodded his head like a clockwork Chinaman. He felt that he might have hysterics if this lasted much longer.

At the same time an observer might have noticed a gleam sparkle in Gordon Gay's eyes. Frank Wootton, in fact, did notice it, and he knew the schoolboy actor well enough to know that a "wheeze" had suddenly come into his head.

"What is it, Gay?" he whispered eagerly.

Gordon Gay grinned.

"Wait and see," he whispered.

While Tadpole was gazing in rapture at his canvas the juniors turned to the door. They had made their peace with Tadpole, and they wanted to go now.

Tadpole on the subject of art—especially his own art—always bored them to distraction.

Gordon Gay, the two Woottons, and Monk had passed out in safety, when Tadpole suddenly turned. He ran across to Carboy and Lane, who were just about to follow the others, and grasped them by the shoulders.



Carboy and Lane looked at Tadpole's "masterpiece" in silence, and then turned away, weeping bitterly.

"What do you think candidly of my latest masterpiece?" cried the amateur artist, with enthusiasm.

Carboy and Lane returned reluctantly, and took a long and careful look at the fearful and wonderful daub on the big canvas.

Then, without a word, they turned on their heels and walked out of the room, their handkerchiefs to their eyes, weeping bitterly. Their feelings were too deep for words.

CHAPTER 3.

Gordon Gay as "Mr. Robinson."

"DEAR SIR,—I have heard that you have some pictures for sale, and as I am in the neighbourhood I will call in about three o'clock this afternoon

in the hope of being allowed to inspect one or two.—Yours faithfully, W. ROBINSON."

The above letter was delivered to Horace Tadpole just after lunch, which had followed a good morning's tobogganing; for the snow lay thick on the countryside, and gave promise of a good old-fashioned Christmas-tide.

Tadpole blinked at the letter in high excitement, and read it aloud to the juniors.

There was a general whistle of astonishment.

"Phew!"

"My hat!"

"A real buyer at last, Taddy!"

Tadpole folded the letter with a smile of satisfaction.

"Yes, you fellows, I have no doubt Mr. Robinson will prove to be an extensive buyer of my works. I confess I am not surprised. My goodness! It's nearly half-past two already! I must go to my room and get my pictures ready for Mr. Robinson to see."

And Tadpole departed in great haste.

"Well, my hat! I never thought anyone would be ass enough to come and see that young spoofer's pictures!" said Frank Monk, with a perplexed grin. "We must be there to see the fun, anyway!"

to inspect the "works of art" which Tadpole had ranged round the walls of the room. Tadpole swelled with conscious pride.

"This is my latest masterpiece, sir," he explained, indicating the huge picture propped up on the chairs with a careless gesture.

"Indeed!" Mr. Robinson peered at the colour-plastered canvas. "Ah! Very realistic! I always did like seascapes!"

Tadpole gave a jump.

"Seascapes, sir?"

"Certainly! Oh, I—I beg your pardon, Mr. Tadpole. How stupid of me! I took this—this object in the background for a ship at first. Of course, I see now that it is a haystack. A haystack on fire, and a very lifelike haystack, too!"

The juniors stifled their laughter, while Tadpole gave the beaming Mr. Robinson an indignant look.

"Really, sir," he said, in a tone of remonstrance, "I always considered those two cows in the foreground to be particularly natural-looking."

Mr. Robinson looked astounded.

"The—two cows, Mr. Tadpole?"

"Certainly!"

"Just—just so, Mr. Tadpole. You are quite right. It's—it's a very good—er—cow. And how much do you want for this—er—masterpiece?"

Tadpole beamed again immediately. So he was not mistaken. Mr. Robinson was a real buyer. He considered deeply for a moment.

"Well—er—shall we say twenty pounds, sir?" he remarked at last, with the assumption of great carelessness.

The juniors gasped. To ask twenty pounds for Tadpole's fearful daub struck them as quite the limit in cheek.

Mr. Robinson nodded his head thoughtfully, while the juniors held their breath.

"I am afraid that's rather more than I want to give," said Mr. Robinson at last calmly. "I wanted one at about eighteenpence."

The onlooking juniors could stand it no longer. With sundry gasps and choking noises they rushed from the room, and a few minutes later Mr. Robinson emerged, staggering under the weight of Tadpole's "masterpiece."

The juniors watched him and his burden down the drive in grinning amazement.

"So you came to terms after all, Taddy?" asked Frank Monk, trying not to roar.

Tadpole turned a rather red face to the captain of the Grammar School juniors.

"Yes; I let him have it quite cheap," said Tadpole, with dignity. "As he was my first customer—"

"How much?" interrupted Harry Wootton.

"Half-a-crown," answered Tadpole, with a lofty air, strolling carelessly towards the door.

In the midst of the terrific roar of laughter that followed the genius of the Grammar School's departure, Gordon Gay strolled into the room.

He was grinning broadly, and marks as of grease-paint, such as actors use for making-up purposes, showed about his face and under his ears.

"Oh dear, Gordon Gay, you ought to have been in Taddy's room when Mr. Robinson came!" almost sobbed Frank Monk, helpless with laughter.

"It was just great! Why weren't you there?"

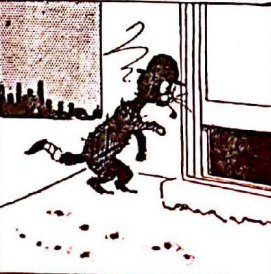
"I was," remarked Gordon Gay calmly, "and I spent half-a-crown there!"

THE END.

The Adventures of Wandering Willie.



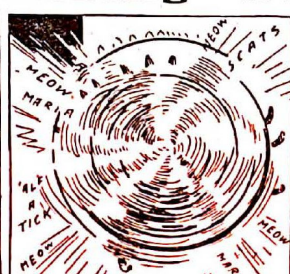
1. Wandering Willie, the tramp, sets out to find a home and someone to love him.



2. Coming across a house with one of its windows open, our pussy nipped inside, and decided to bestow his affections there—



3. Little thinking, as he lapped up a basinful of milk and some catenat, that possibly he might not be wanted at all.



4. Such, however, was the case, so William, feeling rather annoyed at being told to "get," had a few words to say about it—



5. And then left, feeling fatter, and with the thought that perhaps he had better look about for something else.