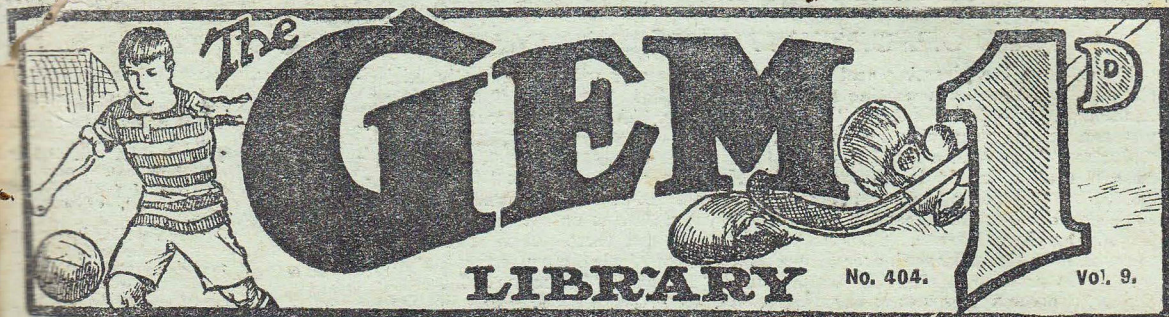


GUSSY AND THE GIRL!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete Tale of School Life at St. Jim's.



POOR OLD GUSSY'S PREDICAMENT!

(An amusing scene in our magnificent, long complete school tale.)

COAL at 1/- a TON

Astonishing Invention which makes One Ton of Coal Equal Two. YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE POUNDS IN HOUSEKEEPING.

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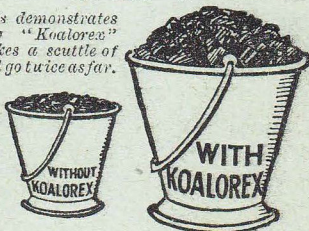
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This demonstrates how "Koalorex" makes a scuttlet of coal go twice as far.



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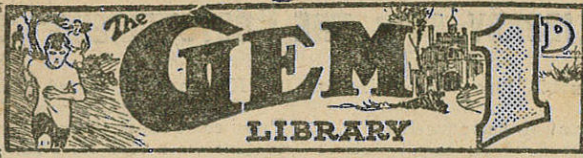
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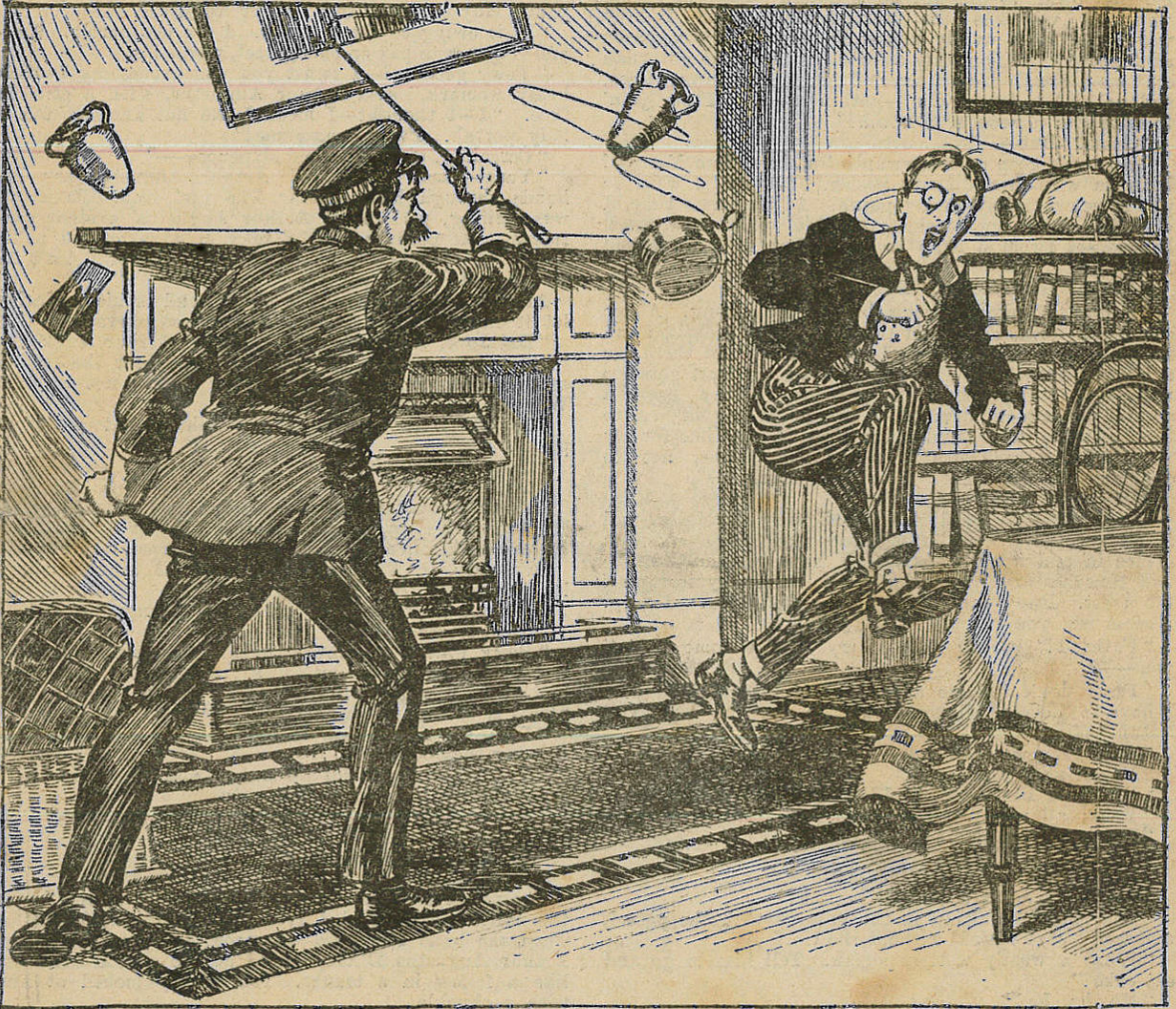
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FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

GUSSY AND THE GIRL!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.
By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



"Gweat Scott!" Arthur Augustus jumped up as Mr. Harker flourished the big whip. There was a crash as the whip caught the clock and hurled it into the fender. (See Chapter 14.)

CHAPTER 1.

A Surprise for Arthur Augustus!

"Gussy!"
"Wats!"
"But—"
"Pway wun away, Tom Mewwy. I am wathah wowwied!"
"Yes. But—"
"Weally, deah boy, I wepeat that I am wowwied, and I wish you would wun away!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the most elegant junior in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, looked worried.

He was seated at the table in Study No. 6 in the School House, with a pen in his hand, of which he was chewing the holder occasionally, apparently as an aid to thought.

A half-written letter lay before him, and seemingly the Honourable Arthur Augustus found it difficult to get on with the letter.

There was ink upon his fingers, and there was a smudge of it on his aristocratic nose, and several spots upon his usually immaculate shirt-cuffs.

In his noble brow there was a deep wrinkle.

Tom Merry grinned as he looked in at the study

Next Wednesday:

"SKIMPOLE'S WINDFALL!" AND "COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS!"

doorway. Arthur Augustus' noble face was decidedly worried.

But Tom Merry did not run away as requested.

"I am sowwy to appeah gwuff, deah boy," Arthur Augustus explained. "But I am witin' a vevy difficult lettah. It is to my patah, you know."

"Yes. But—"

"My patah has not been playin' the game. I ask you, Tom Mewwy, as a sensible chap, whethah I am wespensible for that widiculous old Kaisah goin' off his wockah?"

"Certainly not; it runs in the Hohenzollern family," said Tom. "But—"

"Therefore, it is uttaly absurd for my patah to tell me that owin' to the war he is unable to accede to my wepeated requests for wemittances," said D'Arcy warmly. "It is weally unjust to wegard my requests as wepeated. It is neahly a fortnight since the governah sent me a fivah. Now I have witten to him three times, and nothin' is forthcomin'—nothin' at all. I am goin' to wite him a vevy stiff lettah!"

"Good! But—"

"How you keep on intewwuptin' a chap, Tom Mewwy! I am in wathah a difficult posish. You see, I want to put it vevy plainly to my patah. At the same time, I wish to avoid appwoachin' anythin' like diswespct. Diswespct from a chap to his fathah is howwid bad form."

"Awful!" said Tom. "But—"

"I want to make it stwong, but not too stwong. Above all, I want to make sure of the fivah. You may be awah that a new stores has opened in Wayland, and there are a lot of things there I wequire. I am, in fact, goin' to make some vevy extensive purchases. They have a special department devoted to things for sendin' out to the Tommies. Now, undah the circes, it is a time for my governah to send me some extwah fivahs, not to dock my old allowance. Don't you think so?"

"Of course. But—"

"So I want to word this lettah vevy carefully, and it bweaks the thweed of my wefections when a duffah comes in and intewwupts me. I have persuaded Blake and Hewwies and Dig to leave me the studay to myself for a bit. Pway wun away and play, Tom Mewwy. Excuse me, you know."

"Fathead!" roared Tom Merry. "I've come to tell you—"

"Pway don't tell me anythin' at pwsent, deah boy. I have to devote all my attention to this wowwyin' lettah."

"A parcel's come for you—"

"Nevah mind that now."

"It's from Blankley's in Wayland."

"Yaas; all wight."

"The porter wants to see you."

"Wats!"

"And wants the money, fathead!"

"Oh, deah, what a feahful bothah!"

"The porter's waiting in the passage with the parcel, and won't part with it without the tin."

"What a weally wotten portah. Tell him to go and eat coke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cacklin' at, Tom Mewwy? I uttaly fail to see anythin' to cackle at. I wegard the portah from Blankley's as an impertinent fellah. Is he there?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Portah!" called out Arthur Augustus, without rising from his seat, or looking round. "Pway leave that parcel. I cannot wowwy with it now. I wegard you as a wowwyin' ass, portah!"

"I am sorry, sir," said a soft voice.

Arthur Augustus jumped. He left his chair with a bound, and simply spun round.

Tom Merry, in the passage, was laughing like a hyena. In the doorway stood the porter from Blankley's.

But it was not a "he."

A girl, in a very pretty uniform, with a pretty porter's cap on her fair hair, stood there, half smiling at the astounded Arthur Augustus.

D'Arcy's jaw dropped.

"Bai Jove!" he said faintly.

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"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Pway stop that widiculous cacklin', Tom Mewwy! Pway come in, deah gal—I mean miss. Vevy kind of you to give me a look in, I am suah."

The girl extended a small parcel towards Arthur Augustus, who blinked at it.

"Two-and-sixpence to pay, please!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"It's the porter from Blankley's, you dufer!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! Are—are you the portah, miss?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, sir."

"Gweat Scott! I—I was not awah that Blankley's had young lady portahs," said Arthur Augustus.

"It is owing to the war, sir. I am the porter. Two-and-sixpence to pay on this parcel, please!"

"Vevy good! I—I twust you will excuse my wathah hasty wemark," said Arthur Augustus, with a crimson face. "I—I thought—I mean I did not know it was a lady portah. Pway excuse me!"

"Certainly, sir! Two-and-sixpence—"

"Yaas—yaas, certainly!" Arthur Augustus ran his hands through his pockets. The girl from Blankley's was smiling, perhaps at Arthur Augustus' evident confusion, and perhaps at the inky smudge on his noble nose. "Two-and-six—that—that's half-a-crown, isn't it? Vevy good. Heah you are!"

Arthur Augustus took the parcel, and in his confusion let it slip from his fingers. There was a crash.

"Bai Jove, it's bwoken!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"What wotten luck! It was a new vase for the studay mantelpiece, you know. Howevah, it does not mattal. What is that, please?"

The girl from Blankley's was holding out a slip of paper.

"Your receipt, sir."

"Oh, I see!"

Arthur Augustus took the receipt, and glanced at it. Printed on the slip were the words, "Porter's signature," and following them came the pencilled name, "D. Fane."

Evidently D. Fane was the name of the charming-looking porter from Blankley's.

"What a pwetty name!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Good-afternoon, sir!"

"Pway wait a moment!" Arthur Augustus had often remarked that he was an awfully deep fellow, but never had he been so awfully deep as he was at this moment. "This is your name—what?"

"Yes; the receipt has to be signed by the porter delivering the goods, sir."

"Yaas; but ought not the name to be signed in full?" asked Arthur Augustus cunningly.

The girl from Blankley's looked a little surprised.

"If you prefer it, certainly, sir."

"Yaas, I should pwefer it."

"Very well."

The porter took the slip, and pencilled "Dorothy" over the initial, and handed it back to Arthur Augustus. Then she bade him good-afternoon, and left the studay. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed at the slip in his hand like a fellow in a trance. Tom Merry looked at him with a chuckle.

"What a weally wippin' name!" said Arthur Augustus. "I should like to have a sistah named Dowothy!"

"Go hon!"

"Awf'ly businesslike people, those Blankley's," said D'Arcy. "Wippin' ideah, havin' gal portahs—what?"

"Lots of firms have, now their men are gone to the war," said Tom Merry. "Nothing surprising in that, is there?"

"I wegard it as a wippin', businesslike ideah. It will make their customahs send them lots more ordahs."

"Eh?"

"I wathah think that ordahs will go wollin' in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That vase is bwoken," said Arthur Augustus, gazing at his wrecked parcel on the floor. "I shall have to ordah a new one, of course. Bai Jove, I'd bettah wite a postcard to Blankley's at once."

"What about your letter to your pater?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, that can wait!"
 "Isn't it awfully important?" grinned Tom.
 "Not vewy. I must get that postcard to Blankley's witten and posted for the collection. Bai Jove, what has that ass Blake done with the postcards?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, turning the study desk out hastily. "I shall lose the collection, the sillay ass! Oh, dear! Where is there a postcard? Have you got a postcard about you, Tom Mewwy?"

But Tom Merry did not reply; he limped away, doubled up with merriment. He left Arthur Augustus wildly searching the study for a postcard, upon which to indite his new order for Blankley's. Apparently he found one, for five minutes later he was seen careering across the quadrangle to the letter-box, and he breathed a deep sigh of relief when he found that he had caught the collection.

**CHAPTER 2.
 Drastic Measures!**

BLAKE and Herries and Digby came into Study No. 6, ruddy from footer practice. They were hungry, too—hungry as hunters. They looked expressively at the table. As their noble study-mate had been indoors there was no reason whatever why he shouldn't have had tea ready. But there was no sign of tea in the study.

Arthur Augustus was seated at the table, chewing the handle of his pen. He did not even seem to see his chums enter or to hear them.

There was a far-away expression on his face, and his eyes had a very dreamy look. Blake woke him up, so to speak, with a tremendous thump on the shoulder.

"Yowoo!" roared Arthur Augustus. "You uttah ass! Wow!"

"You shouldn't go to sleep writing a letter," said Blake chidingly. "Besides, it's high time you finished that letter to your pater."

"I am not witin' to my pater, you fathead!" said Arthur Augustus, rubbing his shoulder.

"Finished it?"

"No. I had forgotten all about it."

"Forgotten it!" said Blake, in surprise. "What about the fiver? You were going to screw a fiver out of him with that letter."

"Oh, wats!"

"The study's short of funds," said Blake seriously. "It's time Lord Eastwood played up, you know. 'Tain't playing the game to leave this study in the lurch. But what the dickens were you mooning over if it's not the letter to your pater?"

"Oh, wats!"

Blake glanced at the sheet of impot paper Arthur Augustus had been scribbling on. His eyes grew round with astonishment as he read:

"Like fairy dew upon the grasses,
 Her feet are lightsome as she passes.
 Her voice is like the mellow tone
 Of sweetest flutes by fairies blown!"

Jack Blake stared at that poetical effort blankly. Arthur Augustus left off rubbing his shoulder, made a sudden jump to the table, and caught up the paper. His face was crimson.

"What the merry thunder does that mean?" ejaculated Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Is that about Cousin Ethel?"

"Certainly not!"

"Or Mary the housemaid?"

"You uttah ass!"

"What was it?" asked Herries, who had not seen the lines.

"Poetry!" said Blake. "Gussy's perpetrating poetry. It goes like this."

"Dwy up, Blake!"

"Rats! Why shouldn't Herries and Dig hear it? You can't have too much of a good thing," said Blake. "It goes like this, as near as I remember:

"Like hammers used by blacksmith's men,
 Her feet are number nine or ten,
 Her voice is like the squeaky tone
 Of some old wheezy gramophone!"

"You uttah ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "You have got it all wong!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a wotten boundah, Blake! Some jokes are in vewy bad taste. That wotten joke is in vewy bad taste indeed!"

"Go hon! What about tea?" asked Blake, quite uncrushed.

"I don't want any tea."

"Well, I do!" said Blake cheerfully. "What is there in the cupboard, Dig? Haven't you done the shopping, Gussy?"

"I forgot all about the shoppin'!"

"Off your rocker?" asked Dig.

"Pway don't be widiculous, Dig! I wefuse to answah absurd questions. I wefuse, in fact, to continue this discush with you duffahs at all!"

Arthur Augustus walked out of the study with his nose high in the air.

His chums looked at one another in astonishment.

"What on earth's the matter with him?" asked Herries.

Blake shook his head.

"Blessed if I know, unless he's fallen in love again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme see; it's a whole term since he was in love last time," said Blake thoughtfully. "I suppose it's due again. So near as I remember, Cousin Ethel was the first, then there was the Head's niece, then the vicar's daughter, then the girl in the emporium, and I think one or two others that I've

forgotten. I believe he generally breaks into poetry when he's in love. It's the usual thing, you know. But who the deuce can it be this time?"

"Give it up!" yawned Herries. "Let's have tea."

Study No. 6 had tea, but Arthur Augustus did not return. Apparently he was "off his feed." But Blake remarked that he had been just like that last time. It was nothing new.

After tea the chums of Study No. 6 went to look for Arthur Augustus. They did not find him in the School House, and they inquired for him. The Terrible Three of the Shell—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther—were chuckling together in the doorway, apparently over some good joke, and Blake & Co. bore down on them.

"Seen Gussy?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what's the cackle about?" demanded Blake.

"Oh, we've seen him!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"He's walking under the elms now, with a far-away look in his eyes. I recommend a strait-jacket!"

"So you've noticed it?" grinned Blake.

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "I was there when it happened. Love at first sight, you know, same as they do in the novels and the newspaper serials."

"Love at first sight!" said Blake. "It can't be Miss Marie then; he's seen her lots of times. It can't be the new cook, surely?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No. It's the girl from Blankley's."

"The which?"

**THE
 GREYFRIARS
 HERALD**

Edited by Harry Wharton & Co.
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"They have women porters at Blankley's now, since the war, and they come to deliver the goods," chuckled Tom. "You should have seen Gussy—fairly floored. Knocked all in a heap. You should have spotted him finding out her name; he's as deep as a well. And he's sent off another order to Blankley's, so that the charmer will come again to-morrow."

"Oh, my hat!" said Dig.

"This has got to be stopped," said Blake resolutely. "Why, our study will be chipped no end, with Gussy playing the giddy ox like this. Come on, you chaps, and we'll talk to him straight!"

Blake and Herries and Digby marched out into the quadrangle, leaving the Terrible Three grinning.

They found Arthur Augustus pacing to and fro in a solitary spot under the old elms. His lips were moving, as if he were murmuring to himself. Every now and then he paused and gazed up at the sky.

Blake brought him down to earth again with a slap on the back, which elicited a wild yell from the swell of St. Jim's.

"Ow! You wuff ass! Ow!"

Blake shook his forefinger at him.

"You've got to chuck it, Gussy!" he said severely.

"Chuck what, you duffah?"

"You've been mashed before, and we've borne with it," said Blake. "But there's a limit. We're not going to allow you to trifle with the affections of that girl from Blankley's!"

"Certainly not," said Dig solemnly. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy. Talk about Lothario!"

"We shall forbid the banias!" added Herries.

Arthur Augustus turned crimson.

"I refuse to listen to your wibald remarks!" he said hotly. "Pway mind your own bizney!"

"This is our bizney," said Blake warmly. "We're not going to have a gay dog breaking hearts in our study. We're going to cure you before it's gone too far. Love is like a cold in the head; it can be cured if taken in hand in time. What you need is plenty of exercise. Mooning about under trees is the very worst thing for it—only makes it worse. Come on!"

"I refuse to come on. Pway leave me."

"A good sprint round the quad is what you need. Take his other arm, Herries," said Blake, gripping Arthur Augustus by one arm.

"What-ho!" said Herries, possessing himself of Gussy's other arm.

"Welease me, you wottahs!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"You come behind, Dig. When he lags, help him with your boot."

"Certainly," said Dig; "I'll do anything to help Gussy out of a scrape like this. It's for your own good, Gussy."

"I insist upon bein' weleased!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, struggling in the grasp of his over-zealous chums.

"Not till you have fallen out of love again," said Blake firmly. "This way!"

"Oh, you wottahs—Ow!"

Arthur Augustus simply had to go. Struggling vainly, he was rushed off in the grasp of his chums. Digby, bringing up the rear, nobly did his part, letting out with a heavy boot whenever the swell of St. Jim's attempted to slow down.

"Ow—ow! You wottahs! Gwooh! Oh, deah!"

Right round the wide quadrangle went the chums of Study No. 6 at a great speed. As they completed the circuit of the quad, Blake paused.

"Cured?" he panted.

"Wow! You wottah! Wow!"

"Come on, then!"

"I refuse—Yow-ow!"

Round the quad they went again, running hard. Loud yells of laughter greeted them on all sides. The sight of Arthur Augustus struggling and wriggling in the grasp of Blake and Herries, while Digby helped him from behind, seemed to strike the St. Jim's fellows as funny.

As they passed the door of the School House a second time Arthur Augustus made a terrific effort, and wrenched himself away, and bolted into the house like a rabbit into a burrow.

"After him!" shrieked Blake.

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The trio rushed in pursuit.

Arthur Augustus bolted up the stairs. He rushed into Talbot of the Shell, who was coming down, and floored him; he collided with Levison of the Fourth on the landing, and sent him spinning. In the Fourth-Form passage he cannoned into Reilly and Kerruish, who were coming away from their study, and they crashed into the wall. Arthur Augustus did not heed. He did not even pause to ask whether they were hurt. Perhaps he knew they were. He bolted on to Study No. 6, rushed in, and slammed the door and locked it.

Then he sank into the armchair gasping.

A few seconds later Blake and Herries and Digby were hammering at the door. They were joined there by Levison and Kerruish and Reilly, breathing vengeance.

"My hat, he's locked the door!" shouted Blake, exasperated. "Gussy! Gussy! Fathead! Open the door!"

"Go and eat coke, you wottah!"

"Sure, I'll pulverise ye!" yelled Reilly. "Open the dure, ye spalpeen!"

"Wats!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

But the door did not open. The voice of Kildare of the Sixth came booming up the stairs:

"Stop that row, you young rascals! Do you want me to come there with a cane?"

The attack on Study No. 6 ceased. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was left in peace at last. About an hour later Blake and Herries and Dig looked into Tom Merry's study, where the Terrible Three were at work on their preparation.

"Room for little us?" asked Blake. "Can you lend us some books, and let us do our prep here? We're shut out of our study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't a laughing matter," growled Blake. "That howling ass Gussy won't let us in. We've promised to scalp him. He won't open the door. We're homeless."

The Terrible Three chuckled, and made room for the homeless Fourth-Formers.

When prep was over, Blake & Co. visited Study No. 6 again. The door was still locked. They breathed dire threats through the keyhole, and retired. But it was not till bed-time that Arthur Augustus came forth from his lair.

CHAPTER 3.

Hard Hit.

"HALLO! Wherefore this thyness?"

Monty Lowther asked the question.

It was the following day, and lessons being over, the juniors were thinking of footer practice. The Terrible Three had called in at Study No. 6 for Blake & Co.

Study No. 6 were all at home.

And they were all talking at once. Their voices could be heard at a considerable distance along the Fourth-Form passage.

Blake was looking wrathly. Herries and Dig appeared decidedly exasperated. Arthur Augustus wore an expression of lofty indignation and scorn. There appeared to be a rift in the lute in Study No. 6.

Tom Merry waved his hand gently to the mutually exasperated Fourth-Formers.

"Peace, my infants!" he said chidingly.

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite," said Manners seriously. "As you are probably aware, it is their nature to. Let bears and lions—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake.

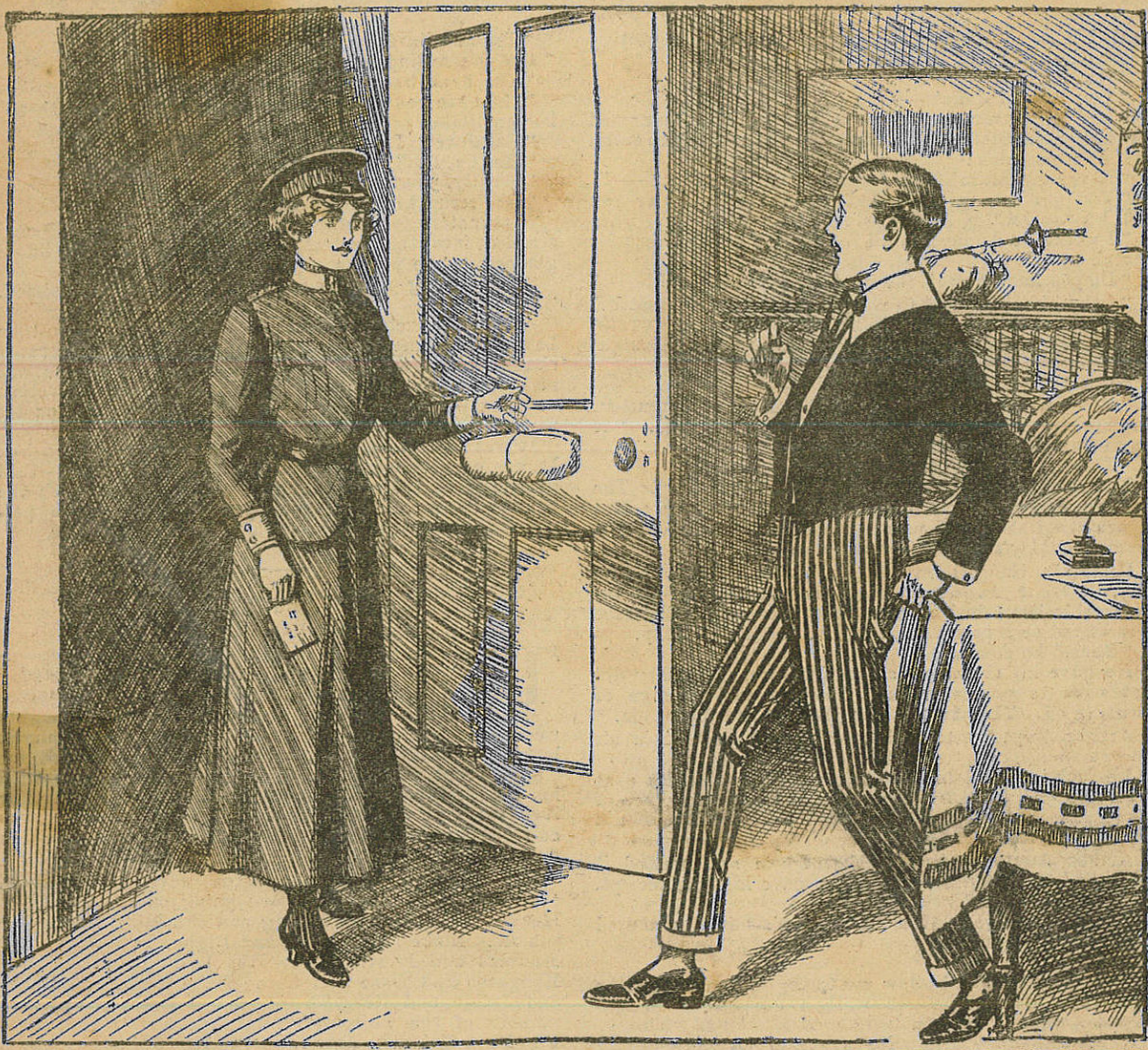
"Growl and fight," resumed Manners calmly; "they've nothing else to do. But fags like you should never let your angry passions rise—"

"Dry up, fathead!"

"Your little fists were never meant to black each other's eyes!" concluded Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Besides, how can you be waxy when you are permitted to behold the great Augustus in all his glory!" said Monty Lowther, looking with great admiration at the swell of the Fourth, who was simply resplendent. "Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed so nuttily as this."



"Bai Jove! Are—are you the portah, miss?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Yes, sir." "Gweat Scott! I—I was not awah that Blankley's had young lady portahs," said Arthur Augustus. "It is owing to the war, sir. I am the porter. Two-and-sixpence to pay on this parcel, please." (See Chapter 1.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Arthur Augustus was indeed a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. Never had his shirt-cuffs been so spotless, his tie so elegantly tied, his trousers so beautifully creased, his highly-coloured waistcoat so free from spot or blemish. He presented a picture that was almost dazzling to the eye.
 Curiously enough, it was that dazzling aspect of the swell of St. Jim's that exercised so irritating an effect upon his study-mates.
 "Look at the ass!" exclaimed the exasperated Blake. "He's got his best bib and tucker on. Instead of coming down to the footer— Look at him!"
 "I have no time for footah this aftahnoon, Blake."
 "Cousin Ethel coming?" asked Lowther innocently.
 "Cousin Ethel is not comin', Lowthah."
 "Then why this glorious thusness?"
 "I pwesume that there is no harm in a fellah makin' himself look decent?" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "As a mattah of fact, I am keepin' up the weputation of the studay by dwessin' decently. These thwee wagged wobins—"
 "These what?" ejaculated Herries.
 "Wagged wobins," said D'Arcy. "The knees of your twousahs, Hewwies, bag fwightfully. Dig's jacket looks as if it had been used for polishing a slate. Look at

Blake's necktie—just as if he had been twyin' to hang himself, and was stopped only just in time."
 "Why, you—you—you—" stuttered Blake.
 "One well-dwessed fellah makes a studay look respect-able," said Arthur Augustus.
 "He's got his best bib and tucker on because he's in love!" roared Blake. "He's doing it again."
 "Doing it again!" assented Dig.
 "He's always doing it!" hooted Herries.
 "Weally, you wottahs—"
 "We've stood it before, time and again, and we're fed up!" continued Blake. "My idea is, that Gussy has fallen in love quite enough, and that he ought to give it a rest—at least till the end of the football season."
 "You uttah ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus, growing crimson to the tips of his ears. "I wefuse to allow you to make such wibald jokes, Blake."
 "I'm not joking. I'm fed up. It's the girl from Blankley's!" growled Blake. "Gussy's been sending more orders. He's got a dodge of sending orders every day, so that he can interview the charmer regularly. We're not standing it!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "If you Shell boundahs have come heah to cackle—"
 "We have!" roared Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "And if he don't chuck it, we're going to rag him!"

NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"SKIMPOLE'S WINDFALL!"

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said Blake. "We're not going to have him getting engaged—and perhaps married—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful duffah—"

"It's jolly near as bad as taking to drink," pursued the indignant Blake. "He can't expect the study to stand it! It's too thick!"

"If you are askin' for a feahful thwashin', Blake—"

"You get into your football clobber at once, or you will hear something drop!" said Blake.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I have no time for footah now."

"Do you know there's the Rookwood match soon?"

"I shall have no time to play in the Wookwood match."

"Hark at him!" said Blake, with breathless wrath. "Probably planning an elopement already—a midnight bolt in one of Blankley's vans—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wibald ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, brandishing his knuckles under his chum's nose. "If you uttah another word on that subject—"

"Two-and-sixpence to pay, please!"

The swell of St. Jim's lowered his fist suddenly. The juniors all spun round towards the door. The graceful figure stood there. A parcel was held out, and the girl from Blankley's smiled demurely over it.

Certainly, the girl from Blankley's looked very charming. Arthur Augustus might be excused if his inflammable heart had been touched once more. His face was as red as a peony as he looked at Miss Dorothy.

"Yaas," he stammered.

He gave his chums an expressive look. But they did not seem to understand it. They showed no sign of clearing off. They stood their ground, and looked on.

Arthur Augustus took the parcel, and fumbled in his pockets.

He had intended to have quite a pleasant little chat with the girl from Blankley's. But in the presence of six grinning juniors the pleasant little chat did not seem to be feasible.

Arthur Augustus found a half-crown and handed it over, and the girl from Blankley's gave him the receipt.

"Good-day, sir!"

"I suppose your van is waitin', miss," ventured Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, sir."

"Pewwaps you will allow me to see you as fah as the van. The—the stairs are wathah dangewous," stammered Arthur Augustus.

And, without waiting for a reply, he accompanied the girl from Blankley's down the passage.

The juniors in the passage looked at one another expressively.

"Fairly hit!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Knocked into a cocked hat!" chuckled Manners.

Blake breathed hard through his nose.

"And he's going to chuck up footer to go mashing!" he said wrathfully. "Well, I'm fed up! He's going to be stopped. Wait till he comes in!"

But it was a long time before Arthur Augustus came in. It seemed to take a considerable time to see the girl from Blankley's to her van. The juniors went downstairs at last, and they were just in time to see Arthur Augustus go into the prefects' room. In that room was a telephone, which the juniors were sometimes allowed to use.

"'Phoning, by gum!" said Blake.

The juniors looked into the prefects' room. Arthur Augustus was at the telephone, and he was speaking into the receiver.

"Is that Blankley's? Vewy good! Please send me somethin' to-morrow. Yaas, D'Arcy, School House, St. Jim's. What? Oh, yaas! Anythin' will do—I—I mean, send me a box of chocolates. Vawious pwices? Oh, yaas—ten-and-six—yaas, ten-and-six will do. The aftah-noon's delivery—yaas. Thanks!"

Arthur Augustus hung up the receiver. He turned from the telephone to find his chums glaring at him.

"So you've sent another order to Blankley's!" yelled Blake.

"Yaas."

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"Ten-and-six for a box of chocolates!" howled Digby. "Are you rolling in money? Has that fiver come?"

"The fivah has not come, Dig."

"How are you going to pay for the chocolates, then?" hooted Blake.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that."

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

"Weally, you fellahs—"

"Oh, scrag him!" said Blake.

Fortunately for Arthur Augustus, Kildare and Darrel strolled into the prefect's room just then. Kildare glanced at the juniors.

"You young rascals—ragging here!" he exclaimed.

"Be off!"

Arthur Augustus walked off in security. Even then he did not change for footer. He eluded his exasperated chums, and sauntered away by himself. When he was seen later, he was strolling aimlessly under the elms, occasionally glancing up at the sky, with a smile on his face which Blake described as idiotic.

It was clear that the swell of St. Jim's was hard hit. It was equally clear—to Blake & Co. at least—that drastic measures were required. Study No. 6—with the hearty co-operation of the Terrible Three—were prepared to apply the necessary drastic measures.

CHAPTER 4.

Trial by Jury!

THAT evening it might have been seen, as a novelist would say, that there was something "on" in the School House. Arthur Augustus did not think of observing it. His thoughts were elsewhere. He was strolling in the quadrangle, looking up at the moon, with a reckless disregard for "prep" that was certain to get him into trouble with his Form-master in the morning. But what did Arthur Augustus care just then for prep or Form-masters? Prep and Form-masters had vanished from his mind, which was filled with thoughts of sweeter things.

But although Arthur Augustus never thought of observing it, a great deal was going on in the School House. There was whispering and chuckling among the juniors. Blake and Herries and Digby, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, were the leading spirits. But Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn of the Shell, and Reilly and Julian and Kerruish of the Fourth, joined the number of the whisperers and chucklers. And then Figgins & Co. came over from the New House. Figgins and Kerr and Wynn seemed to enter into the plot, whatever it was, with great keenness. Whispering and chuckling went on at a great rate.

After a time, the juniors might have been seen making their way towards the woodshed and collecting there. Then Blake & Co. went to look for Arthur Augustus.

They found him under the elms. He was gazing at the moon, and the idiotic smile, as Blake described it, was still upon his face. Doubtless the vision of the girl from Blankley's was floating before his mind.

Blake tapped his elegant chum on the shoulder. Arthur Augustus came suddenly back to earth, and blinked at him.

"Come on!" said Blake.

"It is not bed-time yet, Blake."

"Come on!"

"As for prep, I am leavin' it for this evenin'."

"Come on!"

"I do not want any suppah."

"Come on!" roared Blake.

"Wats! I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Collar him!"

Blake took one of Gussy's arms and Herries took the other. Arthur Augustus, in anticipation of being dribbled round the quad again, struggled violently.

"Will you release me, you wottahs? I—yow!"

The Fourth-Formers marched him off, still struggling. Arthur Augustus was marched away to the woodshed, and marched into it. Blake and Herries entered with him, still holding his arms. Dig followed them in and closed the door.

Arthur Augustus stared round him in astonishment.

The woodshed was crowded. Two or three bike lanterns shed their light upon the scene. It was a striking scene.

Upon a chair, perched upon a high bench, Tom Merry sat, and for some mysterious reason he had a large wig on his head, the property of the Junior Dramatic Society. Manners, with a large black coat on, was seated by the bench. Before them, on several benches and boxes, there were twelve juniors sitting in rows—Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Bedford, Julian, Kerruish, Reilly, Noble, Dane Glyn, Talbot, and Gore. Monty Lowther had a separate seat, and he also had a large wig on. Opposite him was another chair with a wig lying on it. Blake took the chair, and put the wig on his head.

Digby and Herries picket up cricket-stumps and stood guard over Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's surveyed the extraordinary scene in amazement.

Some of the juniors were smiling, but others were looking very solemn. Tom Merry, perched above the heads of all present, wore an expression of owl-like gravity.

Arthur Augustus blinked at them, and jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and blinked again.

"You utter asses—" he began.

"Silence in court!" said Manners, in a deep, booming voice. Manners, apparently, was clerk of the court.

Arthur Augustus realised that he was in a court of law. "I wegard this as an outwage, you duffahs!"

"If the prisoner persists in speaking out of order, he will be committed for contempt of court!" said Tom Merry, from his perch on the elevated chair. Arthur Augustus recognised the fact that the captain of the Shell was a judge.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" "Order!" said Manners.

"I wefuse to wemain here!"

Arthur Augustus made a break for the door. Herries and Digby collared him at once. Herries and Dig, it was plain, were warders.

"Welcase me, you wottahs!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"I wefuse to take any part in these wiculous proceedin's."

"If the prisoner is violent, he must be put in irons," said the judge. "Warders, do your duty!"

"Yes, your lordship!" said Dig.

Clink! Clink! Clink! The irons were produced—an ancient and very heavy set of disused fireirons, suffering considerably from rust. Herries and Digby yanked Arthur Augustus' hands together, looped a cord over them and knotted it, and tied it to the clinking fireirons.

"You uttah wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus, in a voice of anguish. "You are wubbin' wust on my twousahs."

"Order!" boomed Manners.

"Oh, deah! Oh, cwumbs!"

With an ancient and heavy poker, shovel and tongs dangling to his wrists, the prisoner at the bar was quite helpless. He sat down on a box, his irons clinking away merrily, and glared.

"Clerk of the court!" said Judge Merry.

"Yes, your washup," said Manners.

"Read out the charge!"

"I pwotest—" "Silence in court while the clerk reads out the charge!"

"Oh, wats!"

Manners unfolded a sheet of impot paper, and proceeded to read out the charge. The court listened in respectful silence, and the only interruptions were the indignant snorts from the prisoner at the bar.

"Whereas the prisoner Arthur Augustus Adolphus Gustavus D'Arcy, of that ilk, is charged with playing the giddy ox, and giving up footer for the nefarious purpose of mashing girls from Blankley's, and whereas it is considered that it is unpatriotic to fall in love in war-time, and whereas the friends of the said Arthur Gustavus are fed up with his fatheadedness generally, the said Arthur Adolphus is hereby brought before the High Court of the Woodshed, to be tried by twelve good men and true, according to the Statute, Vic. I., Cap. II., Art. III. Div. IV., Part V., Appendix VI."

"Wats!"

"And if the prisoner shall be found guilty," went on the learned clerk, "he shall be sentenced to be ragged baldheaded, and displayed before the gaze of the girl from Blankley's in a disreputable state, according to the Act for the Defence of Study No. 6."

"You uttah ass!" "Prisoner at the bar—"

"Wats!"

"You will now be tried by jury," said the clerk of the court, with dignity, "and any contempt of court will be punished by a rap on the napper with a cricket-stump."

"Fathead! Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus, as a stump rapped upon his noble head. The warders were doing their duty.

"Hewwies, you wottah! Dig, you beast—" "Silence!" thundered the judge. "Counsel for the prosecution pile in—I mean get on with the washing!"

Jack Blake jumped up. Arthur Augustus rubbed his head and glared, and the counsel for the prosecution got on with the washing.

CHAPTER 5. Found Guilty!

"GENTLEMEN of the jury—" "Hear, hear!"

"Silence in court!" said Manners. "Jury-men don't cheer, you asses! Jurymen have to shut up and do as the judge tells them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen of the jury," said Blake, "in all my career at the bar I have seldom come upon so heinous a case as this. Gentlemen, I beg you to look at the prisoner. I beg you to note his sinister and slinking aspect—"

"Weally, Blake—" "His shifty eyes, his nefarious manner of concealing himself behind an eyeglass, and his hangdog look generally. Gentlemen, the charge against this person is of the most serious character. I shall call witnesses to prove my statements. At a time when the football season is fairly in swing, the prisoner at the bar has deserted the playing fields, and ceased to urge the flying ball, and for what? Gentlemen, I repeat for what? To order articles from a large stores in Wayland—articles for which he has no use—in order that they may be delivered by a young lady porter—"

"Dwy up, you beast!"

"Rap!"

"Yawwooh! Oh, my nappah! Gwoooogh!"

"Instead of attending footer practice, the prisoner at the bar dresses himself in his Sunday clothes, and hangs about like a slacker, waiting for the girl from Blankley's to arrive with a parcel. During the intervals between the deliveries from Blankley's the prisoner is absentminded, irritable, capricious, neglectful of his old pals, and a worry generally. Gentlemen, if the rules of the court allow me to call the prisoner's record as evidence, I may say that this is by no means the first offence."

Monty Lowther, counsel for the defence, jumped up.

"The prisoner's record cannot be called as evidence," he said. "I appeal to his washup."

The judge nodded solemnly.

"Counsel for the prosecution is called to order," he said.

"I bow to your lordship's decision," said Blake meekly. "Gentlemen of the jury, I have stated my case. I call for a sentence of guilty upon the prisoner at the bar. I rely upon your verdict, gentlemen, upon the well-known good sense and honest judgment which has made the jury system the glory of the civilised world."

Blake sat down.

"Lemme see, what next?" asked the judge.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Manners!" came a voice from the jury. "The clerk of the court always has to tell the judge what to do, you know."

"Guilty or not guilty?" said the judge.

"That ought to have come first," said Figgins, with a chuckle.

"Silence in court!" thundered the judge. "Prisoner at the bar, do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Wats!"

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NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"SKIMPOLE'S WINDFALL!"

"As the prisoner refuses to plead, the trial will proceed," said the judge. "And if the jury keep on cackling, I shall order the court to be cleared."

"Will you release me, you sillay asses?"

Rap!

"Wo-wow-wow!"

Counsel for the defence got on his feet.

"Gentlemen of the jury, you have listened to the eloquent speech of my learned brother. Gentlemen, I am here to defend the prisoner at the bar. I am here to say what little can be said in his favour."

"Go it, Monty!"

"Gentlemen, it must be admitted that the prisoner at the bar has played the giddy ox. But is there no excuse for him? It must be remembered, gentlemen, that the prisoner belongs to an ancient and aristocratic family, and consequently cannot be expected to possess the ordinary allowance of brains. As the prisoner will, in due course, take his seat in the House of Lords, brains are not in the least essential to him, and would indeed be out of place. Under the circumstances, I submit that if the prisoner has acted like an howling ass and a burbling duffer, it is no more than should be expected of a scion of one of our oldest families."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"The defence, therefore, is that the prisoner, not being in possession of the full faculties of an ordinary person, is not responsible for his actions, and must be discharged on the grounds of hopeless idiocy, or else be detained during his Majesty's pleasure."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottah——"

Crack!

"Yoooooop!"

"Gentlemen of the jury"—it was the judge this time—"you have heard the speeches of the learned counsel for the prosecution and the defence. You will now kindly find the prisoner guilty."

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed the foreman of the jury, Figgins of the Fourth. "We settle that for ourselves, don't we?"

The judge frowned.

"Certainly not! Juries have to do as they're told."

"Then what the merry dickens is the use of a jury at all?" demanded Figgins.

"None whatever. It's an ancient custom, that's all, which has survived for some reason not explained."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, we're jolly well going to find our verdict ourselves," said Figgins. "Now, you chaps, guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" chorused the jury.

"Hold on!" said Talbot of the Shell, laughing. "You haven't called any witnesses."

"My hat!" said the clerk of the court. "Never mind, it's too late for witnesses now. Besides, it's jolly near bed-time."

"Guilty!" shouted the jury.

"Are you unanimous in this verdict?" asked the judge.

"Yes, rather!"

"Good egg! Prisoner at the bar, have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed on you according to law?"

"I wegard you as a sillay ass, Tom Mewwy!"

"That is not evidence. Have you anything——"

"Oh, wats!"

"Very well. Prisoner at the bar, after a fair trial before twelve of your fellow-countrymen, in the High Court of the Woodshed, you have been found guilty of this serious charge. You are guilty of neglecting footer, and of casting sheep's eyes at the girl from Blankley's."

"You impertinent beast!"

Crack!

"Oh, wow! You beast, Dig! Oh! Ow!"

"Sentence will now be passed. Unless you immediately give your solemn promise, honest Injun, to fall out of love immediately, and on the spot, and have no further dealings with Blankley's, you will be bumped on the floor of the High Court of the Woodshed!"

"You wuffian!"

"And to-morrow, when the girl from Blankley's

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arrives, you will be displayed before her eyes in a disreputable state, which would shock any girl from any Blankley's. Take your choice!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Warders, execute the sentence!"

"Hands off, you wottahs! Yawwooop!"

Clink! Clink! Clink! Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Yow-ow! Help! Gweat Scott! Yow! Gwoooogh! Ow!"

The court broke up. Judge and counsel and jury fled out of the High Court of the Woodshed, chuckling. Arthur Augustus was left sitting on the floor, roaring. It took him about a quarter of an hour to free himself from his irons, and then he limped out of the high court, dusty and dishevelled and furious.

CHAPTER 6.

Broken Friendship!

"GOOD-NIGHT, Gussy!"

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther spoke all together as they passed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the passage, on their way to the Shell dormitory.

Arthur Augustus did not respond.

He extracted his eyeglass from his waistcoat-pocket, jammed it into his eye, and surveyed the Terrible Three with a look of lofty scorn. Then he turned upon his heel.

"Cut dead!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

"The cut direct!" gasped Manners.

"Oh, Gussy!" said Tom Merry reproachfully. "Won't you speak to your old pals, after all they've done for you?"

Arthur Augustus looked round.

"I refuse to speak a word to you!" he said.

"Not one little word?" sighed Monty Lowther.

"Not a syllable!" said D'Arcy firmly. "I wegard you as wank wottahs, and I have ewased your names from the list of my fwriends. You have acted vewy impertinently upon a mattah that should be sacwed to ewery pwopahly-constituted mind. I wegard you with scorn!"

And the swell of St. Jim's stalked away to his own dormitory.

The Terrible Three certainly ought to have been crushed. But they required a great deal of crushing. They grinned cheerily as they walked on to the Shell dormitory, where they made the interesting announcement that Gussy was on the high horse—an announcement that was received with many chuckles by the Shell.

Arthur Augustus walked into the Fourth-Form dormitory with his noble nose very high in the air. He was on his dignity, and when Arthur Augustus was on his dignity he was a very dignified person indeed.

When the Fourth Form turned in, Blake and Herries and Digby spoke in a sort of chorus:

"Good-night, Gussy!"

No reply.

"Good-night, Gussy darling!" called out Reilly.

Silence.

"Is it deaf ye are, Gussy?"

"I am not deaf, Weilly."

"Then why don't you say good-night?"

"I wefuse to say good-night to you, Weilly, unless you apologise for your beastlay, impertinent conduct!"

"Howly mother av Moses!"

"What about little us?" inquired Blake.

"I wefuse to speak to you, Blake! I no longah wegard you as a fwriend!"

"After all we've done for you!" exclaimed Blake.

Snort!

Arthur Augustus had let the sun go down upon his wrath.

The next morning the same chilling dignity was visible in the aspect of the swell of St. Jim's. All his old friends were cut dead.

Arthur Augustus walked in the quad in solitary state until breakfast. At breakfast he was as silent as a mummy.

Blake slipped his arm through Gussy's as the Fourth

were going to their Form-room. Arthur Augustus disengaged his arm very deliberately.

"Still going strong?" asked Blake affectionately.

"I wefuse to speak to you, Blake!"

"You don't want me to lend you ten-and-six to pay for the chocolates when they come?" chuckled Blake.

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove! I had forgotten that! Howevah, I shall wefuse to bowwow that sum of you, Blake!"

"Perhaps it's just as well," said Blake thoughtfully, "as I've only got ninenpence. But what are you going to say to the girl from Blankley's?"

"That is my bizney, Blake!"

"Leave it to us," suggested Blake. "If you like we'll raise the tin to pay for the chocolates, and we'll see Dorothy for you."

"I wefuse to allow you to uttah that young lady's name in so familiar a mannah, Blake!"

"Floored again!" said Blake. "However, we're going to look after you."

Arthur Augustus looked a little apprehensive.

"If you play any wotten twicks this aftahnoon, Blake——"

"Don't you remember the sentence of the court?" demanded Blake.

"As I have dwopped your acquaintance, Blake, you will pway not assume the wight to interfeah with me in any way."

"But we haven't dropped yours," explained Blake. "You can throw over your old pals if you like, but we're true as steel. We stick to you like glue; we stick to our old pal like a German fleet to a canal!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"You rely on us," said Blake cheerily. "When Miss Thingummy comes to-day with the chocolates she is going to have a surprise. Leave it to us. We'll attend to the whole bizney."

"You uttah wottah!"

It was time to get into the Form-room, and Arthur Augustus had no opportunity of telling Blake what he thought of him.

During morning lessons Arthur Augustus might have been observed to wear a worried look.

Having dropped the acquaintance of all his old chums, on account of their extremely impertinent interference in his affairs of the heart, he might naturally have expected that they would go on their way, and leave him to rip, so to speak.

Apparently they were going to do nothing of the sort. Their friendship for him was unabated, and they were going to show it in their own peculiar way.

Arthur Augustus looked forward to the afternoon with apprehension.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, had occasion to rag the Honourable Arthur Augustus several times that morning. In the first place, he had done no preparation the previous evening, and in the second place his thoughts were wandering. He construed in a way that made Mr. Lathom open his eyes wide, and earned the unfortunate Gussy a hundred lines.

Arthur Augustus was very glad that it was a half-holiday that afternoon. He felt that he could not put his mind into lessons, he really couldn't.

At dinner his noble brows were wrinkled, and he stole several glances at his former chums. When he caught Blake's eye, Blake nodded encouragingly. So did Dig and Herries. Evidently they were as friendly as ever, in spite of Gussy's icy reserve. Their devoted friendship was not what Gussy wanted just then. He would rather have been without it. But apparently there was no getting out of it.

"You're playing this afternoon, Gussy?" said Tom Merry after dinner, tapping the swell of St. Jim's on the shoulder in the most cordial way.

"I am not playin', Tom Mewwy!"

"But it's a Form match, and you know what will happen to the Fourth if you're not there," said Tom seriously.

"They have bwought it upon themselves," said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "I wefuse to play for the Fourth!"

When the footballers were ready, Blake looked for Arthur Augustus. He found him under the elms,

scribbling upon a paper that was outspread on his knee. D'Arcy hastily thrust the paper into his pocket as Blake came up.

"We're waiting for you," said Blake.

"I wefuse to play, Blake!"

"Fathead! Come on!"

"Pway do not speak to me, Blake. I decline to know you!"

"Look here, Figgins is captaining the Fourth, and if you stick out he will put in a New House chap!" shouted Blake.

"That is quite indiffewent to me!"

"You silly jabberwock——"

Arthur Augustus rose and walked away. Blake glared after him, in two minds whether to collar him and yank him forcibly away to the football-ground. But the footballers were waiting, and Blake stamped away wrathfully.

"Isn't he coming?" asked Dig.

Blake gave a snort.

"No; he's standing out—the ass! Let him wait till six o'clock, and then we'll give him a lesson!"

And the Form match was played without the assistance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. When it was finished, and the players came off, Arthur Augustus did not even inquire whether the Fourth or the Shell had won. He seemed to have lost all interest in football. Blake and Herries and Digby found him in Study No. 6 when they came in, but he did not look at them or utter a word.

"Well, ass?" greeted Blake.

No reply.

"The Shell have licked us!" growled Blake.

Arthur Augustus smiled slightly.

"What could you expect, Blake, undah the cires?"

"Well, with so many New House bounders in the Form team we hadn't much chance, I suppose," said Blake. "What have you got your best bib and tucker on for?"

Arthur Augustus did not seem to hear.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came in at tea-time. Arthur Augustus looked very restively at the juniors.

"I twust you fellahs will leave me the studay to myself about six," he remarked.

"No jolly fear!" said Blake promptly.

"Weally, Blake——"

"We're all going to be on the scene," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Then I shall wetire fwom the studay," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

Blake jumped up and put his back to the door.

"That you jolly well won't!" he said. "You're not going to waylay the girl from Blankley's in the quad. She's coming up to the study, as usual."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Quarter to six," said Tom Merry. "Time to get ready. You've got your colour-box, Manners?"

"Yes, rather!"

"We're ready for you, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus made a jump for the door. The next moment half a dozen pairs of hands were grasping him.

CHAPTER 7.

Great Preparations!

"W OTTAHS!"

"Collar him!"

"Wascals!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Welease me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you feahful boundahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, struggling desperately. "If you do not welease me at once——"

"Hold his paws," said Blake. "Now, Gussy—yaroooh!" Blake broke off suddenly, as Arthur Augustus' flying fists crashed upon him. He caught one with his eye and one with his nose. "Yarooooh! Oh, my hat! Oh, my nose! Yooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar him, can't you, you cackling fatheads?" shrieked Blake.

Arthur Augustus was putting up a fight like a second edition of the celebrated Sergeant O'Leary. Six juniors were collaring him on all sides, but the noble blood of all the D'Arcies was up, and Gussy was hitting out with terrific vim.

There was a crash as he was borne to the floor, with his affectionate chums clutching him and sprawling over him.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Keep quiet, you ass!"

"Welcase me, you wottahs!"

"Sit on his head!"

"Yawoooooh!"

Arthur Augustus' voice died away in mumbling as Herries sat on his head. Dig stood on his legs, with direful results to the most elegant trousers in the School House at St. Jim's.

Blake nursed his nose with one hand and caressed his eye with the other, and glared.

"The blessed idiot!" he gasped. "What do you mean by hitting at your old pals like that, you burbling jabberwock?"

"I do not wegard you as a pal," came in muffled accents from underneath Herries. "I wegard you as a beast!"

"Bring a chair here!" said Tom Merry. "He's dangerous, and he'll have to be tied up, or the girl from Blankley's will be scared, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther placed a chair in position. Arthur Augustus was yanked up and his arms were tied round the back of the chair, and his feet bound together.

Then the juniors released him, and Arthur Augustus, thus spread-eagled, gasped and wriggled.

"You awful wottahs!" he gasped. "I shall give you a feahful thwashin' all wound for this. You feahful beasts!"

"Now, take it calmly, Gussy," urged Tom Merry. "It's all for your own good, you know."

"I wefuse to take it calmly!"

"If you struggle and topple over you may be hurt," remarked Lowther.

Arthur Augustus realised that, and he wriggled a little less energetically. He could not get his hands or feet loose. And—horror of horrors!—Manners was opening his colour-box and selecting a brush. And it was the hour of the afternoon delivery from Blankley's! Almost at any moment now Miss Dorothy Fane might drop in with the box of chocolates—and she would see him thus!

The juniors gathered round to watch Manners' artistic operations. Blake was still dabbing at his injured nose.

"A nice sky-blue," suggested Lowther. "Say sky-blue for the cheeks and scarlet for the forehead. That will make an effective contrast."

"Good!" assented Manners.

"Oh, you wottahs! If you touch me with that bwush, Mannahs—gwoooogh!"

"Better keep your mouth shut," suggested Manners.

"I don't want to waste the paint. Paint costs money!"

"Gerrrrrrg!"

"I told you so! Do keep your mouth shut, old chap."

Arthur Augustus closed his mouth—with a daub of paint in it—and looked daggers. Manners worked rapidly, like a finished artist. The cheeks of the Honourable Arthur Augustus were soon as blue as an Italian summer sky. His forehead was as red as the coat of a soldier of other days.

There was a chorus of approval from the juniors. The effect struck them as completely satisfactory.

"Now, what about his ears?" said Manners thoughtfully.

"Green!" suggested Lowther.

"Yes, a nice artistic green," said Blake.

"Green it is," said Manners, and he proceeded. With blue cheeks, scarlet forehead, and green ears, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy presented a really extraordinary aspect.

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"What about a black circle round the eyes?" said Tom Merry.

"Certainly!"

"And purple for the nose?"

"Good! A purple nose will be awfully effective. Blessed if he isn't beginning to look like a Futurist picture."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The most advanced of Cubist painters had never produced anything to equal Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth when Manners had finished with him. His appearance was not merely striking—it was stunning!

Manners closed his colour-box. His work was done—and done well. He experienced that sense of artistic satisfaction natural to the true artist who knows that his work could not be improved upon.

"I don't think that could be bettered," said Tom Merry. "Now we'd better do his hair. Gussy is rather particular about his hair, you know."

"Oh, you feahful wottahs!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

"A little flour and glue will make a ripping pomade," said Tom. "You can leave it to me; I'm rather adept at barbering."

Flour and liquid glue having been mixed in due proportions, Tom Merry applied that home-made pomade to Arthur Augustus' hair. The hair was gathered up and stuck together in a sort of pyramid. It rose to quite a sharp point on top of Gussy's head when the barbering was done.

"Oh, deah! You awful beasts!"

"It's for your own good, Gussy," urged Blake. "You ought to be jolly glad to have pals to stand by you like this in an emergency. When I fall in love I'd like to be able to rely on you to see me through, you know."

"Oh, you wottah!"

Lowther draped the hearthrug artistically round Arthur Augustus, and pinned it on. Then the juniors felt that they had done enough. Arthur Augustus felt that they had done a little too much.

There was a light step in the passage—a step that Arthur Augustus knew well. He gave a wriggle of horror.

The girl from Blankley's was coming!

"Clear!" muttered Blake.

The juniors crowded out of the study. There was a wail of anguish from the swell of the Fourth.

"Blake—Tom Mewwy! Welcase me! Oh, you wottahs! Oh, cwumbs!"

The girl porter from Blankley's glanced at the grinning crowd of juniors, and tapped at the open door of Study No. 6. She had a parcel in her hand.

"For D'Arcy?" asked Blake politely.

"Yes, sir."

"All serene. He's in there; take it in."

"Yes, sir."

The girl from Blankley's entered the study, parcel and invoice in hand.

Crash!

The parcel dropped on the floor, and the girl from Blankley's recoiled with a sudden shriek.

Arthur Augustus had dawned on her.

CHAPTER 8.

Rough on Gussy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY looked at the girl from Blankley's.

The girl from Blankley's looked at Arthur Augustus.

Neither moved. Gussy was tied to the chair, and the girl-porter was rooted to the floor.

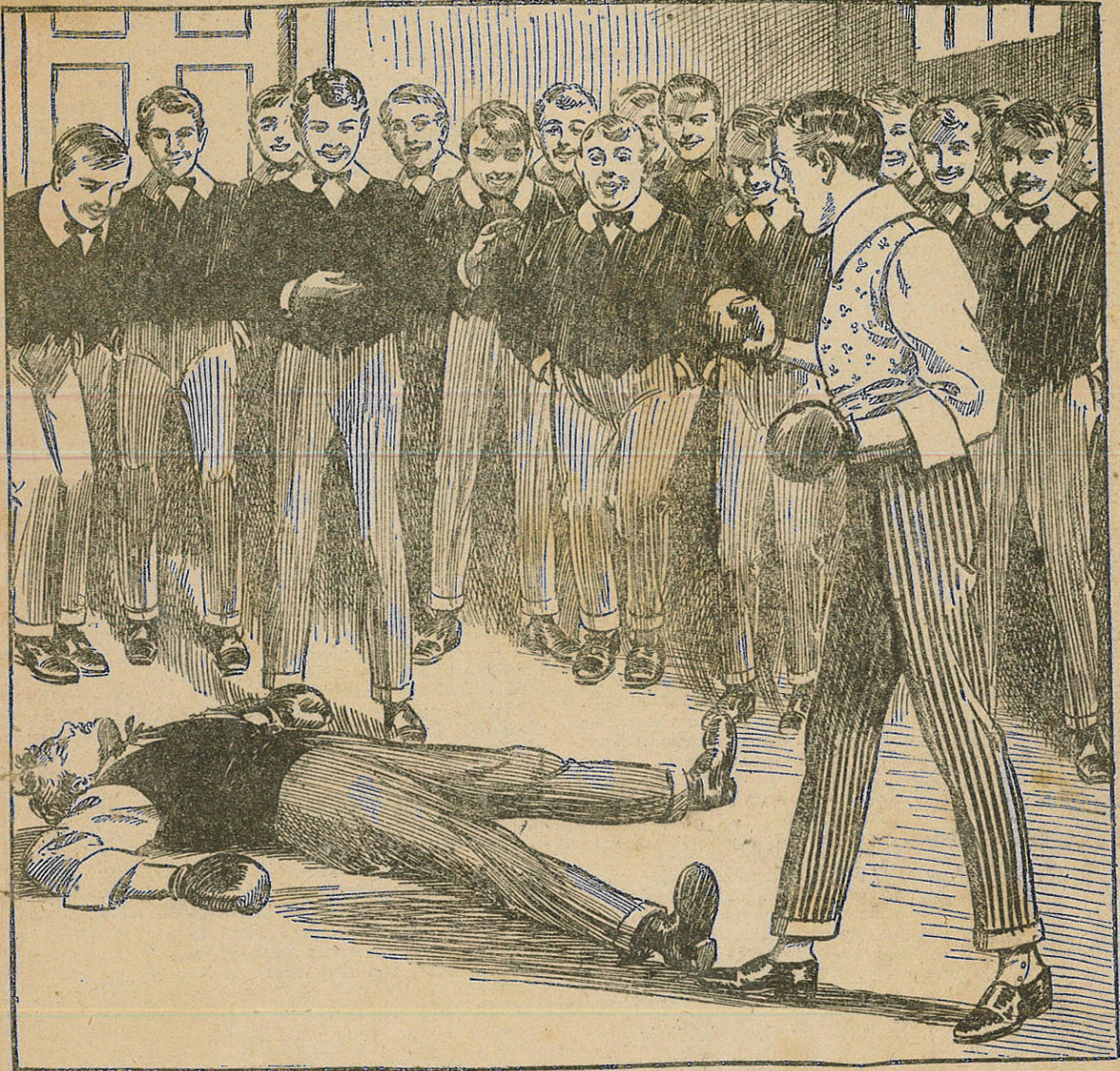
There was an awful moment of silence.

"Oh, dear!" said the girl from Blankley's, at last.

"Gwooh!"

"Ten-and-six to pay, please," said the girl-porter, in a faint voice.

Arthur Augustus wriggled.



"Time!" said Figgins. Crash! Blake landed on the floor even before Arthur Augustus reached him. He lay at full length, and groaned. "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—" (See Chapter 9.)

"Pway excuse me, deah gal, for appeawin' in this widiculous posish," he gasped. "It is a wotten pwactical joke, you know."

A smile lurked on the charming face of the girl from Blankley's. She understood the chuckle from the passage. "I am goin' to thwash all those wottahs, all wound," resumed Arthur Augustus. "This is a feahful outwage, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jumped. The girl from Blankley's was laughing! Actually laughing, as if she saw something funny in the matter!

"Weally—" gasped D'Arcy.

Miss Fane became grave at once.

"Ten-and-six to pay, please," she said,

"Pewwaps you would have the great kindness to wesease me, deah gal," moaned Arthur Augustus. "You will observe that I am tied up. If you would be so awf'ly good as to cut this wotten cord—"

The girl from Blankley's smiled, and took a knife from among the tea-things that were piled on the shelf. She kindly sawed through the bonds that secured the noble limbs of the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus gasped with relief when he found himself free again.

"I—I suppose I look watah widie!" he gasped, tearing off the hearthrug and hurling it into the fender.

"Ahem!"

"A set of wotten pwactical jokahs, you know—"

"Ten-and-six to pay, please."

"Oh, deah!"

In his dismay Arthur Augustus forgot the state of his highly-coloured countenance. He had intended to borrow the half-guinea from somewhere, to pay for the chocolates, and beg the girl from Blankley's to accept them as a present. But he had not been able to raise the ten-and-six; and the hoped-for fiver had not come from home. He was not able to pay on delivery!

"Bai Jove! I—I—I have wun out of money!" he gasped. "Pewwaps you could wait while I get it?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Arthur Augustus rushed from the study.

There was a wild howl of laughter in the passage. The sight of the highly-coloured junior, with his pyramidal hair, caused a sensation.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"SKIMPOLE'S WINDFALL!"

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Gussy!" shrieked Blake. "Don't go downstairs like that, you ass! Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus halted.

"Bai Jove! Oh, you wottahs!"

"Sure, he'll be the death of me!" shrieked Reilly. "Oh, Gussy! Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus dodged back into the study. The girl from Blankley's was trying hard to be grave and business-like. But it was difficult. She seemed dangerously near hysterics.

"Pway excuse me," panted Arthur Augustus. "I—I cannot go out in this state. Oh, deah! Pewwaps you could let it stand ovah—"

"Payment on delivery is the rule, sir."

"Oh, deah!"

"But I could bring the parcel to-morrow," suggested the girl from Blankley's. "We are not allowed to leave parcels without payment."

Arthur Augustus brightened up—under his paint.

"Yaas, wathah—what a wippin' ideah!" he ejaculated. "Pewwaps you wouldn't mind bwingin' it along to-morrow."

"Certainly, sir. Good-day!"

"Oh, deah! Good-day!"

Arthur Augustus did not offer to accompany the porter to her van this time. He felt that it would not do.

The girl from Blankley's departed.

Then a howling crowd looked in at Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus gave them a glare like a basilisk.

"You cacklin' wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get your camera, Manners!" shouted Kangaroo of the Shell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you dare to bwing your camewah heah, Mannahs, I will bwreak it ovah your head!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

He turned to look in the glass, to see just how horrid he looked. He staggered back as he saw his reflection. That was how the girl from Blankley's had seen him! What would she think of him after that?

"Mind that glass!" shouted Blake. "Don't crack it, Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howwid wottahs! Oh, cwumb!"

The exasperated swell of St. Jim's rushed at the crowd in the doorway hitting out. The juniors scattered, howling with laughter. Arthur Augustus shook his fist after them, and tramped away to the dormitory to wash.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three came into their study. "I should think that would cure Gussy. He won't want the girl from Blankley's to see him again, I should think."

And the chums of the Shell sat down to their prep chuckling.

It was about an hour later that the study door opened and Arthur Augustus came in. He was clean once more; newly swept and garnished, so to speak. But his eye was glittering with wrath behind his eyeglass.

The Terrible Three nodded to him in the most affable manner.

"Don't mench, dear boy!" said Monty Lowther, before the swell of St. Jim's could speak.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You've come to thank us—what?"

"Why, you wottah—"

"Don't mench!" said Tom Merry heartily. "Always at your service, Gussy."

"You uttah wottahs, I have not come heah to thank you!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"It's an ungrateful world," sighed Manners.

"I have come heah to give you a feahful thwashin' all wound," said Arthur Augustus, pushing back his cuffs.

"You first, Tom Mewwy!"

"Mercy!"

"Put your hands up, you wottah!"

Tom Merry obediently put up his hands, lifting them above his head.

"That right?" he asked.

"If you do not put up your hands, Tom Mewwy, I shall stwike you!" shouted Arthur Augustus, brandishing his fist within an inch of Tom Merry's nose.

"But, they are up— Oh! Yaroooh!" roared Tom, as the GEM LIBRARY.—No. 404.

Arthur Augustus' knuckles came in contact with his nose.

"I am goin' to thwash you, you wottah! I am also goin' to thwash Lowthah and Mannahs, and then I am goin' to thwash Blake and Hewwies and Dig."

"What a big order!" grinned Lowther. "How much will there be left of you, Gussy, when you've finished?"

"Are you weady, Tom Mewwy?"

"Well, if it must be, it must be," said Tom resignedly, rising to his feet. "Don't be hard on a little 'un, Gussy."

"Don't be a funnny idiot, Tom Mewwy! I am waitin' for you."

"Hold on!" said Lowther, jumping up, with a twinkle in his eyes. "This has got to be in order—Queensberry rules! None of your hooliganism, Gussy!"

"You cheekay ass!"

"We'll go into the gym and have it in order," said Lowther. "No room in the study for fighting—especially with such a ferocious Hun as Gussy. Follow me!"

"I am quite weady to go into the gym."

"Lead the way, then. It's up to D'Arcy to lead, isn't it?"

Arthur Augustus sniffed, and marched out of the study with his nose in the air. Monty Lowther whispered for a moment to his chums, and they followed, chuckling. At the door of Study No. 6 they halted and Lowther looked in. Blake and Herries and Digby were at work on their prep.

"You're wanted," said Lowther.

"Hallo! What's up?"

"Gussy," said Lowther—"up on the high horse and out for scalps. He is going to thrash us three, and then you three. Whether he is going to thrash the rest of the School House as well, I don't know."

"Lowthah, you ass!"

"He's beginning with the Fourth and the Shell, and after that I suppose it will be the Fifth and the Sixth, winding up with the Housemaster and the Head," said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"We're going into the gym to take it like little men," said Lowther. "You fellows had better come and get it over."

"Certainly!" said Blake, rising as Lowther closed one eye, unseen by the wrathful swell of the Fourth.

"Come on, you chaps—like lambs to the slaughter!"

Study No. 6 followed the Shell fellows, and, as the news spread, a numerous army of School House fellows followed them, and they swarmed into the gym.

CHAPTER 9.

Beaten Hollow!

THE gym was crowded.

School House and New House fellows had turned up in swarms at the news that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth had six fights on his hands.

Arthur Augustus, elegant as he was, was quite in the front line as a fighting-man; but six fights in one evening was rather a "tall order." The St. Jim's fellows were anxious to see how he would get through them, and especially what he would look like when he had got through.

There had been a little whispering among the six victims, and now they were all looking very grave—like fellows who realised that they were in for a very serious business indeed.

Perhaps Arthur Augustus realised that it was rather a serious business, too, to undertake to "thwash" six of the best fighting-men in the Lower School. But the word "retreat" was omitted from the D'Arcy vocabulary. Nothing would have induced the swell of St. Jim's to admit that he had bitten off more than he could masticate. Besides, there was the outrage in Study No. 6 to be avenged.

Some of the onlookers were grinning, and others looked puzzled. Arthur Augustus took off his elegant jacket and donned the gloves. Figgins, of the New House, after a whispered consultation with the six

victims, undertook to keep time. Figgins was seen to grin joyously for a minute, but he was soon quite grave again as befitting the solemnity of the occasion.

"I am weady, you wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus.

Figgins took out his big silver watch.

"First victim forward," he said.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Shush! Don't you interfere with the referee!" said Figgins sternly. "Don't you know the rules of the ring? Who's the first giddy victim?"

"I am goin' to thwash Tom Mewwy first."

"On with the motley," said Figgins—"I mean, on with the gloves. Have you made your will, Merry? Good! Seconds out of the ring."

Tom Merry, with a face of preternatural gravity, advanced with the gloves on. He held out his hand in the usual way.

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"I wefuse to shake hands with you, Tom Mewwy, unless you apologise for your wascally conduct!"

"A Merry never apologises," said Tom solemnly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time!" rapped out Figgins.

Arthur Augustus rushed in to the attack. It was really a sweeping attack, and perhaps it was not surprising that Tom Merry fell at the first assault. There was a bump as he sat down on the floor of the gym.

Figgins began to count.

"One—two—three—four—"

Arthur Augustus waited impatiently for Tom Merry to rise. He did not rise. He sat cheerfully on the floor.

"Five—six—seven—eight—"

"Get up, you wottah!"

Tom Merry did not move.

"I did not hit you!" shouted Arthur Augustus excitedly. "You fell down of your own accord, you fealful funk! Gewwup!"

"Nine—OUT!" said Figgins.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Knocked out in the first round," said the referee, with a shake of the head. "I'm surprised at you, Merry! What is St. Jim's coming to? Help him out of the ring."

Julian of the Fourth came into the ring and helped Tom Merry out. Arthur Augustus gazed at them in bewilderment.

"But I have not thwashed him!" he ejaculated.

"You've won the fight," said the referee.

"But there hasn't been a fight!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"You've won the fight according to the rules. Merry has been counted out. Next man in," said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

Monty Lowther came into the ring with the gloves on.

"Anybody got a little whisky?" he asked faintly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time!"

Arthur Augustus' eye gleamed as he charged at Monty Lowther. Tom Merry had got off very easily; but Gussy was determined that Lowther should go through it. His fists lashed out like flails.

Crash! Monty Lowther landed on the floor and groaned deeply. As Arthur Augustus' furious drives had hit everything except Lowther, the reason of his sudden collapse was not clear. But he had collapsed, there was no doubt about that.

Figgins, with a solemn eye on his watch, began to count.

"One—two—three—four—"

"Lowthah, you funkin' boundah, gewwup!"

Lowther groaned dismally, and did not move.

"Five—six—seven—eight—nine—"

"Bat Jove!"

"Out!" said Figgins. "I congratulate you, D'Arcy! You're knocking 'em out in fine style! Help Lowther out of the ring."

"But there hasn't been a fight yet!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"There has been a fight, and you've won. What on earth more do you want?" demanded the referee.

Lumley-Lumley came into the ring and helped Lowther

away. Lowther groaned deeply as he went. Manners stepped into the ring in his place.

The "true inwardness" of that peculiar combat was dawning upon the juniors now, and the crowd were chuckling.

They were not surprised now to see Manners of the Shell crumple up before Arthur Augustus' attack, and fall at the first drive—which missed him, as a matter of fact.

"One—two—three," counted Figgins—"four—five—six—"

"Get up, Mannahs, you funk!"

"Seven—eight—nine—out!"

Kerruish came in and helped Manners away. There was a roar of laughter in the crowded gym. The juniors were enjoying Arthur Augustus' easy victories.

D'Arcy ought really to have enjoyed them, too; never had those doughty fighting men of the Shell been so easily licked.

But D'Arcy was frowning darkly. It was beginning to dawn even upon his noble brain that his aristocratic leg was being pulled.

"Next man in," said Figgins.

Jack Blake came into the ring with the gloves on. He was looking as grave as an owl. Digby wiped away a tear, and Herries shook hands with Blake as if for the last time. Then Blake faced his adversary, his knees knocking together.

"Time!" said Figgins.

Crash! Blake landed on the floor even before Arthur Augustus reached him. He lay at full length and groaned.

"One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I pwotest!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "This is a wotten plan! The wottahs are not fightin' at all!"

"Nine—out! Blake's beaten! Out of the ring, please!"

Ray of the Fourth came and helped Blake out. Blake leaned heavily on his shoulder, and sobbed as he went. Arthur Augustus was crimson with wrath. Digby came in, in Blake's place, with his teeth chattering.

"Dig, you uttah wottah—"

"Time!" rapped out Figgins.

Arthur Augustus attacked hotly. But he had time only for one drive which was knocked up before Dig bumped on the floor.

Figgins began to count amid yells of laughter.

"One—two—three—four—five," chanted Figgins—"six—seven—eight—nine—out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is a wotten jape. I wefuse—"

"Next man in, please!"

Reilly helped Digby away, and Herries came into the ring. It was "last man in." The crowd were chuckling joyously now. Five easy victories had fallen to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and it was evident that the sixth adversary was going the same way.

But Arthur Augustus was a little quicker this time, and he caught Herries' nose with his glove with a terrific drive, and Herries roared. Quite forgetting the humorous programme mapped out by Monty Lowther, Herries hit out, and Arthur Augustus sat down.

"Gwooh!"

"Count!" yelled the crowd, delighted by this variation in the programme.

"You ass, Herries! Play the game!" shouted Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries rubbed his nose.

"All right; I forgot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jumped up like a jack-in-the-box, and charged at Herries. Herries went over with a bump, unresisting.

"Get up, you wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus, dancing round him. "I wefuse to let you be counted out. I insist upon your gettin' up, Hewwies. I am goin' to give you a fealful thwashin'!"

"One—two—three—four—five—six—"

"Shut up, Figgins, you duffah! I insist—"

"Seven—eight—nine—out! Gussy wins!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse—"

The roars of laughter drowned Arthur Augustus' voice. Kerr helped Herries away and the swell of St. Jim's stood victorious in the ring—monarch of all he surveyed, so to speak. But he did not seem satisfied.

Leaning heavily on the shoulders of their seconds, the six vanquished juniors tottered out of the gym, amid shrieks of merriment. Arthur Augustus glared after them in almost speechless wrath. It was only too plain now that his noble leg had been pulled.

"You uttah wottahs, I pwotest—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins, you wottah—"

"Hallo! Do you want to fight me now?" ejaculated Figgins. "All serene! Who'll keep time for me? It won't take long."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus did not fight Figgins. He had had enough easy victories. He snorted, put on his jacket, and stalked out of the gym in great wrath. He left the merry crowd howling like hyenas.

CHAPTER 10.

A Wire Entanglement!

AFTER all they had done for him, it might have been supposed that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would show some tincture of gratitude towards his old chums. But he didn't. Even the "thwashin'" he had bestowed upon them in the gym had not placated him.

That so sacred a matter as an affair of the heart should become the subject of jesting and japing was not to be forgiven. Arthur Augustus felt that it was the limit. Thrashing the juniors seemed to do no good. But Arthur Augustus maintained an attitude of frozen and chilling reserve.

He had dropped the acquaintance of Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three. They still persisted in addressing cheery remarks to him, just as if nothing had happened; that could not be helped. They even made kind inquiries as to how his love-affairs were getting on, and whether he suffered from palpitation of the heart, and whether he had purchased a ring, and so on. To all of which inquiries Arthur Augustus replied only with disdainful sniffs.

The long-delayed fiver had arrived at last from Lord Eastwood, with a letter admonishing his hopeful son, and preaching economy. Arthur Augustus changed the fiver in time to settle for that box of chocolates, when it arrived again from Blankley's. This time he met the porter at the side gate, where the van stopped. He explained to the girl from Blankley's that that saved her the trouble of coming up to the School House. Fortunately the van was waiting, and the driver was impatient, or Arthur Augustus would have kept the girl from Blankley's in conversation till calling-over.

As he came back across the quad he met Blake and Herries and Digby.

"At it again—what?" said Blake.

"I wefuse to speak to you, Blake."

"So you're not cured yet?" growled Herries. "Do chuck up playing the giddy ox, Gussy, and come down to the footer!"

"I decline to come down to the footah."

"What about the Rookwood match next week?" howled Blake. "Do you want to be quite off your form when we play Jimmy Silver's team?"

"I have already wemarked that I shall not be playin' in the Wookwood match."

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus stalked away. Blake looked at his chums with an excessively exasperated expression.

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"Isn't it enough to make a saint as savage as a Prussian?" he exclaimed. "The silly ass! He knows we're fed up, too!"

"He wants some more," said Herries darkly.

"He's jolly well not going to miss the Rookwood match," said Dig. "He's got to be cured before then."

There was a consultation on the subject, the Terrible Three joining in it heartily. They were quite keen to help in curing Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They felt that it was their duty as old chums.

The consultation was long and serious, but the chuckles with which it concluded hinted that the juniors had arrived at a satisfactory decision.

They grinned as they saw Arthur Augustus coming away from the school letter-box a little later. Evidently he had sent another order to Blankley's. As he could not go to see the charmer, it seemed to Arthur Augustus an awfully good dodge to send Blankley's a daily order. At this rate, his fiver was not likely to last him very long. But what were fivers in comparison with interviews with the charming porter from Blankley's? Less than nothing.

Arthur Augustus retired to Study No. 6, without glancing at his old pals. He had lines to do. He was grinding through Virgil—pausing every now and then to think of a bright face under a porter's cap—when Julian of the Fourth looked into the study.

"You're wanted, Gussy."

"Yaas, deah boy."

"Somebody's asking for you on the telephone," said Julian, regarding the swell of St. Jim's curiously. "Kildare sent me to tell you."

"Thank you, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus rose, and laid down his pen. He supposed that his father had rung him up, to tell him the latest news of his elder brother, who was at the Front, or else to continue his lecture on economy over the wires. He descended to the prefects' room. Kildare was in the doorway.

"Somebody's calling you, D'Arcy," said the captain of St. Jim's. "Something about an order you've sent to Blankley's."

D'Arcy jumped.

"While you're about it, you may as well tell Blankley's that juniors are not supposed to be called up on the telephone," said Kildare rather sarcastically, and he walked away.

Arthur Augustus hurried to the telephone. His heart was thumping. Certainly, the girl-porter was not likely to be speaking on the Blankley telephone. But—

D'Arcy's hand shook as he took up the receiver.

"Yaas," he said. "Are you there? Is that Blankley's?"

"Who is speaking?" came back a voice on the telephone—a voice that was a little high-pitched, and sounded feminine to D'Arcy's ears.

"D'Arcy, St. Jim's."

"I am so glad."

"Yaas. Is it somethin' about an order?"

"Are you alone?" came the voice.

"Yaas."

"Nobody can hear us?"

"No."

"I'm so glad. I want to speak to you so much. We have so little time when the van is waiting, don't we?"

D'Arcy's eyes danced. Evidently it was the girl from Blankley's who was speaking over the wires. He did not quite recognise the voice, but it sounded feminine, and, of course, the telephone disguises the voice very considerably.

"How vewy good of you to wing me up," said Arthur Augustus, in a faltering voice.

"Not at all, Arthur. May I call you Arthur?"

"Pway do, deah gal."

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The juniors looked back from the towing-path, and the figure of Arthur Augustus was silhouetted against the sunset, on the bridge. He was waiting—and watching the road from Wayland. "Sister Anne, Sister Anne, is the girl from Blankley's coming?" chuckled Monty Lowther. (See Chapter 11.)

"You may call me Dorothy if you like."

"Thank you vevy much, Dowothy!"

"Can I see you soon, Arthur?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I am in need of a friend. Something in your eyes has told me that you will be a good friend to me."

"How vevy good of you to say so."

"You will help me? You will let me tell you my tale of woe—I mean, all my troubles?"

"I shall be delighted, Dowothy."

"I am sure that you will be able to advise me. I am certain that you are a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Yaas, wathah! Where shall I see you?"

"I will meet you at the bridge on the Ryll—you know the place? At six I will be there. Will you come?"

"What-ho!"

"You are sure it will not be a trouble, Arthur?"

"It will be a pleasure, deah gal."

"What a dear boy you are, Arthur!"

"What a deah gal you are, Dowothy!"

"Au revoir."

"Au wevoir, deah gal."

Arthur Augustus hung up the receiver, looking like a fellow in a trance. He quitted the prefects' room as if he were walking on air.

Monty Lowther stepped out of the telephone-box at Wayland Post Office and yawned.

"Well," said Tom Merry and Manners, Blake and Herries and Dig, all at once.

"All serene!" said Lowther cheerfully. "I asked him if I might call him Arthur!"

"You ass!"

"And I told him he could call me Dorothy if he liked."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No harm in his calling me Dorothy, if he likes," said Lowther. "He can call me Isabella or Gloxiana if it makes him happy. He's going to meet me at the bridge on the Ryll. Blessed if I know what for, but I dare say he's got some reason or other. Come on!"

Tom Merry & Co. quitted the post-office chuckling, and strolled away to keep the appointment Arthur Augustus had made with such delight.

CHAPTER 11.

Sister Anne.

"Oh, what a picture!" Talbot of the Shell made that remark, with a smile, as Arthur Augustus came out of the School House. The swell of St. Jim's was dressed to kill. Solomon in all his glory would have been put completely in the shade.

"Something special on?" asked Talbot, smiling. "Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" Without vouchsafing any explanation, Arthur Augustus descended the steps into the quad, and walked away to the gates. Talbot looked after him, smiling, but perplexed. Arthur Augustus certainly was a picture, from the tips of his beautifully-polished boots to the crown of his gleaming topper. But he was going out when the van from Blankley's was almost due to make the usual delivery at St. Jim's. Apparently he was going to miss the girl from Blankley's this time!

More than one admiring glance was cast upon Arthur Augustus as he strolled out of the gates. He was more than keeping up his reputation of being the best-dressed fellow at St. Jim's.

He glanced at his watch as he quitted the school. It was twenty minutes to six. Since the telephone call Arthur Augustus had been busily occupied in adorning his elegant person. Naturally, he wished to do full justice to the occasion.

He had left himself barely time to get to the Ryll bridge by six, and he hurried down to the towing-path and walked along quickly. It would never do to be late for such an appointment. A meeting in such romantic surroundings was ever so much better than a few minutes' chat when the van came from Blankley's to the side gate at the school. Arthur Augustus would be able to say many things, and enlighten the fair Dorothy as to the true state of his heart—if he found nerve enough. Probably he would not, when it came to the test.

Arthur Augustus hurried on so effectively that he reached the rendezvous five minutes before the hour. He was in good time.

He gave a sudden start as he came on the old stone bridge.

On the low parapet six juniors were sitting in a row, under the shade of a big tree that grew on the bank below. Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three were all there, chatting cheerily, and apparently unaware of the approach of Arthur Augustus. They seemed to be enjoying the sunset.

D'Arcy halted in dismay. The bridge over the Ryll was usually a solitary spot; very little traffic passed that way. It was distinctly unfortunate that six juniors of St. Jim's should have chosen the very hour of his rendezvous to seat themselves on the parapet and chat. In a few minutes Dorothy would be there—and how could he possibly meet the girl from Blankley's under the gaze of six pairs of mocking eyes?

Arthur Augustus coughed. Then Blake looked round, and seemed surprised to see him.

"Gussy, by Jove!" said Blake. "How decent of you to come out to meet us, Gussy! How did you know we were walking home this way?"

"I—I did not know," stammered Arthur Augustus, fervently wishing that the juniors had been walking home some other way.

"Dropped on us quite by chance, then?" said Blake affably. "Well, there's room for one more. Come and squat down, and have some of this toffee."

"You seem to forget that we are not on speakin' terms, Blake," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"Always forgetting something," assented Blake. "But after thrashing a chap you ought to make it up with him, Gussy. That's only playing the game, you know. After the frightful licking you gave me in the gym the other day—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"This is good toffee," said Blake temptingly. "Squat down, Gussy. We're only staying here another half-hour or so."

D'Arcy's heart sank. Six o'clock was chiming out from THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 404.

Rylcombe. At any moment now the girl from Blankley's might come tripping on the bridge—at least, so Arthur Augustus supposed. As a matter of absolute fact, at that very moment the girl from Blankley's was delivering a parcel at St. Jim's. But that was one of the many things that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not know.

Blake and Dig made room for D'Arcy between them on the parapet; but D'Arcy did not sit down. He had not come there to sit down with six juniors and eat toffee. He stood blinking uneasily at the smiling row of juniors.

"Anything the matter, old scout?" asked Monty Lowther, with affectionate solicitude. "You look rather worried."

"Nothin'."

"If it's tin," said Tom Merry, "I've had a remittance to-day. Anything up to ten bob, my son."

"I am not short of money, Tom Mewwy."

"Lucky bargee!" said Manners. "I can't get any more films till I get another remittance."

"The—the fact is, deah boys—"

"Go ahead!" said Blake encouragingly.

"Don't you think you had bettah get on to the school?" suggested Arthur Augustus.

"Lots of time before locking up."

"Yaas; but—but you might catch cold, or somethin', sittin' there like that."

"We'll risk it," said Blake. "We're not going till we've finished the toffee. But if you want to start at once, we'll come with you."

"I—I do not want to start. I—I am not goin' back just yet."

Blake looked puzzled.

"You want us to start, and you're not starting yourself?" he asked. "What's the little game? Are you meeting one of Levison's bookmaker friends here?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"He's up to something," said Monty Lowther seriously.

"I can tell it by his blushes. Confide it to your old pals, Gussy."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Any more toffee there, Blake?"

"Here you are."

"Thanks!"

The six juniors munched toffee, and looked blandly at Arthur Augustus. They showed no sign whatever of moving. Apparently they were enjoying the balmy autumn evening on the river, and the rich sunset that glowed over Rylcombe Wood. Arthur Augustus looked at his watch. Ten minutes past six! Dorothy was late!

Arthur Augustus looked along the road towards Wayland. Dorothy was not in sight, but at any moment she might appear. What was to be done?

"I twust you will go!" said Arthur Augustus at last. The time had come for speaking plainly.

"You want us to go?" asked Tom Merry, looking puzzled.

"Yaas."

"What for?"

"Behold, he blushes!" murmured Lowther.

"You uttah ass, Lowthah!" Arthur Augustus was crimson. "The—the fact is, Tom Mewwy, I—I—I—"

"You—you—you—" assented Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I will tell you the circes and twust to your delicacy as gentlemen!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I am meetin' a lady on this bwidge."

"The murder's out!" gasped Lowther. "It's an elopement. Where is the motor-car waiting, Gussy?"

"You uttah chump! There is no motor-car waitin'."

"No motor-car!" ejaculated Lowther. "Do you mean to say that you're going to elope in a cart or a wheelbarrow?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You know perfectly well that I am not goin' to elope at all," shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to listen to your wibald jokes!"

"Gentlemen," said Blake, looking round with owl-like solemnity, "Gussy has depended on our delicacy as gentlemen. We must play up. There's only one thing for us to do, and that's to retire from the scene, and leave Gussy to wait alone for the charmer."

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Arthur Augustus' knitted brows relaxed. "Blake, that is vewy decent of you," he said. "I withdwaw some of the things I have thought about you!" "Gussy, you do me proud!" said Blake. "Gentlemen, we will retire!"

The six juniors slipped off the parapet. They retired with solemn faces, much to the satisfaction of Arthur Augustus. Only Monty Lowther paused for a moment.

"You don't want me to be best man, Gussy?" he asked.

"Pway cleah off, you ass!"

"Or to help in any way?" said Lowther. "If you have chartered a pirate craft to carry off the fair one——"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Once aboard the lugger, and the gal is ours, you know!" urged Lowther.

"You wibald beast——"

Monty Lowther sighed, and followed his chums. They sauntered away towards the school, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the bridge, like Patience on a monument. He needed all his patience for the vigil that was before him.

"It's jolly nearly too bad!" exclaimed Tom Merry when they were out of hearing. "Suppose we cut back and tell him——"

"Bosh!" said Blake. "Hasn't he got to be cured?"

"Well, yes; but——"

"Nothing like marking time on a bridge to cure a chap," said Blake. "He will get fed up. Of course, we must tell him when he comes in; we mustn't let him think that nice girl has played him a scurvy trick. But if he waits there an hour or so he will have time to meditate on his fatheadedness. It may do him no end of good."

"And he never even called me Dorothy!" said Lowther plaintively.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's bound to come in for calling-over," said Manners.

"Then we'll stand him a tea, and tell him who was calling him Arthur on the telephone. He will thank us for all this some day."

"Ahem! Perhaps!"

"As that Indian chap at Greyfriars puts it, the perhapsfulness is terrific!" said Monty Lowther. "Still, we're doing our duty by a pal. We can't do more than that. My hat! He's still there!"

The juniors looked back from the towing-path. The figure of Arthur Augustus was silhouetted against the sunset on the bridge. He was waiting, and watching the road from Wayland.

"Sister Anne, Sister Anne, is the girl from Blankley's coming?" chuckled Monty Lowther.

And the juniors grinned and went on their way, leaving the swell of St. Jim's to play Sister Anne to his heart's content.

CHAPTER 12. Sticking It Out!

"D ALTON!"
"Adsum!"
"Darby!"
"Adsum!"

"D'Arcy!"

No reply.

Mr. Railton, who was taking the roll-call, raised his eyes and glanced at the ranks of the Fourth. He repeated in a slightly louder tone:

"D'Arcy!"

But there was no voice to answer "Adsum." Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not present. Blake thought of risking it for the sake of his chum, but the House-master's eyes were too keen. Silence reigned.

Mr. Railton waited for an instant, and then marked down Arthur Augustus as absent from calling-over, and

went on with the list. Blake and Herries and Digby looked at one another in some dismay. The Terrible Three did not look happy. Arthur Augustus had missed calling-over. Did that mean that he was still waiting on the bridge?

The practical jokers had taken it for granted that Arthur Augustus would come home in time for calling-over. After spending an hour or so waiting, surely he must have realised that Dorothy was not coming to the rendezvous.

But they had not counted upon the determined character of the Honourable Arthur Augustus. He had gone to the old bridge to meet a lady. The lady was late, but it was up to a romantic cavalier to wait till she turned up. Whatever delay might have arisen, and however late the lady might be in keeping her appointment, it was Arthur Augustus' business to wait till she did come. Weighed in the balance against his duty as a devoted cavalier, calling-over was a mere nothing.

"Well," said Blake, as the juniors left the hall when the roll was called, "what do you think of that?"

"Gussy hasn't come in!" said Tom Merry.

"He can't be still waiting on the bridge, surely!" exclaimed Manners.

"Bet you ninpence to fourpence that he is!" said Blake gloomily. "And I shouldn't wonder if he misses bed-time as well as calling-over!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But—but—but he couldn't be such a howling ass!" ejaculated Lowther, in dismay.

"There's no telling how big an ass he might be!" growled Blake. "He's still there, you can bet your hat. I thought he'd come in for roll-call, of course. But he hasn't. If he sticks it out till bed-time there'll be a fearful row."

"Somebody will have to go and fetch him," said Tom.

Blake made a grimace.

"Breaking bounds after dark!" he said.

"Can't be helped. We can't leave Gussy on the bridge all night. It would be just like him to stay there all night, and come home with the milk in the morning!"

The juniors grinned at the idea. But the matter was serious.

"I'll go," said Lowther. "It was my little joke, after all. It's up to me."

"Rot!" growled Blake. "I'll go; he's our pet lunatic. I dare say I can manage it without being spotted."

Blake sauntered out into the dusky quadrangle. With great care he sauntered out of sight in the dusk, and as soon as he was sure that he was not observed, he clambered up the slanting oak and dropped over the wall into the road.

Then he started for Rylcombe Bridge.

It was a good walk to the bridge. Blake ran most of the way. Punishment was certain and severe if he were found out of bounds after dark, and the expedition was not an agreeable one. He anathematised Arthur Augustus and his obstinacy a dozen times as he tramped through the dusky autumn evening down the river.

The old stone bridge came in sight at last. Blake peered round him as he tramped on to it. A dim figure loomed up before him in the darkness.

"Is that you, deah gal?" It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You fathead!"

"Blake!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, you ass!" growled Blake. "I've come to fetch you home. Do you know that Railton's missed you at call-over?"

"I had to wisk that, deah boy!"

"Well, come on!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I cannot come yet, Blake. I am sallow you took the

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trouble to come heah for me. Pway return to the school befoah you are missed."

"I'm not going back without you, you chump!" shouted Blake.

"I wefuse to be called a chump! I cannot come at pwsent. As I have informed you, I am heah to wait for a lady," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"And do you expect her to come out at this time in the evening?" asked Blake sarcastically.

"I wegard it as certain that she will keep her appointment. Somethin' has happened to delay her for a few houahs."

"And how long are you going to wait?" grinned Blake.

"I could not possibly go away, and pewwaps let her come and not find me," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I shall wait till midnight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to cackle at, Blake. You will oblige me by weturnin' at once to St. Jim's," said Arthur Augustus frigidly.

"You howling ass, come along!" yelled Blake. "There isn't any lady coming. It was Monty Lowther jawed to you on the telephone!"

Arthur Augustus jumped

"Wha-a-at! Wats! Wubbish!"

"He told you you could call him Dorothy!" shrieked Blake. "It was a jape! Do you understand now, you champion idiot?"

"Bai Jove!"

"And there's a parcel waiting for you at St. Jim's. The girl from Blankley's delivered it at six o'clock."

"Oh, you feahful wottahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, convinced at last. "Then I have been waitin' heah for nothin'."

"Nothing, excepting a wigging from Railton for missing call-over!" grinned Blake. "We didn't think you would be fathead enough to miss calling-over, of course. Now, are you coming?"

"I am not comin' with you, you wottah. I wefuse to wecognise you. I wegard you with uttah despision—I mean contempt!"

"Look here, Gussy, old duffer—"

"Pway do not address your wemarks to me, John Blake!"

Arthur Augustus stalked away with knitted brows, leaving his chum quite overcome by the "John Blake."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Blake. And he walked after Arthur Augustus. Not a word was spoken during the return to St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus seemed unconscious of the existence of his old pal.

Arrived at the school, Blake re-entered by climbing the wall. Arthur Augustus marched up to the gate and rang, and Taggles let him in.

"Which you are to report yourself to Mr. Railton," grunted Taggles.

Arthur Augustus walked on to the School House. With perfect calmness, he tapped at Mr. Railton's door and entered. The Housemaster regarded him severely.

"You have just returned, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Why have you stayed out so late?"

Arthur Augustus coloured. He did not feel inclined to confide to Mr. Railton why he had played Sister Anne on the bridge. It was quite certain that the Housemaster would not be sympathetic.

"I—I stayed out, sir," he said feebly.

Mr. Railton's brow grew sterner.

"You will kindly acquaint me at once, D'Arcy, with your occupation during the time you have spent out of the gates!" he exclaimed.

"I have been waitin' on the bwdige, sir."

Mr. Railton started.

"Waiting on the bridge? All the time?"

"Yaas, sir."

"And for what reason?"

"I—I was led to suppose, by a wotten pactical-jokin' beast, that somebody was comin' there to meet me, sir."

Mr. Railton's face relaxed a little.

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"You have been the victim of a practical joke, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir; a wotten joke in the vewy worst of taste."

"You should not have missed calling-over, D'Arcy. You will take two hundred lines. You may go."

"Thank you, sir."

Arthur Augustus quitted the study. In the passage he was surrounded by his old chums. They were repentant and remorseful.

"Licked?" asked Tom Merry, with great solicitude.

"I decline to speak to you, Tom Mewwy."

"Lines?" asked Manners.

"Pway do not address me, Mannahs."

"We didn't know you'd miss call-over," explained Lowther. "How were we to guess that you'd be such a howling ass? I put it to you."

"Let me pass, Lowthah."

"Don't be ratty about it, Gussy," urged Blake. "Don't bear malice, you know. We thought you'd come in for calling-over."

"I'm not watty, Blake. I simply wegard you as a set of unspeakable boundahs, and I wefuse to know you."

"Not if we let you call us Dorothy?" asked Monty Lowther, in a wheedling tone. There was a yell of laughter.

"You—you wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus, losing all at once his dignified calm, and he made a rush at the humorist of the Shell.

Monty Lowther fled for his life.

CHAPTER 13.

The Only Way!

"HALLO!" said Figgins, in surprise.

Figgins & Co. were in their study in the New House when the visitors arrived. There were six visitors—the Terrible Three and Blake and Herries and Dig. Figgins & Co., as it happened, were busy.

Kerr was making up his face with grease-paints before the glass. Fatty Wynn was trying on a wig, and Figgins putting stitches into a costume. Evidently they were getting ready for another effort by the N.H.J.A.D.S.—New House Juniors Amateur Dramatic Society.

"Busy?" asked Blake.

"Yes," said Figgins affably. "Good-bye!"

The School House juniors grinned and came into the study. They were there on business.

"How's Gussy getting on?" asked Kerr, looking round from the glass with a seventy-year-old face, made up with the skill for which the Scottish junior was famous.

"My hat! What a chivvy!" said Blake. "We've come to speak to you about Gussy. He's still doing it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kildare's stopped him using the telephone, but he does it with postcards now. An order to Blankley's regularly every day, and he waylays Dorothy at the gate. She must be getting fed up. I know we are."

"And we've done our best to cure him," said Tom Merry. "And we've only succeeded in putting him on the high horse."

"Hard cheese!" said Fatty Wynn. "Have you tried walloping him?"

"Ha, ha! No. It may come to that," said Blake, "but we've thought of a dodge. Kerr is going to help us."

"Anything to oblige," said Kerr. "You can't do better than leave it to the New House if you're in a difficulty."

"Bow-wow! Now the idea is this," said Blake impressively. "We've done all we can, and Gussy keeps on doing it. There's got to be a radical cure. We've jawed it over, and we've got on to a topping wheeze. Suppose Gussy found out that the girl from Blankley's was engaged?"

"Is she?"

"Blessed if I know. She may be. Nice girl, you know. Whether she is or not, suppose her fiance heard about Gussy's goings-on, and came here to interview him. Gussy, learning that Dorothy is private property, in

a way of speaking, would get off the grass at once. He's awfully honourable, you know."

"But if she hasn't a fiance, how can he come here?" asked Figgins, in surprise.

"That's where Kerr comes in," explained Blake. "Kerr can make himself up as anything, except a good-looking chap—"

"You silly ass—" began Kerr warmly.

"My idea is that—"

"My idea, you mean," interjected Monty Lowther.

"Our idea," amended Blake. "Our idea is that Dorothy should be engaged to a rather rough specimen, who gets wild at the idea of Gussy chucking the glad eye at her. He comes to St. Jim's with a big horsewhip to thrash Gussy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kerr's awfully clever at theatrical rot, and that kind of thing, and we think he could do it. So there you are."

"We're a deputation," explained Tom Merry. "We've come to request the services of your tame Scotsman."

Figgins chuckled.

"Kerr could do it on his head," he remarked. "Of course he'll do it. It's a jolly good idea, and if that doesn't cure Gussy, nothing will."

"I'm on!" said Kerr. "When and where? That's all I want to know."

"Saturday afternoon," said Tom Merry. "There's no match on, and we can give up the afternoon to Gussy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a go," said Kerr. "I'll think out the character, and we'll take the things out to the old barn after dinner on Saturday, and Figgy and Fatty will help me to make up there. Rely on us."

"Thanks!"

"Not at all. As cock-house of St. Jim's, it's up to us to help you School House kids when you're out of your depth."

"Rats!" said the deputation cheerfully, and they departed, highly satisfied.

It was really a stunning idea, and it had cost Gussy's friends a great deal of thought. But Blake declared that they had really hit upon an effective wheeze at last. At all events, it would be very interesting to watch the interview between Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Miss Dorothy's fiance.

They found Arthur Augustus watching the clock in the tower as they crossed over to their own House. They knew why he was interested in the passage of time. It was getting near the time of the afternoon's delivery from Blankley's.

Blake slapped his noble chum on the shoulder, eliciting a yelp from Arthur Augustus.

"Parcel from Blankley's to-day?" asked Blake.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"SKIMPOLE'S WINDFALL!"

"Ow! Yaas. Pway don't bothah!"

"Anything left out of your fiver?"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus walked away.

"What about the Rookwood match on Wednesday?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Blow the Wookwood match!"

Jack Blake breathed hard through his nose.

"That's what it's come to!" he said. "He ought to be scragged, and then boiled in oil. Never mind. Wait till Dorothy's fiance comes along."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

When Arthur Augustus came into Study No. 6 he had a parcel under his arm, and a beatific smile on his face. Evidently he had seen the girl from Blankley's at the gate. He tossed the parcel carelessly on the table.

"What's in that?" asked Blake.

"Weally, I forget. Somethin' fwom Blankley's."

"You don't know what you've paid for?" demanded Herries.

"It's something I've ordered," said Arthur Augustus.

"Pway don't bothah!"

"You silly ass—"

Arthur Augustus quitted the study.

He was still not on speaking terms with his old chums; but they persisted in being on speaking terms with him. In the dormitory that night they bade him good-night in affectionate tones, receiving only a sniff by way of response.

The usual postcard had been despatched to Blankley's; there was to be another delivery on the morrow. Gussy was still "doing it," as Blake expressed it. But, before the next delivery came from Blankley's, something was going to happen.

The next day there were six juniors in the School House who were smiling a good deal. They were anticipating the happenings of the afternoon. Arthur Augustus was anticipating the evening, and he also was smiling—beatific smiles, which his chums described as idiotic.

After dinner Figgins & Co. of the New House might have been seen strolling out at the gates, Kerr carrying a large and well-filled bag. Tom Merry observed them and chuckled gleefully. The plot was working!

"Coming down to footer practice, Gussy?" Tom Merry asked, as he encountered the swell of St. Jim's.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus went to his study. When Blake looked in, he found him deeply engaged with a pen and a sheet of impot paper. He was not doing lines, however. Blake caught sight of a line or two:

"Her eyes are like the blue of summer skies!"

Her voice is like the sweetest zephyr sighs."

Arthur Augustus hastily covered up the paper with a blotting-pad.

"Sticking in here all the afternoon?" demanded Blake. "Why can't you come out and have a go at the ball?"

"Pway don't wowwy!"

"Fathead!" said Blake; and he walked out of the study.

He joined a cheery group of juniors who were waiting in the lower hall.

"He's sticking in the study writing poetry," said Blake. "Safe as houses! I wonder how long Dorothy's fiance is going to be?"

The juniors chuckled and waited. It was time for Kerr of the Fourth to arrive upon the scene. They watched the gates.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Lowther suddenly. "Who's that? Surely—"

"Phew!" said Tom Merry.

All eyes were fixed upon a figure that had entered at the school gates, and was striding towards the School House. The new-comer looked about twenty-five years old, though a little short for his age. He wore a thick moustache, and his face looked red and weather-beaten. He was dressed in a uniform resembling that worn by Messrs. Blankley's porters—of the masculine variety. Under his arm he carried a big whip.

Tom Merry & Co. stared at him hard as he came up. He was so exactly like one of Blankley's porters that

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they could not believe that it was Kerr. They waited to discover.

The young man stopped, and touched his peaked cap to the juniors.

"This 'ere is St. Jim's?" he asked.

"Yes," said Blake, in wonder.

"Can I see a young gentleman, name of D'Arcy?"

"Certainly! Follow me!"

"Thank you kindly, sir!"

The young man followed Blake into the House and up the stairs. Tom Merry & Co. followed behind, in great wonder. Was it Kerr, or was it a genuine man from Blankley's who had business with Arthur Augustus? They simply could not tell. They were soon to see!

CHAPTER 14.

The Man from Blankley's.

BAI Jove! I weally think that is wathal good!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in Study No. 6, was surveying his poetic efforts with considerable satisfaction. The sonnet was completed.

Arthur Augustus pondered. Should he hand that sonnet to the girl from Blankley's when she came with the next parcel, or should he send it by post, care of Blankley's? It was a knotty problem.

He was still pondering over it when there came a knock at the door.

"Come in!" said Arthur Augustus, hastily throwing the blotter over the poem.

He started a little as the young man from Blankley's entered. His eyes dwelt for a moment on the big whip.

"Master D'Arcy—wot?" said the visitor.

"That is my name."

"I s'pose you've eard of me?"

"I am not awah that I have the honah of your acquaintance," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Name of Harker," said the young man—"employed at Blankley's."

"You have called wespectin' my wecent ordah to Blankley's?" asked Arthur Augustus, puzzled.

"No, I hain't!" said Mr. Harker emphatically. "I've called respecting your goings hon, young man!"

"I fail to understand you," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Will you kindly explain your business with me, Mr. Harkah?"

"Ain't I explaining of it?" demanded Mr. Harker belligerently. "Which wot I've got to say is this 'ere, that I ain't standing it! You mark my words, young feller, I ain't standing it! Not at no price! Is that plain enough?"

"I weally do not compwehend—"

"When a feller is engaged to a gel," said Mr. Harker, "a feller don't like a young torf a-giving that gel the glad eye. Natural, ain't it? I ain't a torf, I ain't! I'm a 'ard-working man! But I'm as good as any torf wot ever breathed, young feller, and don't you forget it!"

Arthur Augustus felt an inward sinking.

"Weally, Mr. Harkah—"

"You keep horf the grass!" said Mr. Harker. "You let another feller's gel alone! That's wot I want, and that's wot I'm a-goin' to 'ave! You mark my words!"

Arthur Augustus sank into his chair. He was not afraid of Mr. Harker, truculent as that gentleman looked. That was not the trouble at all. But he could no longer doubt the meaning of Mr. Harker's remarks.

"Do you mean to imply that you are engaged to Miss Dowothy Fane?" he asked, in a faint voice.

"Which you knows it well enough," said Mr. Harker darkly. "And you thinks as because you are a torf you can do as you like—wot? But you can't! This 'ere is a free country, and a 'ard-working man 'as 'is rights!"

I come 'ere to give you a 'iding, Mister Swanking D'Arcy, and that's wot I'm going to do! Then p'raps you'll let another man's gel alone—wot?"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus jumped up as Mr. Harker flourished the big whip. There was a crash as the whip caught the clock and hurled it into the fender.

Arthur Augustus backed round the table.

"Weally!" he gasped.

"Don't you dodge me!" roared Mr. Harker. "I'm a-standin' up for my rights, I am! Which I knows the 'ole gime, sending horders hevery day to bring the van 'ere—wot? A-giving of my gel the glad eye when she comes with the parcels! Well, you may be a torf, but I call it dishonourable, I do! And I'm goin' to wallop you to teach you manners!"

"Oh, deah!"

The whip sang through the air, as Mr. Harker made a rush at the dismayed swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus dodged again.

"Pway be calm!" he gasped. "I—I assuah you, Mr. Harkah, that I weally was not awah—"

"Gammon!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, rushing into the study and collaring the truculent Mr. Harker. "Draw it mild, young man!"

"You lemme alone!" roared Mr. Harker. "I'm a-going to wallop the young scoundrel!"

"Scoundwel! Bai Jove!"

"Rescue!" gasped Tom Merry.

Lowther and Manners, and Blake and Herries and Dig crowded in. They gathered round the young man from Blankley's, and strove to pacify him.

"Quiet, for goodness' sake!" urged Blake. "We shall have a master up here if you make such a row!"

"I don't care a rap! I'm going to wallop that young deceiving villain!" shouted Mr. Harker. "I'll give him the glad eye, I will! 'Cause he's a blessed torf, he thinks he can do wot he blessed well chooses—eh? I'll show 'im!"

"Hold on! Hold on, Mr. Harker! Gussy didn't know—he didn't really—"

"Gammon!"

"Keep behind the table, Gussy!" shouted Dig. "We'll hold him off!"

"I wufuse to keep behind the table, Dig. I am not afraid of this—this person," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Mr. Harkah, there is no need for you to make a wiculous scene. You are actin' under a misappwehension."

"Lemme get at the young scoundrel!"

"I wufuse to be called a young scoundwel!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I was not awah that Miss Fane was engaged, as she does not wear a wing."

"'Ow could she wear a wing, you young hidiot?" exclaimed the man from Blankley's.

"Gussy means that she's an angel, you know, and therefore might be expected to wear a wing," explained Lowther.

"I do not mean anythin' of the sort, Lowthah, you ass! I was alludin' to an engagement-wing."

"Wot does 'e mean by 'is engagement-wing?" demanded the man from Blankley's. "Is 'e orf 'is onion?"

"He means an engagement-ring," chuckled Blake.

"Ho! And 'ow is a 'ard-working man to buy engagement-rings in these 'ard times?" demanded Mr. Harker.

"Course that young torf could afford it. He don't 'ave to work with a van, he don't, for twenty-one shillin's a week. 'Tain't his business, I s'pose, whether my gel wears a ring or not, is it? Young rascal!"

"Certainly not, Mr. Harkah," said Arthur Augustus.

"I did not mean that wemark as impertinent. I was explainin' how it was that I did not know that Miss Fane was engaged. Undah the circs, of course I shall nevalh see the young lady again. I twust you are sufficiently intelligent to see that I am an honouvable chap!"

"You have Gussy's word, Mr. Harker," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "The word of a D'Arcy is as good as gold or currency notes."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I give my word of honah to Mr. Harkah," said Arthur Augustus, with a lofty dignity. "But I wish him

ANSWERS

clearly to understand that I am not afraid of him, I am quite prepared to throw him out of this study!"

"My eye! Lemme get at him——"

"Peace, my child, peace!" said Monty Lowther. "This way! We'll see you to the gates. Lend a hand, you fellows."

Tom Merry & Co. gathered round Mr. Harker, and marched him out of the study. As he went down the passage, Mr. Harker repeatedly requested to be allowed to "get at" Arthur Augustus. But he was escorted safely off the premises.

Tom Merry & Co. returned to the study a few minutes later. Arthur Augustus was stooping at the grate, with a lighted match in his hand. A sheet of impot paper blazed up and was consumed.

It was the poem!

Arthur Augustus crimsoned as he turned and met the accusing gaze of his chums.

"Is he gone?" he faltered.

"Gone," said Blake gravely. "Gussy, I must say I am shocked at this. I never thought anybody in this study would be capable of——"

"You must know, Blake, that I was quite unawah of the twue posish of affaihs," said Arthur Augustus, "and I twust you can wely upon me to do the wight thing. Pway excuse me—I must go and telephone."

"Telephone!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus hurried out of the study. The Co. followed him to the prefects' room. Arthur Augustus took up the receiver, and rang up Blankley's.

"If it's another order for Blankley's, he's going to be scragged!" murmured Blake.

"Shush!"

Arthur Augustus was speaking into the receiver.

"Blankley's? Yaas, good! This is D'Arcy, St. Jim's. You are sendin' me some goods by this aftahnoon's delivevy. Are they despatched yet? No? Very good! Pway do not send them. I find I shall not wequiah them now. Thank you vewy much!"

Arthur Augustus hung up the receiver.

The girl from Blankley's had paid her last visit to St. Jim's!

During the next two or three days Arthur Augustus was very quiet and subdued.

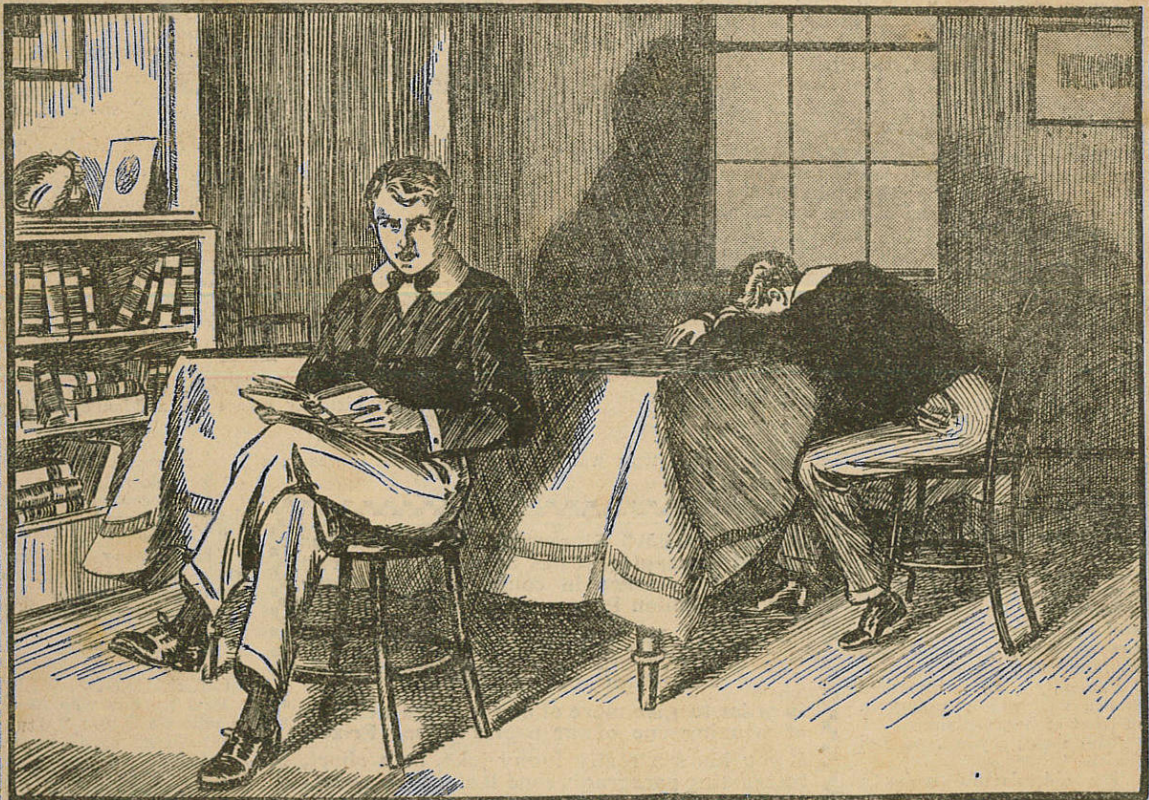
But he was on the old terms with his chums; discord in Study No. 6 was a thing of the past.

And after a few days the smiles returned to the noble countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He had made the discovery that he was not so hard hit as he had supposed, and that at fifteen it was more difficult than easy to be crossed in love. His chums witnessed his recovery with great satisfaction, and they chuckled when they heard him inform Tom Merry that he would be available for the Rookwood match.

Arthur Augustus played in the Rookwood match with great distinction. In Study No. 6 the girl from Blankley's was mentioned no more. But it was a long time before Arthur Augustus' devoted chums told him the story of the true identity of the man from Blankley's.

THE END.

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LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

EQUAL TO THE OCCASION.

An evangelist was exhorting his hearers to flee from the wrath to come.

"I warn you," he cried, "that there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth!"

At this stage an old lady in the gallery stood up.

"Sir," she shouted, "I have no teeth!"

"Madam," retorted the evangelist, "teeth will be provided!"—Sent in by W. Nicholson, Stanley, co. Durham.

A REASSURING ANSWER.

An old lady was going down a coal-mine for the first time in her life.

As the cage slowly descended, she noticed how she and the rest of the party were dependent upon a single rope to which it was attached.

"Do you think it is quite safe?" she asked a brawny miner who was accompanying the visitors, as she glanced anxiously up at the rope.

"Don't fear, mum," was the reply. "You're quite safe. These 'ere ropes are guaranteed to last exactly twelve months, and this one ain't due to be renewed till to-morrow."

—Sent in by C. Lyne, Kettering.

OVERLOADED.

'Twas in the wild and woolly West, and the weary traveller had had a twenty-mile tramp to the nearest railway-station. There he had enjoyed a delightful vigil of nearly five hours, when at last a welcome rumble was heard, and the train crawled in.

The traveller staggered aboard, and seated himself, with a grunt of satisfaction. A long pause, but still the train did not move.

Suddenly a grimy visage thrust itself into the compartment, and its owner, the driver, remarked:

"Say, boss, would you mind climbing dahn a minute while we jest get a start on the confounded engine?"—Sent in by G. Morgan, East Ham, E.

SHE FELT FED-UP.

The hope and pride of a certain junior football team was Bill Smith, the star inside-right. In the opinion of the club's supporters, the result of the match depended largely upon Bill.

Having heard of his popularity, Mrs. Smith—Bill's mother—was in attendance, and she glowed with pride as she watched her stalwart son running down the field.

Presently an impatient youth, who was standing in in front of her, exclaimed:

"Why don't you feed Bill Smith?"

The old dame's umbrella came down upon the critic's head with a resounding crash.

"What do you mean?" she cried indignantly. "I'll let you know our Bill gets more to eat than thee, from the look of ye!"—Sent in by F. Kinder, Brighouse.

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A COLOURED ROMANCE.

First she was green with envy,

Next she was red with rage,

And then she was white with a terrible hate—

And the reader turned the page.

There was the blue-and-black villain

Showing his yellow streak;

His brow was flushed with the pink of death,

And he fled with a purple squeak.

Heroine sees the hero

Coloured so true to life,

The tarred-and-feathered villain leaves

A rainbow man and wife.

—Sent in by B. Whittaker, New Malden, Surrey.

THEN HE MADE A FACE.

The immensely wealthy catch, who had just become engaged to the eldest daughter of the house, had arrived on his first visit to his fiancée's home. Naturally, it was desired to give him a very favourable impression.

After tea he was presented to the youngest of his future sisters-in-law. The little girl looked at him long and carefully with her clear blue eyes, evidently taking in every detail.

"Sissy says you are a self-made man," she said at last.

"Is that true?"

"Yes, my dear, quite true," he replied kindly. "What makes you ask?"

"Well, I was only wondering what made you give yourself such a funny face," was the innocent rejoinder.—Sent in by H. E. Cooper, Rotherham, Yorks.

BITING SARCASM.

Boarder (tackling a very tough steak): "When you undertook to provide me with board, madam, I was really not aware that you meant to do so literally."—Sent in by J. E. Daykin, Derby.

MYSTIFIED.

"Mamma, my birthday comes on a Monday this year, doesn't it?"

"Yes, dear."

"And last year it was on a Sunday, wasn't it?"

"Yes, dear."

"Did it come on a Saturday the year before last?"

"Yes, dear."

"How many days in the week was I born on, mamma?"—Sent in by T. Laverick, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

COURAGEOUS, VERY.

Boss (to boy who has been to collect a debt): "Well, and what did he say about the account?"

Boy: "He said he would break every bone in my body and throw me out of the window if I showed my face there again."

Boss: "Just go back and tell him he can't frighten me by his violence."—Sent in by Robert Chick, Fulham, S.W.

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THE CONCLUDING CHAPTERS OF—

UNDER THE DRAGON.



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adventure in the Far East.

BY
PETER BAYNE.

The previous instalments told how:—

NORRIS BRENT, on returning to England with his Chinese servant YEN HOW, is greeted by his unworthy cousin, GUY MELVILLE.

Despite the fact that he had during a journey through a desert stolen the last drop of water, and left them to perish, Guy Melville pretends to be pleased at seeing them again. He informs his cousin that, owing to the death of an uncle, he is now owner of the estate Eagle's Cliff, and offers him a position thereon, which is accepted.

One day Yen How surprises his master by informing him that MING YUNG, a Chinese mandarin, and his ward, SILVER PEARL, whose acquaintance Brent had previously made in China, are staying at Eagle's Nest.

Brent discovers that Ming Yung has come to Eagle's Nest in order to experiment with an invention with which he hopes to secure world-wide power.

Guy Melville, for some sinister reason, desires the death of his cousin, and secures the assistance of a gipsy, KARL MARROK, to aid him in his foul purpose.

Brent finds a ruby of great value, which, after it has been stolen by Guy Melville, Ming Yung gains possession of.

The latter has to make a hurried return to China, and Brent and Yen How follow him.

Brent enters Ming Yung's residence, and is discovered, so is forced to hide. Yen How rescues him, and the two hasten back to the hotel where they are staying.

Brent and Yen How next morning start off again, and at night enter a hut, asking for a night's rest, when, to Brent's surprise, he discovers his cousin dying. Before Melville dies he asks Brent's forgiveness, and confesses that he stole the red ruby, and that Ming Yung stole it from him.

After burying his cousin, Brent and his companion start off again, and next they reach Canton. Here they again stay for a rest, and, to pass the time, visit a theatre. On leaving the place they are both arrested by four detectives, who are instructed by Ming Yung to do so.

The gaoler of the prison is bribed, and so Brent and Yen How escape, and, obtaining a guide, set out over the mountains. The guide at last exclaims: "The Tower of Silence! This is where I must leave you."

(Now read the conclusion of this splendid story).

The Losing Game—The Dropped Ruby—The Destroyer —Comrades Three.

Karl Marrok uttered a laugh of contemptuous amusement.

He was thinking of Ming Yung, of the trust that he believed the yellow wizard had placed in him, and of how he had betrayed it.

Fortune had smiled upon him. The enterprise that he had embarked upon with Guy Melville had ended in his favour. His associate had fallen out of the running, had been abandoned by him to a harsh fate, and the great prize that had been both coveted was for him alone.

The red ruby was his at last. As it lay in his open hand it glowed and sparkled like a ball of fire. He could not take his eyes from it. There was the treasure that would open

out for him a future wherein he would be able to satisfy every desire of his heart.

The room in which he was standing was in darkness, but it opened out on to a stone balcony that was already touched by the silvery light of the rising moon. The slow dispersal of the mass of black shadow encircling him warned Marrok that he was exposing himself to the danger of being seen.

The retainers of Ming Yung, as he had cause to remember, regarded him with marked dislike and suspicion. It would never do for one of them to find him there.

From somewhere behind him a rustling sound reached his ears. With a startled gasp, he swung round. A light glowed at the back of the room, soft and clear, revealing Ming Yung's tall and commanding figure.

Ming Yung! A spasm of terrified amazement shook Karl Marrok from head to foot. He had made sure that the other was at Hong Kong, and would not be back until the end of the week. Bold and confident in his knowledge that the yellow wizard was absent, he had searched high and low for the red ruby, and had at last found it, only to be detected in the very moment of his success.

The two men stared at each other in silence. Neither moved. Yet while the face of Karl Marrok expressed uncontrollable fear and discomfiture, that of Ming Yung showed not a vestige of emotion.

The mysterious mandarin was not alone. There were other Chinese in the room and out on the stone balcony, silent, watchful, and alert. Seeing them caused Marrok to lose the sense of blind, unreasoning terror that had chilled him to the bone. Like a trapped wolf, he bared his teeth and growled with impotent hate and fury against a power that he knew would crush him to the dust.

"Seize the feringhee!" Ming Yung commanded. "Let him not escape!"

Pausing not a moment as they advanced upon him, Marrok dashed past them on to the balcony. With a swift spring he gained the top of the stone balustrade and started to run along it.

Before he had gone a yard two Chinamen clutched hold of him. For a moment or two he struggled to release himself, and in doing so swayed and lost his balance. Then, uttering a terrible scream, he fell from the balcony and shot down into the ravine hundreds of feet below.

The comrades heard Karl Marrok's death-cry a few minutes after their guide had left them and they were setting out on the last short stage of their journey. It sounded so near that it startled them. They halted and looked up.

There was a tinkling crash almost at their feet. Something that flashed and glittered with dazzling brightness rolled on the ground. Uttering a quick exclamation of intense surprise, Norris Brent stooped down and snatched up the object.

"Look!" he cried. "The red ruby!"

It was the red ruby beyond a doubt. Flinging out his arms as he fell from the balcony in a vain attempt to save himself, Karl Marrok had jerked the precious stone from his grasp, with a convulsive gesture. Dropping clear of the ravine, it had bounded down the highest slope of the mountain to the level space occupied by Brent and his companion.

The comrades stared in wondering amazement at the

splendid gem. How had it come there? That was the immoderate thought that occurred to them both.

Brent was the first to see a glimmering of the truth. "It's mighty odd!" he said. "That scream we heard must have come from someone who was caught while making off with the ruby, which he'd stolen. In his fright he flung it away, and it fell down here, for me to pick it up."

"That is as it should be," Yen How rejoined. "The ruby belongs to you. Now you have it back again, my think you keep it more jolly tight than you did before."

Brent laughed, as he placed the gem in a pocket of his money-belt.

"I'll do my best to," he remarked. "All the same"—and his face grew serious—"it will be a more difficult business than ever now for us to do what we want to. The loss of this red ruby will make Ming Yung like a raging tiger. Shouldn't wonder if he doesn't send his men out to look for it."

Yen How held up a warning hand. "Hark!" he said. "Here they come already!"

The faint sound of distant voices broke the silence. Then the glimmers of lighted torches were seen. The Chinese, urged on by Ming Yung, were descending the mountain, in the hope of discovering Karl Marrok's dead body, and on it the ruby that the gipsy had stolen with such a fatal result.

"This is awkward for us," said Brent. "It makes necessary a change in our plans right away. We shall have little chance of seeing the inside of the Tower of Silence to-night."

Skirting the edge of the ravine, the comrades made their way down towards the coast. It was an arduous and perilous descent. In places the mountain-side was steep as a roof, and slippery as glass, the utmost care and caution being required to avoid a stumble that would have meant instant death.

At last the ordeal was over. Stretching away from the mountain-base to the sea, nearly a mile distant, was a beach, littered with huge rocks and vast quantities of loose shale. As he and his companion halted to take their bearings, Brent's attention was attracted to a bright light that suddenly shone across the water. It was visible for a minute or two, and then disappeared from sight.

"That belong ship's light," commented Yen How. "Yes," said Brent thoughtfully; "and I believe that the ship is a British man-o'-war of some sort."

Instinct more than anything else made him fancy so. So impressed was he by this conviction that he determined to assure himself on the point with the least possible delay.

Accompanied by Yen How, he crossed the beach by a circuitous route that brought them to a point that was in almost a direct line with the spot where they had last seen the light.

A succession of lofty pillars of rock rose out of the sea to a considerable distance from the coast, which was evidently one of the greatest dangers to the mariner. Beyond was the deep sea channel separating the Chinese mainland from Hong Kong, whose innumerable lights cast a deep red glow into the sky.

"Do you see it?" whispered Yen How. "There, between those two big rocks!"

Glancing in the direction indicated, Brent observed a long, dark object that he knew at once to be a destroyer. She was at anchor, and all her lights were extinguished—with what object he could only vaguely surmise, although he shrewdly suspected that Ming Yung was in some way connected with it.

"Tell you what!" he said, coming to a sudden resolution. "I'm going to swim out to that ship, Yen How. D'you want to come with me?"

Yen How smiled and nodded his head. "Of course!" he replied. "What side you go my go."

Wading out until the water was waist-deep, the comrades started on their swim. The sea was calm, and the tide in their favour, so it was not long before they were near the destroyer.

From on deck a voice hailed them; and Norris Brent thrilled with an inexpressible emotion as he heard the familiar accents of his mother tongue.

"We're friends!" he called out. "Can we come on board?"

Immediately afterwards a rope-ladder was flung over the destroyer's side, and the comrades clambered up it. Several sturdy British bluejackets gazed at them with unconcealed wonder and curiosity as they reached the deck, and a young lieutenant stepped forward to meet them.

After exchanging a few words with Brent, the officer appeared satisfied that the comrades had every right to be there.

"You'd better change into some dry clothes," he said, "and then I'll take you to see Captain Scott, the commander."

Not many minutes later Brent was shown into the commander's cabin.

He found that Captain Scott was a youngish man of the real British naval officer type. It did not take him long to tell his story, which deeply impressed his listener, as much by the sincere, straightforward manner in which it was told as by the strange nature of it.

"I've heard of you before," said Scott, "and of your cousin. It was at his place, Eagle's Nest, that Ming Yung was staying when Kenneth Grame's steam-yacht Gloria was destroyed. That affair caused a tremendous sensation, but Ming Yung managed to flee from the country without being openly convicted of his monstrous crime."

"Yet there can be no doubt about him being the culprit," Brent earnestly replied, "and he ought to suffer a heavy punishment for it."

"Quite agree with you," said Scott, "and if I followed out my personal wishes in the matter I should go ashore at the head of my men and arrest him by force. Unfortunately, however, he is a Chinaman on Chinese territory, and that fact assures to him his liberty. To make a landing and take him prisoner would be an act of war on China that might easily lead to world-wide trouble and all sorts of international complications. You see the difficult position that I am placed in?"

"Yes," Brent answered, "I do. But why is your ship here?"

The blunt shrewdness of the question amused the commander.

"Ha," he said laughingly, "you're certainly as sharp as I took you to be! Though our yellow friend is out of my reach at present so far as arresting him is concerned," he continued, "there is no consideration of a political nature to prevent me from keeping a close watch on his movements so far as they may threaten to endanger important British interests."

"Then you're suspicious of him?"

"Very," was the answer. "We've information to the effect that Ming Yung has established some infernal engine of destruction in the Tower of Silence that will not only menace the shipping that passes up and down the sea channel outside, but even Hong Kong itself."

Brent's face flushed with excitement.

"That will be a machine for working the violet ray," he exclaimed, "and if it is finished and in order, then Ming Yung has nothing to fear. Against the violet ray no power on earth could prevail for a moment."

The commander of the destroyer looked grave.

"You've seen this ray at work, you tell me," he said. "I'd like to hear from your own lips all that you know about it."

The grave look in his face deepened as Brent was speaking. All that he heard went to more than confirm the truth of what he had read regarding Ming Yung's wonderful invention. With such a terrible force at his command, the yellow wizard might well prove himself to be a veritable scourge to civilisation.

"If I was certain that Ming Yung was preparing to use the violet ray against our shipping," he said, "I'd take the responsibility of putting armed men into his house at once. His superiors in office may protect him now, but they would not dare to any longer were we able to prove the guilt of his intentions."

"You'll soon be able to do that, sir," Brent declared, "for I'm certain that I shall be able to obtain all the proof necessary for your purpose. It's like this," he went on to say, as Scott darted an inquiring glance at him. "Silver Pearl, the adopted daughter of Ming Yung, is a great friend of mine. It was with the object, first of all, of seeing her that I set out from Canton to reach Ming Yung's place on the coast. She has helped me before to find out what I wanted to about him, and she will again, or I'm very much mistaken."

"And supposing this girl does all that you think she will do," asked Scott, "how do you propose to act then?"

"Well," said Brent readily, "I should pass on the information gained as quickly as possible to you."

To Captain Scott the plan seemed an eminently practical one. Short though their acquaintance was, it had been sufficient to give him confidence in his young guest, whose pluck and bravery, moreover, he had heard of before.

The first-hand knowledge that Brent possessed of Ming Yung was also greatly to his advantage. Silver Pearl, too, promised to be a valuable ally in assisting him to unveil the hidden secrets of the Tower of Silence.

"It'll be a risky enterprise for you to carry out," said Scott, "but not so much so as if you hadn't got me to fall back on."

Then he and Brent proceeded to elaborate the scheme. It was decided that the comrades should make their attempt to enter the Tower of Silence on the following night, and,



Ming Yung's left hand clutched at Brent's throat, and his breath came in gasps. There was a rush of feet, and a crowd of Chinamen, led by Ho Beng, swarmed on to the terrace. (See page 27).

if they succeeded, to return with the information obtained to the destroyer.

Should danger from the Chinese threaten them, then Yen How, who would remain on guard while Brent was speaking to Silver Pearl, was to flash a warning light that would be seen by those on board the destroyer.

"In the event of that happening," said Scott, "help will be sent to you at once. But avoid trouble if you can, for we don't want Ming Yung to hoodwink us and make a complaint to the Chinese authorities that we invaded peaceful territory without any good cause. That would make us a general laughing-stock, to say the least of it."

Brent shook his head.

"You needn't have any fear on that score," he declared. "Whatever the danger was that threatened me, I'd never look to anyone else to save me from it."

"Bravely spoken!" said Captain Scott. "Nevertheless, I shall expect a call from you if you find yourself in a tight fix."

That night Brent and Yen How slept on board the destroyer, and remained on the vessel until a late hour the following day. Darkness had long since fallen when they were rowed to the shore. Leaving the boat that had brought them to land, they set off across the rock-strewn beach, and were soon at the foot of the mountain on whose towering summit stood Ming Yung's lonely abode.

Following the same path they had descended by on the preceding night, they reached the level space of rock where Brent had picked up the red ruby. Above them rose the topmost slope of the mountain, so steep as to look almost inaccessible, but where others had been they did not hesitate to venture.

Sure and steady of foot, they climbed up the rocky height, slipping, often, and now and then accidentally loosening some large boulder, that became dislodged and went leaping and bounding down the mountain-side with ever-increasing momentum. Then they would pause, and lie flat against the slope, fearing lest the noise should be heard by their foes above, to press on upward again in the ensuing silence with renewed confidence.

Now they were on the summit of the mountain. Before

their eyes rose the strong walls of the Tower of Silence, which reminded Brent strongly of an old English castle, except that in this instance the building showed no sign of ever having been allowed to fall into disrepair.

But for a single light showing at a narrow window high up in the front part of it, the place was in darkness. Not a sound disturbed the prevailing peace and calm. Yet, as Brent gazed at that lighted window he felt sure that the yellow wizard, sleepless and alert, was in the room behind it.

"Down!" Yen How whispered suddenly, clutching at his companion's arm. "Someone is watching us!"

He glanced towards a rock near which a figure was moving. At the same moment someone stepped out into the moonlight, and hurried swiftly to the comrades, neither of whom could suppress the cry of surprise that rose to their lips.

No foe this, but a friend—Silver Pearl herself!

"Hush!" she whispered to Brent, falling to her knees, and crouching by his side. "Don't move or speak yet. Someone on the tower may have seen me."

All three listened intently for several moments, but not a sound came to their ears, not an object moved before their eyes. It was silent as the grave.

"Silver Pearl," said Brent, "how did you know that we were here?"

"I've been waiting for you behind that rock," she answered, "for I knew that you would come this way. When you landed from the boat I saw you, and came back here by an easier path than the one you chose."

Brent stared at her in amazement.

"But did you know that we were on the destroyer?"

"Yes," she replied to his question. "Last night I was down on the beach, waiting to see something of the British ship, whose light had attracted my attention before. Then you and Yen How passed quite close to me. I was too astonished to call out to you, and before I could make up my mind what to do you had both waded into the water. To-night I went down there again in the hope of meeting you. When you started to climb the mountain, I guessed what you meant to do."

While Silver Pearl was speaking a vague doubt and suspicion clouded Brent's mind.

"Why were you watching the destroyer?" he inquired. "Because I wanted to speak to someone, if possible, who might be able to tell me something about you," she murmured, blushing and hanging down her head. "Ho Beng had told us of your escape down the river, and I hoped to hear that you had reached the coast in safety, or been rescued by some of your own countrymen."

Now, Brent was ashamed that he had suspected Silver Pearl of watching the British warship on behalf of Ming Yung, and he was silent for some moments, while the girl's dark eyes rested upon him with a look of mingled joy and anxiety.

"It's splendid to be with you again, Silver Pearl," said Brent at last. "But I never thought that we should meet in this way. I feared that it would be necessary to get inside the tower before I could communicate with you."

"Fate is our friend," she answered simply, "as I trust it will continue to be."

Then Brent told her of the strong purpose that had brought him so many thousands of miles across the sea, of the hardships and terrible dangers that he and Yen How had encountered on the journey, and she listened to him with a grave face that ever and again lit up with a bright little smile.

"I'm not surprised," she said, "for what you told me on board that steamer in the Indian Ocean convinced me that either you would gain the victory over Ming Yung, or he would beat you. When you were thrown overboard into the sea, I grieved for you as for one dead, and any respect and affection I might have had for my guardian turned to hatred and a burning desire to have revenge on him for your sake. That is why I am here now, to help you, Norris."

She held out both her hands, and as Brent clasped them in his own, he knew that she had pledged her loyalty to him to the death. And this knowledge thrilled him with a triumphant delight, for with Silver Pearl by his side, trusty and true, he had no fear of Ming Yung being the final victor in the long duel between them that was now about to draw to its close.

"Come!" whispered Silver Pearl. "Now is the time for us to act!"

All three, comrades together, moved on towards the tower.

The Yellow Wizard's Fate.

"Are you sure of this thing?" Ho Beng humbly bowed his face almost to the ground. "Your slave would not dare to utter anything but the truth," he said, with outspread hands. "It is as my honoured lord has been told. Last night Silver Pearl left her room in secret, and was absent for nearly an hour, and now again she is missing."

"So!" remarked Ming Yung, frowning darkly. "And what is the meaning of this nightly ramble on her part? Tell me!"

"That I am unable to tell, my lord," answered Ho Beng, visibly taken aback by this peremptory demand for information that he was at a loss to supply. "All that I know I have told you."

Ming Yung's dark eyes flashed angrily. "You know either too much or too little," he declared.

"It is ever the same. Now listen to me. Keep close watch for Silver Pearl's return. When you see her come straight to me. Should you fail in this duty I have laid on you, then the nail shall be torn from each of your thumbs as a punishment."

So saying, he turned abruptly away from the fawning and abashed Ho Beng, and entered the Tower of Silence by a private doorway that was used by him alone. Closing the door, he felt for the key that he usually carried in the side-pocket of the closely-fitting vest worn beneath his long purple cloak.

The key was not there. Its absence vexed him a little, but it did not strike him as being curious, and he supposed that he must have mislaid it somewhere.

Nor did it occur to him that it would be unwise to leave the door unlocked. He had given the strictest orders that none but himself should use this private entrance, and such a command no Chinaman in his service would disobey, knowing well the fearfully severe punishment that would follow.

Ascending a winding flight of stone steps, Ming Yung came to a landing that opened into a large and lofty room that he used as a combined study and laboratory. It was splendidly equipped for the work that he carried on in it.

The instruments and other apparatus were worth a considerable fortune. Where his scientific researches were affected, Ming Yung always spent with a lavish hand. Only the very best that money could buy would he look at, and the result was invariably one that satisfied even his exacting temper.

Beyond the room, and opening out from it through a couple of high archways, was a great stone terrace, supported by huge pillars rising from the ground, and overgrown for a considerable distance up by a climbing plant bearing overspreading branches covered with a dense foliage of dark-green leaves.

A machine that bore a striking resemblance to the projector of an extremely powerful searchlight stood in the centre of the terrace. Tubes and wires connected it with a large battery placed on a platform back in the laboratory.

It was modelled on the design of the small machine that Ming Yung had erected on the roof of the tower at Eagle's Nest, and was, in fact, made for the same purpose as its predecessor.

Bending over the machine, the yellow wizard eyed it with loving care and attention. All his hopes were centred upon it. Disaster—almost complete failure and irretrievable ruin—had overtaken him in England, but he had fled in time to escape the penalty that would otherwise have crushed him to dust, and this new invention was his answer to his enemies.

So powerful was its directing force that Ming Yung knew that the violet ray could now reach Hong Kong. Turned on at the great battery, the flaming light that destroyed everything it touched would sweep across the sea, and annihilate the centre of British power in China more effectually than the fiercest bombardment by massed pieces of artillery ever could do.

Later on, when the night was far advanced, Ming Yung intended to put his latest invention to its first test. He never doubted that it would come up to his highest expectation, and the thought of the dreadful havoc and destruction that it would cause brought a look of inhuman pride into his face.

While the yellow wizard inspected the different parts of his jealously-guarded invention, Silver Pearl and her companions were thinking of the perilous enterprise in front of them. Fortunately for them, Yen How had caught sight of Ho Beng's figure moving stealthily across the compound which Silver Pearl would have to pass in order to reach the entrance to the house.

"Then he knows that I am out," said the girl, turning pale at the thought, "and is watching for me to return. It was a good thing for us, Yen How, that you noticed him, for I meant to go across the compound."



LOOK OUT! HERE'S SYD CHAPLIN hurrying along to keep his appointment for fooling ON THE FRONT PAGE of the world's great comic—THE FIREFLY, 1/2. Have the loudest laugh of your life this Wednesday.

"Isn't there more than one entrance to the tower?" Brent asked.

"There is another one," Silver Pearl replied, after a moment or two's silent reflection, "but I'm afraid it will be of no use to us. The door is always kept locked by Ming Yung, who carries the key about with him."

"Perhaps he has forgotten to lock it to-night, expressly for our benefit," said Brent, with a cheery smile, in order to hide the disappointment at this early check that he himself, no less than Silver Pearl, was experiencing. "At any rate, we can but try the door and make sure."

Leading the way to the foot of the stone staircase, Silver Pearl gently turned the handle of the door, which, to her unutterable astonishment, swung open.

"You see that there was sense in my suggestion," Brent whispered, with a look of relief. "Go on!"

But Silver Pearl, a sharp suspicion in her mind, hung back with a marked nervousness and timidity in her bearing and manner.

"He has laid a trap for us to walk into," she whispered. "I'm sure of it. He never leaves this door unlocked at other times!"

Brent smiled, and pointed to the butt of the Service revolver that rested in his coat-pocket, and which Captain Scott had given to him before he left the destroyer.

"With this little barker ready to my hand," he said, "I've no fear of falling into any trap that Ming Yung and his Chinamen may have laid for us. Yen How has another of the same sort. Don't you fear anything. Besides, it's quite possible that Ming Yung has forgotten to use his key."

Somewhat reassured by these words, Silver Pearl consented to enter the doorway and ascend the steps. The comrades followed her closely, treading as noiselessly as she herself did, and a few moments later they were on the landing opposite the laboratory.

Peering into the room, they saw Ming Yung, with his back towards them, looking through some memoranda that he had jotted down on a long slip of red paper. He was standing below a green-shaded bulb of electric light, and not until Brent was close to him did some quick play of his instinct warn him that he was not alone.

Turning sharply round, he beheld the lad who had so often balked his purposes in the past, holding a revolver that was pointing steadily at him.

"Don't move!" ordered Brent brusquely. "If you do, your life will pay for it!"

The yellow wizard realised that this was no idle threat, and that Brent would act on it if it was necessary to do so, without a second's hesitation. His eyes shot fire. Then, cold and impassive as ever, he looked calmly at the youth who had dared so much to meet him again.

"So," he said, "once more we are face to face. The last time I looked upon you, feringhee, was when you were thrown into the ocean at my command!"

"I remember the occasion perfectly well," Brent answered, with a scornful smile. "You had me on toast then, and you naturally never expected to see me again. But I've a habit of turning up when I ought not to, that you'll have noticed once or twice before."

Ming Yung snarled suddenly like an infuriated tiger.

"You taunt me because I am helpless for the moment!" he exclaimed. "Why have you come here like some prowling thief in the night?"

"As you did at Eagle's Nest, when you stole the red ruby from my cousin," Brent retorted, "but with no such dishonest motive. Listen to me, Ming Yung! You fled from England to escape paying the penalty for a terrible crime—one, moreover, that you've been planning to repeat here on a far vaster scale. But all your preparations represent so much wasted effort."

"Indeed!" Ming Yung rejoined. "Who is going to bring them to naught?"

"I am," was the prompt answer. "You will come away with me, Ming Yung, or I will most certainly shoot you dead in this room. It is for you to make the choice of these two alternatives. Having got you in my power, I'm not going to

leave you free to carry on your fiendish work. Either you come with me or you die!"

A shot—a scream. The shout of voices came from the laboratory. Brent glanced round, and Ming Yung, seizing the opportunity that he had been waiting for ever since his hand had pushed the electric bell button in the wall behind him that sounded an alarm, hurled himself at the lad.

The revolver that Brent held went off as his finger pulled the trigger, but the bullet sped harmlessly out over the terrace into space. Again he fired. Ming Yung gave a cry of terrible rage and pain, for this time the leaden missile sank deep into his right arm, which fell limp and useless to his side.

His left hand clutched frenziedly at Brent's throat, and his breath came and went in noisy gasps. There was a rush of feet, and a crowd of Chinamen, led by Ho Beng, swarmed on to the terrace.

A heavy blow fell on Brent's head with stunning force. He reeled dizzily, and then blankness came over his brain, and the shouting, fierce-eyed Chinese faded from his vision.

When he again came to consciousness of his surroundings, he found that he was on the mountain-side. Silver Pearl was kneeling by him, holding up his head, and close to her stood Yen How, bruised, battered, and with his clothes torn to ribbons, and four or five British bluejackets.

"He's all right now," said Yen How smilingly, as Brent looked round. "That velly, velly good. My have big fight to drag you away from that place, Mista Brent," he added, addressing his young master; "but my succeed in the end. This revolver bark out all his shots, my tell you, and three or four men will never speak again."

Brent, remembering everything, rose weakly to his feet.

"Ming Yung!" he exclaimed. "He'll get away again!"

"Not much fear, sir," one of the bluejackets replied. "The captain, with a score of bluejackets, has gone up there this ten minutes since. Hallo!"

From the summit of the mountain had come a strange, roaring sound like that made amongst dry leaves by the passing of a strong gust of wind. All eyes were upturned.

High into the sky shot a great flame of violet-coloured light. It lasted scarcely more than a second, then vanished, leaving the sky clear as before. Norris Brent and his companions did not speak, could not have uttered a word had they tried to, for a miracle had happened.

The Tower of Silence had disappeared from the mountain's crest.

Not one solitary stone of it remained. The violet ray, let loose in all its terrible power by Ming Yung, had destroyed the building, turning it and everything within its walls to dust.

The yellow wizard had doubtless released the violet ray with the intention of destroying Captain Scott and the force of bluejackets as they were nearing the place. In his fury he must have made some kind of miscalculation, with the result that the electric stream became an uncontrollable force that swept him and his followers into oblivion.

"Thank Heaven our fellows are safe!" one of the bluejackets said feverishly at last. "They're nearly up to the top of the mountain, but not quite, and for that, praise everybody!"

Brent, glancing at Silver Pearl, saw that she was crying softly.

"Cheer up!" he whispered. "You'll come home with me to England now, where kind friends will always be round you. Will you be sorry to leave China?"

Smiling up at him through her tears, Silver Pearl shook her head.

"No," she murmured. "I shall be very glad. For am I not going to be with you?"

Three months later Norris Brent was back at Eagle's Nest, its owner now, and with every prospect of a long and happy life in front of him. He was accompanied by Yen How and Silver Pearl, for in his prosperity, as in his days of gloom and adversity, these staunch and loyal comrades were all the world to him.

THE END.

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For Next Wednesday:

"SKIMPOLE'S WINDFALL!"

By Martin Clifford.

Wild scenes of commotion take place at St. Jim's in next week's grand, long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co. Since the outbreak of war Herbert Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, has been writing wordy and extensive articles on the subject of his new aeroplane, and great is the surprise of his schoolfellows when he receives a cheque for twenty pounds from the editor of "The Flying Times" in payment for a contribution. On the strength of this sudden nest-egg, Skimpole allows his philanthropy to run riot. He invites his schoolmates to help themselves, and when a further cheque comes to hand, also for twenty pounds, Skimmy rounds up all the local vagabonds, with the intention of supplying their imaginary needs. Then, when every penny has been expended, the unfortunate junior learns that the money has been sent to him in error, and he is requested to pay back the forty pounds without delay. Thus

"SKIMPOLE'S WINDFALL"

does not prove at all beneficial to the fellow who received it, and Skimmy is landed in one of the worst scrapes he has ever known.

THE EVE OF THE FATEFUL DAY!

Are YOU Going to Help "The Greyfriars Herald"?

But a few short days, and "The Greyfriars Herald" Number One, Price One Halfpenny, will be on sale throughout the kingdom. November 15th, 1915, will be a momentous day in the history of the companion papers, for tremendous issues hang on the success or non-success of Harry Wharton's great journal. If it goes well—that is to say, if it is bought by every Gemite and Magnetic and Popite and Friendite—it will be a prelude to the publication of "Tom Merry's Weekly." If it receives insufficient support—and let there be no mistaking my plain words—

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY" WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED.

No editor can afford to be saddled with two papers which are a dead loss to him; and even the "Herald" itself will be compelled to close down unless it can boast a gigantic circulation.

But enough of the dark side. I confidently anticipate great things from my chums. They have not failed me in the past. Why, then, should they fail me in this stupendous new venture? No, they will rally round to such an enthusiastic extent, I warrant, that on the evening of Monday, November 15th, there will be no copies of "The Greyfriars Herald" to be had for love or money. By purchasing a copy of Number One you will be enabled to compete in a charming competition, in which the prizes consist of gorgeous

HAMPERS FILLED WITH TUCK!

There will also be numerous other attractions, in the way of stories, articles, poems, drawings, etc., and—all for a halfpenny!

It is not too early to order

"THE GREYFRIARS HERALD," No. 1.

TO-DAY.

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A PAGE OF READERS' PHOTOGRAPHS.

It has been suggested to me by an ardent reader of the "Gem" Library that one page of our forthcoming Christmas Double Number should be devoted to readers' photographs. I consider this would make a most interesting innovation, so that all readers—boy or girl—who would like to see a portrait of themselves in their favourite paper, should send in their photographs as early as possible. The full name and address of the sender should be written on the back of the photograph, which will be returned if the reader makes a statement to this effect and encloses a penny stamp for the purpose.

A SPLENDID SERIES OF SCHOOL STORIES.

Our popular little companion paper, "Chuckles," which is the "last word" in everything bright, breezy, and entertaining, has now secured a grand series of stories dealing with school life, that which appears in this Saturday's issue being entitled

"NOBODY'S CHUM!"

By Prosper Howard.

It is some time now since Prosper Howard's name appeared before the public; but his famous story, "The School Under Canvas," which made such a hit in the "Gem" Library, is sufficient guarantee that the new feature in "Chuckles" is of outstanding merit and well worth reading. "Nobody's Chum" will be of peculiar interest to all Gemites, since it introduces Tom Merry, Wally D'Arcy, and many other St. Jim's favourites.

Apart from this fine series now starting, there is a splendid Boy and Girl Club for "Chuckles" readers—the biggest and best in the world, in fact—and all should join it now and receive in return the magnificent coloured certificate, which is the work of Mr. Tom Wilkinson, an artist who will be long remembered by his great work in "Punch," "Golf Illustrated," and other high-class journals of our time.

Do not wait until Saturday to get your copy of "Chuckles," or you may be doomed to bitter disappointment. Take your Editor's advice, and order now.

"COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS."

STARTING NEXT WEEK!

Martin Clifford's magnificent serial story of Cousin Ethel and her boy chums positively commences in next Wednesday's issue of the "Gem" Library. I should not like any British boy or girl to miss the splendid opening instalment, and am therefore inserting this brief paragraph to remind my chums once again that, in order to avoid disappointment, it is absolutely essential to

ORDER THE "GEM" LIBRARY IN ADVANCE!

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"Arabic" (Grangemouth).—Very many thanks for your letter. Glad your soldier-chum appreciates the companion papers.

I have to thank the following readers for the loyal letters they have recently sent me:

E. H. Lawes (North Camberwell), Lily H. (Bow), "X." (Camberwell), Leonard (London, E.), "Chemico" (London, W.), S. Young, J. Allen, E. Stewart, Bob Toner, A. Fergu-

(Continued on page III of cover.)

REPLIES IN BRIEF—continued.

son, J. Keating, W. Johnston, J. Blain, D. McKerr, J. McKee, T. Gibson, J. Connoly, J. Morrison, Bob Young, J. Anderson, Minnie Maxwell, Minnie Scott, W. Graham, W. McDade, S. Morrow, D. McCormick, D. McCourt, B. Cook, F. Cook, T. Cook, B. Boyd, B. Elder, J. Clarke, W. Mackey (Belfast), Privates Rogers, Russell, Martin, Toner, Dickson, O'Neill (Seaforth Highlanders), A. B. (Co. Down), "Junior Clerk" (London, E.C.), "Alice" (Nottingham), Frank W. Yates (Hayfield), "A Loyal Reader" (Mold), Jack Hudson (Hoxton), W. J. Bridgewood (Longton), Miss G. Boden (Golders Green), T. S. (Selby), George M. Paton (Dumbar-ton), Aubrey E. Peters (Poplar), Fred Elliott (Sheffield), G. Derrick (Newport, Mon.), A. Marshall (Glasgow), Paul Courtney (Theatre Royal, Birmingham), and Daisy Shelley (Horsham).

L. V. G. F. Lean (Holland Park).—All right, old chap; don't get excited. I will persuade Mr. Clifford to introduce a character of the nationality you mention as soon as an opportunity occurs. Your storyette was not of sufficient merit to gain a prize. You seem to have run away with the idea that every joke submitted is rewarded. That is not so at all.

J. N. C. (Dublin).—I have read your verses deploring the absence of the old familiar friends such as Cousin Ethel, and hope the coming story of that young lady's schooldays will give balm to your poetic soul.

D'A. W. G. W.-F. (London, W.).—Good, honest criticism of the "Gem" Library never comes amiss, and yours is one of the best and soundest letters I have received for many a long day. I frankly confess that there is a certain measure of exaggeration in some of our stories, but do you not realise that this is essential to the welfare of a boys' paper? Were Mr. Clifford to portray public school life with the strictest accuracy, I am afraid the yarns would be very tame. They wouldn't go; and, on the other hand, our circulation would. Should you care to send me your full name, I will have much pleasure in writing you personally, and will certainly not betray any confidences. I presume you hail from Harrow, since you are so devoted to Mr. Vachell's famous story of school life, "The Hill." I agree with you that the latter story is a masterpiece in its way; but what price "The Bending of a Twig," by Desmond Coke?

"Winkle."—Your letter afforded me the keenest pleasure. With regard to the matter you mention, the staff-officers have now made due arrangements, either with the War Office or with the Automobile Club, so that there will be no demand. What about your poor Editor? It's jolly good of you to send out spare copies of the "Gem" to the firing-line. I have it on good evidence that they are highly appreciated out there. Very best wishes!

M. Crouch (Maxwell).—Send me your full name and address, and I shall be very pleased to forward you the Rules and Code in connection with the Chuckles Club.

H. A. S. C. (Cliffe).—The name "Marie" is pronounced with the sound "ah," as in "father."

"Wallaby" (Melbourne).—I sincerely hope that the recent "Gem" stories have been more to your liking than those you name.

Private E. Reynolds (Malta).—Many thanks for your interesting letter. Hope you will experience the best of luck throughout the campaign.

A. J. Ward (Adelaide).—Storyettes not quite up to standard. Try again!

A. J. Evans (Tottenham).—Maps of St. Jim's and Greyfriars will appear shortly. Look out for them!

Fred Spicer (Ilford).—Storyettes should in all cases be submitted on postcards. Otherwise they will meet with no reward, save that which the wastepaper-basket can give.

"Interested" (London, E.).—The Terrible Three are each fifteen years of age.

"A Briton."—You have shown yourself to be the very reverse of your pen-name. No boy is a Briton who attacks an Editor with anonymous letters, finking to quote his name and address. Doubtless you thought I should fill my Chat with comments on your epistle, as I did in the case of Master W. Malpas; but I am sick of making public examples of fellows like you, who are little better than Huns.

John Longland (Southampton).—I expect you will think I have forgotten you, John; but, really, my correspondence has been so very heavy during the past few months that I have had no opportunity of replying to your kind letter. For the information you require about your county, you should read "The Remove Eleven on Tour," published on Monday next in the "Magnet" Library.

D. C. (Leeds).—Very pleased to hear from you again. We are understaffed and overworked at this office—have been since war began, in fact—and I doubt if I shall be able to get up to Leeds yet awhile. If opportunity offers, however, I should be delighted to see and enjoy a chat with you. Best wishes.

"A New Delighted Reader" (Seaforth).—Thank you for your letter, which shows you up in the light of a real sportsman. Can't you introduce me to about fifty thousand readers

as enthusiastic as yourself? In reply to your queries, the "Gem" came into existence before the "Magnet"; and there are two hundred and fifty boys at St. Jim's, which is situated in Sussex. Your good wishes are cordially reciprocated.

F. W. C. (Leeds).—Many thanks for your kind suggestion, which I will pass on to Mr. Clifford.

A. T. (Tufnell Park).—You will have more of "that splendid fellow Talbot" in the Christmas Number of the "Gem," which in size and quality will beat all previous records. John Rivers will also come into the picture before long.

Frank Edwards (Heywood).—Harry Wharton is a superior shot to Buck Finn.

"Loyal and Contented" (Grosvenor Square).—You are another reader whose devotion to the companion papers does you every credit. No, you were not successful in fathoming the "great secret," details of which you have doubtless seen by now.

"A Kentish Lassie" (Maidstone).—Thanks very much for writing to me again. Glad you liked the story of Gilbert the Filbert, and hope the "Gem" will always hold a high place in your esteem.

Walter Clarko (Sheffield).—A reader of the "Gem" from No. 1? Good man! I hope you will be just as ardent a reader of No. 1,000!

Clarence Maguire (Carmarthen).—The Christian names of Gore, Gunn, Jameson, and Dr. Holmes are George, William, Bertie, and Richard respectively. Yes, I am also Editor of "The Boys' Friend," on sale every Monday. The "Gem" is not issued in volume form. No, I am not going to turn this journal into a "Jules Verne Weekly." It shall remain as it is, and the grumblers may go to Jericho!

Private F. Brookes (Chelmsford).—Many thanks for your letter. Glad you appreciate our baby companion paper, "Chuckles." On the previous page you will see an important announcement concerning same. The War Office will not allow me to do as you suggest. Sorry!

"Ye Ken."—Vavasour is at Highcliffe School. As to your suggestion that the "Penny Popular" should be turned into a long, complete school-story book of Tom Merry & Co., that would be simply duplicating the "Gem" Library, wouldn't it?

Bill Mechie (Auehtermuchty).—What a tongue-twister the name of your native town is! Thanks very much for your promise to back up "Tom Merry's Weekly." It must be clearly understood, however, that the latter paper will not be published unless "The Greyfriars Herald" gets a rousing reception.

Your Editor

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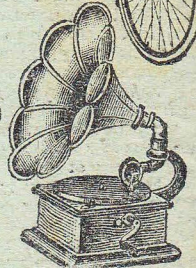
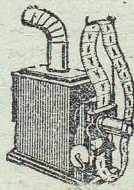
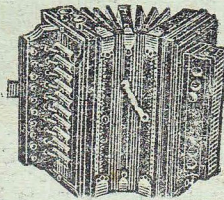
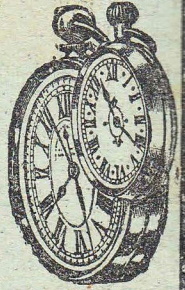
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