

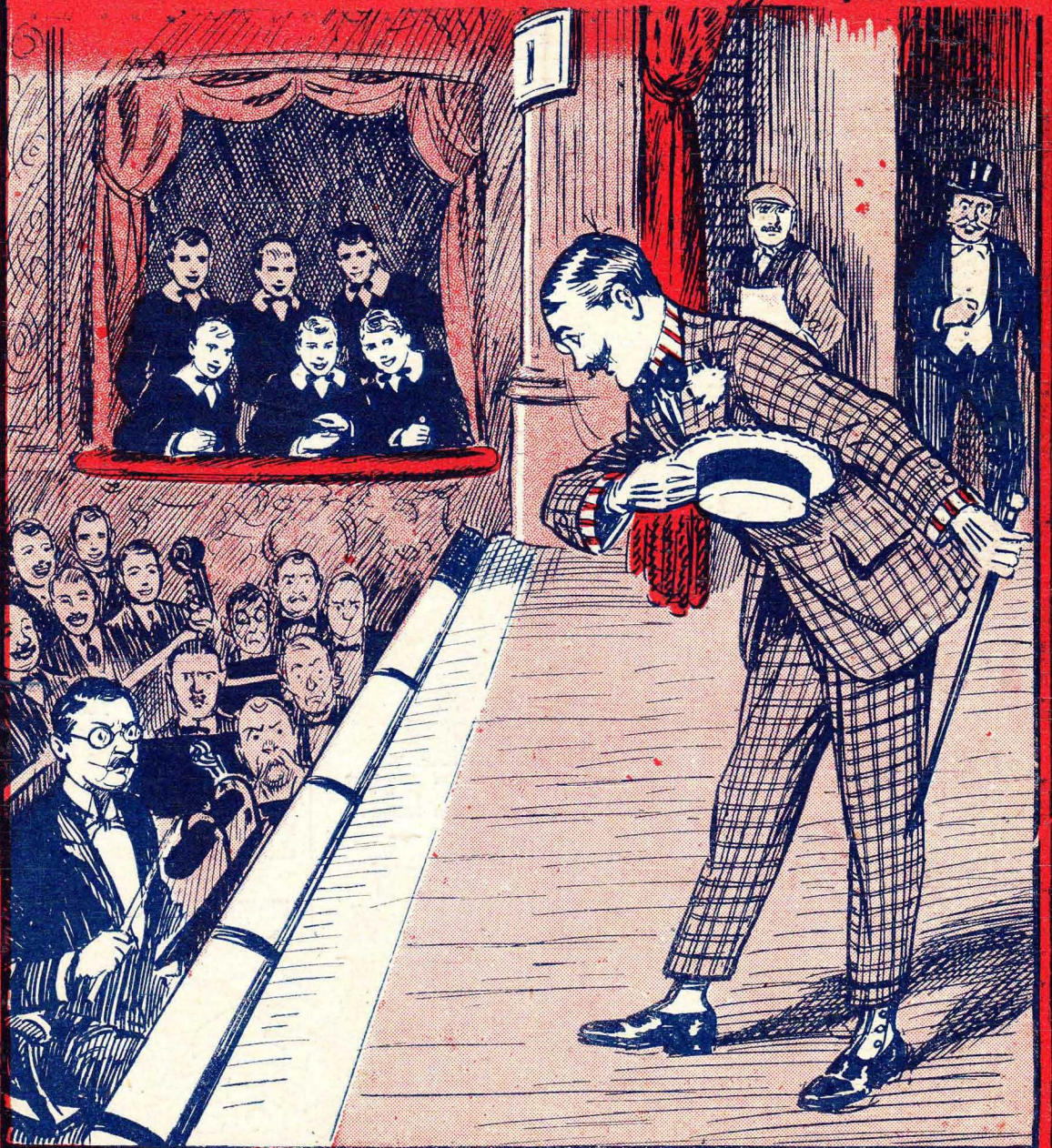
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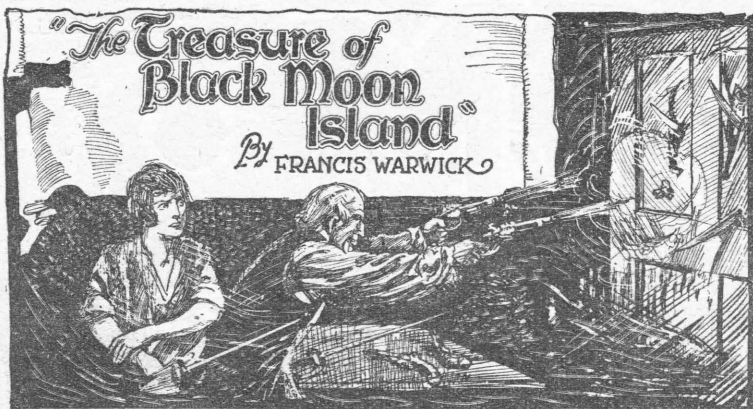
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THE BOY FROM BROADWAY!

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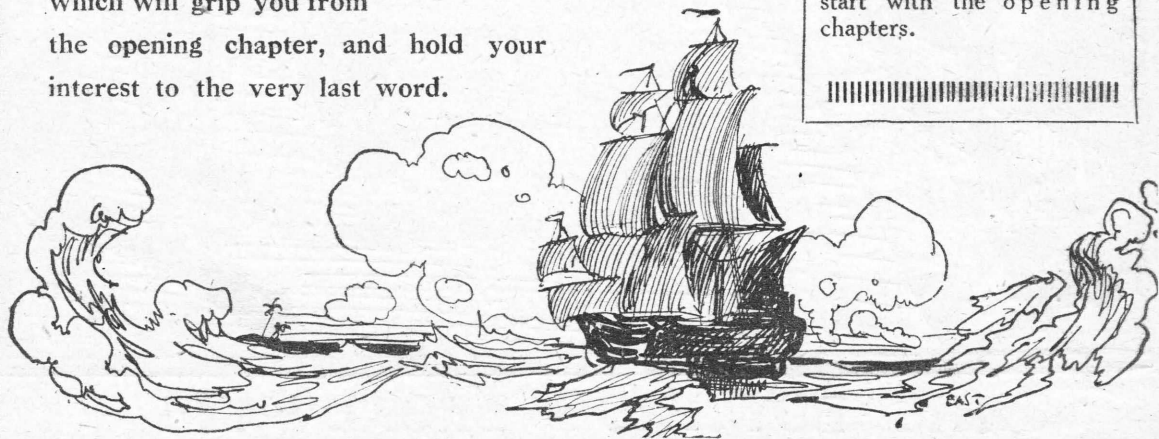
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EDITORIAL NOTE.

THIS is great and splendid news! In this week's issue of the "Popular" you will find the stirring opening chapters of the marvellous new serial by Francis Warwick, an author who is a front line favourite with readers of the "Popular." Now, I must say something not only concerning Mr. Francis Warwick, who has won so many laurel wreaths as a tip-top writer that he must be puzzled to know where to put them all, but of this magnificent romance of the olden time.

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Arthur Augustus D'Arcy goes "on the boards"—and there are some lively times at St. Jim's.



THE BOY FROM BROADWAY!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Story of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and the Chums of St. Jim's.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

The Strangeness of Gussy!

"SHUSH!"

Jack Blake, of the Fourth Form of St. Jim's, held up his hand for silence.

"What the dickens—" began Figgins.

"Hark!" muttered Herries.

The party of juniors that had come along the Fourth Form passage in the School House at St. Jim's halted. There were six in the party—Blake, Herries, and Digby, of Study No. 6; and Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, of the New House.

It was not often that Figgins & Co. ventured within the sacred portals of the School House, and when they did they usually left more rapidly than they had come in—in most cases being ejected forcibly by Tom Merry & Co. and hurled down the steps "on their necks."

But on this occasion the old inter-House rivalry was being set aside and the hatchet buried for the time being, and Figgins & Co. were to have tea in Study No. 6, after which the programme was for them to put in some footer practice with the rest of the junior eleven on Little Side until dusk.

They had been chatting cheerily, and Fatty Wynn had been delivering a glowing eulogy on the merits of Mrs. Taggles' new rabbit-pies, when Jack Blake suddenly held up his hand and said "Shush!"

A series of sounds, proceeding from up the corridor, had reached his ears. They were sounds which Jack Blake knew only too well. Herries and Digby recognised them, too, as being the dulcet voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, their noble studymate.

D'Arcy was warbling forth a refrain from one of Verdi's operas, with a certain amount of tunefulness and a great deal of gusto.

"La Donna e mobile,
Qual piume al vento—"

"My hat!" gasped Digby. "Gussy's got one of his musical fits again! He's on 'La Donna—that thing from 'Rigoletto.' Just hark at him!"

"Muta d'accento,
E di pensiero!"

warbled Gussy from the distance.

Blake & Co. exchanged horrified glances.

They knew that tenor solo. D'Arcy had inflicted it on them many a time and oft. The swell of St. Jim's was greatly addicted to the rendering of tenor solos—he was, in fact, notorious for them at St. Jim's. Gussy took his voice quite seriously, and it was one of his many grievances that his schoolfellows did not, except on those occasions when, for

some unaccountable reason, his tenor solos exasperated them and drove them to acts bordering on homicide. Generally, however, D'Arcy's tenor solos were a great joke at St. Jim's. "La Donna e Mobile" was one of his special items, and when D'Arcy did it at a school concert he generally got more laughter than the funniest turn on the programme.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn grinned.

"My word! He's going it like a house on fire!" chuckled Figgins. "It's 'La Donna,' sure enough, although I didn't recognise it at first. I thought perhaps somebody was killing a cat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wait for the top note!" said Herries grimly. "Just hark at the row he's making!"

"Sempre un amabile,
Leggiadro viso,
In piano in ronso,
E menzoniero!"

trilled D'Arcy from inside Study No. 6.

"Gussy!" howled Blake through the keyhole. "I say, Gussy, you burbler!"

Biff! Thud! Wallop!

Herries commenced to kick on the door with his big feet.

"Sempre un ama—"

Bai Jove! Is that someone knockin'?" called out D'Arcy from inside the study.

Figgins almost exploded.

"Is someone knocking! Oh, my hat!" he gurgled. "It sounded like a giddy bombardment to me! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy!" hissed Blake through the keyhole.

"Hallo, is that you, deah boy?" said D'Arcy. "Pway wun away—I'm busy!"

"You—you—you—"

"Let us in!" howled Herries.

"I'm sowwy, deah boys, but I weally can't be bothahed with you boundahs in heah! I want to pwoceed with my singin' pwactice."

"Singing practice!" snorted Blake. "Do you call that singing, Gussy? It sounds like an old hen in a barnyard!"

"Weally, Blake, I wegard that wemark as oppwobwious and—"

"Will you open the door, you chortling fathead?"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a chortlin' fathead, Blake!" cried D'Arcy. "Undah the circs, I wegard it advisable to wefwain fwom openin' the door!"

"Look here—"

"La Donna e mobile—"

"Open the door!" bawled the chums in chorus.

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"Wats! Qual piume al vento—"

"Thump! Thump! Thump!"

"We want our tea, you cuckoo!" yelled Blake.

"Pway wun away, deah boys! You can have tea with Tom Mewwy!"

"What about Figgins & Co?" hooted Blake wrathfully. "They've come to tea! Is this the way you treat visitors, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Dashed bad-mannered, I call it!" said Fatty Wynn loudly. "You invite chaps to tea, Gussy, and then lock the door in their faces!"

"Oh cwumbs! I had forgotten you, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, with real concern in his voice. "I'll have the door open in half a jiffay!"

The door of Study No. 6 opened, and Jack Blake & Co. glared inside.

Their aristocratic chum had evidently been turning out all his music, for copies of songs and tenor solos fairly littered the room. There were piles of music-sheets on the table and the chairs, and, leaning against the wall above the mantel-shelf was Gussy's album of operatic arias.

"Mum-my hat!" ejaculated Blake. "Look at the state of this room!"

"Gussy, you—you frabjous idiot!" gasped Digby.

Arthur Augustus elevated his nose at Digby and turned to Figgins & Co., who were grinning on the threshold.

"Come in, deah boys! And pway excuse me for not openin' the door befoah," he said. "I twust, Figgins, that you will accept my apology, as fwom one gentleman to anothah."

"All serene, Gussy!" grinned the New House leader. "My word, though, isn't this study in a giddy-mess!"

"Yaas, it is, watah," said D'Arcy, adjusting his monocle and looking round. "I'm really most sowwy, deah boy! You see, I have been wakin' through my wpertoire of tenah solos. Now you have come, you will have the opportunity of heavin' a few—"

"Please don't bother, Gussy!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn hastily.

"Not at all, deah boy—"

"If you start any more of your rotten howling, Gussy, we'll scalp you!" vowed Blake darkly.

"Weally, Blake, if you wegard my singin' as wotten howlin'—"

"I do!" snapped Blake. "Why, it's a jolly sight worse than the row Mrs. Kebble's cat makes!"

"Bai Jove! Withdaw that wemark, you wottah, othah-

wise I shall considah it my painful duty to give you a feahful thwashin'!" exclaimed D'Arcy heatedly.

"Rats!" snorted Blake. "Now, are you going to clear all this junk away, or shall we shove it on the fire?"

"I'm going to sing 'La Donna e—' Yow! Wow! Yawooooogh! Blake, you wough wottah—"

"Chuck this rubbish on the fire!" said Blake, thrusting his nottle chum down into the armchair and gathering up an armful of music.

Herries and Digby followed suit, but Arthur Augustus was up out of the chair like a shot, and he ran desperately to the fireplace.

"Leave my music alone, you wottahs!" he cried. "I wefuse to have it put on the fiah. Undah the cires, I will cleah it away, and you can have the table for tea!"

"Hurry up, then, fathead!" growled Blake.

The table was cleared at last, and D'Arcy's repertoire jammed anyhow into the cupboard by his hungry and exasperated chums.

"Mark my words, Gussy, if you start squawking again we'll bundle all that drivell on the fire, and bump you into the bargain!" said Blake.

"Weally, you uttah boundah, you have no taste watah-ewah—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"I wegard you as a vandal, Blake, and a howwid Hun!"

"Bow-wow!"

The preparation of tea went on apace. Fatty Wynn commenced to fry the sausages and chips, and soon an appetizing smell of cooking pervaded the air in Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy took no hand in the proceedings, but stood by the window, staring out unseeingly into the quad, and wearing a very thoughtful and pre-occupied look. Several times his lips moved, and he was heard now and again to mutter something under his breath.

Blake and the others looked at Arthur Augustus in growing wonderment.

His muttering increased, and several times Gussy made spasmodic movements with his hands, and the expression on his face awoke astonishment and alarm in his chums.

"What in thunder is the matter with Gussy?" exclaimed Herries.

Figgins touched his forehead significantly.

"It's come at last," he said with a sad shake of the head. "Gussy's gone right off his onion. There's no hope for him now."

D'Arcy's gestures and mutterings certainly seemed to indicate that something was very radically wrong with him.

"Gussy, you duffer!" exclaimed Blake. "What the dickens are you mumbling about?"

"Er? Oh, nun-nothin', deah boys!" said D'Arcy, waking with a jerk from the midst of a brown study.

"You're off your rocker, you ass!" said Herries with a snort.

"Weally, Hewwies, I wepudiate that statement!" said the swell of St. Jim's heatedly.

"Oh, bow-wow!" snapped Blake. "What about tea, Gussy? It's ready. Don't stand there mooning like a giddy owl."

"I wasn't moonin', Blake, and I wefuse to be chawactewised as an owl!" exclaimed Gussy. "I'm not goin' to have any tea to-day, deah boys. I'll sing you some tenah solos, if you like."

"You jolly well won't!" said Blake promptly. "Come and have your tea, like a good ass."

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus retrieved some music from the cupboard and stalked loftily from the study. He left his chums gazing blankly at each other.

"Well, my hat!" said Blake. "What's come over Gussy? I've noticed that his behaviour has been jolly strange lately. He's been mooning, and singing, and jabbering to himself just like a lunatic."

"There's something wrong in Gussy's upper storey," grinned Figgins. "Gussy will want watching, Blake, otherwise he might do something desperate."

"Oh, rats!" said the leader of Study No. 6. "Let's get on with tea. I'm hungry."

And tea proceeded in Study No. 6 without the august presence of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 2.

More Mystery!

CLANG! Clang! Clang!
The first bell for morning lessons rang stridently through the ancient corridors of St. Jim's next morning, and there was the usual stampeed of juniors to get their books and take their places in their respective Form-rooms.

Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby came out of Study No. 10 in the Shell passage with Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the trio of juniors known as the Terrible Three,

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In the strong grasp of his chums, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the room with a rush. "Yawoooh!" A chorus of amazed gasps arose from the juniors in the room, and Mr. Lathom, who was standing by the blackboard, almost fell down when he saw D'Arcy. "Bless my soul!" he cried. "What—what—who—ah! Goodness gracious, is it you, D'Arcy?" (See this page.)

"I wonder where that ass Gussy is?" said Blake. "I haven't seen him since breakfast-time."

Monty Lowther grinned. "I saw him go up the back stairs with a parcel a little while ago, as I was coming out of Kildare's study," he said. "Gussy had some music tucked under his arm, too. I reckon he's gone up to one of the box-rooms to practise his tootling."

"If he's warbling upstairs he won't hear the bell, and that will get him into hot water with Lathom," snorted Blake. "Lathom's in his tantrums lately, and he's already got a down on Gussy. I'm blessed if Gussy doesn't need more looking after than your rotten dog, Herries."

"Look here——" began Herries heatedly. "Oh, don't jaw! Second bell will be going in a minute. Let's dig Gussy out."

The juniors hurried up the back stairs, and as they neared the top landing they heard D'Arcy's voice proceeding melodiously from No. 3 box-room.

He was delivering the Toreador's song from "Carmen" in a voice which could hardly be distinguished between a tenor or a baritone.

"Toweador, en garde!
Toweador, Toweador!
Et songe bong, et songe ong congbattong.
Qu'un oil noir to wegahday——"

"Gag him, for goodness' sake!" gasped Tom Merry. The juniors dashed into the box-room, and then drew up short with astonishment.

There was Gussy, standing in the centre of the room, surrounded by boxes and old trunks, dressed in gaudy check trousers, a tight-fitting frock-coat, and a striped shirt, from the collar of which depended a flowing bow. Gussy himself was hardly recognisable, for a false moustache adorned his upper lip, and a bowler hat was on his head, set at a rakish angle.

He was singing the Toreador's song for all he was worth, but he broke off when his chums burst into the study.

"Gussy!" said Blake in a faint voice. "Bai Jove! Pway wun away, deah boys!" said the swell, groping for his monocle and jamming it into his eye. "Run away!" gasped Tom Merry. "Why, it's time for lessons, you—you chortling chump! What in thunder have you got yourself up like this for, Gussy?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy!" "What's the idea?" bawled Blake in exasperation. "Are you right off your rocker, or——"

"Clang! Clang! Clang!" "Second bell!" ejaculated Manners. "Here, I'm off! I'm not yearning for lines and lickings, if Gussy is."

"Same here!" said Tom Merry and Lowther. The Terrible Three dashed downstairs and made tracks for the Shell Form-room.

Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby exchanged glances. "It's time for lessons, Gussy, and you've got to come down," said Blake, breathing hard through his nose. "Are you coming?"

"Bai Jove! I'm afwaid that is imposs, deah boys, undah the cires."

"Under the cires, you're coming down now!" hooted Blake. "Grab the silly ass, chaps!"

"Bai Jove! I—— Yow! Why, what—— Ah! Hands off, you wough wottahs! Yawooogh! Oh, deah! Oooogh!"

Blake & Co. did not waste time on ceremony. In their hurry they even forgot about D'Arcy's strange attire. They grabbed him and bundled him out of the box-room, and rushed him down the stairs with such precipitation that he could hardly find breath enough to yell.

The Fourth Form door was open, and Gussy entered with a wild rush, in the midst of his chums.

"Yawooooogh!" The rest of the Fourth were assembled at their desks, and Mr. Lathom was standing by the blackboard. He almost

fell down when he saw D'Arcy, and a chorus of amazed gasps arose from the juniors in the room.

"Bless my soul!" cried the startled master. "What—what—who—Ah! Goodness gracious, it is you, D'Arcy?"

"Gwooooh! Oh deah! I am in a feaful fluttah, and—"

"How dare you appear in the Form-room in that ridiculous attire, D'Arcy!" thundered Mr. Lathom.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth.

Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby looked rather blankly at Gussy. They had not stopped to think of the impression their noble chum's "get up" would create when he arrived in the Form-room.

As for Gussy, he stood there with his bowler hat on one side and his moustache all awry, gasping like a fish out of water.

Mr. Lathom fixed him with a choleric look. Mr. Lathom was usually a very mild and easy-going master, but of late an attack of dyspepsia had put rather an edge on his temper and made him extremely irascible. The Fourth had already learnt to their sorrow that it did not pay nowadays to take undue liberties with their respected Form master.

"D'Arcy, this is an outrage—a deliberate and unprecedented outrage, sir!" roared Mr. Lathom. "I have often had reason in the past to doubt your mental stability, but now it seems that you have overstepped the limit of your stupidity!"

"Oh cwumbs! My deah sir—"

"Do not seek to argue with me, D'Arcy!" rapped the angry Form master. "I presume these other three lads are fellow-conspirators in the plot?"

"Bai Jove! Wathah not, sir!" gasped the swell. "The fwightful asses dwagged me down just as I was, and didn't give me time to change."

"Then you have been masquerading in that ridiculous attire, when you should have been preparing for lessons, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Lathom tartly.

"Ahem! Yaas; but you see, sir—"

"And what, pray, is your reason for making such a nin-compoop of yourself, D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Mr. Lathom, I must pwotest—"

"D'Arcy, how dare you! You are a bigger dolt than I imagined you to be!" snapped Mr. Lathom, whilst the Fourth chuckled joyously. "You will kindly remove that hat and moustache, and take your place in the Form just as you are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth.

"Silence, boys! D'Arcy, will you obey me?"

"Bai Jove! All—all wight, sir!" gasped the luckless swell.

He took off his bowler and removed the false moustache, and then went very sheepishly to his desk. Mr. Lathom's eyes glinted at him.

"You will take five hundred lines, D'Arcy, and remain in the Form-room here this afternoon to do them, instead of taking the usual half-holiday," he said icily.

"Oh, bai Jove!" D'Arcy's aristocratic countenance took on a look of deep alarm and concern. "I'm afwaid I cannot remain heah this aftahnoon, sir—"

"What!" ejaculated Mr. Lathom.

"I'm fwightfully sowwy, sir, but I have made othah awwagements for this aftahnoon, and undah the cires it will be quite imposs for me to be detained."

Mr. Lathom looked quite dazed for a moment, and the Fourth gasped.

The cool simplicity of D'Arcy's "nerve" quite took their breath away.

"D'Arcy!" stuttered Mr. Lathom at last. "Is it possible that I hear aright? You—you inform me that you cannot be detained!"

"Undah the cires, sir, it is quite imposs," said D'Arcy firmly. "I must wequest you to cane me—"

"Oh! Very well, then, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Lathom grimly. "Kindly step this way, will you?"

D'Arcy went quite cheerfully to the front of the class, his check trousers and tight coat evoking many chuckles from the others.

Mr. Lathom selected his stoutest ashplant, and commanded the swell to hold out his hand. D'Arcy did so, and received four stinging cuts. He was gasping by the time Mr. Lathom laid down the cane.

"Now, D'Arcy, you may return to your desk!" said the Fourth Form master angrily.

"Ow! Gwooooh! Vewy well, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I am extwemely obliged to you for—yow!—canin' me—"

"Don't mention it, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Lathom tartly. "I shall always be pleased to accede to any similar request as that of a caning. With regard to your detention, you will write the lines from Livy, and you will remain in the Form-room this afternoon until you have finished them."

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D'Arcy looked quite blank.

"Bai—bai Jove! But—but, sir, you have let me off the detention—"

"Indeed! I was not aware of that fact, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Lathom.

"Weally, sir, I must—wow!—wemind you of the awwangement that I was to have the canin' instead—"

"I certainly did not enter into any such arrangement with you, D'Arcy," said Mr. Lathom coldly. "You merely requested me to cane you, and I did so!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth.

A grim smile played at the corners of Mr. Lathom's mouth. As Kerruish confided to Julian, Mr. Lathom had his "dander" up with a vengeance!

"The caning you have just received will not influence your detention in the slightest, D'Arcy," said the master sternly. "I am not in the habit of having my orders flouted by my pupils."

"But, sir, I have othah awwagements for this aftahnoon—"

"That is no concern of mine, D'Arcy! I have ordered you to remain in the Form-room this afternoon, and you will do so!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Blake, Herries, and Digby, you may go to your seats!" rapped Mr. Lathom. "The lesson will proceed."

"Mr. Lathom, I must wequest—"

"Sit down, D'Arcy!" thundered Mr. Lathom, in a voice of fear.

Even Arthur Augustus subsided at that. He sat down, looking very flustered and dismayed, and the lesson proceeded on the uneven tenor of its way.

When the class eventually dismissed, a crowd gathered round D'Arcy in the corridor outside. His natty attire was greatly admired by all.

Jack Blake was the only one, besides D'Arcy himself, who did not feel amused.

"You must have gone properly off your chump, Gussy!" he snorted. "What the merry dickens are you up to, anyhow? What with your rotten singing practice, and your mooning and mumbings, and your idiotic attire, I'm beginning to think it's time your pater was advised to order you a strait-jacket!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"He, he, he! He's fallen in love again, that's what it is!" cackled Baggy Trimble. "Gussy's trying to be a lady-killer, and he's going to dress up and serenade his lady-love at night!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Twimble, I wegard your wemarks as uttably wide!" said D'Arcy frigidly. "I wefuse to have anythin' to say to you fwabjous boundahs!"

And with his aristocratic nose elevated at a lofty angle, Arthur Augustus walked away in high dudgeon.

CHAPTER 3.

D'Arcy's Dash!

MR. LATHOM did not allow D'Arcy an opportunity to slip away when dinner was over. He waited for him at the end of the corridor outside the dining-hall, and marched him away to the Form-room.

Gussy's chums watched him go with sympathetic glances. "Hard cheese for Gussy, isn't it?" said Tom Merry to Blake. "We wanted him to join our party for the Grand Theatre at Wayland this afternoon."

The two juniors were making for their studies.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus was incarcerated in the Fourth Form room, and Mr. Lathom locked the door, handing the key to Knox of the Sixth. Knox was staying in that afternoon, and he had quite willingly consented to Mr. Lathom's request that he should give an eye to the prisoner in the Form-room during the afternoon. Knox, the most unpopular prefect in the school, did not regard that task as a duty at all, but as a pleasure. He always took special delight in exercising his authority over any of the chums of the Lower School.

Soon after he and Mr. Lathom had departed, Mary, the St. Jim's housemaid, happened to come along the corridor. The sounds proceeding from within the Fourth Form-room caused her to halt. She set down her pail and brush, and listened.

A voice, in beautiful tenor accents, came to her ears, singing this stirring ballad:

"Oh, tis beautiful Mary's the cause of all my misery,
And that is why I'm not the boy I always used to be!
Oh, she's more wondrous than the beauties we wead about
in histwory!
Oh, for a smile fwom Mawy, how happay I should be!"

The housemaid gasped, and she bent down to the keyhole. She saw Arthur Augustus walking up and down the front of the room, making numerous strange gesticulations with his arms.

"Take all I own—kith, kin, and wealth! Oh, take it all away!"

Throw them into the sea! Thwust them to anothah zone!" (warbled Gussy, with much depth of feeling).

"If Mawy would but open the door to her dear heart this day,

I nevah would feel lonely with the two of us alone!"

Mary, the housemaid, thrilled when she heard those words.

She tried to open the door softly, but found that it was locked. But she had a bunch of keys, and with a fluttering heart she selected the one which opened the Form-room door, and inserted it in the lock. She turned it very softly and pushed the door open a little way.

Arthur Augustus' manner was really most remarkable.

He finished his ballad, and then turned, so it seemed, to the door.

"Ah! Then my beloved has come, and I have not waited in vain!" he cried, with a most dramatic gesture.

"Lawks!" exclaimed Mary, blushing to the roots of her rather tousled hair.

"How long I have worshipped you, and admired your beauty fvyom afah!" went on the swell of St. Jim's romantically. "Here, this vewy minute, I pledge my twoth, and sweah that I will be true!"

"Goodness gracious!" said Mary, her eyes and mouth open wide.

"Say but the word that will bwing me joy! Say you'll be mine, and we will flee togethah!"

"Oh, Master D'Arcy!" simpered Mary, dropping her eyes.

"Come to my arms!" cried Arthur Augustus, in passionate accents, and holding out his arms invitingly.

The St. Jim's housemaid, without more ado, gave a little cry and rushed straight at Gussy, almost falling into his arms and clutching him in a wild embrace.

"Yawooooogh!"

Arthur Augustus seemed to wake as if from a brown study, and all the rapture left his expression and his voice. He gave a yell and wriggled in Mary's embrace.

Smack! Smack!

Mary gave Gussy a resounding kiss on each cheek.

Just at that minute there was a sound of footsteps at the door, and the Terrible Three and Blake, Herries and Digby looked in, with expressions of utter amazement on their faces.

"Gussy!" gurgled Blake in a faint voice.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Oh, Gussy!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Gwoogh! My deah gal, I do not wish to have to wesort to force, but— Ow, pway welease me! Yow! This 'is most fwithtfully embawwassin', bai Jove!"

Mary released Gussy at last, and the swell of the Fourth staggered back, his face crimson.

"Gussy, you awful bounder!" said Manners severely. "So we've caught you spooning when you ought to be writing lines under detention!"

"I—I—I—"

"Sorry we barged in, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "We had no idea, of course, that you were spooning on Mary!"

"Bai Jove! I uttably wepudiate that assertion, Lowthah! I—"

"Mary, I'm surprised at you, too!" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, but Master D'Arcy loves me!" simpered Mary. "He said so."

"Bai Jove! I did no such thing, you boundah—I mean, deah gal!" cried Arthur Augustus, looking quite agitated. "You are labouwin' undah a gweat misappwehension—"

"Oh, Master D'Arcy, how could you, after asking me to flee with you!"

"Mum-my only hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Gussy asked you to flee with him?"

"Look heah—"

"Shame!" said Blake, looking severely at his noble chum. "You shouldn't trifle with the affections of impressionable young ladies!"

Arthur Augustus polished his monocle with a beautiful cambric handkerchief and looked round in deep distress.

"Oh, deah! I'm afraid I have wathah put my foot in it, deah boys," he said. "I certainly did not request Mawy to flee with me, and I—ahem!—certainly have not fallen in love with her. Of course, I have the highest respect for the deah girl, but—"

"You young villains! So you've got the door open!"

It was the grating voice of Gerald Knox, and all the juniors wheeled round with gasps of alarm.

Gerald Knox strode into the Form room, an angry look on his burly face.

"Who unlocked this door?" he rapped harshly. "Come on, now! One of you did it, and I mean to find out who it was!"

"Please, Master Knox, I opened it," said Mary. "I—I thought—"

"Yaroooooogh!"

That loud, fiendish yell came suddenly from Knox.

Arthur Augustus, with a sudden spring, had charged at Knox and sent him flying against the blackboard. Knox lurched wildly, clutched at the blackboard for support, lost his balance completely, and went crashing over, with the board and easel on top of him.

Crash! Thump!

"Woooooogh!"

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

Knox, sprawling on the Form-room floor, with the blackboard and easel on top of him, presented a very funny spectacle indeed.

As for Arthur Augustus, he had flown!

Looking neither unto the right nor to the left of him, the swell of St. Jim's went down the stairs at top speed.

His mysterious behaviour in the Form-room, whatever it meant, had indirectly brought him his deliverance. The path of freedom lay before him, and D'Arcy, not caring the cost, took it at long strides.

It was several minutes before Gerald Knox scrambled to his feet.

A lump as large as an egg had risen on his forehead, indicating the spot where the blackboard had struck him.

"Grooh! Yow! Where is he?" he choked, glaring homicidally round.

"Echo answers where!" grinned Monty Lowther.

Knox almost danced with rage when he realised that the prisoner had escaped.

"You young sweeps, you helped him to get away!" he shouted. "I'll make you smart for this! I'll—"

"Oh, bosh!" said Tom Merry curtly. "You should have kept your eyes open, Knox. You couldn't expect us to run after D'Arcy, could you?"

"Ow! Groogh! The young villain! He'll catch it hot for this! Ow! My head! Yow! Ah! Wow!"

Thus moaning to himself, and with a look of impotent fury at the juniors, Gerald Knox dashed from the room.

Tom Merry & Co. grinned and strolled out after him.

Mary, the housemaid, looking very cross and indignant, took up her pail and her brush and proceeded on her way.

CHAPTER 4.

A Clue to the Mystery!

"THERE'LL be a row!" said Tom Merry.

"Sure as eggs!" assented Jack Blake, with a nod. "Gussy will have something to answer for when he gets back. My word, though, he had some pluck! It was worth half a term's pocket-money to see him bowl Knox over like that!"

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

"But it will be no laughing matter for Gussy when he gets back!" said Tom Merry seriously.

The chums of the School House had just taken their seats in the Upper Circle of the Grand Theatre at Wayland.

They had hunted in and around St. Jim's for D'Arcy after having left the Form-room, but had discovered no sign of the missing junior.

Knox had also instituted a desperate hunt, and his failure to lay the runaway by the heels had heaped fresh fuel on the fire of his wrath.

Tom Merry & Co. had taken train from Rylcombe, and were now comfortably ensconced in the theatre, waiting for the performance to commence.

Owing to the recent heavy rains on the countryside, the St. Jim's playing-fields were under water, and footer for the time being was "off."

It was not often that the juniors of St. Jim's went to the theatre at Wayland, but on an afternoon such as this, when they had nothing special to do, Tom Merry & Co. found that a visit to the theatre was an excellent way of spending their half-holiday. Besides, the piece now being presented at the Grand Theatre was a musical comedy called "The Boy from Broadway," and Figgins & Co. of the New House, who had seen it the week previous, had pronounced it to be "top-hole." The piece was having a long run at Wayland, having already been on the bill for two weeks, and it had yet another week to go.

Tom Merry & Co. were not the only St. Jim's fellows in the audience. In the circle there was a fair sprinkling of juniors, and in the stalls below could be seen one or two members of the lordly Sixth and Fifth, whilst at the back of the circle a tribe of fags from the Third Form were congregated, under the leadership of Wally D'Arcy.

"I wonder where Gussy really has cleared off to?" said Blake, with a worried look. "He is a prize chump, and no mistake. And his giddy conduct lately absolutely beats me."

There was a roar of applause from Wally & Co. at the back as the lights went down, and the orchestra commenced to play the overture.

Then, amidst more applause, the curtain rose and the first scene of "The Boy from Broadway" commenced.

Tom Merry & Co. soon forgot Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his strange behaviour, and they gave all their interest to the play.

First came the opening chorus, followed by some comic "business" between two comedians, and then the Boy from Broadway himself made his entry, being greeted with hearty hand-clapping from all parts of the house.

The Boy from Broadway was supposed to be a young fop and a dandy, and his was quite a humorous role. He spoke with a drawl and an aristocratic accent that reminded the St. Jim's juniors very much of their own Arthur Augustus. This impression deepened as the play went on.

"My word!" murmured Monty Lowther, as the hero of the piece commenced to render his third song. "Isn't he like old Gussy! He's only a young chap, and his chivvy is very similar to Gussy's. He'd look more like him if he wore a monocle."

"Rather!" said Blake. "What a pity old Gussy isn't here—he'd see himself as he really is! My hat! I've heard that song before, somewhere!"

The Boy from Broadway, walking up and down the stage in the limelight, was singing a romantic ballad in which he invoked all the stars in the firmament to testify to his undying love for the heroine of the piece, whose name was Mary.

Blake, Herries, and Digby blinked inquiringly at each other in the dim light of the auditorium. Each of them felt that that song was familiar.

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake suddenly. "That's the song Gussy was singing the other day at St. Jim's. I knew I had heard it somewhere!"

Tom Merry looked interested.

"How on earth did Gussy get to know the song, then?" he asked. "This is supposed to be a new musical comedy, and he hasn't seen it, so far as I know."

Blake gave a grunt.

"He may have seen the piece," he said. "Several evenings this past fortnight the ass has been missing. Each time he's been out of school gates somewhere, and once or twice he's been in late for call-over, you remember. We couldn't get him to tell us where he had been to, either!"

"Oh!"

The play went on, and several times Blake & Co. recognised tunes in it which they had heard Arthur Augustus sing at St. Jim's.

In the second act, after the heroine had played with the affections of the Boy from Broadway, and then gone off with one of the comedians, the Boy, looking very dejected, came on alone to the centre of the stage, and, in a circle of blue limelight, commenced to sing a ballad which all the St. Jim's juniors in the audience recognised at once.

It was "La Donna e Mobile," that notorious inflection of D'Arcy's. The Boy from Broadway, however, sung it in English, and he put a great deal of pathos into his song of how "Woman is Fickle."

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged wondering glances.

"Isn't he marvellously like Gussy?" breathed Herries. "I could almost believe it was Gussy, if it wasn't for the voice."

Jack Blake rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Gussy has evidently seen this piece, and he's been trying to imitate this chap on the stage," he said. "That accounts for his potty behaviour—Gussy's been acting the part of the Boy from Broadway at St. Jim's!"

"Great pip!"

"The chortling ass!"

"Look at that chap's clobber, too!" said Digby excitedly, as the curtain rose for the next scene, displaying the Boy standing in a somewhat gaudy park in the midst of a chorus of dancers.

The Boy from Broadway was dressed in check trousers, a tight-fitting check coat, and a bowler hat, and a false moustache adorned his upper lip.

He looked for all the world like Arthur Augustus when he had appeared before Mr. Latham in the Fourth Form room that morning. It was the very same dress!

Blake blinked.

"Great pip! I'm blessed if I understand this a bit!" he muttered. "What the dickens was Gussy's idea, I wonder? I—I suppose that isn't Gussy on the stage, by any chance? I know it seems impossible, but—but that chap is so much like Gussy!"

Tom Merry consulted the programme.

"According to this, the Boy from Broadway is played by a chap named Bertram Chollop," he said. "I don't think THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 888.

it's Gussy. Blake, though I admit the resemblance is remarkable."

"I'd jolly well like to know where Gussy is then!" growled Blake.

Tom Merry gave a sudden start.

"My hat! I wonder if Gussy is here—in the audience?" he exclaimed. "You say he's been aping the hero of this play, and that he's been out on his own a lot lately. He must have seen the play once or twice to get to know the character and the songs, you know. If he happened to be really keen to learn them, I reckon he'd made up his mind to come here this afternoon—and that was why he broke loose from detention."

"By Jove! You're probably right, Tommy!"

The juniors made a careful scrutiny of the audience when the lights went up for the interval, but Arthur Augustus apparently was not among them.

Soon after the play had been resumed, however, Blake gave a sudden start.

"I say, chaps, look in that box on the right—the one nearest the stage!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry & Co. drew deep breaths.

The occupant of the stage box was none other than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's was leaning forward, with his elbow resting on the front of the box, gazing at the play with rapt attention.

He seemed to be drinking in every word and action of the piece.

"So that's where Gussy got to! He must have caught the same train as us at Rylcombe, and dodged us at this end!" said Blake. "The young spoofer! And he hopped out of the box during the interval so that we shouldn't spot him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wait till the show is over!" said the leader of Study No. 6 darily. "I'll have something to say to him about this!"

"The Boy from Broadway" went merrily and musically on its way, and Tom Merry & Co. enjoyed the show to the full. It was replete with sparkling wit and harmless comedy, and some of the songs were really tuneful.

Towards the end of the piece, however, the St. Jim's juniors noticed that the "Boy" acted very weakly. He spoilt two songs in the last act, and his careless demeanour towards the finish lost him a good deal of applause.

"Now for Gussy!" said Blake, rising from his seat just before the final "curtain." "We'll catch the bounder before he has time to get away."

"What-ho!"

The Terrible Three and Blake & Co. left their seats and hurried through the thickly-carpeted corridors.

When they arrived at the box they found it empty.

"He's done us!" gasped Blake. "Let's get outside, quick! We may catch him!"

Outside, in the street, the juniors looked round for their noble chum.

"There he goes!" cried Monty Lowther, catching sight of the swell of St. Jim's walking up the narrow street that ran alongside the theatre.

The juniors looked in the direction Lowther was pointing, and saw Arthur Augustus, resplendent in a brand-new topper, walking towards the stage door, with a beautiful bouquet in his hand.

"Mum-my hat!" gasped Blake. "He's taking a bouquet to the stage door. That can only mean one thing, chaps—the silly duffer has gone spoons on the heroine of the play!"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"I reckon that must be it, Blake!" he said. "You know what an impressionable ass old Gustavus is. He probably saw the play last week and fell in love with the principal girl, and he's been hanging round ever since, besides blissfully imagining himself to be the Boy from Broadway, who marries the heroine in the last act!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Gussy!"

Blake looked grim.

"Come on, you chaps—we've got to stop Gussy!" he said. "We can't have him playing the giddy ox like this! We'll ram the bouquet down his neck first and then bump him. Perhaps that will knock some of the romance out of the duffer!"

Arthur Augustus happened to look back, and when he saw his chums approaching he gave a gasp and quickened his pace.

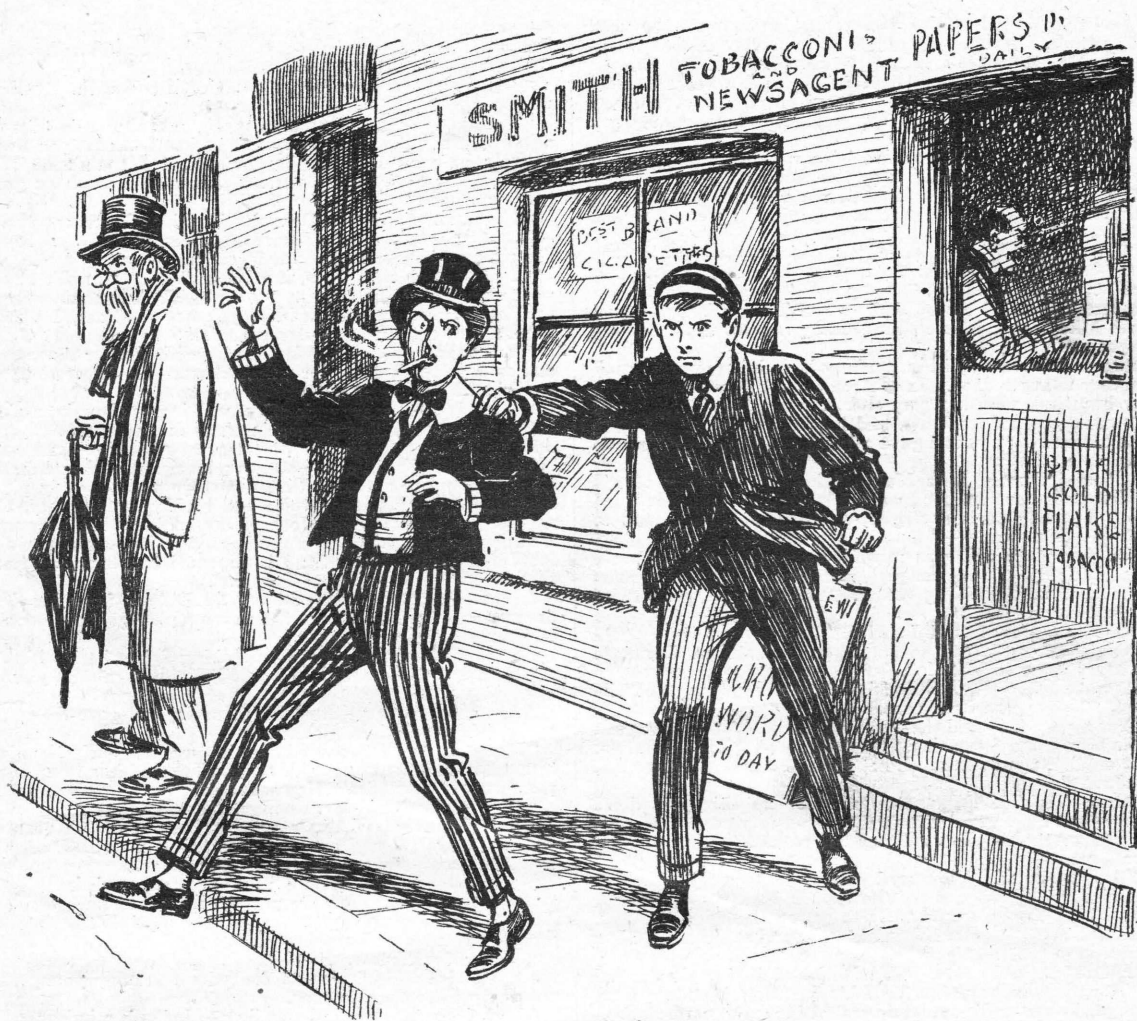
"Gussy!" roared Blake. "Come here, you ass! We want you!"

"Wats!" responded the swell emphatically if inelegantly.

"Half a mo', Gussy!"

Tom Merry & Co. began to run, and so did Gussy. They all arrived at the stage door together.

Arthur Augustus had the door open, and he made a dive into the musty interior, but Blake grabbed one of his noble



Knox's face wore a look of exultant triumph. "Got you, my beauty!" he exclaimed, fastening a very firm grip on the "junior's" shoulder. "Smoking, too, by Jove! My word, won't the Head be interested to hear of this, D'Arcy!" "Let me go!" panted Chollop, struggling to free himself. "I'm not D'Arcy, you fool! Hands off!" (See page 14.)

legs and brought him down on the worn doormat with a crash. A terrific struggle ensued, in which the bouquet suffered sadly.

"Yawooogh! Ow! You wottahs—"

"You're not going in there, Gussy!" said Blake grimly. "We can't have you falling in love like this. We consider it our duty to stop you from playing the goat, and— Yow-wow-wow!"

Arthur Augustus planted a heavy fist right between Blake's eyes, and Blake fell back, unable to see for tears.

Tom Merry made a grab at the swell, but Gussy was already up.

He gave a leap into the narrow passage and gathered one of the fire buckets that hung on the wall.

"Now, get back, you boundahs, or I'll thwow this watah at you!" he said desperately.

"Grab the silly chump!" roared Blake.

The juniors surged forward, and Arthur Augustus, pausing for just a moment to adjust his monocle, took a step back and then raised the pail.

Swooooosh!

A flood of wetness met the oncoming juniors, and they fell back with a chorus of choking yells and gurgles.

"Yarrooooh!"

"Oogh! Gug! Gug!"

"Ere, wot's all this about?" broke in a burly voice, and next minute a very big and red-faced stage doorkeeper came into vjew.

"Pway have these boundahs wemoved fwom the pwemises, Wobson," said Arthur Augustus. "I will give you an extwa half-a-cwown to turn them away."

"Right you are, sir!" said the beefy Robson, with great heartiness.

He picked up a broom and, wielding it with great vigour,

he drove the gasping and bedraggled juniors out through the stage door.

Tom Merry & Co. found the door bolted on them when they had rallied for another attack, and they retreated into the High Street, mopping at their drenched persons and vowing all manner of awful acts of vengeance on the noble swell of the Fourth when they caught him.

CHAPTER 5.

The Madness of D'Arcy!

"COME in, Master D'Arcy!"

The speaker was a plump, florid-faced gentleman clad in evening clothes, with a very wide expanse of white shirt-front showing, in the centre of which gleamed a huge diamond—or, in all probability, an imitation diamond. He was smoking a fat cigar, the fumes of which filled the small room with a thick blue haze.

The room seemed hardly large enough to hold the plump gentleman, for he almost filled it. Before him was a small desk which was littered with papers and typewritten manuscripts. The walls of the little room were decorated with gaudy play-bills and photographs of actors and actresses. This was, in fact, the manager's office in the Grand Theatre at Wayland, and the plump gentleman was Mr. Horatio Bonnetto, the acting-manager and producer of "The Boy from Broadway" company on tour.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy coughed as he entered the little room.

"Gwooh! Good-afternoon, sir! Pway excuse my watah wuffled condish. I had a little—ahem!—argument at the stage door with a few boundahs fwom the school, you know."

Mr. Bonnetto grinned expansively as he surveyed the swell of St. Jim's, who was, indeed, in a somewhat ruffled condition. Mr. Bonnetto's grin widened when he saw Gussy's topper, which had a huge dent in the side, where Herries' large boot had smitten it, and he burst into a roar of laughter when his gaze lighted on the bouquet which Arthur Augustus held in his other hand.

"Ho, ho! Looks like you've been runnin' a lawn-mower over them roses, Master D'Arcy!" he chuckled.

The swell of St. Jim's jammed his monocle into his eye and surveyed the bedraggled bouquet in deep concern and distress.

"Bai Jove! What will Miss Maisie say when she sees these? Oh cwumbs! Those feahful boundahs must have twodden on my bouquet!"

A laugh sounded at the door, and D'Arcy wheeled round to see Miss Maisie Marcel, the leading lady of the theatrical company.

Miss Maisie was lavishly perfumed, and her "make-up" was very heavy indeed. In D'Arcy's eyes, however, she was very beautiful, with her rosy cheeks, pearly teeth, ruby lips, long eyelashes, golden curls, and bewitching smile.

He blushed deeply, and gave a low bow in the true Vere de Vere style.

"Good-afthnoon, Miss Maisie!" he said. "I am afwaid these flowahs have suffahed wathah considewable damage, bai Jove. I weally must apologise, as fwom one gentleman to another—I mean—"

"Oh, you dear boy, you mustn't worry about that!" said Miss Maisie, taking the bouquet, and giving Arthur Augustus one of her most gushing smiles. "How perfectly sweet of you to buy me these!"

"Oh! Bai Jove! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was so embarrassed that Mr. Bonnetto humanely came to his relief.

"Well, Master D'Arcy, and how are you getting on?" he asked. "Have you been practising?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "I know most of the songs, and I can sing 'La Donna e Mobile' in Italian. That ought to go down much bettah than the English version, bai Jove!"

"Hum!" said Mr. Bonnetto, rubbing his chin. "I don't know about that. The question is, can I rely on you to take the part of the Boy from Broadway at a minute's notice if I want you?"

D'Arcy's monocle glimmered with eagerness.

"Bai Jove! Just give me the chance, sir!" he exclaimed. "I'm longin' for an opportunity to get on the stage!"

Mr. Bonnetto leaned back in his chair and subjected Arthur Augustus to a critical survey.

"Hum!" he said again. "You're just suited to the part of the Boy, I must say, Master D'Arcy. You wouldn't need much make-up, and your style would be quite natural, provided you didn't get struck with stage-fright."

"Weally, sir, I've had quite a considerable amount of experience at actin'," said D'Arcy eagerly. "We go in for amateur theatricals wathah a lot at St. Jim's, you know."

Mr. Bonnetto grinned.

"Yes, that may be so," he said. "You're no end keen, I can see. Sure you'd rather take up a stage career than stay on at school?"

"Oh, yaas, wathah!" said the swell of the Fourth eagerly. "I wathah fancay that I am cut out for the stage, you know, Mr. Bonnetto. Of course, my patah would considah it infwah dig, and he would pwobably make a fwightful vow about it; but when he hears of me weapin' lauvels and becomin' famous, he'll soon come wound, bai Jove! Weally, I considah the stage a weally wippin' pwofession!"

Both Mr. Bonnetto and Miss Maisie Marcel smiled.

"Mind, I ain't exactly giving you any definite promise of a part, Master D'Arcy," said the theatrical manager, blowing out a huge cloud of cigar smoke. "But I will say as 'ow I might be requiring a new Boy pretty soon. That chap Chollop, who takes the part now, ain't at all reliable. Between me and you, Master D'Arcy, he's a bad egg."

"Yaas," said D'Arcy. "Fwom what I have seen of him, I gathahed that Chollop is wathah a boundah. He was fwightfully flat in that last act this afthnoon, bai Jove!"

Mr. Bonnetto gave a grunt.

"The rascal won't practise, and he hardly ever turns up at rehearsals," he said. "Drinkin' and gambler are more in his line. I've threatened him with the sack many a time, and warned him that as soon as I sets eyes on another chap to play the part, he can go. The part ain't easy to play, Master D'Arcy, and there ain't many actors capable of takin' it on. The role calls for a young feller like yourself, who can sing. If you say you can learn the part—"

"I've already learnt it, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I've been swottin' up the score you gave me, and I weckon I could play the part all wight. If you would care to hear me sing a tenah solo now—"

"No, my boy, that doesn't matter now," said Mr.

Bonnetto. "You just go along makin' yourself perfect for the part, and practise the songs all you can, and in a few days' time I might be able to give you a start."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed the swell of the Fourth. "How weally wippin'!"

"The salary won't amount to much, and if you do take on a job with me, Master D'Arcy, it's understood that you do so entirely on your own responsibility, and I sha'n't be held answerable for any complications that may arise from your leaving school."

"That's all wight, Mr. Bonnetto," said Arthur Augustus. "Don't go doin' things too rashly, Master D'Arcy: Stage life ain't all honey, I might tell you."

"I can wough it, I hope, if need be," said the noble swell, with a good deal of warmth. "All gweat actahs commence at the bottom wung of the laddah, you know. Yaas, I weally think I was cut out for a stage career."

Mr. Bonnetto shook hands heartily with Arthur Augustus, and so did Miss Maisie, for whose charm the impressionable swell had fallen a slave.

D'Arcy left the manager's office, walking as though on air. His ambitions had wandered in many directions in the past.

At times he had fancied himself a great politician—as Prime Minister of England, even—and as a musician, and as a detective. But now it seemed that the stage was the only place for him. With his tenor voice and his dramatic ability, the noble scion of Eastwood House felt confident that he would make a name for himself on the boards. The glamour of the footlights dazzled him. St. Jim's seemed far, far away from that musty little theatre at Wayland.

A sneering laugh beside him woke D'Arcy from his day-dreams as he walked down the narrow passage between the oddments of stage scenery.

He turned and saw a youthful-looking figure beside him.

"Afternoon, Horace!" said this individual calmly, puffing away at a gold-tipped cigarette. "How's things?"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle, and gave the other one of his most frigid glances.

"Pway wefwain fwom addressin' me on such familiar terms, Mr. Chollop!" he said. "Also, I should like to wemind you that my name isn't Howace, bai Jove!"

"Go hon!" grined Mr. Chollop. "Fancay that, bai Jove!"

His imitation of D'Arcy's aristocratic accent was perfect, and a titter arose from the numerous members of the theatrical company who were standing near.

Mr. Chollop looked quite a youngster, although he was, in reality, much older than the part he portrayed on the stage. His cast of features was remarkably like D'Arcy's. In fact, the two might have been taken for brothers. Chollop's face lacked that freshness and healthy glow that characterised the swell of St. Jim's, but he looked remarkably young and not a day older than D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus flushed angrily at Chollop's mimicry.

"Weally, you awful boundah, I fail to see anythin' clevah in your wemarks," he said. "On the contwary, I wegard them as bein' most fwightfully vulgah, bai Jove!"

"Oh, weally!" said Chollop, quite unperturbed. "That's wathah wotten, isn't it?"

The swell of St. Jim's began to breathe hard through his nose.

"Unless you are more wespctful in your mannah of addressin' me, you boundah, I shall considah it my painful dutay to give you a feahful thwashin!" he exclaimed heatedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the onlookers.

They had no quarrel with Arthur Augustus, but he rather amused them.

There was no doubt that D'Arcy would have commenced assault and battery upon Chollop there and then had not Miss Maisie appeared in the corridor.

"Chollop, you boundah, I shall wefwain fwom givin' you a feahful thwashin," said the swell loftily. "I considah it fwightfully infwah dig, to engage in fisticuffs in the pwesence of a lady, bai Jove! Howevah, I wegard you as a wank outsidah!"

With that the lordly Gussy left the theatre via the stage door.

He looked up and down the dusky street and adjusted his monocle.

"Now for St. Jim's," he murmured as he hurried up the road, keeping a sharp look-out for Tom Merry & Co., "and some more twouble, bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 6.

Paying the Piper!

"SO you've come back, you young sweep!"

Gerald Knox's harsh voice greeted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he arrived at the gates of St. Jim's.

The swell of the Fourth had managed to pass Tom Merry & Co. in the High Street at Wayland without being seen, and had caught a train for Rylcombe immediately on arriving at the station, so that his chums would have to wait for the next.

D'Arcy took a step back, but Knox's heavy hand descended on his coat-collar. "You'll come straight up to the Head's study now, you young rascal!" he grated. "There'll be the dickens to pay when you get there, too!"

"Wecase my collar, Knox!" exclaimed D'Arcy, commencing to struggle. "You are diggin' your knuckles in my neck, you wottah!"

Knox grinned evilly, and kept on digging his knuckles into D'Arcy's neck as he pushed him roughly forward across the Close.

D'Arcy cried out with pain and struggled wildly.

Knox, not content with what he was doing, commenced to kick D'Arcy's heels.

"You wotten cad, Knox! I pwotest against this treatment! Oh! I wufuse to go any farthah! Ow, ow, ow!"

"Come on, will you!" exclaimed Knox, wrestling at the junior's coat-collar.

D'Arcy, raging at the brutal treatment he was receiving, stopped and resisted all Knox's efforts to push him forward.

A crowd began to gather, and uncomplimentary remarks were made.

At last Knox gave D'Arcy a cowardly kick that brought a cry of agony to the swell's lips. Next minute he whirled round on Knox and gave him a thump in the chest that forced the prefect to release his hold and tumble backwards. Unfortunately for Knox, there was a large puddle just behind him, and he sat down in the middle of it with a splash and a roar.

"Ow, wow, woogh!" "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors who witnessed the accident.

"The ah, you fwightful wottah!" exclaimed D'Arcy, setting his topper straight on his head. "I am fully pwepaiahed to face the music indoors, but I uttably wufuse to be tweated like a wewfawctowy pwisonah in the hands of a policeman, bai Jove!"

"Good old Gussy!" cried Kangaroo admiringly.

Arthur Augustus walked away and disappeared up the steps into the School House.

He went straight to Mr. Lathom's study, and found that gentleman at home.

Mr. Lathom rose from his desk and fastened a very grim look on the Fourth Former as he entered the room.

"Ah, D'Arcy! Have you come to render an account of your disgraceful conduct?"

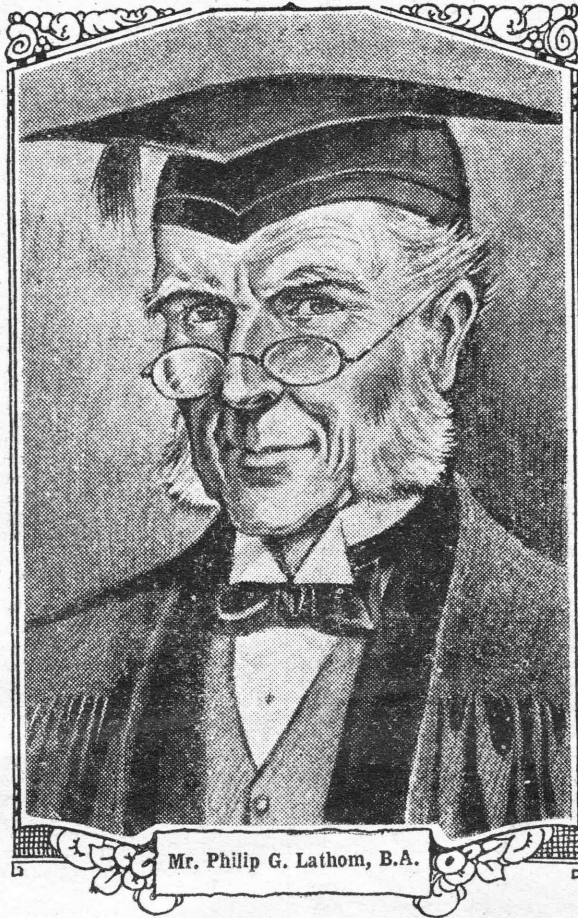
"Yaas, sir. As a fellow of tact and judgment I think I shall be able to explain mattahs-suffish. I had wathah an important engagement this afternoon—"

"Which you had the brazen impudence and efrontery to break!" thundered Mr. Lathom angrily. "Your engagement was to remain under detention in the Form-room during the afternoon, D'Arcy! For a junior boy to thus flaut the authority of his master and to assault a prefect into the bargain, as you have done, is without parallel in all my experience as a schoolmaster. It is unprecedented!"

"Oh, cwumbus! I admit I wan away fwom detention, sir, but, as I pointed out, I had an important mattah to attend to, and I was quite willin' to be punished some othah way—"

"D'Arcy, how dare you speak to me, your master, like that!" cried Mr. Lathom, his very voice trembling with anger. "Have you no sense of your position, boy? Your audacity is amazing, D'Arcy! Nothing you may say will mitigate your offences. You deliberately broke detention, and, moreover, assaulted the prefect I had put in charge over you. I—"

Thud!
The door opened without ceremony and Knox squelched in,



Mr. Philip G. Lathom, B.A.

The respected master of Blake & Co., of the Fourth Form. Figures less prominently than the Head, Mr. Railton or Mr. Ratcliff, but is one of the nicest masters at the school. He is liked and much respected by the boys of his Form. He is lenient and kind, and does not deal out lines and lickings like some of his colleagues. At the same time he can wield the cane with vigour when occasion demands. Is an interested spectator at all the junior sports' functions.

leaving a trail of muddy wetness behind him. The prefect's face was black with fury.

"Knox," exclaimed Mr. Lathom in a shocked voice and scanning the prefect up and down, "how dare you come into my study in that condition!"

"D'Arcy is the cause of it, sir!" fumed Knox. "I caught him at the gates and was taking him up to the Head when he turned on me and knocked me down into a puddle!"

"Good heavens! D'Arcy, is there no limit to your wanton conduct?"

"Weally, sir, I must pwotest stwongly against Knox's assertion!" said the Fourth Form junior heatedly. "He was tweatin' me with gwoss and unnecessary bywuality, and as a pwotest I stwuck him. It was quite an accident that he fell into the puddle. I didn't know it was there, bai Jove!"

Mr. Lathom's look was very grim and foreboding.

"D'Arcy, your conduct has been disgraceful, and this is far too serious a matter for me to deal with alone. I have already reported you to Dr. Holmes, and you will kindly follow me to his study at once. Knox, you wufuse to come also."

D'Arcy and Knox followed the Fourth Form master, and a curious and excited crowd watched them go into the Head's study.

Dr. Holmes listened gravely and seriously to Mr. Lathom's and Knox's accounts of D'Arcy's misdeeds. He shook his head when the swell commenced an eloquent explanation.

"D'Arcy, I do not think you realise the full enormity of your offences against the school rules," said the Head sternly. "You must learn

that the rules have to be obeyed and that you cannot, as a junior lad especially, do just as you please with impunity. The trouble, it seems, is the outcome of a comparatively small matter—your being late for classes this morning and indulging in a ridiculous masquerade when you should have been preparing your books for the lesson. Mr. Lathom, I consider, was fully justified in ordering you to be detained. If, however, you can satisfy me that the matter which took you away from school this afternoon was really urgent, I might take a more lenient view of the affair. I put you on your honour, D'Arcy, to tell me where you went."

"Ahem! I—I went to Wayland, sir."
"To Wayland? What for? What did you do there, D'Arcy?"

"I—I went to the Gwand Theatre, sir," said D'Arcy, going red.

Dr. Holmes and Mr. Lathom—and even Knox—started. "D'Arcy!" The Head's voice was like unto that of approaching thunder. "You coolly admit that you broke detention for the special purpose of attending a theatrical performance! I have never heard of anything more preposterous! Your explanation only makes the matter more serious, D'Arcy, and I shall make an example of you before the whole school. You will spend the night alone in the punishment-room, and in the morning you will be taken into Hall for a public caning!"

Knox darted a leering, triumphant grin at the Fourth-Former.

Mr. Lathom grimly nodded his approval of the Head's decision.

"You will take D'Arcy to the punishment-room now, Mr. Lathom, and see that he is safely incarcerated there," said Dr. Holmes quietly.

"Yes, certainly," said the Fourth Form master. "Follow me, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus hesitated at first, but even he realised the futility of protesting further.

So, with a look of lofty scorn at Knox, he followed Mr. Lathom from the room.

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. were waiting anxiously at the end of the passage. They had not long ago arrived from Wayland.

"Gussy!" exclaimed Blake.

Arthur Augustus stopped, whilst Mr. Lathom walked on.

"Have you been licked, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"No, deah boy, but I'm in for it in the mornin', I'm afraid," said D'Arcy. "The Head has ordahed me to ve-main in Nobody's Studay all night, and in the mornin' he's goin' to cane me befoah the whole school!"

"Whew!"

"Hard cheese, Gussy!"

"No more than you might have expected!" snorted Blake.

"Gussy, I'm sorry for you, but you were a frightful fat-head!"

"I wufuse to be called a fathead, Blake! I shall go to the punishment-woom as a mattah of dutay, but between now and the mornin' I shall vevy seriously considah wethah to wufuse to be caned or not."

"Oh, my hat!"

Mr. Lathom was looking back, and D'Arcy hurried on.

"Gussy will be the death of me yet!" groaned Blake. "Let's go along and see him shut up!"

The juniors followed at a respectful distance. The punishment-room—called Nobody's Studay by the juniors—was in the upper passage. Mr. Lathom turned the big rusty key in the great lock, and with a grating sound the heavy oak door came open.

D'Arcy shivered as he looked within.

The room was dark and bare, and when Mr. Lathom had lit the gas it looked more dismal and forbidding still. There was only a plain deal chair, a table, and a hard bed in the room, otherwise it was as bare and empty as a prison.

D'Arcy walked in at Mr. Lathom's command. Then the master left him, and the imprisoned junior just caught a last fleeting glimpse of his chums through the door before Mr. Lathom closed it and grated the key in the lock.

The master's and the juniors' footsteps died away, and all was still and oppressive.

D'Arcy shuddered as he looked round.

"Gwoogh!"

He sat down on the bed, feeling distinctly miserable. But his spirit was far from being broken. Mary came in a little later to make the bed. She hardly looked at Arthur Augustus, but as she went she gave an expressive and audible sniff. Wingate and Darrell mounted guard outside the door, so that this time there was no escape for the swell.

Thus was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy left alone in the dismal solitude of Nobody's Studay. But he did not brood.

Anyone being able to glance in there ten minutes later would have seen D'Arcy pacing up and down the room, making mysterious movements and uttering strange sentences.

He was improving the shining hour by going through the part of the "Boy from Broadway," from memory, and for once the swell was able to proceed with his rehearsal without any fear of interruption.

CHAPTER 7. Gussy Cuts Loose!

NEXT morning the first person to appear in the punishment room was Toby, with D'Arcy's breakfast, which consisted of cocoa and bread. The page also brought in two letters on the breakfast-tray, and the prisoner took them up eagerly.

One was from his noble pater, Lord Eastwood, and it contained a five. D'Arcy thrust the rustling banknote into his wallet with the rest of his money, and then he opened the other letter with quick, impatient fingers.

The postmark on the envelope was Wayland, and a thrill went through D'Arcy when he withdrew a letter headed, "Grand Theatre, Wayland, Sussex." The letter itself ran thus:

"Dear Master D'Arcy,—Just a line to let you know that I fired Chollap from his leading part last night after he'd practically ruined the evening performance. I gave him the option of clearing out altogether or going down as an understudy for the title role and a permanency in the male chorus. He chose the latter rather than lose his shop, so now, if you still feel inclined to take up the stage, and if you are word-perfect for the part, I am willing to give you a trial as soon as you like. Let me know your decision to-day for sure, so that I shall know what to do. Yours,
"HORATIO BONNETTO."

D'Arcy's eyes danced jubilantly.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "How wippin'! How weally THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 888.

wippin'! I've got a job offahed me on the stage—the weal stage! Heah's my chance to take the leadin' part in a musical comedy! This has thown me into a feahful fluttah, bai Jove! But isn't it toppin'!"

Toby had gone, and the door was relocked, and Arthur Augustus sat down on the hard bed to think.

His brain was in a whirl; he could hardly realise his good fortune. The opportunity for which he had longed had come—his dreams of winning fame and fortune on the stage might now come true! Before his inward vision floated the sight of the histrionic boards, with himself in the centre—in the limelight! In his vivid imagination he pictured the theatre, the orchestra, the sea of faces before him. He saw the rapt, entranced expressions of that vast audience as they listened to his tenor voice and watched him act, and he heard the thunderous applause and the clamorous calls of "Encore!"

Arthur Augustus heaved a deep, deep sigh.

"It's a frightful pitay to have to leave St. Jim's, but I have my futuah and my caweer to considah!" he mused. "Yaas, I will take the offah. I won't be gwound down with mastahs and pwefects and wiculous wules any longah, bai Jove! My spiwit calls for fweedom—the fweedom of a true artist! Wats on Lathom and Knox! I shall uttably wufuse to sufah the fwightful infwa dig of bein' caned before the whole school! Wathah not! My next public appearence is goin' to be on the stage, bai Jove! My mind is made up, and I'll be as firm as a wock. I shall wufuse to be caned, and shall wetiah fwom the school to embark on my stage caweer!"

Arthur Augustus looked very earnest as he thus soliloquised.

When his mind was made up wild horses would not make him alter it. D'Arcy prided himself on being as firm as a rock, but Jack Blake always said that he was as obstinate as a mule. That, however, was a matter of opinion.

"The twouble is, how am I to get away fwom heah?" D'Arcy mused, polishing his monocle thoughtfully. "I am determined not to be caned, bai Jove—and I've got to get to Wayland somehow. I wondah how it can be managed?"

That, indeed, was a great problem. There he was, locked up in the punishment-room under sentence of a public caning, which he had resolved not to undergo. And, having made that resolution, Arthur Augustus would stick at nothing to keep to it to the very letter. That was the spirit which had stirred the D'Arcys in times of old, when tales of noble deeds of valour had been writ upon the family escutcheon.

"I'll do it, bai Jove! They think I'm pottay, don't they? Yaas, I'll do it!"

Arthur Augustus arose and took a small bottle from his pocket.

It was a bottle of Indian ink, with which he had been correcting some music in Study No. 6 the day before.

At that moment the key grated in the lock. It was Toby, come to collect the breakfast-tray.

Gussy quickly withdrew the cork from out of the bottle and then lay down on the floor, placing the bottle in a conspicuous position beside him.

When Toby walked into the punishment-room his startled eyes beheld the still, silent form of Arthur Augustus laying prone on the floor.

A gurgle of horror escaped the page's lips when he saw the bottle beside the prostrate swell.

"Oh lor'! 'Elp! Master Knox—quick!" yelled Toby, dropping his tray with a crash. "Master D'Arcy has—has—"

"Good heavens!"

Knox and Cutts, the Fifth-Formers, who were waiting outside, dashed into the punishment-room on hearing Toby's cry. They stopped short with amazement and horror when they beheld D'Arcy on the floor.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" gasped Knox, going white.

Cutts tried to speak, but could not.

Toby stood back, trembling with fright.

"Which I did 'ear as 'ow Master D'Arcy was going off 'is 'ead yesterday, Master Knox," he said. "This is awful! 'Adn't I better go an' tell the 'Ead?"

"Yes, cut along and fetch him here, for goodness' sake," said Knox, licking his dry lips. "I—I hope the other chaps won't blame me for this, Cutts. D'Arcy must have been mad."

"Of course he was," said Cutts. "The Head ought not to have locked him in here alone. Is he still breathing, Knox?" Knox, trembling with horror, bent down over the silent form of D'Arcy. He was about to turn the Fourth Former over when, all of a sudden, the "corpse" sprang into violent activity!

Knox received a drive on the jaw that sent him toppling over with a yell. Next minute D'Arcy sprang up, fists doubled and eyes gleaming with the light of battle.

Cutts gave an angry roar, and made a rush at D'Arcy.

He met a pair of hard, rapping fists that drove him backward.

Arthur Augustus, the light of battle glinting in his eyes, went for Cutts tooth and nail. The senior roared. At last Cutts tripped over Knox, who was still floundering on the floor, and he collapsed on the bed behind with a howl.

"Ow-wow-wow!"

"Yah!" cried Knox. "You little rotter—"

"Cheewio, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "You'll be all wight head till the Head awwives. I'm off now, bai Jove!"

Grate!

The rusty key turned in the lock behind D'Arcy, and Knox and Cutts were left prisoners in the punishment-room.

Arthur Augustus heard the prefects thumping and kicking at the door as he ran downstairs. He passed Mr. Lathom on the lower landing, and the master gave a cry:

"D'Arcy! Bless my soul, the young rascal is absconding, after all! Stop, D'Arcy, do you hear?"

D'Arcy heard, but, like Baalam's ass, he heeded not the voice of his master. He fairly tore out of the Hall door, and streaked across the quadrangle to the bicycle-shed.

Mr. Lathom gave chase, his gown flying in the wind, but Gussy had already mounted his machine by the time the master arrived at the shed.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Lathom.

"Sowwy, sir, but it's quite impos for me to stop!" said D'Arcy pedalling away.

"D'Arcy, I command you to come back!" shrieked the master.

But Arthur Augustus went away like a streak of lightning, and he pedalled out through the gates for all he was worth, leaving Mr. Lathom gasping and quite speechless with wrath.

CHAPTER 8.

D'Arcy's Double!

D'ARCY'S feet flew round on the pedals, and he made Rylcombe in record time. He stopped there to purchase a topper, and then continued on his wild dash for Wayland. The Grand Theatre was his objective, and once he was safely there all would be well. Nobody would dream of looking for him at the theatre.

His silk hat was on the back of his head, his necktie came out and fluttered behind him in the breeze like a pennant, and his beautifully-creased trousers bagged dreadfully as he ground away at the pedals. But Gussy had no thoughts for his clobber now.

Wayland at last!

He went into the High Street with a rush, and fairly buzzed to the theatre stage door. He gasped as he dismounted.

"Done it, bai Jove!"

Robson, the doorkeeper, came out, and he touched his peaked hat very respectfully to Arthur Augustus. Robson was usually very curt and abrupt with visitors at the stage door, but D'Arcy's liberality with his half-crowns made things different.

"Pway take my jiggah in, Wobson, and have it put in a place of safety," said the swell. "Is Mr. Bonnetto in?"

"Yessir. He's in his office now."

Arthur Augustus hurried away to the manager's office whilst the doorkeeper yanked his bicycle up the steps and carried it inside.

Mr. Bonnetto looked up in some surprise when he saw the junior from St. Jim's.

"My word! Fancy seeing you here so soon, Master D'Arcy!" he exclaimed. "Did you get my letter?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "And I've come to accept your offah, sir. I have wethiaed from St. Jim's, and am now entirely at your service, bai Jove!"

Mr. Bonnetto looked hard at the junior.

"You're very red and out of breath, Master D'Arcy," he said. "You haven't run away from school, I hope?"

"Wathah not, sir!" said Gussy promptly. "I have wethiaed from St. Jim's. Theeah is a distinction between wetiwin' and wunnin' away, you know."

Mr. Bonnetto grinned.

"Is there?" he said. "Well, have it your own way, Master D'Arcy. You know your own business best. If any trouble develops, I'm not goin' to be held responsible, that's all."

"That will be quite all wight, Mr. Bonnetto. I trust ewythin' is ready for me to commence my dutays?"

"You'll have to attend dress rehearsal, of course, before you take on the part," said the manager. "Chollop's understudy is playing the lead now; but he's much too old for the part. I shall be real glad if you could take it on. I'll run the rule over you at rehearsal this morning and see how you shape."

"That's wippin', sir!"

Miss Maisie Marcel looked in just then, and she bestowed a bewitching smile on the swell of St. Jim's. Gussy blushed, and his heart commenced to thump wildly.

"So you have come to join our company!" said the

sprightly young lady. "I'm sure we shall get along nicely together, don't you?"

"Oh, bai Jove! Yaas, wathah! I vewy sincerely hope so!" said Arthur Augustus gallantly. "We'll make 'The Boy from Broadway' a toppin' success, you know."

"You're a keen 'un, and no mistake!" laughed the manager. "Dress rehearsal starts in half an hour's time, D'Arcy, so you'd better get along to your dressing-room and make up. Miss Maisie will show you the way."

"Oh, good!"

Miss Maisie took the blushing swell's arm and led him to a dressing-room on the other side of the corridor. It was a small, musty little room, furnished with a scanty carpet, a table, a chair, a large, cracked mirror, and a cupboard, which contained all the costumes for the Boy's part.

When D'Arcy had finished his "make-up" and presented himself before Miss Maisie outside, that sprightly young lady waxed quite affectionate.

"My, but you make a first-rate Boy!" she cried. "I'm sure I would much rather act with you than with that horrid rascal Chollop."

"That's weally wippin' of you to say so, deah gal!" said the embarrassed and delighted Gussy. "I'll play the part like anythin', bai Jove!"

He worked very hard at dress rehearsal, and he pleased Mr. Bonnetto by showing that he had gone to great pains to learn his part. The manager had to coach D'Arcy a good deal in the various items of stage "business," and also in his singing, but at the end of the rehearsal he expressed himself as being completely satisfied with the new recruit.

There was no disputing the fact that Arthur Augustus seemed to have been absolutely made for the part of the Boy from Broadway. Indeed, Mr. Bonnetto went so far as to state, in the presence of all the company, that D'Arcy made a better Boy, even, than the deposed Chollop.

Chollop, who heard this, scowled blackly.

He only had a minor part in the production, now, and he was feeling savagely vengeful towards the boy who had supplanted him.

When rehearsal was over, and Gussy had gone into the manager's room with Miss Maisie to receive further instructions, Chollop gathered a number of his fellow small-part players round him in the corridor behind the scenes.

"Fancy that noodle of a school kid being taken on for the leading part!" he exclaimed. "Why, it's ridiculous! I'll make things so warm for him, he'll want to go back to school again."

One or two nodded sympathetically.

Chollop looked into his old dressing-room, now occupied by D'Arcy, and when he saw the junior's clothes lying on the chair, a grin crossed his face.

"That young nincompoop thinks he can take me off—eh?" he said. "Let's see how I take him off, then!"

He went into the dressing-room and closed the door.

A short while later the door opened again, and a figure emerged that made all the players in the corridor gasp.

Had they not known that D'Arcy was at that moment in Mr. Bonnetto's room they would have sworn that this was he.

Chollop had dressed himself in D'Arcy's school attire, and the transformation was complete, monoe as well.

The skilful use of grease-paint and powder had made up for the slight differences of resemblance between Chollop and the swell of St. Jim's. He was, indeed, a second D'Arcy.

Chollop raised the topper and bowed in an exact imitation of D'Arcy's graceful style.

"Good-mornin', deah boys!" he said in a voice so like D'Arcy's that it was impossible to distinguish between the two. "I'm feelin' fwightfully bucked, bai Jove! I can sing 'La Donna e Mobile' in Italian—yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the other members of the theatrical company.

Chollop walked elegantly up and down the corridor, mimicking Arthur Augustus with amazing cleverness. He was an accomplished mimic, and his remarkable likeness to D'Arcy rendered his masquerade perfect.

"I wathah think I'll take a walk, deah boys," he said, setting the topper at a jaunty angle on his head. "Watch me stwoll down to the Pig and Whistle and back. I'm a perfect boundah when I'm out, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chollop, out of sheer bravado, walked to the stage-door, and Robson, who was standing outside, touched his hat respectfully and made way for him to pass.

"Which your bike is locked up safe in the store-room, Master D'Arcy," said the doorkeeper.

"That's wippin'!" said the disguised Chollop. "I weward you as a perfectly powerless deah boy. I'll pwesent you with a fivah when I weturn, Wobson."

"My heye!" gasped the astounded stage-doorkeeper.

He blinked after the elegantly attired figure, wondering whether he had heard aright.

He had not the slightest doubt that it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who had just spoken to him.

He could not help wondering what was in the air, however, when the other members of the cast crowded round the door and laughingly watched "Arthur Augustus" walk up the road.

Chollop swaggered on, quite enjoying the joke. He turned into the High Street and made his way across the road towards the Pig and Whistle public-house. He was now out of sight of the theatre stage-door, and none of the company had taken the trouble to follow him.

He felt in D'Arcy's pockets for a cigarette; but, of course, found none. So he gave a grunt and turned into a tobacconist's shop, where he purchased a box of cigarettes and matches.

Walking out into the High Street again, he paused to light a cigarette. He had just got it alight, and was puffing away contentedly, when he heard a quick footstep behind him, and a heavy hand was clapped on his shoulder.

Chollop, half choking, whirled round and found himself wriggling in the grasp of a tall, burly fellow wearing a St. Jim's School cap.

It was Gerald Knox of the Sixth, who had tracked D'Arcy as far as Wayland, and had been hunting high and low there for the fugitive all the morning.

Knox's face wore a look of exultant triumph. "Got you, my beauty!" he exclaimed. "Smoking, too, by Jove! My word, won't the Head be interested to hear of this, D'Arcy!"

Knox, had, of course, mistaken the disguised Chollop for D'Arcy. This was quite a natural delusion, for the rascally young actor looked so much like D'Arcy that Lord Eastwood himself might have been deceived.

Knox had received quite a shock to see D'Arcy, as he thought, emerge from a tobacconist's shop in Wayland High Street, just as though it were the most natural thing in all the world for him to do. Still further had the prefect been surprised to see "D'Arcy" stop and calmly light up in full public gaze. He had lost no time in pouncing on him.

Knox was quite agreeably surprised to have caught "D'Arcy" in the act of smoking. Knox himself was in the habit of indulging in that pastime secretly, but it was his duty as a prefect to bring to book any boy found guilty of such a heinous offence.

"So this is the little game, is it?" he said, with relish, fastening a very firm grip on Chollop's shoulder. "You're not the goody-goody you've always made yourself out to be, D'Arcy! Smoking in broad daylight in Wayland High Street—eh? Who ever would have thought it?"

"Let me go!" prated Chollop, struggling to free himself. "I'm not D'Arcy, you fool! Hands off!"

Knox gave a brutal laugh. "Not D'Arcy—eh? I'm not potty, if you are, you little sweep! You're coming back to St. Jim's now and—Ow! You little villain!"

Chollop struggled fiercely, and Knox found him a tough handful to deal with. The actor was years older than Knox, although his looks belied him, and it was not long before Knox, by his utter amazement, found himself being whirled down into the gutter.

Bump!
"Yoooooop!" howled Knox fendshily. He retained his grip on the pseudo D'Arcy, and the two fought hammer-and-tongs in the gutter.

A crowd soon collected, and the town urchins raised joyous cries as they watched the combatants.

"Go it, Archie!" they yelled encouragingly. Chollop "went" it, and he gave Knox the severest handling he had ever received.

Knox was on the verge of giving up, when there was a tramping of feet, and Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger of the Fifth dashed up.

They had ridden over to Wayland directly lessons were finished, hoping to be able to track down the fugitive.

"Hold him, Knox!" exclaimed Cutts. "We'll soon nab him!"

"Yow! Groogh! Hurry up! Yooop!" wailed the luckless prefect.

Cutts & Co. piled on Chollop, and against such overwhelming odds he stood absolutely no chance.

He was dragged to his feet and hustled down the High Street. Knox, looking and feeling a wreck, followed up, snarling.

"You fools!" hissed Chollop. "I'm not D'Arcy, I tell you! Let me go!"

"You can't brazen this out!" chuckled Cutts, with relish. "You'll get it where the chicken gets the chopper when you arrive at St. Jim's, D'Arcy! Come on!"

Chollop yelled and protested in vain. He was yanked roughly to the station, and, in the custody of Knox and Cutts & Co., was compelled to board the next train for Rylcombe.

CHAPTER 9.

A Surprise for St. Jim's!

BERTRAM CHOLLOP sat in the corner of the train compartment, scowling. His gaolers mounted guard on the carriage doors on either side, so that escape, even if he contemplated it, was impossible. He took out his box of cigarettes and lit one.

The St. Jim's seniors jumped. "Mum-my hat!" gurgled Cutts. "So he's taken to smoking! And he has the check to light one here—in front of us!"

"My word!" said St. Leger. "Won't he catch it when the Head knows?"

Chollop's eyes gleamed. A new idea had occurred to him.

He realised the utter futility of trying to convince the St. Jim's fellows that he was not D'Arcy. He would probably be disbelieved at St. Jim's, too. Why should he not take his place at St. Jim's as D'Arcy for the time being?

He had trouble to face when he arrived there—that much he gathered from what the prefects had said. He guessed that D'Arcy had run away from school to take up his position with the theatrical company, and he chuckled softly to himself as the funny side of the affair struck him.

What would happen when he reached the school? The headmaster would call him over the coals, believing him to be D'Arcy. He was in for a severe caning, at least. But Chollop was a man, and hardened to the world, and he told himself that he could stand a caning—for other considerations.

He was still deeply embittered against D'Arcy, and was ready to do anything to get his revenge on the fellow who had supplanted him in the company. What better means could he take for the revenge than to masquerade at St. Jim's as D'Arcy, and cause such a commotion there that things would be made very hot for the real D'Arcy afterwards?

D'Arcy, he knew, was the soul of honour, and was probably held in high esteem at St. Jim's. Staying there in the role of D'Arcy, he could so blacken his character that D'Arcy would have a terrible amount to answer for later on. He chuckled again as he realised how easy it would be for him to thus gain his revenge on the young swell.

He puffed calmly at his cigarette and extended the box towards the amazed seniors.

"Have a gaspah, deah boys?" he said. "I can quite recommend this brand, bai Jove!"

"Great pip!" said Cutts, in a faint voice. "You—you deep young beggar, D'Arcy! You've spoofed the school all this time, then, into thinking you to be a paragon of all the virtues! You're a giddy wolf in sheep's clothing!"

Knox, with a quick movement, snatched the box of cigarettes from Chollop's hand.

"Good! I'll take the lot—and show 'em to the Head!" he said. "That will do away with any chance of you destroying 'em!"

Chollop scowled, but he passed no comment. For the remainder of the journey he maintained a moody silence. He was weighing the pros and cons of the plan in his mind. As the train stopped at Rylcombe and he was whirled out unceremoniously by his captors, he wavered in his decision to maintain his masquerade and face the music at St. Jim's.

But revenge on D'Arcy was uppermost in his mind, and he felt prepared after all to "stand the racket," and make D'Arcy pay for it a hundredfold afterwards.

There was a group of juniors standing round the gates of St. Jim's when he arrived there in the grip of Knox and Cutts, with Gilmore and St. Leger following, grinning, behind.

"My hat! Here's Gussy!" exclaimed Blake. "Knox has caught him!"

"Hard cheese, Gussy!" Tom Merry & Co. gathered round sympathetically as the pseudo swell was hustled in.

Knox glared at them. "You kids can clear off!" he snapped. "And let me warn you not to interfere!"

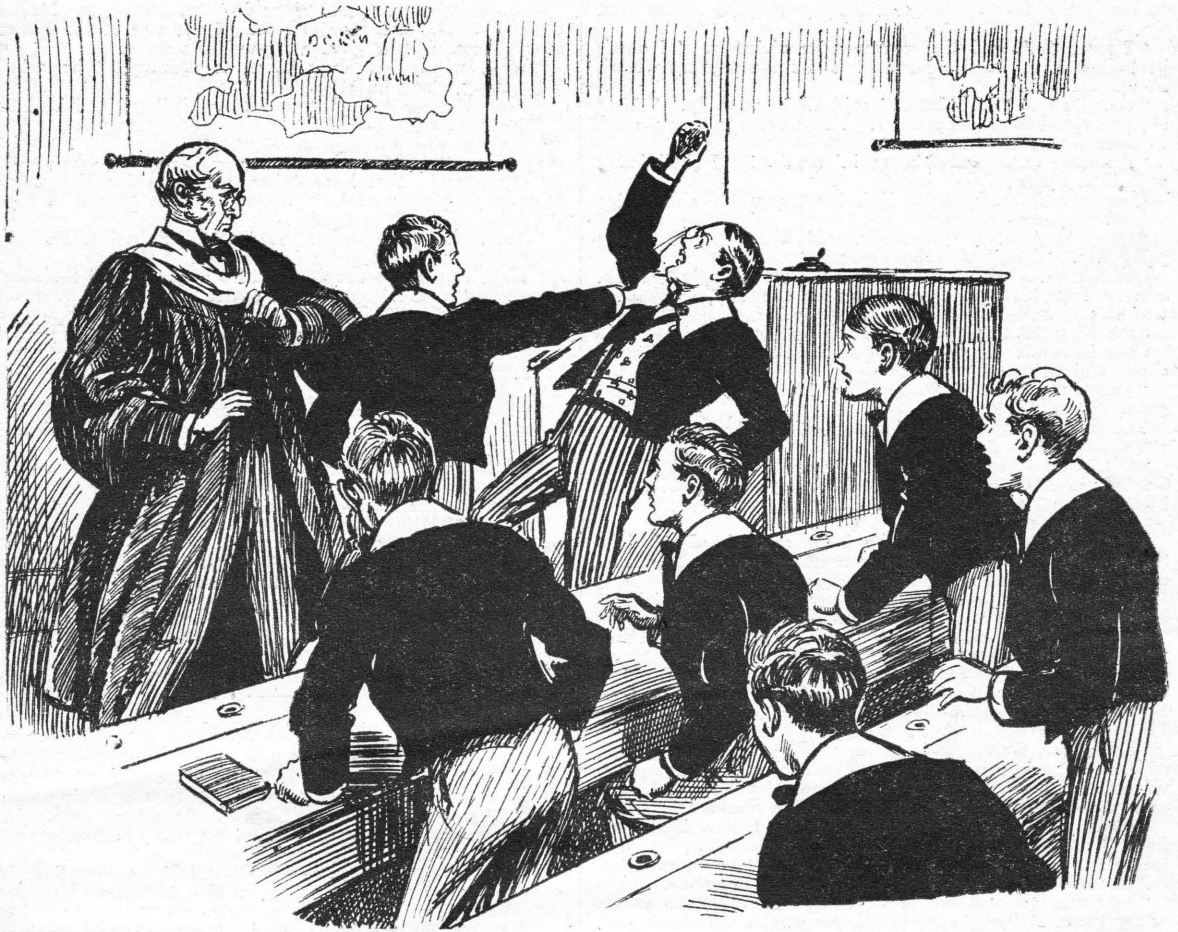
"Keep your wool on, Knox—what there is left of it!" said Monty Lowther cheerily. "My word, though, you look as though you've been trying conclusions with a steam-roller. Who's been using you as a doormat?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, highly amused at Knox's battered and bent condition.

Knox scowled and hustled the grinning Chollop across the Close and into the School House.

"Gussy doesn't look a bit down in the mouth, does he?" said Herries, as he followed the crowd towards the School House. "I wonder if he was the cause of Knox getting into that state?"

"He must have gone for Knox like a giddy lion," said Tom Merry. "Poor old Gussy will catch it now, though,



Jack Blake saw the coward's intention in the nick of time, and, with a spring, he jumped between "D'Arcy" and the Head. The Fourth Former caught the blow on his strong chest. The next minute, however, he lashed out with his own left and caught the fellow he believed to have been his best chum a heavy, lifting drive on the chin. (See page 17.)

I'm afraid. What a maniac he was to bolt like that! He might have known he would be caught."

"The Head will scrag him!" said Blake, looking very concerned.

The juniors waited anxiously at the end of the passage whilst Knox and Cutts & Co. took Chollop into the Head's room.

A few minutes later Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger emerged, grinning.

"We're going to fetch Taggles," said Cutts, with infinite relish. "D'Arcy's in for a flogging!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Poor old Gussy!"

"And he jolly well deserves to be expelled!" said Gilmore. "Knox caught him smoking in Wayland High Street."

Tom Merry & Co. looked incredulous.

"Bosh!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "You can't pitch us that yarn, Gilmore!"

"It's true!" said St. Leger. "Why the cheeky little rotter actually offered us a fag on the way back in the train. It's a fact—honour bright!"

"Rats!"

"Tell that to your grandmother!"

The juniors would not believe that of their old school chum. The story was really too "tall."

"All right," said Cutts, with a shrug. "You needn't believe us, but it's the truth. Anyway, we've got to find Taggles."

The Fifth-Formers went away, and soon Taggles came along. He entered the Head's study, followed by anguished looks from D'Arcy's chums.

They knew only too well what a visit from Taggles to the Head's dread apartment meant, under those circumstances. The school porter always detained a flogging, his function being to hoist the youthful delinquent on his back and hold him there whilst Dr. Holmes administered the birch.

Flogging at St. Jim's was an awful happening, though, fortunately, it was very rarely that the Head had occasion to resort to the birch.

The juniors in the passage waited with bated breath.

Soon they heard the blows falling, but those who expected to hear cries of pain were disappointed.

"Good old Gussy!" muttered Blake. "He's bearing it like a Trojan!"

The sounds of the birch ceased at last. Knox and Taggles came out of the study a short while afterwards, the former grinning with evil relish.

Not long after, D'Arcy—or the person all believed to be D'Arcy—appeared. His face was white, and his eyes glittering with a light the juniors had never seen in D'Arcy's eyes before.

Chollop had gone through with the flogging, which had been a severe one. Dr. Holmes had not spared the rod, and the rascally actor had received a harder punishment than he had anticipated. He was, however, a man, and was able to stand up to it, whereas a boy, even as tough and as stubborn as D'Arcy, would undoubtedly have broken down under that grim chastisement.

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. looked at him in wonder.

They had counted the blows, and judged their force by the sound they had made, and they marvelled at "Gussy's" fortitude.

"Keep your pecker up, old man!" said Blake sympathetically.

"How do you feel, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, in anxious tones.

Chollop gritted his teeth. The worst was over now, and he had practically a clear field for action to do his worst to blight D'Arcy's name. He was far too good an actor to allow his physical discomforts to take him off his mettle.

"I'm all wight," he said. "I'll get my own back on that old fossil, though!"

"Gussy!"

The juniors looked shocked. Never before had Arthur Augustus spoken so disrespectfully of the Head. The look

on his face as he uttered those words was quite unlike him, too.

"I mean it!" said the masquerader viciously. "I won't be bullied like that for nothin'! I'll make the old wottah sit up, bai Jove!"

"Oh, draw it mild, Gussy!" said Blake uneasily. "After all, you asked for it, you know. You were a raving maniac to behave as you did."

"I wufuse to be called a wavin' maniac! I shall jollay well do as I please!"

Herries and Digby each linked an arm on either side of their supposed chum.

"Come along to the study, old chap," said Digby pacifically. "You'll feel better soon."

Chollop went with Herries and Digby willingly enough, and he kept his eyes open keenly on the way, so that he was able to memorise the way to Study No. 6.

Jack Blake and the Terrible Three followed.

Once in there, Herries arranged the cushions in the arm-chair, and "D'Arcy" sat down.

"That's much bettah," he said. "Have any of you chaps got a fag on you?"

The juniors in Study No. 6 almost collapsed at that. They stared blankly at the speaker.

"Don't stand there lookin' like a set of boiled owls!" said Chollop insolently. "I'm dyin' for a cigawette, bai Jove! That wottah Knox took all I had."

"Good heavens!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. could hardly believe their ears. All they could do for some minutes was to blink dumbfoundedly at their supposed chum.

"You—you want a cigarette, Gussy!" ejaculated Blake at last. "Surely you're trying to pull our legs!"

"You silly cucksops! Didn't you heah what I said? Can't you get me some cigarettes, bai Jove?"

The juniors looked in horror and amazement at each other. Then what Cutts and Gilmore had said was evidently true—D'Arcy himself had admitted it. It was time, they thought, for the world to come to an end!

"Look here, Gussy, if this is your idea of a joke, we don't cotton on!" said Tom Merry huffily. "You know as well as we do that it's impossible to get cigarettes here, and that, even if you could, it's against the rules to smoke."

"Hang the wules! I mean to do as I like heah, bai Jove!" came the calm retort, in D'Arcy's voice, but certainly not his manner. "If you chaps have any considewation at all for me, you'll get me something to smoke."

"You can go and eat coke, Gussy!" said Blake in an angry voice. "I'm blessed if I know what's come over you. You seem different, somehow."

"Wats! I'm fed-up with wules and wegulations, and I'm finished with bein' goody-goody! I'm goin' to enjoy myself, and hang the mastahs, and you chaps, too!"

"Why, you—you—you—"

Blake pushed back his cuffs and was about to make a war-like advance on "Gussy," when Tom Merry laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Let Gussy be, old chap," he said. "He's not himself, you know, and, besides, you can't wallop a chap after he's had a flogging. There's something awfully wrong with Gussy, but he'll pull round soon."

"Thank you for nothin', deah boy!" said Chollop insolently.

Tom Merry flushed with anger, but he restrained the angry words that came to his lips.

"I think we'd better leave Gussy alone, you chaps," he said quietly.

The juniors, darting curious looks at the fellow they thought was their chum, left Study No. 6.

Chollop gave a sneering grin.

"So far so good!" he muttered. "It seems that a chap who has been flogged gets a certain amount of rope for a day or so. Well, I'll take all that rope—sufficient to hang Master High and Mighty D'Arcy, anyway. Oh, come in!"

A tap had sounded at the door, and in response to the invitation, Percy Mellish of the Fourth came in.

There was a sneaking grin on Mellish's thin, pasty face. He closed the door behind him and turned to "D'Arcy."

"He, he, he! So it's true that you've taken to smoking, D'Arcy?" he sniggered. "All the chaps are talking about it, you know. So you're not the Good Little Georgie we all thought you were!"

Chollop adjusted his monocle and surveyed Mellish critically. He took mental stock of the cad of the Fourth at a glance, and he gave a supercilious smile.

"Well, what if I have taken to smoking?" he asked. "Anything w'ong in it?"

"That depends on how you look at it," grinned Mellish. "The school rules forbid it, of course."

"Wats on the school wules!"

Mellish stared.

"My word! You have taken a change for the worse, D'Arcy, and no mistake!" he said. "I'm blessed if I get the hang of it. Is it a joke?"

"No, it isn't, bai Jove!" said the disguised actor. "I suppose you haven't got a fag on you?"

"Well, I've got a couple left in a packet," said the dingy young dog of the Fourth with a grin. "You can have one if you like, Gussy."

Chollop took one of the proffered cigarettes. He gave it a contemptuous glance.

"H'm! 'Golden Ray' Cigarettes; but it's better than none, bai Jove!"

"Of course, I can't afford the expensive brands, if you can, Gussy," said Mellish, striking a match and giving him a light. "I suppose you have posh fags?"

"I haven't got any now, bai Jove!" said the pseudo swell. "I suppose you couldn't manage to get me some?"

"Give me the money, and I'll try," said Mellish eagerly.

Chollop withdrew D'Arcy's Russian leather wallet and took out a ten-shilling note.

"Get me a hundred of the best gold-tipped Turkish fags," he said. "And as quick as you like!"

Mellish's eyes opened wide.

"My hat! You're splashing it, Gussy, I must say!" he exclaimed. "All right, old chap! I'll let you have 'em before afternoon lessons."

And Percy Mellish left Study No. 6 grinning expansively.

CHAPTER 10.

Expelled from the School!

BLAKE looked into Study No. 6 when dinner-bell rang, and Chollop accompanied him to the dining-room. There he ate a hearty meal, curiously watched by all the boys. He seemed to have quickly recovered from the effects of his flogging.

There was something strange about D'Arcy, they thought, yet nobody suspected for a moment that he was an impostor. All D'Arcy's serene, urbane manners seemed to have vanished from him, however. Tom Merry & Co. were really worried. They could not understand it a bit.

Chollop kept with them as much as he could, although his persistent insolence made the juniors wish to avoid him. They were dismayed and horrified at the change that seemed to have come over their noble chum. They would never have believed it possible.

Mellish met Chollop walking alone in the lower corridor, and he handed him a square packet.

"Your smokes, D'Arcy," he murmured. "I say, what about a quiet little game of nap in the box-room with Racke and the rest before lessons? There'll be time. Racke and Croke are up there now. Will you come along!"

Chollop's eyes gleamed.

"Yaas, wathah!" he said. "I'm weady for a fluitah, deah boy!"

Up in the box-room where Mellish led the pseudo D'Arcy, Racke and Croke, the black sheep of the Shell, were waiting. They chuckled when the newcomers arrived.

"Come in, Gussy," said Racke affably. "So you've started to really enjoy life—what? Well, let's have a little flutter right away. There's time for a few rounds of nap before lesson bell."

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

The young rascals gathered round a large trunk which served as a table, and, after cigarettes had been handed round, the game commenced.

D'Arcy amazed Racke & Co. by his knowledge and grasp of the mysteries of nap. They had fondly imagined the swell to be new to the game, and had made up their minds to "rook" him. As the game proceeded, however, Racke & Co. began to discover that they, instead, were getting "rooked."

Their little piles of money, quickly went over to "D'Arcy's" side of the trunk. At length Racke jumped up, sweeping away the cards with a savage gesture.

"D'Arcy's cheating!" he roared furiously. "He hasn't been playing square! He's a rotten cardsharp, that's what he is! Let's have our money back!"

"Yes, we'll make the rotter shell out!" muttered Croke. "D'Arcy isn't the simpleton we thought he was!"

Chollop jumped up in alarm as the other young rascals closed in on him. The trunk went over with a crash, and soon a wild and whirling scuffle was taking place in the box-room.

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In the midst of the turmoil the door opened and Kildare and North of the Sixth, both with ashplants gripped firmly in their hands, strode into the room.

"Great Scott! You little sweeps, so we've caught you gambling!" exclaimed the school captain, his eyes resting on the scattered cards. "And smoking, too! Collar them, North!"

"What-ho!" said North.

Racke & Co. struggled in vain. The noise brought a number of juniors to the spot, and in the forefront were the Terribles Three and Blake.

They gasped with amazement when they heard the news that D'Arcy had been caught smoking and gambling with Racke & Co.

Racke turned furiously to Chollop.

"D'Arcy, here, started the game, Kildare!" he whined. "We followed him, just for—for amusement."

"Well, you'll follow me, now, for some more amusement," said Kildare grimly. "By rights, I should report this matter to the Head. D'Arcy, I shall speak to Dr. Holmes about you. I sha'n't care you, as you had a flogging not long ago. Racke, Crooke, and Mellish, come with me."

The three young blades followed Kildare, and when they emerged from his study a short while after they were moaning and gasping dismally, and they walked in a crouching attitude, with their hands tucked deeply under their armpits.

Chollop accompanied the rest of the Fourth to the Form-room for lessons.

No sooner had he reached his desk than he took out a cigarette and lighted it. He put his elegantly-shod feet on the desk in front, and blew out smoke-rings calmly and contentedly.

The Fourth Form juniors blinked, feeling doubtful of the evidence of their senses.

"Gussy!" exclaimed Blake. "Put that away, you idiot!"

"Wats!" came the cool retort.

"Here comes Lathom! Chuck it away! Do you hear?"

"Oh, bow-wow!"

The juniors sat in their seats frozen with horror when Mr. Lathom walked gravely into the Form-room.

The master coughed and looked round.

"Atchoo! Hem! There is an odour in here which smells to me remarkably like tobacco smoke," he exclaimed. "Can it be that— Oh! Good heavens, D'Arcy!"

Mr. Lathom's voice trailed off faintly as he looked at the recumbent swell before him.

D'Arcy was puffing away undauntedly at his cigarette, and already a blue haze of tobacco smoke hung in the Form-room air.

Mr. Lathom could not speak for several minutes. When he did speak his voice was terrible to listen to.

"D'Arcy!" he thundered. "Have you taken leave of your senses, boy? How dare you smoke tobacco in the Form-room? How dare you, sir?"

"Weally, old top, it's the easiest thing in the world, bai Jove!" replied Chollop blandly. "Have a gasper. It might take some of the wheeziness out of your voice!"

"Bless my soul!" cried Mr. Lathom, petrified with horror.

"I don't know that smokin' is any cure for a wed nose, but you might try it!" went on D'Arcy with a grin. "Yours is weally a chwonik wed nose, isn't it?"

"Gug-good heavens!"

Mr. Lathom's brain was in a whirl. He could hardly believe that he had heard aright. As for the boys of the Fourth, they looked at D'Arcy in horrified amazement.

"D'Arcy!" Mr. Lathom's voice trembled with righteous wraith. "D'Arcy, you insolent young scoundrel! You—you dare address me, your master, in those terms! I have never been more insulted in all my life!"

"Poor old chap! You shouldn't worry your scanty locks ovah that, though. That nattay little bald patch on your head might expand, and wouldn't that be a fwithful shame!"

Jack Blake & Co. could scarcely move for horror.

To hear Gusey—their own aristocratic and noble Gussy—talk like this! It seemed incredible.

Mr. Lathom's face was a study.

"D'Arcy, your behaviour is without parallel! You are a wanton and unmitigated young scoundrel, sir! I—I cannot trust myself to deal with you. Blake, will you kindly call Dr. Holmes from the Sixth Form room?"

Jack Blake rose, and, like one in a dream, he left the Form-room and fetched Dr. Holmes.

Chollop was still reclining at full length at his desk, and was puffing away merrily at his cigarette when the Head arrived.

Dr. Holmes coughed and blinked in the haze of smoke. He stood rooted to the floor in amazement when his eyes beheld the one he took to be D'Arcy.

Mr. Lathom walked up to the Head, his face red with anger.

"Dr. Holmes, I have sent for you to ask you to deal with this renegade young scoundrel!" he said in a voice that

trembled with emotion. "D'Arcy has had the brazen effrontery to commence smoking in the Form-room here, and when I commanded him to cease he spoke to me with unparalleled insolence. I—I hardly know how to deal with him, sir. He is beyond me!"

Dr. Holmes' kind old face was stern and grim now. His eyes glinted like points of fire as they looked at the pseudo swell.

"D'Arcy, come out here this instant!" he thundered.

"Oh, any old thing!" said Chollop, rising leisurely and strolling to the front.

"Put that cigarette down, sir!" commanded the Head in his most awful tones.

D'Arcy did not turn a hair.

"I'm just enjoyin' this smoke, sir," he said coolly. "Toppin' flavouah, bai Jove!"

Dr. Holmes looked in amazement at him.

"D'Arcy, I can hardly credit that it is you!" he exclaimed. "You are either mad, D'Arcy, or you are deliberately inviting further trouble. Once more I command you to cease smoking that cigarette. Throw it into the fire this minute!"

"Wats!" said the pseudo D'Arcy.

"What!"

"I said 'wats'—and many of 'em!"

A convulsive shudder went through the Form. Mr. Lathom fell back, agast. Dr. Holmes' face worked spasmodically for a few brief seconds, and then he picked up Mr. Lathom's cane, which was lying on the desk.

"D'Arcy, obey me, or I shall strike you!" he said with an obvious effort to control his anger.

"Stwike away, deah boy!" said Chollop aggressively.

Dr. Holmes, his eyes flashing with very rage, stepped forward, the cane upraised.

Chollop, with the cigarette still held between his lips, strode to meet him. Up came his right fist, and with calm, calculated deliberation he aimed a smashing blow at Dr. Holmes.

A cry of horror arose from the boys, and there was a dull thud. Dr. Holmes, however, had not received that cruel blow. Jack Blake, who had remained at the front of the class, saw the coward's intention in the nick of time, and, with a spring, had intercepted himself between D'Arcy and the Head.

Blake caught the blow on his strong chest, and next minute, gritting his teeth, he lashed out with his own left and caught the fellow he believed to have been his best chum a heavy, lifting drive on the chin.

Chollop went down like a felled ox, and he lay at Dr. Holmes' feet, moaning.

The Fourth-Formers were all on their feet now, shouting and talking in a babel.

Dr. Holmes was so thunderstruck and horrified for the minute that he was rendered incapable of speech.

"Boys! Boys! Be silent!" he exclaimed at last. "I—I will deal with this matter. Bless my soul, this is an unprecedented affair! For a junior boy to strike at his headmaster! It is unheard of! D'Arcy, get up! Do you hear?"

Chollop struggled up, his face livid and his eyes glittering like a wild cat's.

"D'Arcy, you have amazed and shocked me by your conduct these last two days, but this—this is unsupportable!" exclaimed the Head. "You have already received a flogging for your flagrant breach of the school rules. Your present conduct, however, far eclipses anything you have previously done. I cannot allow that to pass without dealing with you as you justly deserve. D'Arcy, you will not be permitted to remain at St. Jim's any longer. You are expelled!"

"Expelled!"

The word burst hoarsely from a score of lips in the Fourth Form room. D'Arcy expelled from St. Jim's! D'Arcy, of all people!

Could it be true?

Many of the juniors found themselves doubting their senses.

Yet there was D'Arcy before them, cringing in front of the class with his chin held in his hands, and Dr. Holmes, majestic, austere, and angry, beside him, pointing to the door.

"Go, D'Arcy!" said the Head, struggling to contain his anger. "You are a disgrace to St. Jim's and a discredit to the noble family of which you are a member! I will acquaint Lord Eastwood of the facts of this disgraceful affair, and also ask him to send someone for your belongings. You will kindly leave St. Jim's immediately. Go!"

Chollop turned on his heel, and, with a leering look at the class, he strode from the room.

There was an angry movement among the juniors, but the Head raised his hand commandingly.

"Boys, let there be no demonstration here!" he rapped. "D'Arcy will pay the price of his folly, you may be well assured. Mr. Lathom, the lesson will now proceed."

Dr. Holmes swooped from the Form-room, leaving the Fourth in a foment of excitement.

As for Chollop, he recovered his good humour as the pain in his chin subsided.

"Well, I've done it for D'Arcy now!" he muttered to himself as he made his way downstairs. "I thought I'd get one in on the old buffer for the flogging he gave me, but I was unlucky. It doesn't matter, though. I'm none the worse for it, and I've made things pretty hot for Master D'Arcy—all in a few hours, too. If that doesn't make him sit up nothing will."

Thus musing to himself, the rascally actor left St. Jim's, having accomplished the dastardly scheme that he had set his mind upon.

He had been expelled from St. Jim's in D'Arcy's name. D'Arcy was now disgraced in the eyes of the whole school. And, all unknowing of the events that had taken place, Arthur Augustus himself was working hard at the Grand Theatre, Wayland, to prepare himself for the launching of his stage career, and was looking forward with much eagerness to his first performance, on the following night, of his role in "The Boy from Broadway."

Meanwhile, Chollop had arrived back at the theatre and had changed back into his own clothes, leaving the swell of St. Jim's togs where had first found them.

CHAPTER 11.

Run to Earth!

"I DON'T believe it!"

Tom Merry made that statement emphatically when he heard the startling news.

Manners and Monty Lowther also shook their heads.

"Impossible!" said Manners. "Gussy expelled for acting like that? Utter piffle!"

"There's something wrong somewhere," said Lowther.

Blake made a weary gesture.

"Well, it's no use denying the facts," he said. "Gussy played the very deuce in the Form-room this afternoon. He started smoking and refused to obey orders. Then he slanged Lathom and checked the Head, and finished up by going for the Head. The Head expelled him, and Gussy's gone!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked disconsolate in the extreme.

They had a real affection for their noble chum, and although his supposed conduct had shocked and disgusted them, they could not help thinking of Gussy as he used to be. Dear old Gussy, as Blake had almost tearfully referred to him. It seemed as though a part of themselves had been taken away. St. Jim's without Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not seem right somehow. He was disgraced now, and his name dishonoured. Blake & Co. could not bear to think of it.

Tom Merry & Co. would not think of it.

"I don't believe it!" said Tom Merry again, and with more emphasis. "If you say Gussy did all that, Blake, then there's an awful mistake somewhere."

"You mean to say, then, that Gussy isn't expelled?" demanded Herries.

"He'll come walking up in a tick, I suppose, to ask us our opinion about some new neckties or a fancy waistcoat," said Digby, with a catch in his voice.

"I don't mean that at all," said the Shell captain quietly. "I maintain, you chaps, that it wasn't Gussy who was expelled this afternoon. It stands to reason that it couldn't have been Gussy—our Gussy!"

Blake darted him a quick look.

"Merry, you don't think it was someone else—"

"That's just what I do mean, old chap. It sounds wildly improbable, I know; but for Gussy to carry on as all the chaps think he did—well, that's not only improbable, but impossible. We all know Gussy better than that. Old Gussy wouldn't take to smoking and gambling and acting the rotter, whatever straits he was in. As for that business in the Form-room this afternoon, I don't think for a minute that it was Gussy who was expelled. Gussy's an ass, but he's a good ass! He's not a rotter, and he couldn't be, even if he tried!"

"Then who was it?" said Blake desperately. "I can hardly believe it was Gussy, yet—yet it was him—"

"Bosh!" said Tom Merry. "It was someone marvellously like Gussy, but I'll bet my boots it wasn't him! There's only one Gussy in this world, and he's true blue, and as straight as a die, and he's got a heart as good as gold. He must have a double. As I said before, it sounds wildly improbable, yet such things as doubles have been known. In fact, I read in a book once that some learned old professor Johnny claims that every living person in the world has a double somewhere. So, you see, it's quite within the bounds of possibility that Gussy has a double."

"But—but the voice and his dress!" gasped Herries. "I tell you it must have been Gussy."

Tom shook his head decisively.

"If a chap who happened to be Gussy's double took it into his head to come here and spoof the school, surely he'd get his

voice and his dress to match Gussy's, as well as his face!" he said. "I tell you, chaps, we've been spoofed. The chap whom Knox brought back this morning, and whom the Head expelled this afternoon, was not Gussy at all, but a chap who got himself up to represent Gussy. Gussy ran away this morning, so the coast was clear for the spoofer."

"But—but the chap got a flogging as soon as he arrived!" said Blake, in wonder. "Surely when he found what he was in for he would have given the show away, assuming, of course, that it wasn't Gussy."

Tom Merry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I see what you mean, Blake," he said; "but I still hold to my belief that the chap was an impostor; that the real Gussy is still at large, and that he is ignorant of what has been happening here. The best thing we can do is to find the chap whom the Head expelled, and have it out with him."

"Right-ho!" Jack Blake, still hardly convinced by Tom Merry's words, spoke more cheerfully. "We shall have rather a job to track him, though. Look what a start he's had!"

"Never mind!" said Tom. "If he's still in the neighbourhood we shall probably run across him. Let's take our jiggers."

The chums of the Lower School acted on this plan. They scoured the countryside till dusk set in, forgetting tea in their eagerness to find the one whom Dr. Holmes had expelled, whether it was really D'Arcy or, as Tom Merry claimed him to be, an impostor.

They returned to St. Jim's at locking-up time, however, empty-handed and disappointed.

Next morning, Lord Eastwood, looking haggard and worried, came to St. Jim's, and he held a long consultation with Dr. Holmes.

He spoke to Tom Merry & Co. afterwards, and told them that he had seen or heard nothing of the missing junior.

"It is a terrible tragedy for me, my boys," said the old peer brokenly. "I would not care, only Arthur seemed such a different boy. Now he has shown himself in his true colours I no longer regard him as a son of mine! I am ashamed to own him."

Tom Merry looked troubled.

"I—I think that perhaps we have been judging Gussy too hastily, sir," he said. "We don't believe that he has been expelled at all. We think that the fellow who came here yesterday was an impostor. And, what's more, we're going to prove it!"

"I wish you could," said Lord Eastwood fervently.

Nothing transpired that day, although Tom Merry & Co. devoted all their spare time in searching for their quarry.

"We'll go to Wayland to-morrow afternoon, and perhaps we shall find something there," said Tom, in the Common-room that evening. "I'm sure the chap we want isn't far away."

Directly dinner was over at St. Jim's on Saturday afternoon, the Terrible Three and Jack Blake & Co. took out their cycles and rode swiftly to Wayland. They left their machines at the station and commenced their search. Half an hour had elapsed without result, when suddenly Manners caught sight of a young, slim figure coming out of a public-house in the High Street.

"My hat! Do you recognise that chap?" he exclaimed. "It's the one who acts the part of the Boy from Broadway, at the Grand Theatre—the chap who is so like Gussy, you know."

Tom Merry started.

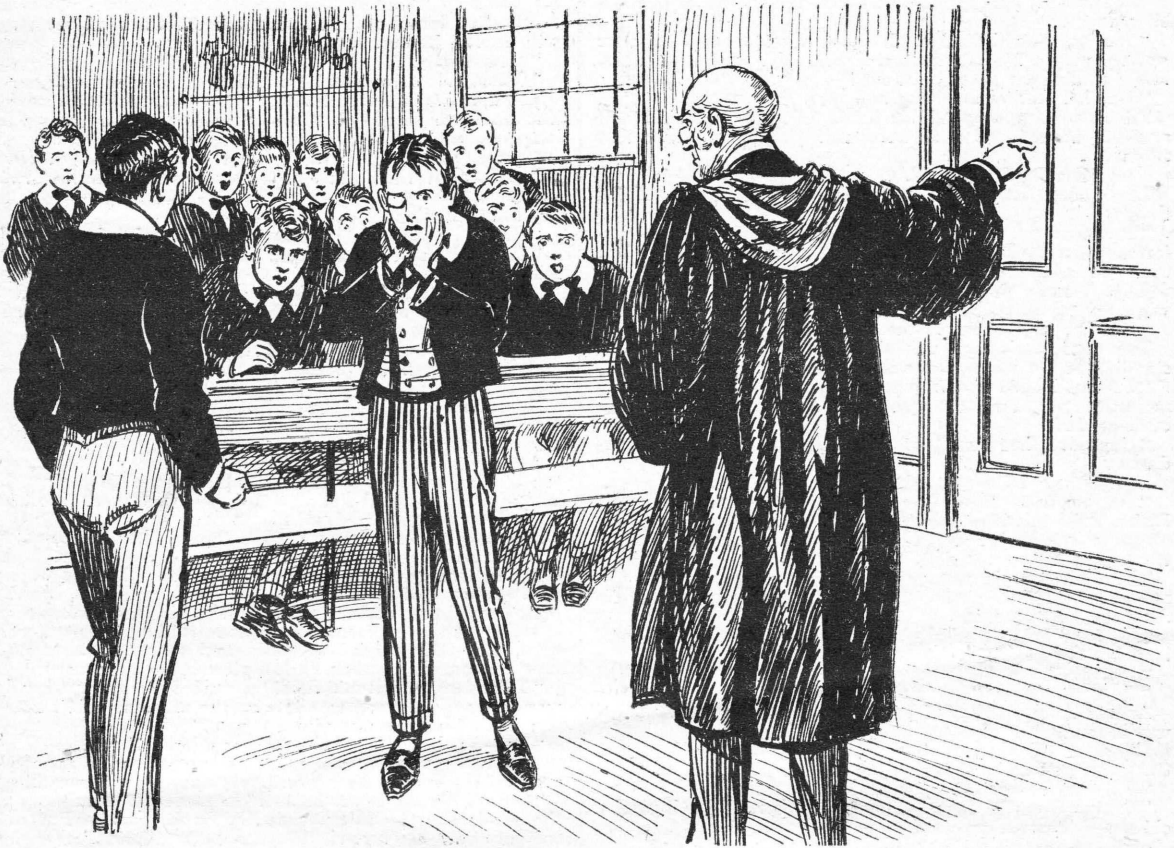
Chollop—for it was he—saw the juniors, and he turned his head quickly and hurried away in the opposite direction.

Tom Merry set his teeth grimly.

"That chap shouldn't know us from Adam, yet directly he spotted us his face went white!" he said. "Look at him now—trying to get as far away from us as he can. Doesn't it look jolly suspicious, you chaps? He's frightened to face us, for some reason. And I think I can guess, now. I hadn't thought of him before. That actor chap is practically Gussy's double—isn't he? We remarked on it when we saw the show, you remember. An actor would have no difficulty in impersonating Gussy, especially if he happened to look something like him. Chaps, I reckon we've got the clue of the whole matter here. Come on! We've got to stop that merchant Jollop, or whatever his name is, and put a few heart-to-heart questions to him."

The St. Jim's juniors hurried along the High Street, and rapidly gained on Chollop.

The actor, looking back, saw them coming, and he quickened his pace. The Grand Theatre was now in sight, and he almost ran down the side street that led to the stage-door. Tom Merry & Co., abandoning all secrecy, ran also, but Chollop reached the stage door first, and he disappeared within.



"D'Arcy, you have amazed and shocked me by your conduct!" said Dr. Holmes sternly. "You have already received a flogging for your flagrant breach of the school rules. Your present conduct, however, far eclipses anything you have previously done. D'Arcy, you will not be permitted to remain at St. Jim's any longer. You are expelled!"

"Expelled!" The word burst hoarsely from a score of lips. (See page 17.)

When the juniors applied for admittance a minute later, they were met by the stolid Mr. Robson, who flatly and forcefully refused to allow them inside the theatre.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

"That settles it!" he said. "Chollop is the man we want—he knows something and he was frightened to face us. I suppose he's making ready for the afternoon performance. Chaps, we're all in funds, so the best thing we can do is to go to the theatre and watch our chance. Let's club together and take a box—it works out much cheaper for a party."

Half an hour later the six St. Jim's juniors were seated in the stage box at the Grand Theatre, looking right down on the stage.

The orchestra struck up and at last the show commenced.

Tom Merry & Co. waited eagerly for the Boy from Broadway to appear.

"There's the cue for him to come on!" muttered Blake, as the lights changed. "Now we shall be able to have a good view of this Chollop merchant."

They watched eagerly as the figure of the leading actor appeared. A titter of laughter arose from the auditorium when the elegant and knuttishly attired "Boy" walked on, swinging his cane and looking a most extraordinary dandy.

Tom Merry & Co. did not laugh, however.

They shot bolt upright in their seats in amazement.

Their eyes almost started from their heads as they gazed at the figure on the stage below them. Surely this was a different hero to the one they had seen on Wednesday!

Then they all gave one long simultaneous gasp.

In spite of his make-up, they recognised the figure on the stage. Being at such close quarters, they were able to penetrate the "make-up" of the one they knew only too well.

"Gussy!"

CHAPTER 12.

Gussy Gives It Up!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS, blissfully unconscious of the presence of his chums, ambled elegantly to the centre of the stage, swinging his cane and surveying the audience through his monocle with an urbane smile. Inwardly, he was trembling with excitement, for this was

the first time that he had appeared on the stage before the public. His part had been drilled into him, and Mr. Bonnetto was lurking behind the scenes, watching him anxiously, and ready to prompt him if need be.

Gussy felt a little dazed at the sea of faces before him, and the orchestra sounded noisier than it ever had done at rehearsal. The Grand Theatre was crowded for the Saturday afternoon matinee, and a round of clapping greeted his appearance. The footlights and the noise, and the people dazed him for the moment, but he continued to smile and swing his cane, as it was his part to do whilst the orchestra played the introduction to his first song.

He felt quite safe from discovery. For one thing, he was made up for his part, and for another he did not anticipate the likelihood of any St. Jim's people being at the theatre that afternoon. The First Eleven were playing a very important match with Redclyffe, and he knew that all the other fellows would remain at the school to watch the game.

Tom Merry & Co., in fact, were the only St. Jim's fellows in the audience that afternoon. They had forgone the match in their anxiety to solve the mystery of D'Arcy.

The conductor of the orchestra gave the "Boy" his cue, and Arthur Augustus tackled the song gallantly. Tom Merry & Co., sitting amazedly in the box on his right, watched and listened with bated breath.

If they had had any doubts at first, they had none now.

This was D'Arcy—their own original Gussy!

The orchestra blared away at the song, and Gussy warbled with all his might, struggling manfully to keep up with the musicians below.

The song developed into a race between the noble Boy from Broadway and the orchestra, and the effect was rather remarkable.

Mr. Bonnetto, glaring out from the wings, put his fingers to his ears, and his florid face took on a weird and wonderful contortion.

Gussy trilled away desperately, sometimes a tenor, now a bass, now a baritone—first in one key, and then in another. The orchestra ground out the tune bravely. Finally, Arthur Augustus became so confused that he gave it up. He strode

to the front of the stage and glared at the conductor through his monocle.

"Weally, you boundah, I must pwotest against your wotten playin'!" he exclaimed heatedly. "You've absolutely wuined my song, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the audience.

The conductor dropped his baton in sheer astonishment, and the instruments that were still playing wheezed into silence.

Tom Merry & Co. gasped.

"This undoubtedly was Gussy—there was no mistake about that!"

"Pway accept my apologies for havin' held up the performance, deah boys—I mean, ladies and gentlemen!" said the swell, addressing the audience from the footlights. "But weally, I must pwotest against the orchestwa. It put me wight off my song, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the audience.

The conductor's face was a study, whilst Mr. Bonnetto, standing in the wings, was on the verge of apoplexy.

"I tvust I shall not have to pwotest furthah!" said Gussy majestically. "I must wequest you to commence that song ovah again!"

"Gug-gug heavens!" stuttered the dumbfounded conductor.

Tom Merry & Co. were chortling in their box.

"Ha, ha, ha! This is better than a pantomime!" gurgled Blake. "So this is Gussy's game—he's run away from school to go on the stage! My only hat! There he goes again! Ha, ha, ha!"

The orchestra, in response to desperate signals from the manager behind the scene, played the song again, and Arthur Augustus retacked it.

This time he finished slightly ahead of the orchestra, and loud salvos of applause broke out.

"Hurrah!"

"Encore! 'Core!"

Arthur Augustus bowed gracefully from side to side. He was in the middle of a sweeping bow when his eyes happened to light on the six grinning faces in the box on his right. Gussy jumped up as though someone had stabbed him.

"Bai—bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"Bravo, Gussy!" roared Monty Lowther. "Do it again, old son—it's worth a guinea a box!"

"Gug-gug-gweat Scott!" gasped D'Arcy breathlessly.

He stood in the centre of the stage like one in a dream.

The orchestra struck up the tune for the next bit of business. Here Miss Maisie appeared in the role of the demure and bewitching heroine.

The scene was laid on a railway-station, and the pair were supposed to be on the platform, waiting for a train. A toy mouse, running out of the property "waiting-room," was supposed to terrify the heroine into running into the arms of the Boy from Broadway for protection. Then a duet followed, during which the train was heard approaching—the "puff-puff" effect being produced by one of the stage hands behind the scenes who had a long board which he rubbed with a wooden block wrapped in sand-paper.

"Bob, bom, bom! went the drum, and Miss Maisie started her song.

Gussy remained limply on the "platform," gasping with dismay. He had no ears for the music, and he took no notice of what was going on. He even failed to hear Mr. Bonnetto's sulphurous voice from the wings, urging him to "make eyes" at the heroine.

Then the mouse appeared, and Miss Maisie gave a scream.

"Oh, sir, save me!" she shrieked, and dashed precipitately into Gussy's arms.

Arthur Augustus was not prepared for that rush, otherwise everything would have been all right. As it was, Miss Maisie fell into

his arms so suddenly that he lost his balance, with the result that both he and the heroine sat down on the stage with fearful bumps.

"Yawooooogh!"

"Oooooogh!" screamed Miss Maisie, in very earnest.

The duet was nothing like the one contained in the score! The audience rocked from side to side in their seats with laughter, and a loud shriek rang out when Gussy, in struggling to rise, grasped the door of the "waiting-room" and pulled down the whole of the scenery on that side of the stage.

Crash! Wallop!

"Yoop! Yah! Oh, cwumbs! This is awful, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Tom Merry & Co., weeping with mirth.

The property man, with his board and wooden block, was there, waiting to produce the "puff-puff" of the train. When the scenery fell he was displayed to full view of the audience, as well as the rest of the stage at the back, and with a yell he picked up his board and ran out of sight.

Never before had the Grand Theatre at Wayland re-echoed with such howls of laughter. The incident had fairly "brought the house down."

Arthur Augustus pushed away the scenery that lay on top of him and rose to his feet. He gave a gasp when he saw Miss Maisie still sitting dazedly on the stage. He bent down and gallantly assisted her to rise.

The heroine went crimson, even through her grease-paint. Her beautiful golden curls had been knocked awry in the fall, and Gussy saw, to his utter amazement, that she wore a wig. A crop of sparse sandy hair was displayed beneath those wondrous curls. Miss Maisie did not look at all beautiful at that moment. She was fairly beside herself with rage, too. She turned to Gussy and gave his aristocratic face a resounding smack, in full view of the audience!

"Take that, you stupid dolt!" she cried shrilly. "Oh, why was you ever allowed to come on the stage at all? You—your brainless little nincompoo, you!"

"Bai—bai Jove!" gasped the bewildered Gussy.

A howl proceeded from Mr. Bonnetto, who appeared amongst the scattered scenery, fairly dancing with wrath.

"Get off the stage, you booby!" he roared. "You've spoilt the whole show! Hi, you at the back there! Put that curtain down can't you? Put the curtain down!"

He and a number of other men, conspicuous among whom was the rascal Chollop, made a rush at Gussy.

They evidently meant to wreak vengeance upon him for what he had done. Arthur Augustus put his back to the proscenium, and, squaring his shoulders, he made ready to meet the avengers.

Tom Merry & Co. saw him striking the first blows manfully, when the curtain dropped with one fell swoop and hid the proceedings from their view.

Tom Merry turned to the others.

"Gussy's in for a pretty warm time down there!" he exclaimed swiftly. "I reckon it's up to us, chaps, to lend him a hand!"

From behind the curtain came a yell in Gussy's dulcet voice.

"Yah! Ooogh! Wescue, St. Jim's!"

"Come on!" said Blake. And he led the way by jumping out of the box on to the stage.

The juniors leaped wildly one after another, and landed on the boards in front of the footlights. It was not a very big drop from the box to the stage. The conductor of the orchestra let out a roar of wrath, but the St. Jim's juniors paid no heed. They dived under the curtain and dashed to Gussy's side.

The swell was being roughly handled by the actors and stage hands. It was evidently their intention to hurt him. The arrival of the six lusty juniors turned the tide in D'Arcy's favour, however.

Tom Merry & Co. planted themselves between the swell and the others, who drew back, gasping.

"You'd better let D'Arcy come quietly with us!" said Tom Merry. "The audience are getting impatient, and if you take my tip you'll get on with the washing!"

Mr. Bonnetto nearly tore his hair.

"How am I to get on without the title part?" he moaned. "How—"

"Pway don't count on me for the wole, Mr. Bonnetto!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I wesign! Fwom this moment I sevah all connection with your company, bai Jove!"

"Resign!" stuttered Mr. Bonnetto. "You're sacked! Don't you come near here again, you booby! Chollop, get into those things as soon as you can, and get on with the part!"

Chollop grinned and hurried away to the dressing-room. "This way, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, following after Chollop. "You've got to change into your school things and get out of here."



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"Vewy well, deah boys. I wufuse to wemain heah any longah than I can help."

Tom Merry & Co. went to the dressing-room with him, and they bundled Gussy into his school clothes. By the time he was ready for the street the performance had been resumed, with Chollop in his old part.

Arthur Augustus walked out of the stage door of the Grand Theatre, Wayland, never to enter again!

In the cakeshop in the High Street opposite Gussy gave his chums an account of his doings since he "wethiahed" from St. Jim's on Wednesday. Tom Merry gave Blake a meaning look.

"There you are! What did I tell you?" he said. "It wasn't Gussy who was expelled from St. Jim's!"

"Bai Jove! Expelled!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "I don't undahstand, deah boys!"

It was Tom Merry's turn to do some explaining. He told D'Arcy of the amazing happenings at St. Jim's when he was supposed to have been expelled from the school.

Arthur Augustus polished his monocle and gasped.

"Bai Jove! This has sent me into a feahful fluttah, deah boys! If I find the wascal who impersonated me—"

"We shall find him all right—when the performance is over!" said Tom Merry grimly. "Chollop is the one we are wanting, Gussy, unless I am very much mistaken!"

Arthur Augustus gave a start.

"Bai Jove! So that accounts for my clobbah disapeawin' the othah day!"

The chums of St. Jim's remained in the cakeshop, discussing matters, until it was nearly time for the Grand Theatre matinee to come to an end. Then, having settled on their plan of action, they left the shop. Tom Merry paying the bill for the refreshments they had had, and then they made their way along to the garage near the station.

There Gussy hired a closed car, and the chauffeur drove them swiftly to the stage door of the Grand Theatre.

The people were now flocking out of the exits, the matinee having finished. The car stood outside the stage-door, and the juniors inside waited breathlessly, keeping well out of sight, but at the same time maintaining a keen watch on the door.

Some time elapsed before Chollop appeared. "There he is!" muttered Tom Merry. "Now, my sons, grab him! And let there be no mistake about it!"

The car door opened with a rush, and the seven juniors pounced upon Chollop without giving him any warning. The rascally actor was taken completely by surprise. Before he quite realised what was happening he was dragged into the car, dumped down on the floor, and sat on.

"Now, right away for St. Jim's, driver!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Right you are, sir!" The chauffeur started the engine, and the car glided away. It did not take long to reach St. Jim's.

There were several fellows at the gates when the car arrived, and they stared when they saw Arthur Augustus smiling at them from inside it.

Dr. Holmes appeared on the School House steps with a tall, distinguished-looking gentleman. D'Arcy gave a cry. It was Lord Eastwood, his pater!

The car stopped at the foot of the steps, and D'Arcy got out.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes in amazement. "You, D'Arcy, back again!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" said the swell. "I've come to cleah my name, bai Jove! Bwing out that wottah, deah boys!"

"Yaroooooogh!" Bertram Chollop came out of the car violently, being hauled out by Tom Merry & Co.'s lusty hands, and helped behind by Herries' huge boot.

The actor looked woebegone in the extreme. He had evidently experienced a very rough journey from Wayland.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head, walking quickly down the steps. "Who is this person? What is the meaning of this affair, Merry?"

"It means, sir, that we have brought back the fellow you expelled the other day, just to prove to you that it wasn't

D'Arcy," said the junior captain calmly. "The real D'Arcy was at Wayland while this rascal was masquerading here. We forced a confession out of him on the way from Wayland. Look at him, sir! Can't you see how like D'Arcy he is?"

The juniors thrust Chollop forward, and both Dr. Holmes and Lord Eastwood peered in amazement at him.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head. "The resemblance is remarkable!"

"Amazing, by Jove!" said Lord Eastwood. "Arthur, you little rascal, I shall require an explanation of all this!"

A crowd had quickly gathered, and excitement reigned supreme when the news got round.

"Come with me to my study, D'Arcy," said the Head.

"Merry, Blake, and you other lads may bring your prisoner along, too. I will thresh this matter to its roots."

Chollop was bundled unceremoniously to the Head's study.

There Arthur Augustus gave a frank confession of his movements since he left St. Jim's, and explained the reason for his amazing conduct.

Lord Eastwood was shocked and astounded. "Arthur, you ridiculous young idiot!" he exclaimed.

"How ever could you think of going on the stage?" The swell of the Fourth polished his monocle.

"The idea wathah appealed to me, patah," he said. "Howevah, I have changed my opinion now. I think, aftah all, I shall wefwain fwom any furthah efforts to go on the stage."

Lord Eastwood could not help smiling, in spite of himself.

Dr. Holmes then turned to Chollop, and that cowering rascal muttered his confession of the deception he had perpetrated at St. Jim's.

The Head drew a deep breath when all was explained.

"I am thankful, D'Arcy, to find that you have been misjudged," he said. "I need hardly point out to you, however, that you would have been primarily responsible for any trouble that might have accrued had not your friends discovered the truth in time. Your escapade was audacious, to say the least."

"I twust, sir, that you won't wepeat the floggin' which this wascal so geneowously weceived on my behalf?" said Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry almost choked.

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"You and your friends are to be complimented on what you have done, Merry," he said. "You may now see that Mr.—er—Chollop is removed from the premises. D'Arcy, you will remain here with Lord Eastwood and myself."

D'Arcy made a grimace at his chums as they led Chollop from the room.

The swell knew that he was in for a "row"—and he got it, not only from Dr. Holmes, but from his pater as well.

His hands were smarting when at last he emerged from the Head's study, but he looked quite cheerful.

The School House was strangely deserted, and Gussy discovered Tom Merry & Co. and a whole host of juniors in the quadrangle engaged in the task of frogmarching the rascally Chollop.

By the time that process was over and the luckless captive had been ejected through the gates "on his neck," as Blake expressed it, Bertram Chollop had begun to realise that the way of the transgressor is hard—very hard!

He crawled out of sight down the Rylcombe Lane, shaking his muddy fist at the chortling juniors in the St. Jim's gateway.

"Well, Gussy," said Tom Merry, turning to Arthur Augustus, "did you catch it hot? If you didn't you jolly well ought to have done!"

"Yaas, I caught it hot enough, deah boy," said the swell, "and the Head's given me impots suffish to last a whole term, almost. But still, I wathah think I got out of it easily, bai Jove!"

"Rather!" said Blake. "And if you ever want to meet with sudden death and destruction, Gussy, just mention to us about wanting to go on the stage, that's all!"

And the juniors went indoors to broadcast to the others an account of the stirring events that had followed the advent of "The Boy from Broadway."

THE END.

Another magnificent yarn next week, chums—

"GRUNDY ON THE TRAIL!"

—One of Martin Clifford's extra-specials—So Don't Miss It!



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

MY DEAR CHUMS.—As numerous readers tell me, the good old GEM is better these days than ever it was. It is more all round and interesting, and that is saying a good deal, for the GEM has been running now for a good number of years, and has had heaps of triumphs. Still, there it is! The St. Jim's yarns are waited for with tremendous eagerness. No wonder! It is a good group of characters. Each popular favourite is looked for. Gussy, Cardew, Tom Merry and the others are made welcome all over the world. Added to that we have the other fine features of the GEM. The present grand serial needs no further recommendation. It is swooping away. Then there is always a ripping adventure tale in the old paper, to say nothing of the other attractions, including an up-to-date competition of the best.

"GRUNDY ON THE TRAIL!"
By Martin Clifford.

Next week's topping story of St. Jim's sheds the brilliant limelight on the picturesque figure of Grundy. The big fellow appears in a new role. It is quite a natural one. Grundy is bitten by the gold fever. As already stated, there has been a professional search for the precious ore in the vicinity of the school. Gold has always been much in request. The presence of a trained gold-seeker in the neighbourhood fires the imagination of George Alfred Grundy. For Grundy has an imagination. It may have seemed to be dormant, but it was only waiting for its opportunity. The tale is crammed full of incident, and is written in Mr. Martin Clifford's best and most humorous style. There is a mystery which is not funny, but Monty Lowther does his little best to lighten the proceedings with a dash of wit. Look out for the brilliant way in which Monty comes to the assistance of Grundy. The latter is keen on finding the trail. Why should he not discover one? The yarn rocks with merriment, and will give you the heartiest laugh yet.

"ERRORS" RESULT.

Watch out for the list of prize-winners in our great "Errors" Competition. Full particulars will be given at an early date. Just a word here regarding our next Competition. It is coming very shortly, and will be thoroughly to the liking of all "Gemites."

"TROJAN TIM!"
By J. W. Wheway.

Next week's issue of the GEM will contain a special complete story of a football conspiracy. Mr. Wheway is well known for his yarns about the winter game, and his new tale will excite the keenest interest. It concerns a smart young football amateur and his rascally uncle. The latter is no end of a bad lot, and is determined by hook or crook to bring about the downfall of his nephew, for reasons which you will see when you have our next number in your hands. Tim Webster, the amateur football enthusiast, is a proper player of the game. But at one time it looks as though Uncle Nick will prove altogether too much for him. The wily old rogue sets traps to catch his relative. A great deal hangs on the success of the ill-conditioned uncle, and the incidents follow each other in quick succession, keeping one on the alert all the time. Watch out, too, for Raggy Jones, an urchin of the quaintest description. He has his work cut out for him. The story is one which is bound to add considerably to the reputation of the author. It is a fine bit of writing, and sensational to a degree.

THE TUCK HAMPER.

From all parts of the country I am receiving congratulations over the revival of the Tuck Hamper feature. Send in your brightest efforts to the Editor, the GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. Postcards are best, and they cost less. Verb. sap.

"FOOTBALL CHUMS!"
By A. S. Hardy.

Our serial romps away in felicitous fashion. Mr. Hardy scores goals every week. He is tip-top at footer, and his exciting situations as revealed next Wednesday surpass anything that has yet come to hand in this fascinating tale of the leather sphere.

Your Editor.

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GOOD OLD BRUM!

THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE!

A number of men were sitting in a village inn yarning on exciting moments. One of them had just concluded telling how he had killed a great South African lion with a revolver. "That's nothing," said another man, rising from his seat. "Why, when I was in South Africa, walking through the jungle, I saw a lion one day, but I had no revolver to shoot it with." "What ever happened?" asked the startled crowd. "Why, I simply took out my pocket-knife and cut off its head." "What?" exclaimed the man who had just been speaking. "Cut off the head of a lion with an ordinary pocket-knife? Fiddlesticks, sir! Fiddlesticks!" "Indeed I did, sir," answered the second speaker. "But perhaps I ought to say it was a dande-lion!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to F. Iliffe, 8, Greenfield Road, Harborne, Birmingham.

HIS IDENTITY!

A negro was charged with chicken stealing. He was at the court early, and before the case was called the judge saw him and asked his name. "My name is Johnsing, yo' honah," said the darkie. "Are you the defendant in this case?" inquired the judge. "No, sah," replied the man. "I've got a lawyer to do my defending. I see de gentleman what stole de chickens!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Fry, Valley Cottages, Alkham, near Dover, Kent.

HE COULDN'T SEE IT!

A man applying for a job in a pit was asked whether he had been down in one before. Thinking he would not get the job if he said no, he answered "Yes." "What kind of lamps did you use?" asked the foreman. "Oh, I don't know," was the reply. "I wasn't on nights!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Arthur Judd, 5, Highfield Terrace, Harpurhey, Manchester.

TOO LIGHT!

"Good-morning!" said an old lady briskly, entering a baker's shop. "Permit me to compliment you on the lightness of your bread." The baker rubbed his hands and smiled. "Thank you, madam!" he said, proudly but respectfully. "It's my aim to bake the lightest bread in the town." "And you do it," said the old lady. "If it gets much lighter it will take two of your pound loaves to weigh sixteen ounces!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Edward Keith, McKinnon's Land, Dalnaber, Campbeltown.

ONE FOR TOM!

Aubrey Racke was seated comfortably in an armchair in his study before the fire, when Tom Merry came in and told him to come down to football. "Blow football!" cried Racke indignantly. "No, Racke," said Tom, "Association football!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to T. H. Simpson, Cripples' Home, Gosforth, Newcastle.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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It was discomfiting to Hal Chester to find himself pitted against no less a light than Bill Stevens, the burly back who had already tried to put him out of action!

FOOTBALL CHUMS!

By
ARTHUR S. HARDY.

(The Most Popular Football Writer of the Day.)

A thrilling yarn, telling of the trials and tribulations of young Hal Chester, in his bid for fame on the footer field.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

HAROLD CHESTER, a well-knit youngster in his teens, and a member of the Kingsdown Football Club. His love for football earns for him the disapproval of

JAMES HENSON, his stepfather, a Nettingham grocer, in whose employ Hal Chester is. Like the rest of the employees at Henson's, Harold finds his stepfather a very hard taskmaster. First of all, his stepfather dislikes him; secondly, James Henson hates football; and, thirdly, he believes that he—Harold—is an idler.

An important match was down for decision on Saturday for which Hal had already been granted permission to assist his team. But when the great day comes Mr. Henson cancels his promise. Hal has pledged himself to play for his team. He was considered one of the best players in the club, and could not very well let his side down.

Suffering from a sense of injustice, Hal is determined to turn out for his team, come what may.

But luck is against the lad, for in the match he is badly hurt by one of the opposing backs. It is late when he returns home,

weary and in great pain, and he finds the door locked against him. He meets an old friend, however, in Tommy Bell, who is well in with the management of the Nettingham Town Football Club. Hal is given a trial with the professionals, but the older players, envious of his play, starve the lad, and he is turned down.

Still convinced of his chum's prowess, Tommy Bell interviews the manager of Nettingham United, and Hal is given a chance with them.

It was an "on" day for Hal, for his side proves victorious by three clear goals, all of which are scored by Hal himself. And, to crown it all, the United's opponents had been Nettingham Town, the team that had turned Hal down as being no good. There was an immediate cry for the lad's signature; but Hal decides to consult Tommy Bell first. The chums are making for the gates when the manager of Nettingham Town approaches them. Bell explains the situation.

"All right," said the anxious Bliss. "Only get him to sign on for us if you can!"

(Now read on.)

A Depressing Start!

HAL CHESTER, Dicky, and Tommy went home together.

After dinner, as they sat round the fire in the cosy sitting-room at Mrs. Sandy's, Hal told his chums exactly what he thought about things.

"On the one hand," he concluded, "I want to sign on for the Town because I have always had a fancy for the club, and because you and Dick play for the Town team, Tommy; but, on the other hand, in fairness to the United, I reckon I ought to sign on for them. What am I to do about it?"

Tommy traced patterns on his knee.

"I don't mind confessing that I want you to sign for us, Hal," he said. "I admit it will be hard on the United, you being as good as you are. What is in your mind, Hal?"

"Well, if I signed on for Nettingham Town I should want Billy Chatsworth not to feel too sore about it. He's done me a real service, you know. He would have helped the Town in securing a new player whom they want themselves, and if only the Town's directors could do something to make Mr. Chatsworth feel less sore, then—"

Tommy's brain began to work. Hal had given him an idea.

"Hal, you stay here with Dicky," he said. "I'll go out and have a talk to George Bliss. It won't take me long to ride round to his place on my motor-bike."

"All right!" Hal agreed.

Tommy went, and within an hour his two chums heard his motor-bike purring rhythmically outside.

A moment later Bell came into the room beaming.

"Sorry to have been so long, Hal," he cried, "but after I'd talked to Bliss he rang up our chairman and some of the directors and had a talk to them. And it's this way.

If you sign on for the Town the directors will present Billy Chatsworth with a gold watch and chain—ay, and a good one—to make up in some measure for his disappointment."

"But the United directors won't get anything," said Hal, with a laugh.

"Never mind them. They're all well-to-do men. They don't count. Billy's a good chap, and I know he is in need of a watch. How do you feel about things now, Hal?"

Hal smiled happily.

"I must say I feel a whole heap better," he declared. "I have got something off my mind."

"And you'll sign for the Town and play with Dicky Double and me?" asked Tommy brightly.

"I—er—think I will, Tommy."

Dicky held out a huge, fat hand and chortled gaily.

"Hal," he cried, "put it there!"

On the Monday morning Manager Billy Chatsworth, of the United, received the unwelcome news that Hal Chester had signed on for Nettingham Town.

Hal did not write to him, nor did Manager George Bliss. Hal went to see him, and Tommy Bell and Manager George Bliss, of the Town, accompanied him.

In the Nettingham United manager's office George Bliss opened a case that contained a handsome gold watch and chain.

It was a costly present, having cost over sixty pounds. Short as the time had been, the directors of the Town had managed to get an inscription inside the case which read: "To Billy Chatsworth, in recognition of a kindness rendered to Nettingham Town Football Club," and also the date.

"The boy really wanted to come to us, Billy," said George. "Don't be hard on him or bitter against us. There was no underhanded business about it, believe me."

For a moment Billy Chatsworth seemed resentful. But a glance at Hal's frank and honest face decided him.

"It's bribery and corruption. But there, let us be friends, George," he cried. "And I hope the lad will serve the

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Town as well as I had hoped he would serve the United. And—well, you all have certainly got the laugh on me!"

It was a bitter blow for Billy Chatsworth to lose such a good man as Hal, but he nevertheless fervently hoped that Chester would make much of the chance offered him.

And so it came about that by mid-week Harold Chester had been legally enrolled upon the playing strength of the Town. His name was duly recorded in the books of League and Association.

He had become a fully-fledged professional, who now awaited his first game in the paid class. He had paid a cheque for ten pounds given him by the directors into the bank to add to the little store that still remained in it. All his misgivings had vanished. He was now in the seventh heaven of delight and looking forward to a great time with the Town. For was he not going to play with the burly, bulky Dicky Double and the stalwart Tommy Bell, his old school chums?

His mind was relieved of any thought of meanness now by the generous action of the Town's directors.

Also, had he but known it, Billy Chatsworth was pleasantly resigned to the situation.

"After all," said Manager Billy to the directors of the United, "last Saturday's form may only be a flash in the pan. Perhaps the boy may not ever play as well again. He is young and slight and should be easily hurt, I imagine. How will he fare against the hard tackling of the League halves and backs? We have seen these kids come and go, and it isn't all of them that have such strong bones as Bell."

If the directors smiled it was because of the handsome gift which the Town had given their manager.

"At all events, you've come out of it all right, Billy," they reminded him.

And now at the City ground, where Hal turned up for training regularly, and spent his time trying to make friends with the other Town players, much curiosity was shown where the new forward was concerned.

Marsh, the burly centre-forward, who was a rusher, openly sneered.

"I can't say there's much of your chum, Tommy," he remarked to Tommy Bell, of whose football cleverness he was extremely jealous. "He's just a kid. They'll play him at inside-right, I suppose, and if they do, how can I expect him to play up to me?"

Tommy smiled broadly.

"He'll play up to you all right, Gerald," he retorted. "The question I have in my mind is, will you be able to play up to him?"

Marsh flushed hotly.

"What do you mean?" he cried.

"I mean that I am not exaggerating when I speak of Hal Chester's cleverness. He's a trier every moment of a

game. He's got the pluck of a fully-grown man, and he never whines if he is beaten. It's not all of us who can say that with truth." He darted a critical glance at the Town's centre. "As to where they'll play him, I don't think it matters a lot."

"Ah! One of those versatile kids who can fill any position from goal to outside-left, I suppose?" sneered Marsh.

"I'm not so sure but that you're not right. He can fill any place in the forward line, at all events. I've seen him do it and know. Marsh, you fancy yourself at centre, but I can assure you Hal's a much better centre-forward than you'll ever know how to be!"

Gerald Marsh pointed down the pitch at where Hal Chester was practising the taking of the ball when it was put to him at top speed, and shooting at the net with tremendous power.

Hal's aim was not always right, and he did not gather the ball as often as he might.

"Him!" sneered the centre-forward. "Oh, come off your perch, Bell! You make me positively tired!"

Marsh strode away with head uplifted, and Tommy Bell knew that he had not added to the cordiality that existed between them—if ever there had been much of it.

As for Hal, he listened to words of advice from Ben Robinson, the trainer, without protest, and endeavoured to follow out his ideas, which pleased Ben, who chose to believe himself the greatest trainer in the game. Kirton, the outside-left, Seymour, the inside-left, Atkins, the inside-right, and Small, the outside-right, were mildly interested in Hal—Atkins in particular, because the other chaps told him that he would be given a rest on Saturday to make way for the new player.

Atkins did not like that. A tall, burly, muscular young fellow, without, alas, much brain, he had served the club well and had always tried.

To be superseded by a mere kid was galling.

"Surely they won't play him for a week or two?" he said to Marsh.

"Why not? You saw how he played for the United last Saturday? My opinion is that Tommy Bell purposely played down to give his chum a chance. But at any rate George Bliss and the directors are now crazy over him. They won't wake up until Chester's let 'em down a game or two, and so, of course, you'll be put out of the team."

"For a kid like that!" roared Atkins jealously. "George Bliss will be signing 'em on from the Kindergarten next!"

Atkins lived in fear and trembling until the list of players that were to make the journey to Bangley on Saturday was put up. Then all his doubts were set at rest. His name was not included. That of Hal Chester appeared in his place.

In a white heat he hurried to the manager's office.

"I say, Mr. Bliss," he said, "I've been turned out of the League team, and I don't think it's fair! Am I to play for the Reserves?"

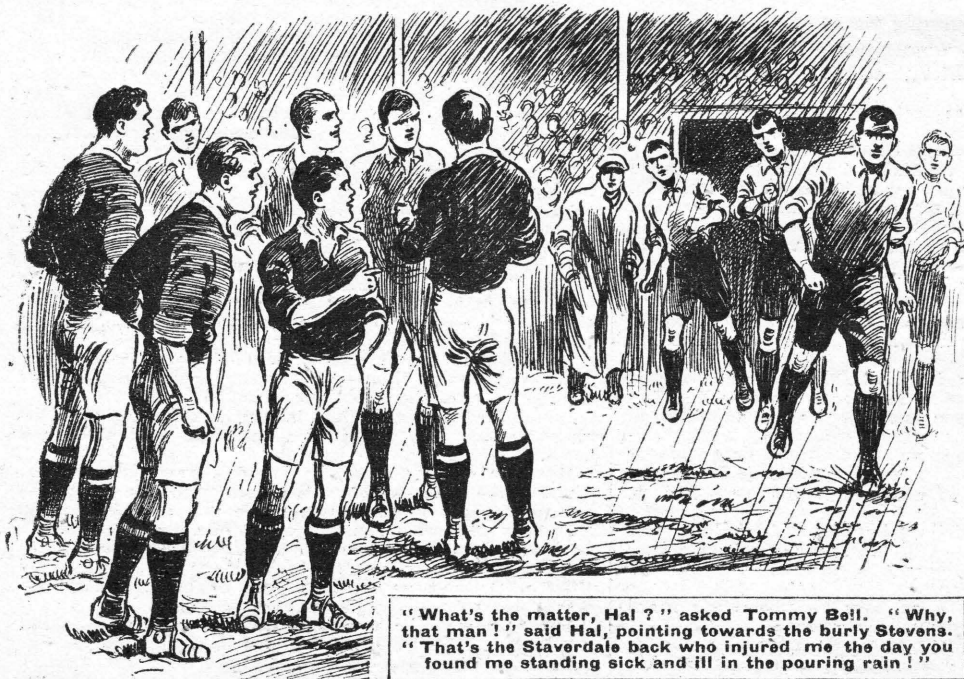
"Yes, Atkins. And mind you play your best. We've decided on a new regime at City Road. We don't want to be dodging about at the bottom of the table when the big fight to save relegation comes round."

Atkins smiled sourly.

"You've all gone crazy over that boy!" he growled. "But I'll wager he won't even be good enough for the Reserves before the end of the month."

On Saturday morning the Town departed at an early hour for Bangley. The sky was pitch black, a ground mist obscured the country, and rain was falling pitilessly down during the entire journey.

Bangley is by no means a cheery place even under ideal weather conditions, but perhaps it has never looked so dirty,



"What's the matter, Hal?" asked Tommy Bell. "Why, that man!" said Hal, pointing towards the burly Stevens. "That's the Staverdale back who injured me the day you found me standing sick and ill in the pouring rain!"

so dispiriting and drab, as when Nettingham Town drove from the station to the Great Northern Hotel, where they were to have lunch before starting for the ground.

Nobody took the slightest notice of them as the omnibus plunged through the muddy streets. Not an eyebrow was uplifted in interest as they filed into the hotel and made their way to the room reserved for them.

The waiters during lunch were glum and silent. And when they started for the ground, passing men who trudged on with collars upturned and caps pulled down, nobody seemed at all roused when it was stated: "There goes the Town team!"

The ground was gloomy and depressing.

The flag at the masthead dropped down in sodden depression. Ghostly figures were dotted here and there on the banks behind the crush barriers, and there were big gaps between. Smoke blew overhead. Puddles covered the pitch. Only in the enclosure was there something like cheeriness, and here the crowd was better protected, having the big stand at their backs. The stand was half full when the team reached the ground.

However, there was a cheeriness about the welcome the directors of the club extended to the visitors from Nettingham, which made up for a lot.

"I've heard, George," said one of them, shaking Bliss by the hand, "that you've just signed on a clever kid, and that this will be his first match for the Town?"

"Rumour's right," smiled Bliss. "Let me introduce you to the lad. This is Hal Chester!"

"Glad to meet you, boy!" said the Bangley official, darting a searching glance at Hal. "My! There's not a lot of you, is there, and you've struck a bad day for your first big game for Nettingham Town."

Hal was looking a trifle worried, but forced a smile. And his voice rang with a cheery note as he replied:

"I never mind the weather, sir, as long as one can play. After all, a real footballer can play under any conditions."

"He's got a nerve, George!" said the director of the local club, jerking a thumb after Hal as the boy made for the dressing-room. "Any good?"

"Why, yes! I think he's got the makings of a great player!"

"Can he stand up against resolute and rushing backs? Ours don't stand on ceremony, you know! And being short of backs, we've just got hold of a rare good old 'un, who's recently played for Staverdale, the Nettingham and District League Club."

"Why, that's the League our new kid has come from!"

"You don't say!" said the local club's manager. "Our man's name is Billy Stevens."

George Bliss frowned.

"Ah, yes! The old League player, of course. He's a veteran. Why, those two have been at loggerheads before. That Staverdale back put our new kid out of mess the last time they met, and was sent off the field for it. I believe his suspension has only just expired. What ever made you sign on a brute like that?"

"We like having backs that scare our opponents to death," grinned the Bangley man, "and we've got three of our regulars on the injured list."

George Bliss walked away, wondering whether he ought to tell Hal or not. He decided to hold his tongue. Better leave Hal to find out the unwelcome truth for himself, he thought.

And Hal did that swiftly enough!

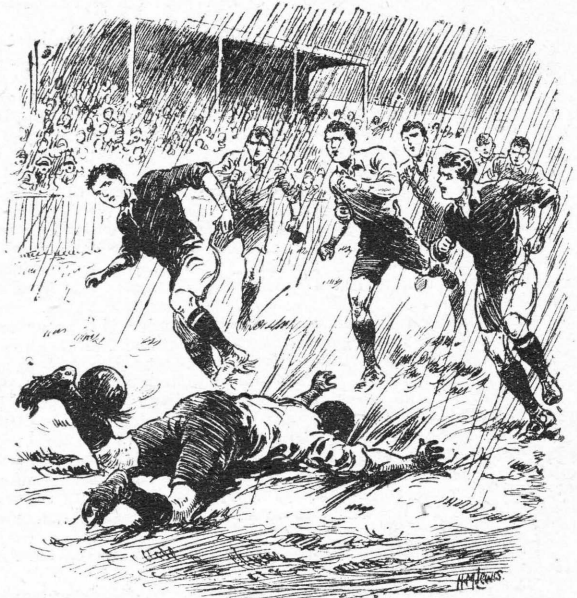
The Town were the first of the two teams to make their appearance, and with hardly a friendly cheer to give them heart they stood shivering in the brisk wind and driving rain until the Bangley men came trotting on to the field.

As they came one after the other, ten of them in the club's colours, their goalkeeper in a bright green, Hal looked them over.

Last but not one came a figure that seemed familiar to him. Hal looked the player up and down, glanced at his face, and gasped.

"What's the matter, Hal?" asked Tommy Bell, who was feeling sorry for Hal, this being the lad's first trial for the Town.

"Why, that man," said Hal, pointing. "Bangley must only just have signed him on. I'm surprised at them taking on such an old League player as he is. He was reckoned not good enough several seasons back. It's Bill Stevens, the Staverdale back, who injured me the day you found me standing sick and ill in the pouring rain!"



As Stevens charged viciously upon Hal, the young forward swerved suddenly. Squelch! The burly back went floundering helplessly in the mud.

He saw a man who looked older than his years, who might have been anything between forty and fifty, to judge by his coarse and dissipated face, yet who moved nimbly enough over the mud as he ran down the pitch.

"Bangley must be hard up if they have to fall back on a man like that, Hal," remarked the gallant centre-half. "He looks a brute!"

"He is a brute, Tommy!"

"It's a pity you have to play against him. If he lamed you before, he'll probably do it again; Hal. I expect he's got his knife into you over that Junior League game. Still, you know what to expect. I'd try and keep clear of him if I were you."

Hal forced a smile, though his teeth were chattering. Never had he felt so cold. The cheerless ground, the beating rain, the darkness overhead, and the huddled-up groups of spectators, who only added to the bleakness and dreariness of the scene, sent Hal's spirits down to zero.

The turning-out of Bill Stevens only served to remind him of that match at the Staverdale ground, when it had rained so hard and he had been hurt by this bullying back.

The boy shivered.

"If only we could start, Tommy," he muttered.

"We'll be at it in a minute, Hal boy," answered Tommy. "And you'll be warm enough before the game finishes, I warrant you."

Tommy Bell walked across to the centre of the pitch to toss up for choice of ends. Tommy won.

He did not hesitate a moment, but, pointing into the driving rain, elected to play with the wind behind him.

The players at once crossed over.

"Hal," laughed Tommy, shivering in turn now, for the rain had soaked his football shirt and knickers through. "we'll let Bill Stevens face the drizzle. I dare say his face can do with a wash!"

Hal had to smile at that, and the next moment he was face to face with the burly, thick-set back, who had come within a yard of him.

Stevens stopped in passing, and looked Hal up and down.

"I heard that you had signed on for the Town, kid," he sneered. "Seems to me you've got some pals at court, haven't yer? Didn't expect to see me at Puttywell this afternoon, did yer?"

What a vulgar brute the fellow was, thought Hal; so different from the great army of professional footballers who are such a credit to the game.

His blood boiled in spite of his effort at self-control.

"No, and I did not want to," he answered swiftly. "And I'm sorry. The afternoon is bad enough without seeing you."

Stevens laughed. It was an unpleasant laugh.

"Is it now?" he jeered. "Well, keep out of my way, that's all I've got to say to you! Cheeky kid!"

Stevens swung away, his eyebrows set in an ugly frown.

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A Mud Plug!

IT was Bill Stevens, right enough. The full back who had earned the unenviable reputation of being a foul player whilst he had represented Staverdale was back once more in a League team, it seemed.

Tommy Bell studied the back as he came on to the field.

Hal had angered him. The weather had got on his nerves, also.

His under jaw jutted as he took his place, and the beat of the rain as he turned to face the wind brought an oath to his lips.

This was Stevens' second game for his new club, and he meant to make his presence felt. Testing the muddy surface with his foot, he grinned. It was very slippery. One could foul a chap and get away with it on account of the treacherous going. Just wait till Hal got near to him!

The call of the whistle interrupted his train of thought and called him to the game.

As the home forwards sped down the field, Stevens followed up, his feet squelching in the mud. Right through to goal the Bangley men took the ball, Low failing to intercept and slipping badly, and at point-blank range it was fired at Dicky Double.

Dicky had put on an extra sweater under the outer one that showed a vivid green, and had donned heavy gloves. He was as warm as toast, and laughed as the ball came at him. He made a spring, and, catching the ball at the extremity of the goalmouth, he ran two strides with it, dodged a rushing Bangley player, who tumbled headlong into the net, and volleyed the ball to the centre of the field.

Gerald Marsh and Hal were waiting near the halfway line. The centre-forward, trapping the ball and finding himself covered, reluctantly gave it to Hal. He was already jealous of Hal, but one had to stifle one's feelings and play the game sometimes.

In a moment Hal was on the move, glad to stretch his stiffening legs.

Now that he had to play, he forgot the discomfort of wind and rain and cold. Speeding swiftly, he turned the ball to his winger, who promptly beat the half-back opposed to him, cut in, squared to Hal, and left the new player with a distinct chance.

Meanwhile, Bill Stevens had run back, scenting danger, for he knew of old that Hal Chester could score goals.

Bangley's keeper was a good, average goalie, but no more. Stevens decided that he had better put paid to Hal's run. So, with calculating eyes, he watched Hal as the boy ran, crossed in front of him, then charged.

Hal had gone on with head down, apparently oblivious of the approach of Stevens. But he had seen his enemy all right, and had anticipated what Stevens would do. The full-back intended to take the boy, not the ball.

The referee was up-field, and one could bluff the linesman. So Bill Stevens thought, but Hal, with a swerve, passed him, and down into the mud the full-back plunged with arms outspread.

Squelch!
He hit the dirty mess spreadeagled, driving his face into it.

The crowd yelled with delight, the full-back's fall was so comical.

From the stand the voice of the Bangley manager came in a roar:

"Why don't you tackle you man! Watch the ball!"
Bill Stevens had more to do than watch the ball at that moment. He was busy taking the mud out of his eyes, whilst Hal, cutting goalwards with twinkling feet, steadied himself, and as coolly as you like fired the ball wide of the goal-keeper.

Had Hal been a veteran international player of widest experience, he could not have played more coolly. The goal-keeper hesitated, reached timidly for the greasy ball, and failed to hold it. Spinning out of his hands, it found the net, giving Nottingham Town the lead.

There was a roar of dismay, a ringing cheer, and Tommy Bell had Hal by the hand.

"Well played, Hal boy!" he chuckled. "That's the stuff to give 'em! Reminds me of how you used to play at school. And you fooled Stevens gloriously. Look at him!"

Hal looked, and saw the full-back glaring at him.

Stevens had fallen in a bad patch. He was plastered thick with mud, and the beat of the rain upon his face, smearing the soil, did not add to his attractiveness. His hair streaked down over a bulging forehead. He was as unprepossessing a footballer as ever you could hope to see.

Hal had to smile. Stevens noticed it, and called to him:

"Wait!" he cried. "I'll mark yer!"
The referee heard the words, and turning, glanced at the speaker. In his anger Stevens did not realise that his threat had been noted.

Even had he done so, he might still have gone on fouling, such was the ugly nature of the man.

But the ball had been sent to mid-field, and it was time to go on with the play. Again the home centre-forward touched

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the ball away, and down the field the Bangley men went with another promising rush.

They did not get very far, for Tommy Bell, racing back, tackled the man with the ball, got it away, and lobbed it to Marsh.

It was now the turn of the Town's centre to show what he could do.

Gerald Marsh did not intend to give Hal another chance—yet. They were a goal up. He went down the field in a single-handed rush, intending to score himself.

Keeping his eyes on the ball, and selfishly refraining from slanting it out to the wings, either of which were open to a pass, he sped on.

Stevens saw him coming, realised his intention, and, racing in front, came at him vigorously.

"Look out, Gerald!" called Tommy Bell, who was backing up.

Marsh paid no heed. On he blundered, and, losing the ball, tumbled into the full-back.

It was just such a chance as Stevens gloried in. His knee was up in a flash, and poor Marsh, falling head-long, rolled over and over on the ground.

"I can't have that, Stevens," warned the referee as he raced up. "If you do it again I'll send you off."

Bill Stevens turned an amazed face towards the referee. "I don't know what you mean, sir! He ran on to me!" he growled.

"I know what he did, and what you did," said the referee sternly. "If it is repeated, I shall not hesitate. It will mean marching orders!"

"It's not fair," grumbled Stevens, as he turned his back and walked away. "Seems to me a referee wants a chap to stand out of the way and let the other side score."

His lips were curved in a smile of satisfaction as he waited for Marsh to be led off the field and the game to be resumed.

He reckoned that the Town's tall centre-forward would be of little use during the remainder of that game.

The Town resumed with four forwards. The free kick taken outside the penalty area was of little use, and play continued in brisk fashion, the players of both sides warming to it and getting used to the mud.

The rain was now teeming down. It blinded the players at times. It formed puddles on the field into which the ball fell and stopped. But it was apparent these conditions suited the lighter and more sure-footed Town men better than the home side.

Dicky Double was striding up and down his goal-mouth swinging his arms to try and keep warm, for the play of Low, Smart, and the three half-backs was so sound that he had nothing to do.

The half was thirty minutes old when twice in succession the Bangley forwards broke clean through.

On the first occasion their inside-left fired the ball against the crossbar, whence it fell at the feet of the centre-forward, who drove a ground shot wide of Dicky.

Did the Town's goalie miss it? No. His keen eyes, aided by a swift acting brain, told him just how to judge his dive, and, hurling himself down, he caught the ball with his left hand as it was about to cross the line, raked it out, saw a forward right on top of him, just pushed the ball away, lumbered to his feet, and laughed as Smart, the left-back, kicked clear.

A minute later the Bangley men came through again, beating Tommy Bell by neat passing, the centre-half being unable to turn quickly enough, and this time the centre-forward carried the ball to within five yards of Dicky before he tried to lob it wide of him.

The fat boy just grinned, moved his hands, caught the leather, and tossed it over the head of the forward, who, charging in rebounded off Dicky and fell in a sitting position in the mud.

"Here you are, Tom," cried Dicky.
His old schoolmate sped along in a magnificent dribble, beating player after player, until, facing and drawing Stevens, he slipped the ball to Hal as he took the full-back's charge.

"There you are, Hal boy!" he cried.
Hal did not desire a better chance than this. He was on the ball in a flash. His shot at goal had plenty of powder behind it, and was well directed. It was one of those rising shots that are so difficult to deal with and to judge. The goalkeeper missed it badly, and to the back of the net it rolled, putting the Town two goals ahead.

Then Marsh came limping back from the dressing-room.

He looked pale and worried.
"You'd better go on the wing, Gerald," said Tommy Bell. "Small can move to inside-right, and Chester will play at centre. Don't try and do too much, old man. Take your

time and be content to centre the ball. It's all you can do, and we don't want you to crock yourself completely."

"All right!" Marsh agreed.

He walked up and down the touchline, losing the ball on the few occasions that it was sent to him, and the game proceeded on even lines until half-time.

An Easy Win in a Hard Game!

NEVER were players more in need of a rest than the Town men in that game at Bangley. It was a positive delight to seek the shelter of the cosy dressing-room. Here Ben Robinson, the trainer, had a complete change of clothing ready for the players, having had the foresight to bring double kit with him. His face beamed as he gave the new togs to Hal.

"Boy," he said, "I must apologise for thinking that you would never be any good in the League team. You played clever football. If you keep it up, you'll make a reputation with the Town!"

Hal stripped with alacrity, dried his body with a rough towel, and donned the clean, dry things.

"Thanks!" he said.

Then into the dressing-room came Manager Bliss. His face was beaming.

"Chester, my boy," he cried, "you're a wonder! Those goals of yours were real beauties, especially the first one, when you fooled Stevens so grandly! But that back's got you marked down!"

Hal laughed.

"Not more certainly than I have marked down him," he replied. "He has crippled poor Marsh. He intends to cripple me as he did when I played for the Athletic against Stavendale, but I am sound so far, and I know him. I don't think he'll do it this game, sir!"

Dicky Double interrupted with a laugh.

"I'll make a small bet he won't, sir!" he declared. "At school Hal had a reputation for a swerve that would beat a duffer like Stevens any day. That chap's not a good player. He just relies on a chap being scared to death of him, and kicks like a mule. He's no brains!"

Bliss chuckled, rubbing his hands together.

"Whether or not," he remarked, "I don't want Chester injured. My boy, I am thoroughly delighted with you! I had my doubts about you till I saw you play for Nettingham United. I reckon we're lucky to have got you. To-day's game is a real test."

Gerald Marsh looked up peevishly.

"Some players have all the luck! If anyone's to be injured, it's always me!" he grumbled.

George Bliss stared at Marsh. He wanted to tell the reckless centre-forward that a player who runs on heedless of the fact that a powerful and unscrupulous player is blocking the way for him, with never an attempt to pass the ball or turn aside, deserves pretty well all he gets, but he did not want to rub it in.

The call came, and the teams trooped out on to the field for the second half to find the ground in a worse condition than ever, the clouds hanging lower than before, the light almost gone, and the rain falling pitilessly. Never had Hal played football under worse conditions.

It was only the two goals lead that gave the visiting players the heart to go on.

As soon as play was resumed, Bill Stevens began to run up field before a pass was made, thus putting the Town's forwards off-side.

Seven times in succession he succeeded in doing this, and the fault was mostly due to the fact that the outside men, especially Marsh, who remained well in the Bangley half, were constantly out of position.

Every time the trick worked the back grinned in delight.

Hal himself was caught napping three times, and swung the ball out cleverly, only to hear the whistle blow.

He turned to Bell with a rueful smile.

"Tommy, I'm a mug to be caught by that old trick!" he declared.

Tommy laughed.

"Older birds than you have been caught by it, Hal," he said. "Play is so fast, you see, that you fail to notice what the backs are doing. But we'll beat 'em at their own game. Leave it to me. I'll dribble through in a minute, and hood-wink them. Back me up. I'll give you the ball. You can take it through and score!"



"Leave the field, Stevens!" commanded the referee, pointing in the direction of the stand. "I've had enough of this! You deliberately fouled Bell! Off you go!"

Five minutes later Tommy Bell got the chance he wanted. The ball had been put to mid-field for the Bangley centre to deal with. Tommy racing forward, took the ball right off the player's toes and went down the muddy field in a clever dribble, passing Hal, and carrying the ball down towards the Bangley full-backs.

On he raced with head down, apparently oblivious of the movements of the grinning Bill Stevens. He feinted as if he meant to bang the ball out to the left-wing. In a moment Stevens had run up so that the Town's forwards had only two players in front of them now, and the wingers were both in advance of the ball.

That was just what Tommy Bell wanted. Keeping on a bit longer, he squared the ball with a yell of, "Here you are, Hal," and coming up from behind the deputy-centre, tapped the ball onward in his stride, raced at amazing speed towards goal, and had that ball at the back of the net before the goalkeeper could make up his mind what to do. There was now no question as to his being inside, the wingers were not interfering with his play. The growing darkness did not help him, either.

The Town were now three goals up, and the match as good as won.

It was difficult now to see the length of the field. Already the enclosure was half empty, and many of the occupants of the stand were leaving their seats. Still it rained.

It was then that the captain of the home team was guilty of an unsportsmanlike action.

Going up to the referee, he protested against the light.

"It's not fit to play by," he declared. "We can't see! The match ought to be abandoned!"

The referee smiled.

"I wonder whether you would say that if Bangley had a three goals' lead?" he cried. "The light is good enough—play on!"

The game went on, and, with the Town's forwards dancing lightly through the mud, and beating the backs and halves opposed to them by their quick and clever passing, they threatened to add to their lead.

Bill Stevens by this time had lost his temper.

Twice he tried to foul Hal Chester, who evaded him with ease, and then he tumbled up against Tommy Bell. This boyish centre-half of Nettingham Town had done a lot of damage, his frequent hdding up of the Bangley forwards having much to do with their ineffectiveness.

If he couldn't hurt Chester, he would lay this chap Bell out, Stevens thought. So, deliberately rushing at Tommy when he fancied the referee was not looking, he elbowed him, tripped him, and kicked him as he fell.

That was more than Bell could stand.

The blood surging to his cheeks dyed them red. Tommy was on his feet in a moment. This was no Rugby game, wherein a player who is incensed against an opponent can wait till a suitable opportunity and then collar him and hurl him down.

Tommy dared not use his feet as Bill Stevens had done—but he could not refrain from striking him. His fist caught the full-back on the point of the jaw, sending him staggering backwards.

The next moment the referee was up with them. From the crowd came an angry roar. The incensed Banglely players gathered round in a threatening group. Stevens, livid with anger, was pointing at Tommy.

"He struck me, Mr. Referee!" he choked. "He struck me!" And forthwith he hit out at Tommy. Bell guarded the blow, stepped back, and prepared to defend himself.

The referee's finger was pointing at the stand.

"Leave the field, Stevens!" he commanded. "I have had enough of this. I have overlooked a lot. You deliberately fouled Bell! Off you go!"

"What for? Didn't he hit me? Where's the justice of it? I'm not going!" bellowed Stevens with an oath.

"I didn't see Bell strike you. If he did, you almost deserved it. Leave the field, Stevens!"

"I'll have you chucked off the list of referees for this!" blurted Stevens.

"Your reputation is too bad for any notice to be taken of your complaints," the referee remarked as he waved the other players back. "I'm master here! I'll have no nonsense!"

The full-back began to move. He knew there was no help for it. His captain walked beside him.

"It's no use kicking up a fuss," he said. "And you did foul Bell, you know!"

"I'll do more than foul 'im after the match," muttered the full-back, as he tramped off.

Amid the howling of the crowd the game went on.

Fouls were frequent now, free kick after free kick being given against the home side. Smart developed a limp. Tommy Bell hurt his knee. Small, the left-winger, was doubled up through having the ball driven at him from close range.

And all the time the rain fell faster and the darkness became more like night.

But there was enough light left to finish by, and at long last came the relieving whistle.

Then through the drenching downpour, the rain forming streaks as it fell, the players ran or limped off the field, the Town victorious by three goals in about as hard and unpleasant a game as they had ever experienced.

Every one of the Town men sighed in relief as he gained the dressing-room and pulled off his soddened, muddy things. Then into the steaming hot baths they tumbled.

Every face wore a smile as the players dressed. Hal felt as if he could have leapt over the stand.

George Bliss and the officials also were laughing when the players joined them. Only one of the Nettingham men looked gloomy and out of humour—Gerald Marsh, who had grown bitterly jealous of Hal. He just sulked in the back-ground.

"I think, boys, we had better get into the bus and leave for home," said Manager Bliss, and they began to move towards the doors.

But Hal was not through with the excitement of this, his first game for Nettingham Town, yet.

As the players moved towards the doors they heard a shouting and scuffling behind them, and, swinging round, they saw Bill Stevens, the full-back, hurling his shoulder at the door of the referee's dressing-room.

Backing him up were two or three of the Banglely players. Oddly enough, none of the home officials were on the scene. The space beneath the stand had cleared as if by magic. Hal wondered if this had been designedly done.

"I say, Tommy," he cried, "Stevens is going to assault the referee!"

(There will be some startling developments in next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful serial, chums. So don't miss a line of it).

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