

A LEADER OF THE LEAGUE!

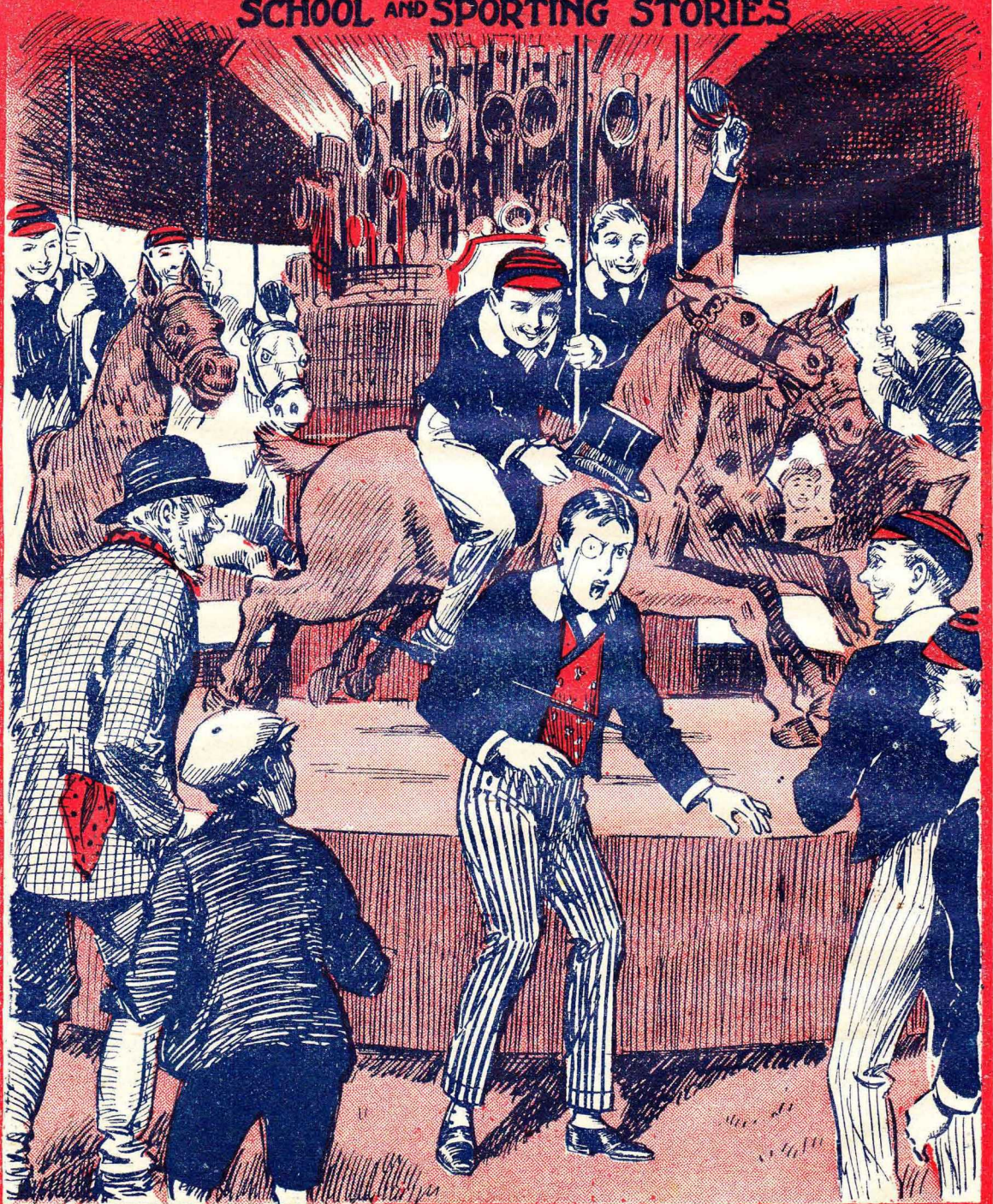
GRAND FINISH
START

EVERY WEEK

The GEM 2^D

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SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

No. 925.
Vol. XXVIII.
October 31st,
1925.



TAKING AN UN-FAIR ADVANTAGE OF GUSSY!

(Gordon Gay, the leader of the Grammarians, amuses himself at the expense of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Read the school story inside.)



Your Editor Chats With His Readers.

Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Gateway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

AMATEUR THEATRICALS!

TWO or three loyal Gemites have written me on the subject of forming an Amateur Theatrical Dramatic Society. It's a top-hole scheme to brighten the winter evenings, but it must be handled carefully. In the first place, it would be advisable to form a committee representative of the opinions of the would-be society. This committee should then be split up under three headings—namely, the finance committee, the selection committee—whose job is to choose the right sort of sketch or play—and the management committee, which latter includes the producer and the stage-manager. This may sound a formidable proposition to tackle before the society "does anything," but it is not half so difficult as it looks, and is really essential. For one thing, it tends to eliminate squabbles, which is a great thing to remember in theatrical societies.

CASTING!

As most things in life cost money, it is also necessary for the members of the society to contribute some small amount, as shall be mutually agreed upon, before the society takes on any financial responsibilities. Copies of the selected play or sketch must be bought, for instance. Then comes the question of a rehearsal-room. My correspondents have announced their intention of rehearsing at home. Good notion! Now, providing the play has been decided upon, there comes the question of casting the players. Unless the abilities of the members of the society are known to the management committee, it is a good idea to give everyone an equal chance. This hefty job can be managed quite easily by allowing each member of the society to read from the book a passage that requires a certain amount of artistic ability to interpret correctly. The producer then gets to know the limits of his players, and can submit what he thinks will be a strong cast to his committee.

WORKING TOGETHER!

After that, providing the grumblers—and you get them in every society—don't wag their chins too much, everything should go along like clockwork. Aided by the stage-manager, the producer puts his players through their paces. His job is to "pick them to pieces," and show them how he wants a certain movement done, or how the "lines" should be rendered. The duty of the players is to obey the producer, for he's the man "in front," and can spot blemishes.

REHEARSALS!

The intervals between rehearsals should not be too long, for nupteen weeks of rehearsal tends to make the company stale and fed-up. When the producer and the stage-manager reckon that they have "knocked" the show into shape, a dress rehearsal should be called. Meantime, the management committee, working in conjunction with the finance committee, should have seen to all the "props" required for the production. The extent of these, of course, depends upon the type of play chosen and the number of performers. And when the dress rehearsal does come along, the painstaking performers who have been "swotting" their lines like billy-ko feel the joy of having accomplished something, for there's a peculiar thrill attending these dress rehearsals. Of course, the foregoing deals very briefly with the entertaining subject of theatricals, but it will give the uninitiated some idea of how to start. I wish my loyal chums who are about to start their society the very best of luck!

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"CARDEW'S BIG BLUFF!"

By Martin Clifford.

A long complete story of your old favourites at St. Jim's, with Ralph Reckness Cardew playing the leading role. Don't miss this yarn, boys.

"A LEADER OF THE LEAGUE!"

By Sydney Horler.

The second instalment of this splendid footer serial beats the opening chapters, and that's saying something. Look out for it!

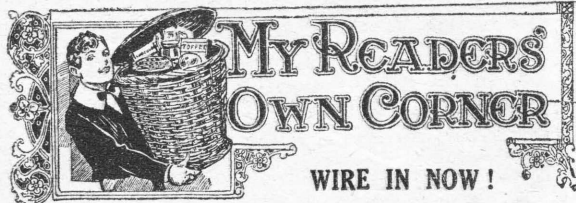
"FIREWORKS!"

A special Supplement dealing with the celebrations at St. Jim's on the Fifth of November.

"JINGLES!"

Another topping poem by our clever rhymester, featuring Dick Redfern.

Your Editor.



You Know A Good Joke? Let's Hear it, Chum.

Delicious Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes
Awarded for Interesting Pars.

All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: The GEM LIBRARY, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

TUCK FOR A LONDONER!

A BOYISH BLUNDER!

The small boy was seated upon the rail in the park smoking a cigarette when a kindly-faced old gentleman approached him. "It's all right," said the small smoker. "I know what you're after. You're going to tell me that boys ought not to smoke, that it will stop me growing—" "Ahem!" coughed the dear old gentleman. "I was going—" "I've heard all that before," the lad continued. "It's a pity a chap can't enjoy a smoke in peace without fellows coming up and—" "What I was going to say," protested the elderly gentleman mildly, "was: Have you got any cigarette pictures?"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Ronald V. Woolcott, 1, Gainsborough House, Aldine Street, Shepherd's Bush, London, W. 12.

VERY SMART!

The train stopped at a small station, and two travellers got down. "What do you think of this town?" said one of them. "Ain't it magnificent?" "I can't see it," said the other. "There's a motor-car in front of it!" They never spoke to each other again.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. T. Havers, 2, Branksome Road, Norwich.

PLACE OF BIRTH!

Teacher: "Now, Ernie, where were you born?" Ernie: "U.S.A., sir." Teacher: "United States of America?" Ernie: "Oh, no, sir! Up Stairs in the Attic!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Taylor, 60, Aston Avenue, Fallowfield, Manchester.

LUGGED!

The gentleman was hurried to catch a train, and in his hand was a crate containing a large live turkey. As he approached the gate the ticket inspector stopped him. "You can't take that through here," he said. "But I can't stop!" declared the passenger, trying to push his way through. "I've got to catch this train!" The inspector held him back. "You can't take that with you," he said firmly. "It's not ordinary luggage; you must pay for it, and it must go in the luggage-van." "Oh, no," replied the other, with a confident smile. "It's luggage all right. Don't you see I'm lugging it!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Laurence Campbell, 32, Albion Road, Swiss Cottage, Hampstead, N.W.6.

A LUCKY SHOT!

An Irishman was sleeping in a log cabin in Canada. Towards midnight he awakened suddenly, and thinking he saw a ghost, he reached for his six-shooter and fired at it. Next morning he found a bullet-hole through his own shirt that was hanging on a peg. "Begorra!" he cried. "Tis lucky Oi wasn't in it at the toime!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss W. A. Prunty, 4, St. Mary Street, Woolwich, S.E.18.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

The GEM LIBRARY.

No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

THE ONE AND ONLY! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy has landed himself into some peculiar situations from time to time, but it is doubtful whether he has ever before done anything to equal his "latest."



A grand extra-long story of Tom Merry & Co., featuring Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1.

The Fun of the Fair!

"**A**REN'T you ready yet, Gussy?"

Jack Blake asked the question in a tone of withering scorn and disgust.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the occupants of Study No. 6 on the Fourth Form passage were getting ready to visit a travelling show that had pitched camp on Wayland Common—at least, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was getting ready; his chums, Blake, Herries, and Digby, had been ready some twenty minutes or more.

Hence Blake's tone of withering scorn and disgust. The glass of fashion and the mould of form of the Fourth at St. Jim's spent a great deal more care on his personal appearance than common mortals.

"Are you coming?"

As Blake asked the question D'Arcy looked up from his task of polishing a silk "topper" with a velvet pad.

"Weally, Blake, deah boy," he protested mildly, "there is weally no occasion to get excited, bai Jove! A fellow must make himself pwesentable, you know—even to visit a twavellin' show."

"Great Scott! Haven't you been doing that for the last two hours?" hooted Blake.

"That is wathah an exaggeration, Blake. It is scarcely an hour since dinnah, bai Jove! Howevah, do you think this toppah will do now, Blake?" asked D'Arcy anxiously.

"Do!" howled Blake witheringly. "If you polish the dashed thing any more you'll be able to see 'through it, you tailor's dummy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"For the last time, how much longer are you going to be?"

"Pway do not wear at me, Blake! I stwongly object to being woared at!" retorted Arthur Augustus coldly. "I have already told you that I will come when I am weady. I weally feah I shall have to keep you youngstahs a few moments longer while I change my necktie."

"Great pip! You've already changed it twice!"

"I am quite aware of that, Hewwies. But I am howwibly afraid that the pink and blue in it scarcely matches the colour of my eyes, deah boy," explained Arthur Augustus, stepping to the study mirror and eyeing his reflection seriously. "Don't you fellows think so?"

D'Arcy's chums did not explain what they thought—they acted upon it instead. At a wink from Jack Blake all three of D'Arcy's study-mates advanced upon him with a rush. Blake jammed his silk hat at a rakish angle on his aristocratic head, Herries rammed his lavender gloves down the back of his neck, while Digby knocked the pad from his hand and kicked it into the fireplace. Then all three grabbed

hold of their astonished chum and rushed him through the doorway.

"Yawwooh! Oh cwumbs! What— Bai Jove! Welease me, you wuffians! Oh, bai Jove!"

But Blake, Herries, and Digby were ruthless, and Arthur Augustus went along the passage and down the stairs at express speed, protesting frantically, but vainly.

Out of the School House and across the green-carpeted quad and through the old archway went the four with a rush, D'Arcy's elegantly-shod feet scarcely touching the ground.

On the well-kept gravel path Arthur Augustus attempted to make a desperate stand, but his chums fairly lifted him along to the gates and through them.

Not until they were some hundred yards along Rylcombe Lane did Blake call a halt, and then they released the panting and dazed swell of the Fourth.

"There, Gussy!" gasped Blake severely. "I hope that quickening pill has done you good, old son. It's time you learnt the value of time, old top. Now, are you coming along quietly, or are we to administer another pill?"

Arthur Augustus did not answer at once. He gasped and panted and gasped, and then he fumbled for his monocle and jammed it into his eye.

"You—you uttah wuffians!" he gasped indignantly and breathlessly. "You weckless wottahs! You have wumpled my clobbah, and put me in a feahful futtah, bai Jove! I uttably wefuse to accompany such wuffians—"

"Now look here, Gussy—"

"And I uttably wefuse to wecognise you as fwjends any longah."

With that Arthur Augustus marched away, with his nose elevated. He marched back towards St. Jim's, and his chums stared after him rather blankly.

"Oh, that's torn it!" snorted Blake. "And we were relying on the silly chump to stand the brunt of the cash this afternoon! Oh crumbbs!"

"Fetch him back and threaten to bash his topper in!" suggested Digby. "He'll come round then."

Blake glared after the retreating form of Arthur Augustus for a moment, and then he sniffed.

"Oh, let the ass rip!" he said warmly. "Fancy getting on his high horse just for that! I've got a few bob, luckily, and we'll manage somehow without his quids."

"Don't worry," grinned Digby. "He'll change his mind and decide to forgive us before he gets to St. Jim's. Trust old Gussy to do that."

"We're not waiting for him, anyway," grunted Blake, greatly exasperated. "Come on! We've wasted enough precious time on the dummy."

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Blake's word was law, and the three hurried on to Wayland Heath without Arthur Augustus or his quids.

But as it happened, Digby proved to be quite correct in his view that D'Arcy would change his mind. Scarcely had the swell of the Fourth turned the next corner when his heart smote him, and he halted.

Arthur Augustus was an exceedingly kind-hearted member of the nobility, and his wrath was wont to evaporate very quickly. He hated squabbling of any kind; moreover, the thought of missing the delights of the fair after all did not appeal to him.

"Aftah all," he reflected, shaking his head, "perhaps I was wathah hasty, and one must forgive these iwvesponsible youngstahs. I'm afraid they will be gettin' into mischief without me to look aftah them, too. Yaas, wathah, bai Jove!"

And placating his injured dignity with these magnanimous reflections, Arthur Augustus, like the immortal Dick Whittington, turned again and retraced his steps.

But by this time Blake, Herries, and Digby were out of sight, and Arthur Augustus reached the fair-ground on Wayland Heath without Arthur Augustus or his quids.

"Oh deah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he mingled with the noisy throng on the fair-ground. "What a tewwible din, bai Jove! This is weally too awful!"

It certainly was a "din" to anyone with sensitive ears. The brazen blare of the steam-organ, the sharp crack of rifle-shots from the shooting-gallery, the ringing of bells, and shouts, and yells of laughter made the aristocratic Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shudder. Though as fond of fun as anyone, the noble Gussy was undoubtedly sensitive in that direction.

With a look of lofty dignity and easy tolerance on his noble features, Arthur Augustus wandered about leisurely in search of his chums. He cut quite a figure on the fair-ground, resplendent as he was in shining topper, spotless Etons, natty spats, and glimmering monocle.

He stopped suddenly, however, as a rather surprising thing happened.

Without any warning his glimmering silk hat was whipped from his head, seemingly vanishing into thin air.

"Bai Jove!" gasped the startled Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 2.

Only Gordon Gay!

IT was really surprising. One second it was there, on the noble, aristocratic head of Arthur Augustus, and the next second it was gone.

Save for a slight tug, Arthur Augustus had felt and seen nothing. It was most mysterious—to Arthur Augustus.

The nearest persons to him were several village urchins. But though they were staring at Arthur Augustus, and also grinning at him, their hands were in their pockets, and they had obviously not taken the topper.

Nor could Arthur Augustus see any sign of the topper anywhere.

"Weally, this is most remarkabale!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus to himself, blinking about him through his monocle. "I uttably fail to undahstand how—Ow! Oh, bai Jove!"

It had happened again. But this time Arthur Augustus saw just how it happened.

The natty walking-cane he had been idly swinging was suddenly snatched from his hand. And as he wheeled round the swell of the Fourth was just in time to see it go.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus—this time in indignant wrath.

It was not mysterious, after all. It was only Gordon Gay, the cheery leader of the Grammarians. That fun-loving joker was seated on the roundabouts, and as it came round to where Arthur Augustus was strolling, he had just wound his legs round the hobby-horse he was riding, and had swung his body outwards and deftly appropriated, first the topper, and then the stick, as the hobby-horse he was riding came round again.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus, his noble eye gleaming wrathfully. "The cheeky wottah! Why, I—I'll—"

At that moment the cheery, grinning face of Gordon Gay, surmounted by D'Arcy's own gleaming topper, came whizzing round again, and Arthur Augustus went in pursuit with a rush.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

The sight of the St. Jim's junior rushing in chase of Gordon Gay on the hobby-horse was too much for the village urchins, and they roared—as did Gordon Gay and Frank Monk and Harry Wootton, who were with him.

The laughter reached D'Arcy's ears, and he stopped, seeming to realise the absurdity of chasing the hobby-horse, and he waited for it to come round again.

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It came round the next second, and Arthur Augustus took a flying leap for the moving platform.

Luckily, his grasp closed on one of the brass uprights, and, steadying himself, he made a grab at Gordon Gay.

But that practical joker was too quick for him. In a flash, he had slipped from his horse, and dropped from the roundabout as one drops from a moving omnibus.

"You young himps!" roared the attendant.

He came rushing along, and made a grab at Arthur Augustus. But, in his turn, D'Arcy was too quick. He dodged the detaining hand, and followed Gordon Gay.

Unfortunately, he did not bother to drop off as Gordon Gay had done. He simply jumped off, and he suffered in consequence.

The instant his feet touched the ground, they were swept from under him, and after turning a couple of complete somersaults, Arthur Augustus crashed into a peanut-stall, almost wrecking it.

"Yawoooooh!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

The howl of laughter was followed by a howl of fury from the peanut merchant, as he jumped at Arthur Augustus and held him fast.

"Now you done it, blow you!" he hooted, shaking the hapless Arthur Augustus furiously. "Jest look what you've gone and bin and done—upset all my stock! Take that, you little monkey!"

Cuff, cuff, cuff, cuff!

"Yooooop! Yow-wow! Yooooop!" roared D'Arcy.

He wriggled and howled with pain and dismay as the irate pea-merchant cuffed him again and again. The pea-merchant's stock had been scattered far and wide, and already a swarm of grinning urchins were busy filling their pockets. It was no wonder the man was annoyed.

The commotion was at its height when three cheery juniors emerged from a side-show some yards away, and stared at the sight in astonishment. Blake, Herries, and Digby were astounded at seeing their noble chum in such a predicament.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "It's old Gussy!"

"In trouble again!" grinned Herries.

"Trust him to get himself into a mess without us to look after him!" grinned Digby.

The three looked on with cheerful grins. They did not doubt that Arthur Augustus had "asked for it," and they decided to let him have it. But D'Arcy suddenly sighted them, and gave a yell.

"Wescue! Wescue, you fellows! Oh, bai Jove! Yooop! Wescue, deah boys!"

"Better rescue him, chaps," said Blake thoughtfully. "After all, we're looking to old Gussy to stand tea this afternoon."

"Ha, ha! Just so!"

Blake approached the peanut-merchant, and grabbed his arm.

"Hold on!" he said. "What's all this about?"

"What's it all about?" howled the gentleman, ceasing to cuff the luckless Gussy. "Can't you see? This 'ere young raskil busted my show up—upset my tray o' nuts, darn 'im!"

"Oh deah! "Gwooooooh! Weally, you awful wuffian—"

"Horful ruffian yourself!" hooted the man. "What abart my stock—hey? Look at 'em—look—" He paused to make a rush at a couple of grinning urchins who, having filled their pockets, were busy filling their caps. Then, having put them to flight, he returned to the trio, still dragging Arthur Augustus with him. "What about it, I sez? Who's goin' to pay for all this? That's what I wants to know!"

"Yah! Pay up, eyeglass!"

"Pay up for the damage you done, you young raskil!"

"You make 'im shell out, mister!"

The sympathies of the crowd were undoubtedly with the peanut-merchant, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned pink at the uncomplimentary remarks that went up.

"Better shell out, Gussy," said Blake severely. "I suppose you've been up to your usual monkey tricks—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Like a mischievous urchin!" snorted Jack Blake, winking at Herries and Digby. "Upsetting a poor chap's stall like this! I call it scandalous—"

"Bai Jove, Blake, you awful—"

"I'm ashamed to own him!" went on Blake, in pretended disgust. "Fancy a seion of the noble House of Eastwood playing tricks like this on a poor man—"

"Disgracing St. Jim's!" said Digby.

"Lowering the tone of the school," agreed Herries. "You ought to pay up, Gussy."

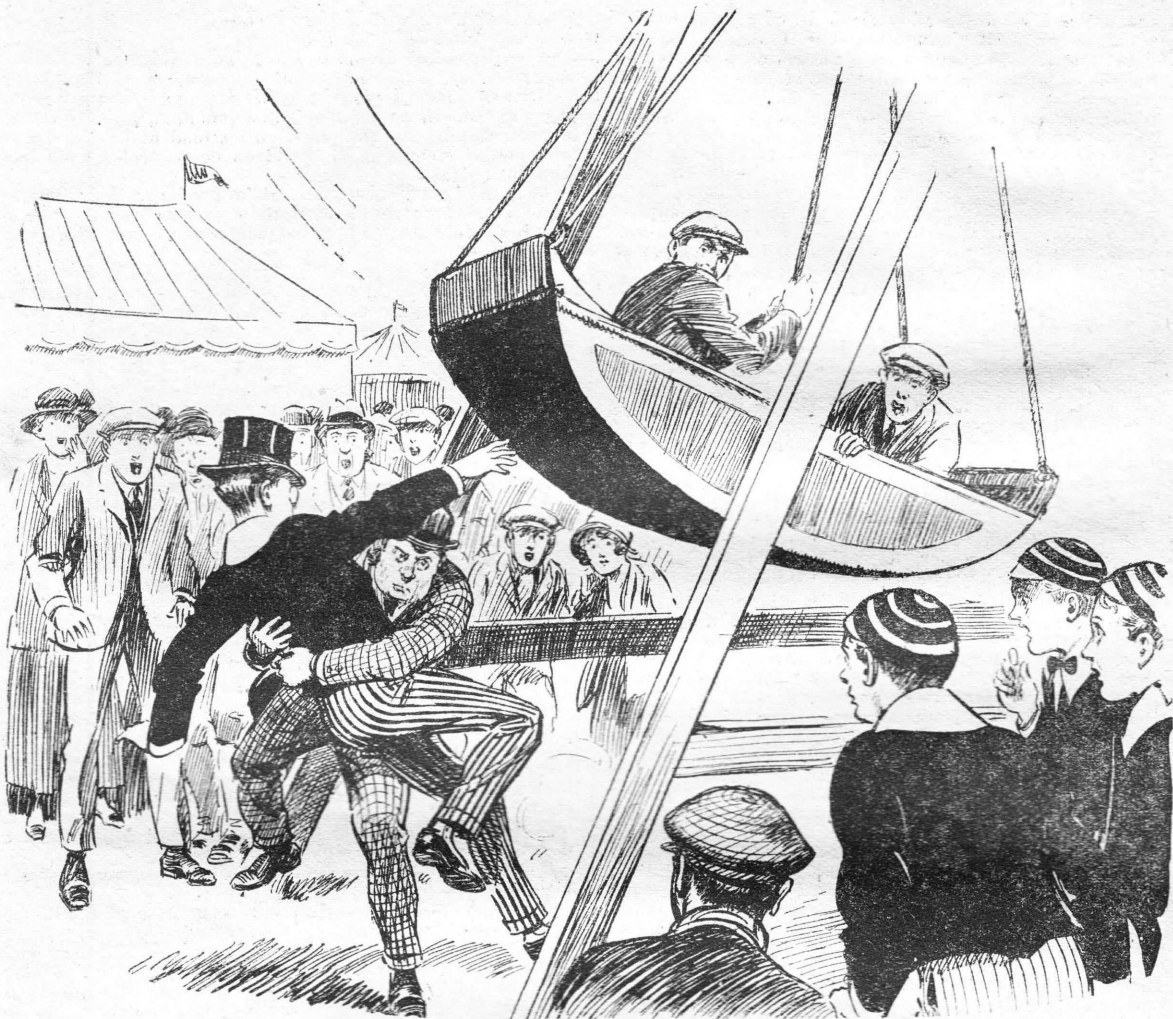
"Bai Jove! You—you—"

Arthur Augustus fairly spluttered with wrath.

"Now don't argue!" exclaimed Blake. "Pay up—"

"I uttably wescue to pay up—"

"Won't you—"



The two cheery Rylcombe youths in the swing were high in the air when they spotted the prostrate form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy below them, and they fairly shrieked at him. "Look out!" "Outer the way, idjut!" The swell of St. Jim's managed by a frantic effort to reach his feet, and even as he did so a man hurled himself at him and carried him clear, just as the swing-boat came crashing down. (See page 6.)

"Until I have explained——"

"We aren't waiting for an explanation, Gussy," said Blake.

"Collar him, chaps!"

"Yes, rather!"

D'Arcy's chums collared him quickly enough, and while Herries and Digby held the struggling Gussy, Blake calmly took from his inside pocket a handsome wallet. From the wallet he took a ten-shilling note, and handed it over to the snorting peanut merchant.

The snorting of the peanut merchant ceased abruptly. There had certainly not been ten shillings' worth of nuts on his tray. He pocketed the note with a grin, and started picking up the few stray nuts left. He had done a good stroke of business, and he had had the satisfaction of cuffing Arthur Augustus soundly.

Leaving him well-satisfied, Blake, Herries, and Digby rushed their wildly protesting chum away from the crowd. They stopped at last, and as they did so Arthur Augustus adjusted his collar and tie, and started to brush himself down. This done, he looked his chums over. It was a Hunnish look.

"You—you feahful wuffians!" he stuttered. "You have tweated me with wuffianly diswespect, and you have wefused to allow me to explain my wotten posish——"

"Well, you can explain now, Gussy," grinned Blake. "You ought to thank us for saving you from being mobbed."

"Wubbish! Uttah wot! There was no dangah what-evah of my being mobbed, Blake! I was about to explain my wewehensive posish——"

Arthur Augustus paused abruptly, his eyes fixed upon a group of figures gathered round a side-show, and from whom a yell of laughter had just come.

The side-show happened to be a greasy pole, at the top of which a huge leg-of-mutton swung temptingly, waiting

for some lucky competitor to win it by climbing the pole.

But Arthur Augustus was not staring at the leg-of-mutton, nor the group of laughing figures at the foot of the pole. He was staring at a well-known figure that was just attempting to climb the greasy pole.

It was Gordon Gay, of Rylcombe Grammar School, and on Gordon Gay's curly head, surmounting his school cap, was a shining silk-hat—a silk-hat Arthur Augustus recognised in a flash.

It was his own precious "topper," and Arthur Augustus saw at once what Gordon Gay intended to do with it—if he did succeed in climbing the pole. He intended to remove the leg-of-mutton, and replace it with the silk-hat.

The thought put the finishing touch to D'Arcy's indignation and wrath.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "The awful wottah! I will give him a feahful——"

Without stopping to finish his excited remarks Arthur Augustus started for the side-show, and he arrived on the scene with a rush, scattering the hilarious spectators to right and left.

Frank Monk and the Wootton brothers were there, and they chuckled as they recognised the newcomer.

"Hallo, it's old Gussy!" grinned Frank Monk. "It's all right, Gussy, old man. Gay's just showing your giddy topper up the pole. Don't startle him, and he'll do it yet."

But Arthur Augustus intended to do more than startle Gordon Gay. He danced about at the bottom of the pole and shook his fist up at the leader of the Grammarians.

"Gordon Gay, you uttah wuffian!" he shrieked. "Bwing my toppah down this instant!"

Gordon Gay obeyed instantly. He had not intended to obey. Climbing a greasy pole was far from being a simple

operation, and it needed all one's skill and attention. And the arrival of Arthur Augustus, and especially his wild shriek, quite took the Grammarian's attention from his task.

He seemed to hesitate for the fraction of a second, and then he came down with a rush.

Whiz!

"Yawooooooh!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Unfortunately, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy happened to be just underneath, and there was a crash, and a yell of laughter as Gordon Gay crashed on top of him. There were also yells from D'Arcy and Gay as they crashed to earth and rolled over and over together—yells of wrath and pain.

Amidst the laughter of the onlookers the two rolled over and over, Arthur Augustus punching away at Gordon Gay for all he was worth.

But suddenly the Grammarian leader wrenched himself free. Then he leaped to his feet and bolted, laughing uproariously.

The next instant Arthur Augustus also leaped up. Only stopping to recover his silk hat, which was badly battered by this time, he gave a snort of wrath and went in pursuit, jamming the hat on his head as he went. A yell of laughter followed the two as they vanished amid the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 3.

Born to Trouble!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS was wrathful—there was no doubt about it. "Pulling Gussy's leg" was a favourite relaxation of Gordon Gay's, and, needless to say, Arthur Augustus objected to it strongly. There was always trouble when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Gordon Gay came into contact with each other.

But Gordon Gay had overdone it a trifle this time. He had not only purloined Gussy's "toppah," but he had also caused grievous damage to it—a serious enough crime to Arthur Augustus in all conscience. On top of this he had hurt Gussy's feelings in more ways than one, and he had made him a laughing-stock to the general public—had caused grave damage to his noble dignity.

So Arthur Augustus wanted vengeance, and he wanted it badly—and he meant to have it.

Heedless of the laughter that followed him, heedless even of his dignity now, Arthur Augustus went in chase in a state of towering wrath. He glimpsed Gordon Gay through the throng of joy-seekers, and he dodged in and out of the crowd after him.

He caught him at last. Gordon Gay was held up by a crowd round a side-show, and the irate and indignant grasp of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy closed upon him.

"Got you, bai Jove!" panted Arthur Augustus. "Now, Gordon Gay, you wascal— Yooooop!"

*Arthur Augustus had spoken too soon—far too soon for one dealing with a slippery customer like Gordon Gay.

Even as Gussy's grasp closed upon him, Gay ducked his head and butted it into the fancy waistcoat worn by the swell of the Fourth, and Gordon Gay chuckled and sprang away.

Unfortunately he did not look where he was going. His desperate leap took him smack into a blackboard and easel that stood outside the side-show. On that blackboard were pasted weird and wonderful photographs of weird and wonderful-looking individuals—most of them wearing cowboy attire, or Red Indian attire, or something equally unusual.

Apparently the side-show was a "freak photographer's"—though neither Gordon Gay nor Arthur Augustus had time to realise that.

The easel collapsed on top of Gordon Gay, while the blackboard spun over and dropped on Arthur Augustus, catching him a fearful thump on his noble head. Arthur Augustus roared with anguish, as did Gordon Gay, and their simultaneous roars were echoed next moment by a still louder and far more angry roar as the freak photographer rushed out of his photograph-plastered tent.

He was not a nice-looking man at all. He seemed to be a curious mixture of rust and oil—rusty trousers and frock-coat and boots and tie, and exceedingly oily hair and oily, spiked moustaches and oily features.

He was also a very bad-tempered individual—or else the sight of his collapsed easel and board put him into a bad temper. At all events, he gave a roar of rage and went for Gay and D'Arcy the moment he sighted them.

"Smash my show up, would you?" he roared. "I'll learn you!"

"Oh, my hat! Look out, Gussy!" gasped Gay.

The Grammarian leader, slippery as ever, wriggled from under the easel and bolted for his life. But Arthur Augustus was not so lucky. That crack on the head had dazed him

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more than a trifle, and before he could even think of bolting a savage clutch fell upon him.

What happened next was like a bad nightmare to Arthur Augustus.

He was dragged roughly to his feet, and then a vicious clout at the side of his noble head sent him spinning to the ground again. He scrambled up dazedly, and as he did so a second vicious swing of the freak photographer's fist sent him down again.

"I'll learn you!" hissed Mr. Steve Flashley. According to the poster above the door of the tent that was the photographer's name. "I'll give you comin' 'ere with your larkin'!"

He stooped to grasp the junior again, but this time sheer desperation lent Arthur Augustus sharpened wits. He rolled over smartly and leaped to his feet. Then, ducking neatly to avoid another swift clutch, Arthur Augustus jumped away to escape.

It was just at that moment that Aubrey Racke of the Shell at St. Jim's took a hand—or, rather, foot—in the game.

With Crooke and Mellish, Racke had arrived on the scene just in time to see D'Arcy fall into the hands of Mr. Steve Flashley, and the sight of the hapless Gussy's predicament seemed to give the shady trio great satisfaction. And Aubrey Racke did not wish the scene to end. Far from it.

As Arthur Augustus leaped to escape Racke shoved his foot out swiftly, and the swell of the Fourth stumbled over it, staggered forward a few paces, and then, unable to stop himself, he tripped over a length of painted wood in his path.

It happened to be part of the supporting feet of the giant swings, and Arthur Augustus went sprawling headlong over it, flat on his face.

And at that moment a series of alarmed yells rang out.

"Look out, kid!"

"Get up, youngster! Look out!"

"Look out, Gussy!"

This last yell came from three St. Jim's juniors, who had just emerged from the photographer's tent. They were Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Harry Manners, and they had been having their photographs taken when Gordon Gay had crashed into the easel and board. And they had followed Mr. Steve Flashley out just in time to see Arthur Augustus give that oily gentleman the slip.

But the next moment they saw what everyone else saw with sudden alarm.

Arthur Augustus had fallen full in the path of one of the swing-boats.

There were two cheery Rylcombe youths in the boat, and they were apparently doing their best to go "over the top." They were high in the air when they spotted the prostrate form of Arthur Augustus below them, and they fairly shrieked at him.

"Look out!"

"Outer the way, idjut!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus saw his terrible danger then, and he strove to jump up. But he could never have saved himself.

Down swept the swing-boat amidst a howl of yells and shrieks, and in that instant two things happened.

Arthur Augustus managed, by a frantic effort, to reach his feet, and even as he did so a man hurled himself at him and sent him flying yards again with a hefty shoulder-charge.

Crash!

The swing-boat crashed upon the brake-board, missing D'Arcy's plucky rescuer by a hair's-breadth as he leaped aside, to fall, sprawling and gasping, over the length of timber Gussy himself had tripped over.

"Oh!"

"Thank goodness!"

From the alarmed spectators came gasps of relief as they saw that both rescued and rescuer had got clear. The Terrible Three rushed over to the luckless Arthur Augustus, and helped that dazed junior to his feet.

"My hat!" breathed Tom Merry, gripping Gussy's arm in deep relief. "I thought you were a goner that time, Gussy. That chap was jolly smart, whoever he was."

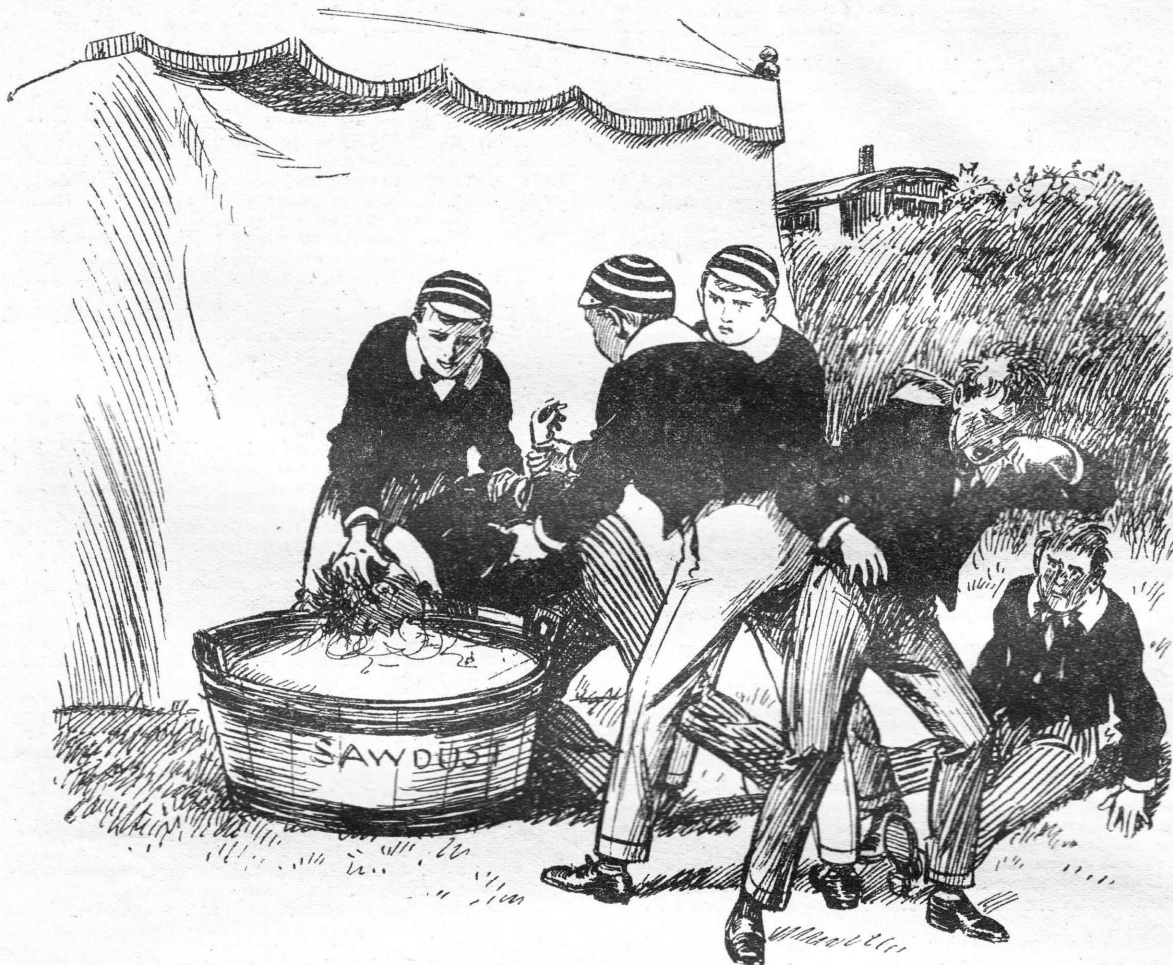
"A showman, I think," said Manners, looking round.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy also looked round. He was shaking with agitation. It had been an exceedingly narrow escape, and Arthur Augustus realised it.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Weally, deah boys, I am all in a fluttah, you know. Where is the wippin' fellow who wescued me, bai Jove? I must weally— Oh!"

Arthur Augustus paused with a gasp as a savage hand closed on his collar. It was Mr. Steve Flashley, and, from his face and manner, that oily individual did not seem at all troubled over the fact that the junior had just narrowly escaped serious injury, if nothing worse.

"Got yer!" he gritted, screwing a knuckle into Gussy's



Despite their frantic yells, Racke & Co. were dragged towards the tub of sawdust, and at Lowther's suggestion their respective heads were dipped and rubbed in the sawdust, after which handfuls of the same were stuffed down their respective collars. Racke & Co. spluttered and sneezed frantically, but Tom Merry & Co. only laughed. (See page 8.)

neck. "I've not settled with you yet, my lad. Take that and that!"

Arthur Augustus took them, and fairly yelped. They were kicks from Mr. Flashley's dingy boots, and they were brutal kicks.

But Mr. Steve Flashley only kicked Gussy twice; Tom Merry & Co. saw to that.

As the showman raised his foot for the third time, Tom Merry swiftly interposed his own boot, and, instead of kicking Arthur Augustus, the freak photographer kicked Tom Merry's boot heel hard, with his shin.

"Yoooop!"

Mr. Flashley howled with pain. After dancing about clasping his injured shin with both hands for some seconds, he gave a bellow of fury, and went for Tom Merry with waving fists.

"Oh, my hat!" shouted Tom Merry. "Back up, chaps!"

CHAPTER 4.

Settling with Racke!

RESCUE, St. Jim's!" bawled Monty Lowther. But rescue was scarcely necessary, Mr. Flashley being anything but a fighting-man. He got one blow home at the side of Tom Merry's head, but there was little power behind it. Tom Merry merely shook his head, and the next moment his own fist smacked home under Mr. Flashley's chin. The freak photographer howled.

Then Lowther and Manners and Arthur Augustus piled in upon Mr. Flashley. And scarcely an instant later there came an answering yell to Lowther's appeal, and Grundy of the Shell, with his chums Wilkins and Gunn, came rushing up and joined the melee. Another instant and Blake, Herries, and Digby and Talbot arrived, and they also, though they could scarcely see any enemy, felt it incumbent upon them to "pile in."

Mr. Steve Flashley disappeared from view beneath a swarm of St. Jim's juniors. From a raging roar, his oily voice—when it could be heard—had changed to a wailing howl for mercy.

But the freak photographer had only himself to blame for the tidal wave of juniors that flowed over him. Tom Merry & Co. were far from being the sort of fellows to "kick up a shindy" on a fair-ground, far from it. But in this case they had no choice in the matter. Tom Merry & Co. were certainly not the fellows to see one of their school-fellows brutally kicked without interfering.

Mr. Flashley had certainly brought it on himself; the attitude of the spectators was sufficient proof of that. Their sympathies were obviously with the St. Jim's juniors. Nor did any of the showmen attempt to interfere. Mr. Flashley evidently was not popular.

"Set about 'im, young gents!" bawled a burly Rylcombe carter. "I seed 'im kicking that youngster about, blow 'im! I'd 'ave 'andled him if you 'adn't!"

"Smash him!" roared Grundy excitedly. "Kicked one of our chaps, did he? My hat! Let me get at him!"

"Here, hold on!" gasped Tom Merry, with a grin. "That's enough, Grundy, you ass! Let the rotter go now."

"Pitch him back into his thumping show!" snorted Jack Blake. "I expect that ass Gussy asked for trouble; but we aren't letting him be used as a football by brutes like that, anyway. In with him!"

"Yoooop! Leggo, you young gents!" roared Mr. Flashley. "Look 'ere— Yarooooooh!"

The St. Jim's juniors obeyed him the next moment. They lifted the oily showman on high, and then they swung him forward and let him go, sending him sprawling, all arms and legs, into his tent.

Tom Merry felt in his pockets, and taking out some silver

he pitched it into the tent after Mr. Flashley, one of the coins catching him on the nose as he lay in the sawdust, roaring.

"What's that for, fathead?" asked Blake, in surprise.

"It's what we owe him," explained Tom Merry, with a grin. "We'd just had our giddy photos taken when the rumpus started, and we hadn't paid him, you see."

"Blow his dashed photos!" sniffed Manners. "I wouldn't have 'em as a gift, in any case."

"We won't now, certainly," chuckled Tom. "We only went in for a lark. Anyway—" Tom Merry paused, and looked about him. His face was grim now. "Now we've dealt with that merchant, what about dealing with Racke, chaps?"

"Eh? Why should we deal with Racke?" asked Blake.

"Because the howling cad played Gussy a dirty trick," snapped Tom. "It's up to any St. Jim's chap to help another against an outsider, isn't it, Blake?"

"Of course."

"Well, Racke did the opposite, the cad! When that photographer merchant was after Gussy, Racke shoved a foot out and tripped old Gussy up, so that the brute could catch him. It jolly nearly ended in Gussy being smashed up, too."

Tom Merry related what had happened—how the luckless Arthur Augustus had narrowly escaped serious injury under the swings.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Blake. "Gussy again!"

"The awful ass!" mumbled Digby. "Might have been killed!"

"It was scarcely his fault this time," said Tom. "That ass Gay was after him, and it was he who knocked the show over, I understand."

"Poor old Gussy!" said Blake, looking round him. "Where is the awful idiot?"

"Where's Racke and his pals!" snapped Tom. "That's the question now. We're not letting this drop, you fellows. That cad Racke needs a lesson—a lesson in loyalty and decency. He's going to get it."

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors looked about them grimly in search of Aubrey Racke & Co. But those juniors seemed to have made themselves scarce. Arthur Augustus and Gordon Gay were also conspicuous by their absence.

"Gussy's gone after Gay, I suppose," said Blake, with a chuckle. "It takes a lot to damp old Gussy's fiery spirit when he's on the warpath. But where's that howling rotter Racke?"

"I fancied I spotted him sheering off round by the swings when we came along," said Digby.

The juniors started off in search of Aubrey Racke. Grundy and the rest of the St. Jim's rescuers had cleared off on their own business now—Mr. Flashley not having shown his features again from the tent—and the crowd had likewise dispersed, evidently concluding that the entertainment was over. It was as easy to find a needle in a haystack as to find anyone on the crowded fair-ground, but Tom Merry & Co. had luck at the start. As they rounded the swings D'Arcy minor came rushing along. He was chasing Curly Gibson, but he stopped as Tom called to him.

"Seen anything of Racke, kid?" asked Tom.

"Smoking fags behind the big tent," said D'Arcy minor briefly and cheekily. "Anything else, youngster?"

"That's all, kid," grinned Tom.

Wally of the Third rushed on, and the juniors made for the big tent. They hurried to the rear of it, and there they found that Wally D'Arcy's information was quite correct. Aubrey Racke, Crooke, and Mellish were there right enough. They were seated on the grass with their backs to the tent wall, and they were smoking "fags"—a little pastime Racke & Co. often indulged in.

They jumped up as Tom Merry & Co. surrounded them. Racke looked uneasy as he saw the grim faces of the chums of the School House.

"Here, what's the game, Merry?" he muttered. "What do you fellows want?"

"We want you, my pippins," said Jack Blake. "We're going to teach you a little lesson, Racke. We've already dealt with your pal the freak photographer; it's your turn now."

"Eh? My pal? What d'you mean, you cads?" breathed Racke.

"You've got a short memory, Racke," said Tom Merry. "You're forgetting how you tripped up old Gussy, so that that beastly photographer chap would catch him and lick him. We're going to give you a sharp memory lesson, old bean."

"It's a rotten lie!" said Racke savagely. "I didn't trip him; it was an accident. D'Arcy stumbled over my foot. I couldn't help that."

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"Couldn't you? You're going to be a giddy innocent sufferer, then, Racke," said Tom pleasantly. "Collar the cad, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

"Here, don't you dare—Leggo!"

Aubrey Racke yelled and struggled savagely as the avengers laid hands on him, and flung him flat on the grass. Mellish and Crooke jumped to escape, but Digby, Manners and Lowther were on them in a flash, and they also went down sprawling and yelling. Crooke and Mellish had not tripped Gussy up, but they had approved of Racke's trick, and that was enough for Tom Merry & Co.

Leaving Blake and Herries to look after Aubrey Racke, Tom Merry ran across to the hedge a few yards away, and cut off a switch. He returned with it to the group on the grass.

"A dozen each will about meet the bill," he remarked. "Racke first, you chaps; turn him over."

"Yes, rather!"

"Look here—" roared Racke.

Whack!

"Yoooop!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Twelve times Tom Merry laid the switch on, and Aubrey Racke fairly howled with wrath and pain. Then it was the turn of Crooke and Mellish, and Tom contented himself with giving them half a dozen each instead of a dozen as in Racke's case. But neither Crooke nor Mellish seemed at all grateful for the quality of mercy shown them.

But they were not finished with yet.

There happened to be a tub of sawdust round the corner of the big tent, and at Lowther's suggestion the respective heads of Racke & Co. were dipped and rubbed in the sawdust, and handfuls of the same were stuffed down their respective collars. Then, well satisfied, Tom Merry & Co. released their captives.

Racke, Crooke, and Mellish sat up on the grass, and gasped, and groaned, and spluttered. Quite a lot of sawdust—possibly by accident, possibly not—had found its way into their mouths and up their noses, and they spluttered and sneezed frantically to get rid of it.

"Oh, you—you—Grooooooh! Mum-m-m-mum! Oh, you—groooooh!—rotters!" panted Racke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let this be a lesson to you, Aubrey," said Tom Merry. "It's up to a St. Jim's fellow to back another up when he's in trouble—not to show spite by helping an outsider."

"Grooooooh! Cads!" gasped Aubrey. "Oh, I—I'll get my own back for this, you rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. left them then, all of the chums laughing at the extraordinary expressions on the sawdusty features of Racke & Co.

"That's settled then!" grinned Blake. "Now what about seeing that blessed gorilla boxer, chaps? The show starts at three-thirty."

"It's nearly that now," said Tom Merry, looking at his watch. "Come on."

"Wonder where old Gussy is?" said Herries.

"Oh, blow the ass!" growled Blake. "I expect he's getting himself into more trouble somewhere. Anyway, come on."

"Right-ho!"

And Tom Merry & Co. went on, stopping at last before a show, plastered over the front with posters. The posters depicted a huge, dreadful-looking gorilla wearing boxing-gloves, and sparring with a man whose features strikingly resembled a world-famous boxer. Below the posters was an announcement claiming that "Jacko, the one and only boxing gorilla in the wide world," was ready to meet any local boxer with the gloves on, and that a five-pound purse would go to the man who could knock him out.

"What a chance!" grinned Jack Blake. "Now, Tommy, old man, it's up to you to collar that fiver."

"No, thanks!" grinned Tom Merry. "Not if he's a beauty like that one shown on the poster, anyway. Hallo, show's open. Good! My treat, you chaps!"

Tom Merry paid at the pay-box, and his grinning and expectant chums followed him in to the show.

CHAPTER 5.

Gussy Means Business!

BAI Jove! Now I wondah which is the wight cawavan?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stopped short and stared through his monocle at a group of caravans on the piece of waste land at the back of the fair-ground.

The moment that Arthur Augustus had seen that his chums no longer needed his aid in dealing with the oily Mr. Steve Flashley, he had left the scene quickly—though not

to go in search of Gordon Gay, his tormentor, as his chums had supposed.

Indeed, Arthur Augustus had almost forgotten the existence of the cheery Grammarian leader. The swell of the Fourth happened to have another object in view—a far more important object to Arthur Augustus. And that was to find the man who had so pluckily and successfully rescued him from the swing-boat.

For Arthur Augustus was under no delusion as to what would have been his fate had the boat crashed into him—as it would most certainly have done but for the smart act of the stranger. It would have maimed him for life if it had not killed him.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was more than thankful for his narrow escape, and more than grateful to the unknown who had rescued him.

He was determined to find the man, and to render him his grateful thanks in person.

To this end Arthur Augustus made his way quickly to the man in charge of the swing-boats who had witnessed the incident. Gussy remembered Manners saying he thought

As he stood there wondering, a youth came down the steps of the nearest van—a youth wearing an exceedingly doleful expression.

He stared curiously at Arthur Augustus, whose battered silk hat and glimmering eyeglass made him rather an object of unusual attention.

"Want anyone, mister?" he asked.
"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with his usual politeness. "I wondah if you would be good enough to diwect me to Mr. Joe Gubbins' cawavan?"

"You want the old man?" asked the youth, staring.
"The—the whattah?" said Gussy, puzzled. "I wish to see Mr. Gubbins, deah boy."

The youth grinned, and, turning his head, he bawled back through the partly-opened door of the van he had just left.

"There's a young gent as wants you 'ere, father."
"Bring 'im in, Jim," came the reply, in a husky grunt.
The youth jerked his thumb towards the open door, and Arthur Augustus gracefully removed his hat, and, mounting the steps, he entered the van.

Then Arthur Augustus gasped.



St. Jim's Jingles!



No. 9 G. A. GRUNDY (OF THE SHELL)

BREATHES there a boy with
soul so dead
Who fails to worship
Grundy?"
(Thus the sarcastic Lowther said
Whilst having tea on Monday.)
For Grundy thinks he's quite a King,
A giant, a Colossus;
And he'd be pleased as anything
If only he could boss us!

This burly member of the Shell
Was first at Redclyffe College;
A place where he did nothing well,
And gained but little knowledge.
He smote a prefect hip and thigh,
And caused a fearful flurry;
And this explains the reason why
He "packed up" in a hurry!

He's wooden-headed, dull, and dense,
And in his "upper storey"
Sawdust you'd find instead of sense,
And yet he struts in glory,
And gives himself majestic airs,
And thinks himself fine and famous;
Yet everybody else declares
That he's an ignoramus!

To watch old Grundy playing games
Is quite an education;
Within his breast ambition flames,
And fierce determination.



GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY.

Barging and charging like a bull.
And making fearful bellows
Of "On the ball!" and "Play up,
School!"
He scatters all his fellows!

Pity poor Wilkins! Pity Gunn!
They have to share his study;
And when the match is fought and
won,
And Grundy's tired and muddy,
They have to say, in duty bound:
"Grundy, your form is topping!
No finer player could be found
From Wayland unto Wapping!"

St. Jim's would be a sadder place
If Grundy wasn't in it;
He brings a smile to every face
A dozen times a minute!
He's as bombastic as can be,
We're half inclined to scrag him;
But, as his name is "G. A. G.,"
Perhaps we'd better "Gag" him!

NEXT WEEK'S CELEBRITY
WILL BE

RICHARD REDFERN of the
NEW HOUSE.

the man was a showman, and Gussy guessed the swing-boat man would know him if he was.

Manners proved to be correct there.
"Yes, young gent," said the swing-boat attendant, eyeing Arthur Augustus curiously. "It was old Joe Gubbins as showed you outer the way. You wants to see 'im, sir?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy emphatically.
"You'll find 'im in 'is van over there, young gent," said the show hand. "You'll 'ave to 'urry, though, as he'll be gettin' ready for 'is show now—that is if he ain't 'urt."

"Bai Jove! Hurt?" gasped Gussy.
"He 'urt hissell' when 'e fell," explained the man, with one eye on Gussy, and the other on his boats. "Leastways, 'e were limpin' when 'e went off. You'll find 'im in 'is van, I reckon, anyway."

The man moved off to "brake" down one of his boats, and Arthur Augustus hurried away, more determined than ever to find his rescuer.

And now he had reached the vans, and was wondering which one housed Mr. Joe Gubbins.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he murmured in alarm.
It was the man who had rescued him right enough—the short, stockily-built man with the jovial face—though just now his face was as doleful as his son's. He was seated on a locker, busily engaged in bathing his right foot in a bucket of cold water.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus involuntarily. "I feah you were injured when you so vevy gallantly wescued me, Mr. Gubbins."

"Oh, it's you, young gent!" said Mr. Gubbins, with a faint grin. "You are the young gent as was nearly knocked out by that there swing-boat, eh? You want me?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, eyeing Mr. Gubbins, in great distress. "I have come to express my vevy deep gwatitude for what you did for me, Mr. Gubbins. You wescued me ffrom a feahful accident at gwreat personal wisk, bai Jove! I can only express my gwreat thanks and my deep wegwet that you were appawently injured while doin' so."

"Don't you worry about that there, young gent," said Mr. Gubbins heartily. "I just 'appened to be near, and I'm pretty nippy on my pins as a rule. It was just bad luck as I tripped 'over that there strut."

"But weally—"

"It's only a sprain, sir," said Mr. Gubbins, nodding to his foot. "A slight sprain as will be all right arter a few hours' rest. It ain't your fault, anyway, and you no need to worry about me. It's a bad job, an' I don't know what to do about it. Arter puttin' the show-up and advertisin' I don't like lettin' the public down, like. But it ain't none of your fault, and—"

He paused suddenly, as if he had said rather more than he should have said.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in some agitation. "Am I to undahstand, Mr. Gubbins, that your accident will mean sewious inconvenience to you?"

"It's all right, young gent; no need for you to worry about it," said Mr. Gubbins hastily. "I was forgettin' as you wouldn't know nothing about it. It's all right; don't you worry, young 'un. Just you run off and enjoy yourself. What I did was nothing, and we won't say no more about it. Thanks for comin' 'ere to see me."

He waved his hand to the door. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's chin set firmly. The swell of the Fourth was not the fellow to be put off so easily.

"Mr. Gubbins," said Arthur Augustus kindly but firmly, "I should feel a vewy mean and ungwateful wottah if I did wun away and leave you in your twouble, bai Jove! I insist upon doin' all in my powah to help you out of the difficulty—whatevah it is. You were injured whilst doin' me a vewy gweat service, and I am determined that you shall not suffah on my behalf, bai Jove! Wathah not!"

"There ain't nothing you can do, I'm afraid, sir," said Mr. Gubbins, "thankin' you all the same."

"But I insist!" said Arthur Augustus, with kindly dignity. "It is uttahly imposs. for me to allow you to suffah, you know. I wathah flattah myself upon bein' wathah a useful fellow in an emergency, and I insist upon twyin' to put the mattah wight."

"It ain't anythin' as you can do, young sir."

"Wubbish! If you will pardon me sayin' so, Mr. Gubbins. Uttah wubbish! You can wely on my tact and judgment to put the mattah wight. I shall insist upon intahviewin' the ppopwiotor, and shall explain exactly why you will be unable to do your work this aftahnoon, deah boy. I pwopose—"

"Here, here! 'Old on, young 'un!" grinned Mr. Gubbins. "Not so fast! You got hold of the wrong end of the stick, I reckon! I 'appen to be my own proprietor, more or less, like. It's me, and me only, as'll lose over this job. But that needn't worry you, young sir."

"Bai Jove! That wathah makes mattahs more sewious," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "If you will be kind enough to explain just what—"

"I'm afraid I can't just explain what my job is—it being a secret like, sir," said Mr. Gubbins good-humouredly, with a wink at his grinning son in the doorway. "You run away and enjoy yourself, young 'un."

But Arthur Augustus had quite made his noble mind up to "put mattahs wight." He shook his head more firmly still.

"Wathah not!" he said. "I weally must insist upon doin' some—Ow! Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus jumped—he jumped back so violently that his head cracked against the side of the bunk behind him with a fearful crack. But he scarcely noticed the fact, nor felt the pain of the impact. He just blinked through his celebrated eyeglass at something lying on the opposite bunk.

And no wonder! It was apparently the horrible head and body of a most ferocious-looking gorilla.

As Arthur Augustus could not jump back any farther he just stood as he was and blinked, aghast, at the apparition. Then he suddenly gasped—a gasp of relief—as he noted that it was but a skin, after all, and not a real live animal.

"Oh, bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Weally that skin gave me quite a start, Mr. Gubbins! Oh deah!"

Mr. Gubbins chuckled—it was rather an uneasy chuckle, however.

"Well, you seen it now, young sir," he said rather gruffly. "Now p'raps you'll see as it's nothing you can do to 'elp. What's wanted is a bruiser for my job—a bloke as can 'andle the mitts."

"The—the what?"

"The mitts," explained Mr. Gubbins, pointing to the gorilla-skin. "I weren't going to let on, of course; it wouldn't do for it to get out as it ain't a real monk—see? But as you've seen that, it ain't no good 'iding the secret, like. I can see as you're a real gent, and I know you won't go giving the game away."

And Mr. Joe Gubbins looked at Arthur Augustus rather anxiously. That astonished junior blinked at him. Arthur Augustus was by no means a fool, and a glimmering of the surprising truth was dawning in upon his mind. He remembered having seen the posters relating to the "boxing gorilla." Was it really possible—

He fairly blinked at Mr. Gubbins.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped unbelievably. "Am I to undahstand that you are the—the boxin' gowilla, Mr. Gubbins?"

Mr. Gubbins nodded, with a slight grin.

"I thought as you'd already guessed that," he said. "Well, now you knows you can see as 'ow I'm fixed. There ain't another bloomin' man in the whole show as can use the mitts good enough for this 'ere job!"

"Then—then the boxin' gowilla is weally you dwessed in that skin, Mr. Gubbins?"

"O' course!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was astounded—and also not a little shocked. He did not at all approve of such a thing; it was what he himself would have called "wathah a swizz."

Mr. Joe Gubbins, apparently, saw nothing to be shocked about, however. He was merely anxious—anxious to make sure that Gussy would not "let on."

"You—you won't let on, o' course?" he asked.

"Bai Jove! Wathah not!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "But—but weally this is wathah surpwisin' Mr. Gubbins. What a wemorable thing, bai Jove!"

"I expect you're surprised," said Mr. Gubbins. "There 'ad used to be a real monk on the job, but he died; and the gov'nor 'ad to do something or close this show altogether. But it was a rare go with the public; and then I come along, and he offered me the job of taking the monk's place. And, bein' an old pug, and bein' on me beam-ends at the time, I was only too glad to take it. Since then I've bought out the boss, and now it's me as will lose over this. And the pity of it is I shall disappoint the public. They won't come to the show next time if I lets 'em down to-day."

He groaned and glowered at his injured foot.

"The show's due to start in a few minutes," he groaned dolefully. "And the public will 'ave to 'ave their money back. No takings this afternoon, and no takings to-night, and p'raps none to-morrow. Oh crikes! It's 'ard lines!"

And again Mr. Joe Gubbins groaned dismally.

The sound touched the tender heart of Arthur Augustus. He forgot that it was "wathah a swizz"—he only remembered that Mr. Joe Gubbins had saved his life, and that he was in deep trouble entirely owing to having saved his life.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured, in distress. "It is weally vewy hard lines, Mr. Gubbins! Is theah nobody—"

"Nobody as can 'andle the mitts," said Mr. Gubbins.

"There's young Jim 'ere, what's the ballyhoor—bangs the big drum and that. And there's my other son Sam, as is assistant to Flash Steve. But they've their own jobs, and neither can 'andle the mitts, in any case. I suppose," said Mr. Gubbins, looking hopefully at Gussy, "that you knows of nobody as could take it on?"

Arthur Augustus jumped. And then his eyes gleamed with sudden determination.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped, as if a sudden startling idea had entered his noble brain. Bai Jove! Why not? It is up to me. Yaas, wathah!"

"You—you knows of someone, young gent?"

"Yaas, wathah! Leave it to me, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, with great assurance. "It is entirely through me that you are in this hole, and it is up to me to put the mattah wight. You can wely on me. I wathah fancy myself with the gloves, you know. I wathah flattah myself that I can stand up to anythin' Wylcombe can pwoduce, at all events, bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"By James!"

Mr. Gubbins blinked at him; young Jim also blinked at him.

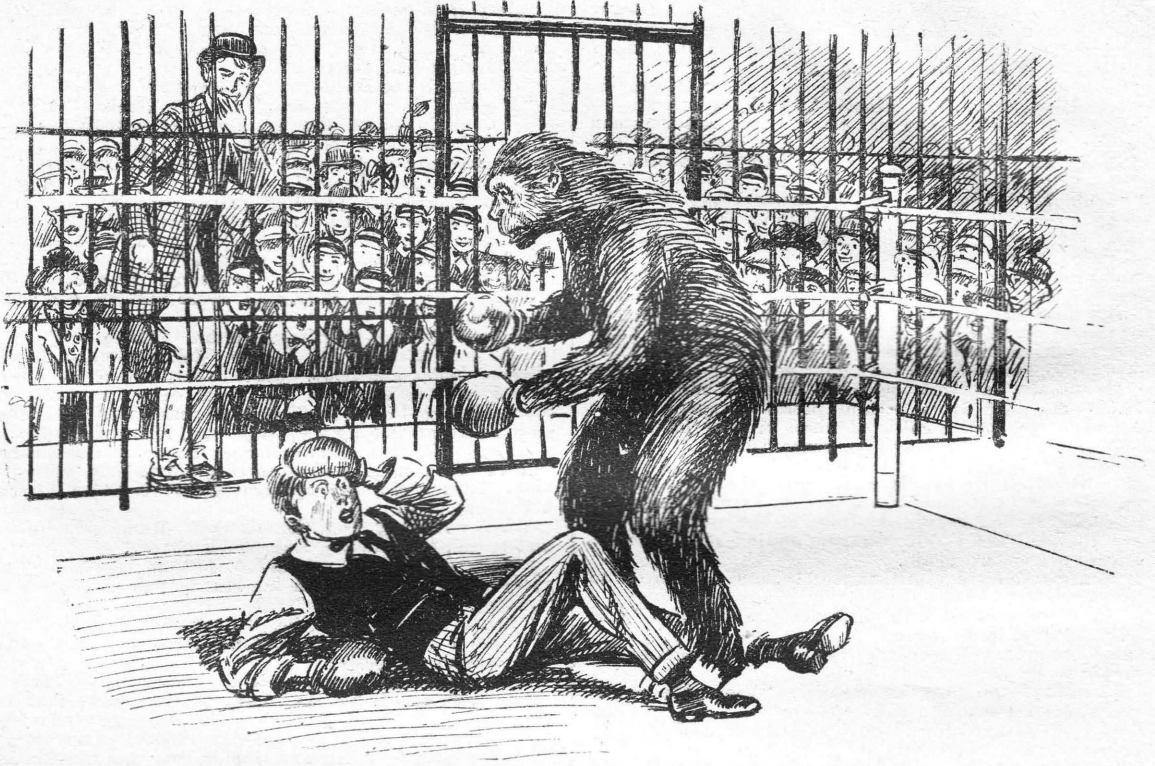
"You mean yourself, young gent?" ejaculated Mr. Gubbins.

"Just that, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus calmly, though his noble eye was gleaming with resolution and excitement. "I see no weason whatevah why I should not tackle the job. I am almost as tall as yourself,

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Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood over his fallen enemy, breathing hard. He had quite forgotten the part he was supposed to be playing in his excitement and wrath. "Theah, you wotah!" he breathed. "Get up and take your thwashin'. You have wuined my toppah, and——" The swell of St. Jim's broke off abruptly and jumped back as Gordon Gay scrambled to his feet. (See page 15.)

Mr. Gubbins, and puddin' will do the west. Wely on me, deah boy."

"But—but——"

"Pway do not waste time in buttin'," remarked Arthur Augustus, gently but firmly. "My mind is quite made up. Mr. Gubbins. It is up to me; I can do nothin' less undah the circs."

"But—but you'll get smashed, young sir! It won't do, and I won't 'ear of it. Just you——"

"I shall certainly not allow myself to be smashed," said Arthur Augustus serenely, and in all modesty. "I can handle the gloves, bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"Now, look 'ere, young gent. It won't do, and——"

"I insist, Mr. Gubbins!" said Arthur Augustus, waving a gloved hand confidently.

And Arthur Augustus did insist, and at last, after more protests, Mr. Joe Gubbins gave way—though with obvious reluctance.

"Well, if you can use the mitts, it may be all right," he grunted at last. "Arter all, it's only rare as rare as anyone can use 'em answers the challenge. They're mostly yokels as turn tail and bolt the moment they're face to face with old Jacko 'ere." Mr. Gubbins grinned at the gorilla skin. "As for Slim Alf, you no need to be afraid of 'im. He'll play up, o' course."

"Bai Jove! Who is Slim Alf?"

"He's the bloke as spars with me—my assistant," grinned Mr. Gubbins. "We gives a little exhibition afore 'andin' out the challenge, and he acts as umpire arterwards. He can't box for nuts."

"Oh! I undahstand!"

"You—you means it, then, young gent?"

"Natuwally. If your son will kindly put me up to the wopes——"

"That he will!" said Mr. Gubbins. His voice was still very doubtful, but he was like a drowning man clutching at a straw, and he made no further protests. "Take the young gent along to Alf, Jim lad," he went on quickly. "There ain't no time to be lost. Tell Alf to put the gent up to what to do, and to 'elp 'im inter the skin. Then you get to your job at the drum. You—you won't give the show away, I hopes, young gent—unknowingly, like?"

"Wathah not! Wely on me!"

"Right! Then good luck, and thanks, young sir. I only hope you pulls it off all right and don't get 'urt. I'll hobble along and see 'ow things is going if I can. And if they goes wrong I'll chip in, mebbe."

"That won't be necessawy, deah boy. Do I dwess for the part heah?"

"By jingo, no!" grinned Mr. Gubbins. "Now, Jim lad, you knows what to do."

"Right, father!" grinned Jim.

He picked up a large canvas bag and started to stuff the big gorilla skin into it. Then he slung it over his shoulder, and nodding to Arthur Augustus, he led the way out of the van.

Arthur Augustus smiled confidently at Mr. Gubbins, and followed his son down the van steps. He did not falter as he marched after Jim across the fair ground. He had fairly let himself in for it now, but if he felt any qualms, Arthur Augustus did not show it. The possibility of meeting the boxing talent of Rylcombe district did not trouble Gussy at all. But the thought of getting inside that dreadful gorilla skin did—it made him shudder. But he had no intention of drawing back now—far from it. Arthur Augustus had assured Mr. Joe Gubbins that he would "make mattahs wight," and he meant to keep his word, come what may.

CHAPTER 6.

The Plotters!

"O! Oh dear!"

"Oh m-m-mum-my hat! The awful cads!"

"Groooogh!"

Thus Aubrey Racke & Co.

For some little time after Tom Merry & Co. had wandered away, Aubrey Racke and his chums sat in the grass and gasped and groaned, and spluttered, as they contorted their features and forms weirdly in their frantic efforts to get rid of the sawdust.

It was in their eyes and mouths, and up their nostrils, and down their necks; and it was most uncomfortable.

The remarks they made regarding Tom Merry & Co. were loud and deep, and anything but complimentary to those cheery juniors.

That it was entirely their own faults—that they had thoroughly earned the "ragging," did not seem to occur to Racke & Co.

"Oh, the beastly bullies!" gritted Aubrey Racke, staggering to his feet at length, his eyes glittering with rage. "Oh, won't I just pay the cads back for this!"

"Hang them!" hissed Croke, glaring at his leader furiously. "This is all your fault, Racke, you fool!"

"My fault?" snarled Racke.

"Of course! I warned you to leave that cad D'Arcy alone. You might have known his dashed pals couldn't have been far away. Now you've let us in for this; and I bet that fool D'Arcy will be after us, too!"

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Racke, in his turn. "It was just sheer bad luck that Merry happened to see me do it."

"It was thundering good luck for you that that showman chap saved D'Arcy, anyway," said Mellish savagely. "The cad might have been killed, and then you'd have been for it!"

"Should I?" sneered Racke. "I don't think! I should just have sworn I didn't do it—nobody could have proved I did. Anyway, you shut up, Mellish, or I'll thundering well shut you up!"

Aubrey Racke got to his feet, and started to dust himself down savagely. His chums did likewise, but they did not criticise their leader again. From the genial Aubrey's tone they saw it would not be safe. In silence the three black sheep wandered dimly back to the fair ground. Their desire to smoke seemed to have gone now. As a matter of fact there was only one desire in Racke's mind at the moment—and that was a burning desire for vengeance on the fellows who had humiliated him. Aubrey Racke was a regular Hun where revenge was concerned.

Aubrey Racke stopped at length.

He stopped a few yards away from the freak photographer's show, and there was a sudden, hard glitter in his eyes now. In the canvas doorway of the side-show Mr. Steve Flashley was busily engaged putting up his photo-plastered blackboard again.

It was the sight of him that had brought the glitter to Racke's eyes.

"I think we'll have a little chat with that merchant," said Racke, nodding towards him.

Crooke and Mellish looked at their leader—struck by the meaning in Racke's tone.

"What for?" said Crooke uneasily. "Leave the greasy boulder alone, Racke."

"He looks savage, doesn't he?" said Racke coolly.

"Yes, but—"

"I bet he'd just jump at a chance to pay those cads out," said Aubrey Racke meditatively. "Especially if we paid him to get his own back—what?"

"Look here, Racke," said Crooke. "You can count me out; I'm fed up with your silly games. What is the game, anyhow?"

"It's quite a simple game—with no risks to ourselves," said Racke quietly. "I'm not at all sure if it can be managed yet, though. We must talk it over with the chap. Come on."

"No fear!" said Crooke grimly. "I want to know what the game is, first, Racke. Your dashed wheezes have a way of coming unstuck too often for my liking."

"My dear man, it's quite simple and quite safe," returned Racke airily. "Do you want your own back or not, Crooke?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then come along with me. I fancy I can see a way to cook the goose of Merry, Lowther, and Manners, anyway. You saw them come out of that place, didn't you? They'd been having their giddy photos taken—I heard Merry say so. He chucked some money after that greasy merchant to pay for them—the fool!"

"What's the game?" said Crooke doggedly. "I'm not coming until I know."

"It's safe as houses, and beautifully easy—at least, I think so," said Racke. "All we do is to have our photos taken by that chap—"

"But what—"

"With cigarettes in our fists," finished Racke with a grin. "And that's all we do! The freak photo merchant will do the rest."

"Well, you idiot," breathed Crooke. "If you jolly well think I'm such a fool—"

He paused, and drew a deep breath as the glimmering of Racke's idea came to him.

"You—you mean—" he began.

"I see you've tumbled," grinned Racke. "Yes, I mean that, Crooke. We'll get this chap to make a little mistake accidentally, on purpose. We'll get him to transfer the giddy heads of Merry and his pals on to our unworthy bodies. The result will be a freak photo showing Merry, Manners, and Lowther smoking cigarettes. But the Head won't know it's a freak."

The cunning, dastardly plot was clear to Crooke and Mellish now.

"My only hat!" breathed Crooke. "It's great, Racke, old boy! But are you sure it can be done?"

"I'm almost sure," said Racke calmly. "These freak photograph johnnies can do almost anything. Anyway, we'll try the blighter; he'll know just how it can be done."

"But will he do it?"

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"Just look at his chivvy now," smiled Racke. "He's fairly thirsting for vengeance. And a quid will help him to do it, I bet. I'd gladly pay more than a quid to do that howling cad Merry in."

"But how is the Head going to see one?"

"We can soon work that!" grinned Racke. "We can send a giddy photo through the post—anonymously, of course. It wouldn't be a bad idea, either, to get this freak merchant to stick one on the blackboard there."

"Phew! Good wheeze!"

"I noticed Knox prowling round some minutes ago—looking for giddy law-breakers!" grinned Racke. "We could soon lead a giddy prefect like Knox on the scent of it, for that matter. Well, what about it?"

"It—it sounds all right!" muttered Crooke. "But, mind you, this freak chap must swear to keep our names out of it."

"I'll see to that!" grinned Racke. "Come on!"

This time Crooke and Mellish followed—though with obvious doubts and fears. Quite calmly and coolly Aubrey Racke led the way into the tent, squeezing past Mr. Steve Flashley to do so. That gentleman glared after them—obviously recognising their caps—and followed them in.

It was fully ten minutes before Racke & Co. emerged into the open again, and when they did so they were grinning. It was only too apparent that Mr. Steve Flashley had "jumped at it."

When well away from the side-show, Racke called a halt and turned his grinning look on his chums.

"Well, I told you so, didn't I?" he chortled. "The giddy goose of Merry and his beastly pals is cooked, my pippins!"

"Fairly!" grinned Crooke. "Good man Aubrey!"

"Blest if I would have paid the brute a quid, though," said Mellish enviously.

"A quid!" said Racke, his eyes glinting. "Isn't it worth it to get those cads flogged—that's what they will get, I fancy."

"They'll only swear it's a swizz, though," said Mellish.

"I say, supposing it leads to trouble, and that oily boulder splits?"

"Oh, you make me sick, you rotten funk!" sneered Racke in disgust. "Of course it won't lead to trouble, you fool! They'll deny having smoked; but that won't help them. The Head's such an innocent old bird—he won't dream of such a thing as a fake. They're cooked, I tell you! Flashley is going to send a print to the Head by post to-night—just shove one in an envelope and post it. And to-morrow—well, to-morrow, my friends, we shall have the pleasure of seeing dear old Merry flogged—My hat!"

Racke paused, his eyes fixed upon a tall senior wearing a swallowtail coat and a St. Jim's cap. He had a rather unpleasant face, and his eyes were glowering about suspiciously as he strolled round the fair-ground.

"Knox!" grinned Racke. "The very man we want for this job—better than sending a print to the Head, and perhaps rousing suspicion. Look at him—like a blessed military policeman on duty at a station. I've got it! Wait here a sec."

Racke darted away; Knox had his back to the trio at the moment, and was watching D'Arcy, Curly Gibson, and Levison minor, who were larking round the coconut-shy. Knox was the sort of fellow who didn't mind spending his half-holiday at "duty"—if that "duty" meant getting hapless fags or juniors into trouble. And Racke found him still watching Wally & Co. when he returned—after a couple of minutes' chat with Mr. Steve Flashley.

"All serene!" chuckled Racke softly. "I've told Flashley what to expect, and how to deal with dear old Knoxywoxy. Here he comes. Good! Back me up, you fellows!"

Knox, apparently disappointed that Wally & Co. were not transgressing school rules, came along scowling. All three of the shady schemers had their backs studiously turned to him, but Knox, the prefect, stopped short as he was passing them. For Racke was just saying:

"Yes, I think Merry and his pals must be potty. Fancy having their giddy photos taken smoking fags, eh? Why, that freak photograph merchant might easily shove a print on his dashed blackboard for anyone to see."

"Quite likely!" agreed Crooke gravely. "Why couldn't the asses have their smoke in a quiet spot somewhere if they wanted one?"

"Just swank, if you ask me," said Mellish loudly. "They wanted to swank, of course. My hat! Supposing one of the prints got into the hands of one of the beaks?"

"Might easily do; and—'S-slush!"

Aubrey Racke seemed to become aware that Knox, the prefect, was behind him. He gave a clever imitation of a startled jump.

"Oh!" he gasped. "I—I didn't see you there, Knox."

Knox nodded grimly. His eyes were gleaming.

"I know you didn't, Racke," he said, his voice trembling slightly with triumph. "That doesn't matter, though. I order you to repeat to me what you just said, Racke."

Racke was silent. He bit his lip as if dismayed and angry at having been overheard.

"Come on!" snapped Knox roughly. "As it happens, I heard every word, Racke. What Mellish and Crooke said also."

"You—you heard?" muttered Racke.

"Exactly. Is it true that Merry has had his photograph taken while smoking cigarettes?"

"I'm saying nothing," said Racke. "You've no right to make me give my Form-fellows away, Knox," he added, with cleverly-assumed indignation. "Hang it all, the fellows will think I've given them away now."

"Not at all—you needn't worry about that, Racke," said Knox impatiently. "I shall not say where I got my information from, of course. I'm just doing my duty in taking this matter up. I'm asking you if it's true that Merry—I suppose those young cads Lowther and Manners were in it, too—have had their photos taken smoking in that beastly freak photographer's yonder?"

"I'm saying nothing," said Racke. "Why don't you go and ask the photographer yourself, if you want to know?"

"I'm going to do that," said Knox, trying to restrain a grin. "You've no need to say more, Racke, I can see whether it's true or not."

With that, Knox of the Sixth walked away towards the freak photographer's. He vanished inside, and then Racke chuckled gleefully.

"Done it!" he murmured. "He swallowed it like a lamb."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke and Crooke laughed gleefully. Mellish was looking rather uneasy, however.

"Look here," he said, "it's all very well, but what about when it gets out that we put Knox on to it? What will the fellows think?"

And Mellish shivered a little.

"Rubbish!" said Racke, though his voice sounded none too certain. "Knox won't give us away. We'll wait and tackle him, though."

They had not long to wait. Soon Knox came striding out, and, sighting them still standing there, he crossed to them. His eyes were gleaming with satisfaction.

"So you were right, Racke," he said grimly. "That beastly merchant inside wouldn't admit it at first; but he did afterwards—I soon wormed it out of him."

"You—you've got proof—the prints?" breathed Racke, forgetting himself in his eagerness.

"No; the brute wouldn't part with them—at least, he said he couldn't until to-night. He's going to post them on to the Head. The crafty brute wanted cash—"

Knox paused suddenly. It struck him as unwise to explain that Mr. Steve Flashley had insisted upon Knox buying the prints from him—at a price. Mr. Flashley was, apparently, making hay while the sun shone.

"It doesn't matter, though," went on Knox hurriedly; and he nodded and walked away.

Racke was fairly gurgling with glee now.

"We're safe—safe as houses!" he gurgled. "Oh, my hat! This is rich!"

And Racke & Co. waited until Knox, the prefect, was out of sight, and then they laughed—loud and long. But the affair was not ended yet, and it remained to be seen whether Racke & Co. would have the last laugh.

CHAPTER 7.

The Boxing "Gorilla"!

"**E**RE he comes!"

"Good old monk!"

"What's the odds on old whiskers?"

"Ain't he a beauty?"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Fortunately, Arthur Augustus said that last under his breath. It would scarcely have done for the spectators to hear that remark proceeding from the ugly mouth of the boxing "gorilla."

Arthur Augustus had not backed out—far from it—though it had needed all his boundless courage and nerve to prevent himself from "backing out."

If had been a dreadful ordeal for the fastidious swell of St. Jim's, and it looked like being a still more dreadful ordeal.

But he meant to keep his word and go through with it, for all that.

He had followed young Jim to a little wooden shanty at the back of the boxing gorilla show, and here, safe from prying eyes, Arthur Augustus, helped by Slim Alf, had donned

the gorilla-skin after much trial and tribulation. The skin was none too clean, and getting inside it had been a far from pleasant task. Gussy's height was just right for the skin, but his slimness was far from being right, and he was obliged to pad well with twisted straw.

Rather than soil and crumple his elegant "clobber," Arthur Augustus had removed all save his underclothing, and at last he was fixed up—though it was no satisfaction to Arthur Augustus. Inside the skin's head it was horribly smelly and stuffy and hot, and Arthur Augustus almost fainted at first.

But he soon got used to it, and after putting him up to the ropes, telling him just what to do and what not to do, Slim Alf—who was a tall, lanky individual—had placed a huge brass collar round his neck, and led him before the public.

Here, Arthur Augustus found himself in a large, iron-barred cage, inside which was a roped-in enclosure—evidently the boxing-ring.

Outside this was the audience—a huge crowd composed chiefly of Wayland and Rycombe folk, and St. Jim's and Grammar School boys. Undoubtedly, the "boxing gorilla" was a "draw."

His appearance had been greeted by a perfect hurricane of cheers and cat-calls and laughter, hence that dismayed remark of "Oh, bai Jove!" by Arthur Augustus. He had scarcely expected such a greeting. But apparently the audience looked upon the gorilla as a "funny turn"—though they would doubtless not have done so had not iron bars been between themselves and the dreadful-looking "gorilla."

Slim Alf himself was in a weird and wonderful suit of bespangled tights, and after leading the hapless Gussy in, he rang a bell for silence. As he did so, the sound of the big drum outside ceased to bang forth, and after a moment's interval young Jim came inside with his drum, fastening the doors behind him as he did so.

The great show was about to commence.

The bell for silence had made little difference, and Slim Alf proceeded to put the "gorilla's" gloves on amid a hurricane of laughter. The gorilla certainly did look a grotesque figure with boxing-gloves on his hairy fists.

This done, he removed the chain and brass collar from round the neck of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and donned a pair of boxing-gloves with the aid of young Jim.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" bawled young Jim, waving a far from clean hand. "Ere you see the one-an'-only boxin' ape in the world. He's quite harmless"—here Arthur Augustus took his cue, and gave a really ferocious snarl—"and no gentleman need be afraid of 'im. He's as gentle as a lamb—ain't you, Jacko?"

Once again, Arthur Augustus, in his role of the boxing ape, obliged with a truly ferocious snarl. It brought a yell of laughter from the spectators.

"Any gentleman who wants to win five pounds 'as only got to face old Jacko, and knock 'im out," continued the ballyhoo cheerfully. "To show 'ow harmless he is, Mr. Alf Bunce, who's 'is trainer, will meet 'im in an exhibition bout to open the proceedings. Arter that, any gentleman as likes can step inter the cage and meet Jacko."

"What hopes!" said a voice, remarkably like Lowther's.

"Come early, to avoid the crush!" bawled Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A chorus of ironical remarks and catcalls went up amidst laughter from the good-humoured audience.

The bell rang for silence, and taking out a huge watch, young Jim bawled out:

"Time!"

From their opposite corners of the ringed enclosure in the great cage, the boxers advanced to meet each other, the gorilla advancing in a series of grotesque leaps and bounds. Ignoring the outstretched hand of Slim Alf, he whanged his left home in the former's right eye with unmistakable effect.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

It was a pre-arranged "stunt," of course, to get the audience in the right humour, but the audience did not know that and they howled with laughter and cheers.

"Go it, Missing Link!"

"What price hair-shirt?"

"Mind he doesn't bite!"

"Go it, monk!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

The "monk" went it—hitting Slim Alf neatly in the left optic this time.

"Biff!"

After that, Arthur Augustus let himself go—as he had been instructed to do—in order to "put the wind up" prospective candidates for the five pounds.

And he "played up" well, leaping and prancing in a truly lifelike manner round the apparently helpless Alf, and hitting him often and hard amidst the cheers of the spectators.

Such agility was rather remarkable in such an ungainly-looking creature, though that did not seem to occur to the spectators. Nor did it seem to occur to them that one such swipe from a real gorilla would undoubtedly have killed a man.

Arthur Augustus was entering into the spirit of the game with gusto now—far too much gusto for Mr. Alf Bunce, in fact. The arrangement had been that Mr. Alf would allow Arthur Augustus to do as he liked, more or less, for the sake of effect. But before the round ended, Mr. Alf discovered that he could not stop Arthur Augustus doing as he liked. What Slim Alf did not know of boxing would have filled several volumes of the "Holiday Annual," whereas Arthur Augustus was no mean exponent of the noble art.

Biff, biff! Wallop!

Slim Alf got a bit tired of it at last.

"Ere, 'old 'ard!" he gasped. "'Old 'ard, mate!"

Unconsciously, Slim Alf had gasped the remark out aloud, and it was greeted by a yell of laughter from those who heard it. Just then the call of time came, and it was greeted with obvious relief by Mr. Alf Bunce.

He slipped out of the ring, gasping and panting, and the victorious gorilla lurched to his corner, growling and snarling realistically. It was likely that the enthusiastic Arthur Augustus would have an exceedingly sore throat before the day ended.

"Well, my hat!" gurgled Tom Merry, when the hubbub had subsided a little. "This beats the band, you fellows! That blessed monk can box, there's no thumping doubt about it. He was all over that thin chap!"

"Going to have a smack for the five quid?" grinned Jack Blake.

"We'll carry home what's left of you afterwards, Tommy," said Herries.

"No fear!" said Tom Merry promptly. "I'm near enough to that beauty—as near as I want to be, anyway. I say, it's rather queer, though—that brute knowing so many boxing tricks!"

"Just what I was thinking, Thomas," chuckled Gordon Gay, who happened to be close to Tom Merry & Co. "I'm rather interested in that giddy gorilla. He's well trained—too jolly well trained for my liking! I think I'll have a go at him afterwards."

"Great pip! You silly ass!"

"Not at all!" said Gordon Gay, his eyes gleaming curiously, as he stared at the ape. "I'd like to get to closer quarters with that giddy animal—especially to see him open his jaws. I'm going to try to make him do that. Hallo! There's the bell!"

Gordon Gay's rather suspicious remarks had rather mystified the other juniors, but the bell going just then drew their attention to the ring again.

As in the first round, the gorilla led the pace, but this time he seemed to have lost his temper a trifle. If Arthur Augustus had been instructed to give the impression that he had suddenly become enraged, he was certainly playing his part well.

No longer did he leap and prance about, nor did he show his boxing skill. He did not attempt to box, but just went for his opponent ferociously with outstretched, clawing arms and extraordinary growls.

The audience was getting thrilled now. It was rather startling, and the catcalls and laughter had died down a little.

"My hat!" breathed Tom Merry. "The brute's getting out of hand!"

"Is he?" chuckled Gordon Gay. "I don't think! Hallo! Exit Mister Bunce!"

Mr. Alf Bunce had, apparently, had enough. Dodging a sudden lunge from the gorilla, he turned tail suddenly and booted through the ropes, holding up his gloved hands as a sign of defeat.

There was a rather strained cheer, and some laughter. The ballyhoo man rang the bell for silence.

"There you are, gents!" he bawled. "Now you've seen jest how Jacko shapes I reckon you won't be afraid of tackling 'im and winnin' that fiver. You can see as he's as gentle as gentle—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

The statement that Jacko was gentle seemed to cause ironical laughter.

"Silence, gentlemen, please!" bawled the grinning Joe. "Well, old Jacko's waiting to meet the man as can master im. One at a time, please."

There was more laughter, followed by a strained silence. It was rather a long silence. Nobody seemed at all keen on mastering Jacko. But at last there was a stir close to the platform before the cage, and a burly village youth sheepishly mounted the steps on to the platform.

He was the son of Barton, the Rylcombe butcher, and he

had quite a reputation as a boxer in the district. His appearance was greeted with a roar of cheering.

"Good man, Barton!"

"Play up, Puncher Barton!"

"Show the old monk what's what!"

There was a do-or-die expression on Puncher Barton's red face, but he was obviously very nervous and apprehensive for all that.

He seemed to become more nervous still when, after he had donned the gloves, Mr. Alf Bunce opened the iron door of the cage with a great show of caution, and ushered him inside.

CHAPTER 8.

Gordon Gay's Waterloo!

PUNCHER BARTON entered the cage by tripping in the doorway and sprawling full-length over the sawdust floor. But a sudden growl from the "gorilla" brought him to his feet in a flash. Then, seeing his square jaw, he ducked under the ropes and faced the boxing ape.

He did not face him long.

Before accepting the challenge Puncher Barton had thought it out well. The "beast" was fat and flabby—Puncher little dreamed that the "fat" was padded straw—and Puncher intended to play a tattoo on that fat with his huge fists. He felt that by skilful footwork and plenty of punching he would soon "wind" the gorilla and reduce him to helplessness. He intended to side-step neatly and swiftly at every ferocious rush, and beat a tattoo on those fat ribs.

That was what Puncher intended to do. Unfortunately—for him, but not for Arthur Augustus—he failed to do it.

The gorilla, growling fearfully, certainly made his usual blind rush. But, instead of facing him and carrying out his intention, Puncher's heart failed him, and with a gasp he turned tail and bolted round the ring.

The sight of a full-grown, ferocious gorilla, bounding towards one with waving, hairy arms, proved far too much even for the courage of the redoubtable Puncher.

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Go it, Puncher!"

"Yoiks! Tally-ho!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Round and round the ring went Puncher Barton, with the gorilla after him. Then, ducking suddenly, he dived through the ropes and went on, round and round, between the ropes and the bars of the cage.

"Here you are!" bawled young Joe.

At the critical moment he flung open the door—he seemed to be used to doing that—and the hapless Puncher shot through it, and fell like a sack of coke at the bottom of the platform steps among the audience.

The laughter could have been heard a mile away.

Young Joe banged the cage door, locked it, and turned a grinning face to the audience.

"Any more for the monk?" he bawled, when the hubbub had subsided somewhat. "The last gentleman, Mister Puncher, stood up to Jacko jest two seconds. If—'Ere, Jacko's had 'is dinner, youngster!"

Young Joe addressed that to Gordon Gay, who had leaped lightly and smilingly up the steps on to the platform.

"I haven't come to feed him," grinned Gordon Gay, "but to collar that fiver, old nut!"

Young Joe blinked at him, whilst a silence fell.

"You going to put 'em on with Jacko?" asked Joe.

"Just that," grinned Gay cheerfully. "Buck up with the gloves, old top!"

"Lummy!"

Young Joe looked astounded—or pretended to look astounded and alarmed—but he helped Gordon Gay on with the gloves. From the audience came a roar—jeers from the villagers, and cheers and much chipping from Saints and Grammarians.

"In you go, young gent," grinned Slim Alf. "Jacko's 'ad his dinner, but he'll eat you as an afternoon snack."

He flung open the cage door, and Gordon Gay slipped inside. A deep growl came from Jacko, but Gordon Gay only grinned still more and ducked lightly under the ropes.

"Good for you, Gay!"

"Pitch into the old monk!"

"Pile in, youngster!"

"Mind you don't hurt the monk!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The audience looked on expectantly, fully expecting a repetition of the last fiasco, only more so. But it failed to materialise.

As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was rather staggered at sight of the Grammarian leader. He had never expected either a St. Jim's junior or a Grammarian to accept the challenge.

And while he stood, crouching in startled indecision,

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy heard the growls, and looked round. Then he gasped. "Oh, bai Jove!" The sight of the two dogs tearing towards him—obviously with anything but friendly intent—quite unnerved the swell of the Fourth. For the fraction of a second he stared aghast, and then he gasped again, and took to his heels.

(See page 17.)



Gordon Gay ran lightly up to him and hit him swiftly in the left eye.

Biff!

"Good shot, Gay!"

"Hurrah!"

But Gordon Gay's success was short-lived—very short-lived.

Arthur Augustus had got over his dismay now, and as Gay's glove tapped him, the swell of the Fourth breathed hard and his noble eyes gleamed behind his gorilla's head, so to speak.

He remembered suddenly his battered topper, and he remembered the humiliation Gordon Gay had heaped upon him that afternoon. It had all been Gay's fault from the beginning. He had treated him with ruffianly rudeness, and he had utterly ruined a spotless new silk hat.

In D'Arcy's eyes that last was a crime above all crimes.

And here was his chance at last—the chance to give Gordon Gay the fearful thrashing he had promised him.

Within the gorilla skin Arthur Augustus fairly trembled with wrath, and his eyes gleamed with determination.

After that first tap Gordon Gay scarcely got a chance to deliver a second one.

He imagined for a brief, horrible moment that a thunderbolt had struck him as Arthur Augustus launched himself to the attack.

Biff, biff, biff, biff!

Smack!

Gordon Gay hit the boards with a smack.

He had leaped back lightly, with his guard up, after delivering that first blow, but his guard did not defend him from the vengeance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

His guard was swept back, and he was fairly knocked right and left until he tripped, and went flat to the sawdust.

"Good old monk!" roared the crowd.

Arthur Augustus stood over his fallen enemy, breathing hard. He had quite forgotten the part he was supposed to be playing in his excitement and wrath.

"Theah, you wottah!" he breathed. "Get up and take your thwashin'! You have wuined my toppah, and—"

Arthur Augustus broke off abruptly and jumped back as Gordon Gay scrambled to his feet. But instead of rushing to retaliate, Gordon Gay just stood and blinked at the supposed gorilla.

He had never been more astonished in his life before.

As a matter of fact, Gordon Gay had suspected from the first that the "gorilla" was a fake—that it was a man in an ape's skin. He had accepted the challenge not to "bag" the five pounds, but to prove his suspicions and bowl out the faker.

But never in his wildest dreams had he imagined the faker to be the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's.

The shock of discovering it was so flabbergasted Gordon Gay. And while he stood staring dazedly, Arthur Augustus went for him again, and proceeded to use him as a punch-ball, to the hilarity and excitement of the onlookers—or most of them, at all events.

Luckily nobody had heard Gussy's breathed remarks excepting Gordon Gay, and the Saints and Grammarians who knew how Gay could handle the gloves were amazed at seeing him knocked right and left, desperately but feebly defending himself.

"Go it, Missing Link!"

"A billion to one on the monk!"

"Send for the hot irons and the ambulance!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

All the audience were on their feet now, amid an uproar of yells, and cheers, and cat-calls, and jeers. In the

ordinary way, Gordon Gay was, if anything, more than a match for the swell of the Fourth, but he had quite lost his head now, and he was too flustered and bewildered even to use what skill he had.

He ducked and dodged desperately before Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's whirlwind attacks. That wrathful junior was fairly letting himself go. He fought Gay round and round the ring, amidst a perfect hurricane of excited cheers and laughter.

The hapless Grammarian leader was paying dearly for the damaged topper now. The audience little dreamed that a wrecked Bond Street silk hat was responsible for the comedy—or tragedy—they were witnessing.

Punch, punch, punch, punch!

The end came suddenly. A beautiful upper-cut took Gordon Gay under the chin, and it was followed by a hefty punch in the chest that sent the hapless Gordon Gay clean through the ropes.

He collapsed in the sawdust, gasping and groaning and panting.

"Ow!" he panted. "Oy-yow! Oh, my hat!"

Inside the ropes the triumphant "gorilla" stood and glowered out at him.

Slim Alf slipped inside the cage, a broad grin on his face, and grabbed Gordon Gay by the back of his waistcoat.

"I reckon you've 'ad enough, youngster," he chuckled. "I reckon that fiver's safe enough. Kim on!"

He led the half-dazed Gordon Gay out of the cage and down the steps. Gordon Gay dismally mopped his swelling nose and went a deep, deep red at the laughter and cat-calls that greeted him.

His own chums and Tom Merry & Co. eyed him wonderingly as he joined them sheepishly. They could not understand his having cut such a sorry figure at all. Certainly they had not expected him to lick the gorilla, but they had fully expected the redoubtable leader of the Grammarians to put up a good fight once he had started.

"Well, you—you ass!" breathed Frank Monk in some disgust. "Great pip! You had the chance to knock the brute out dozens of times, and let them go! What the thump was the matter with you?"

Gordon Gay grinned sheepishly. He couldn't understand himself what had been the matter with him now—except that the shock of discovering that D'Arcy was the gorilla had utterly startled and unnerved him.

"Oh, shut up!" he growled crossly. "Come on! Let's get out of this!"

"But, look here—"

"Come on!" hissed Gordon Gay, with a warning glance towards Tom Merry and his chums. "I've got something to tell you chaps—something jolly queer!"

He started to work his way through the grinning audience, and his mystified chums followed him. When Gordon Gay faced his chums outside some moments later he was still mopping his swollen nose, but his eyes were gleaming and he was grinning.

"Well?" snorted Harry Wootton.

"It's just as I suspected," grinned Gordon Gay, rubbing a swollen nose and a rapidly swelling eye ruefully. "It's a swizz—it's someone inside a blessed skin!"

"All the more reason, then, why you should have put up a decent scrap," grunted Frank Monk. "You've jolly well disgraced—"

"Half a minute," said Gay, with a chuckle. "If you'd been in my giddy place you'd have been fairly knocked out, too. D'you know who this giddy someone was?"

"Eh? How should we know? Jack Dempsey?" asked Frank Monk, with biting sarcasm.

"No," grinned Gordon Gay. "It was dear old Gussy!"

"Old—old whatter?"

"Gussy," explained Gay calmly. "It was the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the shining light and glass of fashion at that casual ward they call St. Jim's. Now do you understand why I was so dashed knocked out that he walked over me?"

"Great pip! My only Aunt Jane! Are you potty?"

"Not at all," said Gay. And he told his gaping chums what the gorilla had said to him. "Do you think I could possibly mistake the one and only Gussy's delightful accent? Rot! It was old Gussy right enough."

"Well, upon my word!"

Gay's chums blinked at him, aghast, but he gave them no chance to pass any further remarks on the situation.

"Come on!" he snapped, a mischievous glint in his eyes.

"We're looking into this. I've got an idea I can get my giddy own back all serene. I'm blessed if I understand just what it all means. But—come on! The giddy show's over already!"

That much was evident, for as the three Grammarians stood there a swarm of laughing youths came crowding out of the show. Apparently no other challengers had offered themselves—which was scarcely to be wondered at after the dismal fate of Puncher Barton and Gordon Gay.

Gordon Gay led the way at a run round to the back of the show. It was quiet enough here, and after a swift glance about him Gordon Gay tried the little door of the shanty.

It was unfastened, and next moment Gordon Gay was blinking into the tiny dressing-room—it was obviously that. And Gordon Gay soon spotted what he wanted.

"Nobody here," grinned Gay. "And there's Gussy's clobber right enough. Here goes!"

On a packing-case in the dressing shanty were two piles of clothing—one of them, a loud pepper-and-salt suit, evidently belonging to Mr. Alf Bunce; the other was a suit of Etons surmounted by a battered silk hat, evidently—very evidently—belonging to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

In a flash Gordon Gay had reached the piles of clothing. He grabbed the pile of Etons and the topper in his arms and bore them swiftly out.

"Grab the topper, Franky," he grinned. "I'll see to the rest. Old Gussy may be able to borrow some clobber, or he may not. If not, I fancy there's going to be some fun. Come on!"

And, like the Arabs of old, Gordon Gay & Co. folded their tents—or, rather, D'Arcy's clothing—and silently stole away.

CHAPTER 9.

Awkward Indeed!

"OH deah! Thank goodness that is ovah, bai Jove! Weally, I could not have stood it anothah minute. Wathah not!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of the Fourth made that remark as he passed from the cage into the little dressing-room at the back. He was gasping and panting and exhausted.

The strain of the last few exciting minutes was beginning to tell on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Rarely had the noble Gussy spent such a decidedly unpleasant hour, though he certainly had enjoyed his little affair with Gordon Gay. It had given Arthur Augustus a great deal of comfort and satisfaction to know that he had amply avenged the wrecking of the precious topper.

"Well, young gent," grinned Mr. Alf Bunce as that worthy followed Arthur Augustus into the shanty. "You done well—better nor I would have dreamed as you could do. I've never knowed folks go away so pleased like. They fairly 'ad their money's worth. You'll be ready for the evenin' performance, of course—seven o'clock prompt."

"Oh deah!"

Arthur Augustus groaned at the prospect.

"Very well, Mr. Bunce," he went on, not very cheerfully. "I must confess that this howlid skin is more than flesh and blood can weally stand, bai Jove! But—but I have no intention of lettin' Mr. Gubbins down—wathah not!"

"You're a real gent, you are," said Mr. Bunce heartily and admiringly. "You can handle the mitts, too. You made me hop round like a durned two-year-old. I reckon—"

"Pway do not waste time, Mr. Bunce!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hastily. "Help me off with this twily howwible skin, deah boy. It is stifling me, and— Oh, bai Jove! My—my clobber!"

Arthur Augustus looked this way and that way, but he saw no signs of his "clobber"—with the exception of a beautiful pink and blue striped tie, which Gordon Gay had overlooked.

"Looks as if they've bin pinched," opined Mr. Bunce, looking about him rather blankly. "My heye!"

"Gweat Scott!"

The two of them stared about them in search of Gussy's elegant clothes, but they had undoubtedly gone.

"Only thing as I can think on," said Mr. Bunce, "is that young Jim 'as taken 'em across to the van, though I'm blessed if I can say why 'e should. He's gone to tell 'is father 'ow well things went off. I'll run over and see in a minute, young gent."

Mr. Bunce lost no time in changing into his pepper-and-salt suit, and then he left the dressing-room. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—feeling rather apprehensive now in regard to his clothes—sat on the box to wait his return.

It proved to be a long wait—too long for Arthur Augustus.

As a matter of fact, rather a sad calamity had befallen Mr. Alf Bunce.

As he strode across to the distant living-vans, Slim Alf happened to see two schoolboys hiding behind a tent some yards away in rather a suspicious manner. He had, suspecting mischief, gone to investigate, and had been astonished to find them in possession of D'Arcy's missing clothes.

Gordon Gay & Co.—it was those cheerful youths, of course, who were waiting for Gussy's appearance—had thereupon taken to their heels, also taking Gussy's clothes with them.

Naturally, Mr. Bunce had instantly given chase, and, finding himself cornered in the doorway of an empty store-van, Gordon Gay had flung Gussy's clothes inside and bolted.

But he had not gone far. Seeing Mr. Bunce enter the van after Gussy's clothes, the mischievous young rascal had crept up swiftly, and, finding the key in the padlock, he had smartly locked the door, making Mr. Alf Bunce a prisoner, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's clothes.

So that it was no wonder Arthur Augustus had a long wait, and he got a bit tired of it at last.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus tragically. "This is weally too awful for words! I weally must get this beastly skin off soon, bai Jove!"

Mr. Alf Bunce, obviously, had forgotten all about him—so Gussy imagined. And stepping to the little door of the hutch—it was really little better than that—Arthur Augustus peeped cautiously out.

Then he drew a breath of relief; there wasn't a soul to be seen across the stretch of ground between him and the living-vans. Some yards away a couple of dogs were squabbling noisily—that was all.

"Heah goes, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, with desperate resolution.

There was nothing else for it, in Gussy's view. He felt he would faint if he remained a moment longer in the gorilla skin; and he could not possibly get it off without help—at least, without ruining it; and Arthur Augustus did not desire to do that.

So the swell of St. Jim's took the risk, and, leaving the shelter of the hutch, he darted out, and made a beeline for the vans.

As he did so, three grinning faces peered round the corner of the hutch and watched him go. But Arthur Augustus never saw them, and he would undoubtedly have reached the safety of the van had not an unexpected thing happened.

One of the squabbling dogs—a stray mongrel—suddenly sighted the fleeing "gorilla."

It was something quite new in the mongrel's varied experience; and after staring in wonder after it for a brief instant, he gave a low-throated growl and went in chase, apparently to investigate.

The second dog—likewise a mongrel—promptly gave voice to a menacing growl and followed suit.

Arthur Augustus heard the growls, and looked round. Then he gasped.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

The sight of the two dogs tearing towards him—obviously with anything but friendly intent—quite unnerved the swell of the Fourth.

For the fraction of an instant he stared aghast, and then he gasped again, and took to his heels—this time away from the direction of the caravans, for one of the mongrels was already tearing across to cut him off.

Never in his life had the hapless Gussy moved at such a rate. He cut a most extraordinary figure, for no ape had certainly ever run like that before.

With the dogs rapidly gaining, and with Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Harry Wootton scudding behind the dogs, yelling with laughter, Arthur Augustus fairly flew.

Unfortunately he took an unlucky direction, and almost before he knew it he found himself in the thick of the crowd on the fair-ground.

In a moment the air was vibrating with yells and shrieks—yells of fear from the male element, and shrieks of fear from the female.

Like snow before a snow-plough, the crowd parted before Arthur Augustus amidst an uproar of terrified howls and shrieks. Round the giant swings, and round the roundabouts, scudded Arthur Augustus, who had completely lost his head by this time.

For some exciting seconds pandemonium reigned supreme in that quarter of the fair-ground. The two mongrels were almost at Gussy's hapless heels now, and close behind Gordon Gay was yelling.

"Stop him—stop the escaped gorilla!"

"Look out! Stop him!"

But nobody attempted to stop him—far from it. Wayland and Rylcombe folk were just ordinary people, and stopping an escaping gorilla was not in their line at all.

Luckily, however, for Arthur Augustus, the mongrels were stopped.

A brindled bulldog, having missed sighting Gussy, as he flashed past, was just in time to sight the tearing, growling mongrels, and he went for the foremost like a flash of lightning. Next second a terrific three-cornered dog-fight was in progress, the second mongrel having decided that a scrap with his own kind was preferable to a scrap, alone, with an unknown quantity.

The snarling and yapping died away behind Arthur Augustus—greatly to his relief, and he tore on thankfully. But the tumult from the human element did not die away behind him.

Having discovered that the gorilla appeared to be more afraid of them than they were of it, the crowd regained courage, and went in chase of Arthur Augustus, yelling and brandishing sticks and any other weapon they could grab.

Arthur Augustus was well away from the fair-ground now—he was plunging across a ploughed field, with the foremost pursuer fully a hundred yards behind him.

The hapless Gussy's one idea now was to reach St. Jim's, and seek sanctuary in his own study in the School House—if the luck stayed with him to that extent.

Across field after field went Arthur Augustus, leaping fences, and crashing through hedges, and with the crowd of howling pursuers still in hot pursuit. But the crowd was continually growing—farm-hands and suchlike grabbing spades and pitch-forks, and joining in the chase.

He reached Rylcombe Lane at last, bursting through the hedge almost on top of a group of juniors who were trooping schoolwards.

They were Tom Merry & Co., and Blake, Herries, and Digby, and at sight of the gorilla, and startled by the tumult, they scattered with yells of alarm.

Arthur Augustus went on without thinking of stopping or trying to enlist his chums' aid—badly as he needed it. It did not occur to his bemused senses that if he had stopped, the pursuing crowd would also have stopped—at a safe distance.

The lane was full of juniors and seniors returning home from the fair, and, like Tom Merry & Co., they scattered to right and left on sighting the gorilla behind them.

But Arthur Augustus was thankful rather than otherwise, and he fairly sobbed his relief as the school gates hove in sight at last.

Like a runner finishing the last lap, Arthur Augustus thudded on to the gates, gasping and panting and wheezing frantically. In the old gateway, Taggles, the porter, was lounging, but he stood bolt upright as he sighted the apparition tearing towards him.

"By hokey!" exclaimed Taggles.

For an instant the ancient porter blinked down the lane, and then with praiseworthy promptitude he started to pull the gates to frantically.

As it happened, he was not quite prompt enough. As he dragged at them, Arthur Augustus came bounding up, and dived desperately through the rapidly closing gap.

His hairy head took the petrified Taggles in the waist-coat, and Taggles doubled up, with a gasping howl of mingled fright and pain.

Arthur Augustus ambled on, pumped to the world now, but kept going by sheer desperation. The gravel drive from the gates was swarmed with fellows making their way indoors, but the moment Arthur Augustus appeared on the scene a remarkable transformation took place.

Warned by the tumult in the gateway where the yelling crowd had just appeared, the fellows looked round, saw the gorilla ambling towards them, and the next moment Arthur Augustus was in full possession of the drive.

He rolled along it like a ship in distress, and, passing under the old archway, entered the quadrangle. Without heeding the yells of his scattering schoolfellows, Arthur Augustus made for the School House steps.

At the top of the steps Kildare was chatting with Darrell and North. The chat ended abruptly, and the three seniors seemed to remember urgent business elsewhere. Kildare was the last to bolt, but even he did not feel equal to an argument with a gorilla.

There was a group of fellows chatting in the hallway, but they scattered like chaff before the wind as Arthur Augustus appeared suddenly in their midst. Bracing himself for a last desperate effort, Arthur Augustus bounded up the stairs two at a time, and made a bee-line for Study No. 6, with yells and howls of terror ringing out on all sides.

In the distant hallway he could hear the shouting of men, and he realised that the villagers had, invaded the sanctity of the school—apparently feeling the occasion justified.

Arthur Augustus did not think so, and he shuddered as he reflected what the Head would say and do. Someone would have to pay the piper, and that someone would be Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—if he were captured.

Arthur Augustus was determined not to be captured.

As he entered the Fourth Form passage a junior emerged from Study No. 2. It was a very fat junior—Baggy Trimble, to wit—and Arthur Augustus barged full into him, sending him head-over-heels back into Study No. 2 again.

"Yaroooooh!" howled Baggy Trimble.

As he went backwards Baggy Trimble glimpsed the dreadful form that had bowled him over, and the next instant shriek after shriek was echoing through the School House.

"Oh, bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

He dived into Study No. 6, slammed the door, and locked it. Then he blinked round the room desperately.

For the moment he was safe, but only for the moment. Already he could hear the tramp of heavy feet, numerous excited voices, and then he heard Trimble's terrified squeal.

"Oh-yow! Oh dear!" yelped Trimble. "It's gone into Study No. 6—I saw it. The beast bowled me over. Oh-yow!"

The sound of heavy feet came nearer—the voices came nearer. Fortunately, they came nearer very cautiously and slowly.

Trimble was still yelling almost incoherently, and D'Arcy realised he would have to do something quickly. Sooner or later the pursuers would gain courage, and attempt an entrance.

Arthur Augustus ran to the window and blinked out. He saw a squad of excited men, aided by Taggles, carrying a ladder across the green-carpeted quad towards the window he was at. A howl went up as he was sighted.

"Oh deah!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

The situation was serious in the extreme. He had gained the sanctuary of Study No. 6, but he wished now that he had gone up to the dormitories instead. To be found in the study, either with the skin on or off, made little difference. He had no clothes to change into, and he had nowhere to hide the skin, had he been able to get it off alone.

And then as he blinked frantically about him, something caught the eye of Arthur Augustus, and his heart leaped at sight of it.

It was one of the panels of the wall near the bookcase—a panel black with age, but looking just like the rest of the panelling.

But Arthur Augustus knew that it was not like the rest. It was a secret panel that had been discovered terms before by the chums of the School House. And though the Head had had it screwed up, and placed out of bounds, it had come in useful on more than one occasion to the juniors.

Arthur Augustus resolved that it should come in useful now. In a flash Arthur Augustus was across at the cupboard, and from it he took out a toolbox. It was the property of Blake, who was a bit of an amateur carpenter, and from it Gussy snatched a screwdriver.

He worked away until the perspiration streamed down his face, heedless of the clamour outside the study door. He heard excited voices right outside the door now, and then he heard the door-knob cautiously tried. He also heard the scrape of a ladder outside the window.

Another frantic second, and the last screw was out and flung under the table.

Arthur Augustus wrenched at the panel, and, after a moment of fierce struggle, it slid aside, revealing a yawning cavity, through which a cold draught blew.

"Thank goodness!" panted Arthur Augustus.

He slipped through the sliding panel, and instantly slid it home again with a click. And even as he did so a heavy crash came at the door of Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus heard it; he also heard the lock give way and the crashing back of the door. Then came a strained silence followed by an amazed yell.

"Gone!"

"It ain't 'ere at all, mister!"

"Gone!"

Behind the panelling, despite all he had gone through—despite his exhausted state of mind and body, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave vent to a chuckle; it was a deep chuckle. He could not help it.

CHAPTER 10.

A Warning From Knox!

"IT beats the band!" said Tom Merry.

"Beats it hollow!" agreed Jack Blake; and Herries and Digby and Lowther and Manners also agreed that it did.

The chums of the School House were standing in Study No. 6 when Tom made the remark, and almost unconsciously Tom glanced a trifle nervously round the room as he made it.

And it really was little wonder.

The escaped gorilla had been seen entering Study No. 6 without a doubt. Baggly Trimble had not been the only fellow to see it. Wildrake had seen it, and down in the quad Taggles and several villagers had seen its fierce visage at the window.

Yet when the door had been crashed open, and when Taggles had cautiously—very cautiously—blinked into the room through the window, it had been empty.

The gorilla had gone—vanished, seemingly, into thin air. It really was queer. As Tom Merry put it, it "beat the band."

When Tom Merry & Co. had arrived at the school they had found the place in an uproar, and they had found several men, including Mr. Raitton and Kildare and Darrell, and several other seniors, in Study No. 6.

They had searched the cupboards, and even looked up the

chimney, though how a gorilla could get in either place was rather a mystery. At all events, they had searched the study to no avail, and afterwards they had searched the whole house, even to the upper box-rooms, to no avail, excepting to discover that the escaped gorilla was certainly not in the building.

It really was queer.

At the same time, it was very comforting to know that the escaped gorilla—same or otherwise—was not in the building. Though fellows like Baggly Trimble, not feeling any too certain of that, locked themselves in their studies to make sure.

And now, all of them explaining volubly how wild they felt at not having had the chance to come to grips with the gorilla, the villagers and suchlike had departed from St. Jim's—greatly to the relief of the authorities—and leaving the old school seething with excitement.

In the studies in School House and New House nothing else was talked about but the invasion of St. Jim's by the escaped gorilla, and especially his remarkable disappearance again.

"It was the boxing gorilla, of course," said Tom Merry, wrinkling his brows thoughtfully. "It—it's no end queer, you fellows. I can't help thinking there was something jolly well curious about that blessed monkey. Old Gay thought so, too. You noticed how jolly intelligent it seemed, and how it could box?"

"I thought it jolly suspicious myself," said Manners, nodding.

"And another thing," went on Tom. "You saw how the beast knocked Gay about? Gay had lost his nerve, of course. But—but it strikes me that one of those blows from a real ape would have about killed old Gay stone dead."

"Well, it didn't, so what's the odds?" grinned Blake. "Anyway, what about tea, chaps? You fellows tea with us?"

"What a question!" remarked Lowther. "We're stony, and the cupboard's just like old Mother Hubbard's, only more so. Yes, we'll stay."

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's get down to it, then," said Blake. "Perhaps that awful ass Gussy will have come in by the time it's ready."

"Weally, Blake—" protested a well-known voice.

"What the thump—"

"Where the dickens—"

Blake, Herries, and Digby and Tom Merry & Co. jumped. It was the voice of Arthur Augustus, without a doubt, rather faint and stifled, but Gussy's voice without a doubt.

The juniors blinked round them in amazement.

The door was shut close; but it did not seem to come from beyond the closed door. It sounded faint and eerie, real as it obviously was.

"What the thump—" began Blake again.

He looked under the table. Drawing blank, he looked in the cupboard, top and bottom, though knowing it could not have sheltered Arthur Augustus.

It was really most mysterious. And then, while the bewildered juniors blinked at each other, the voice of Arthur Augustus came again, quite clearly this time.

"Weally, Jack Blake," it said indignantly, "I pwotest strongly against bein' referred to as an awful ass, bai Jove! Hovevah, that mattah can wait for the moment. Will you kindly oblige me by fastenin' the door, Jack Blake? You can easily do so by jammin' a chair beneath the knob. Yaas, wathah!"

"M-mum-my hat! Where the thump—"

"Pway huwwy, Blake! Cannot you see that it is imposs for me to wisk comin' out until the door is secually fastened?"

"What the— Oh!"

Blake saw it then, as did the others. Their eyes suddenly saw the slit in the panelling, and through the slit they glimpsed a dark figure. Even then, though they could see little, the juniors imagined it looked queer.

"Oh, you awful ass!" gasped Blake, glaring at the sliding panel—or, rather, the slit. "You awful ass to open that dashed panel, Gussy! The Head—"

"Kindly fasten that door, Blake!"

"Yes, but—"

"Wats!"

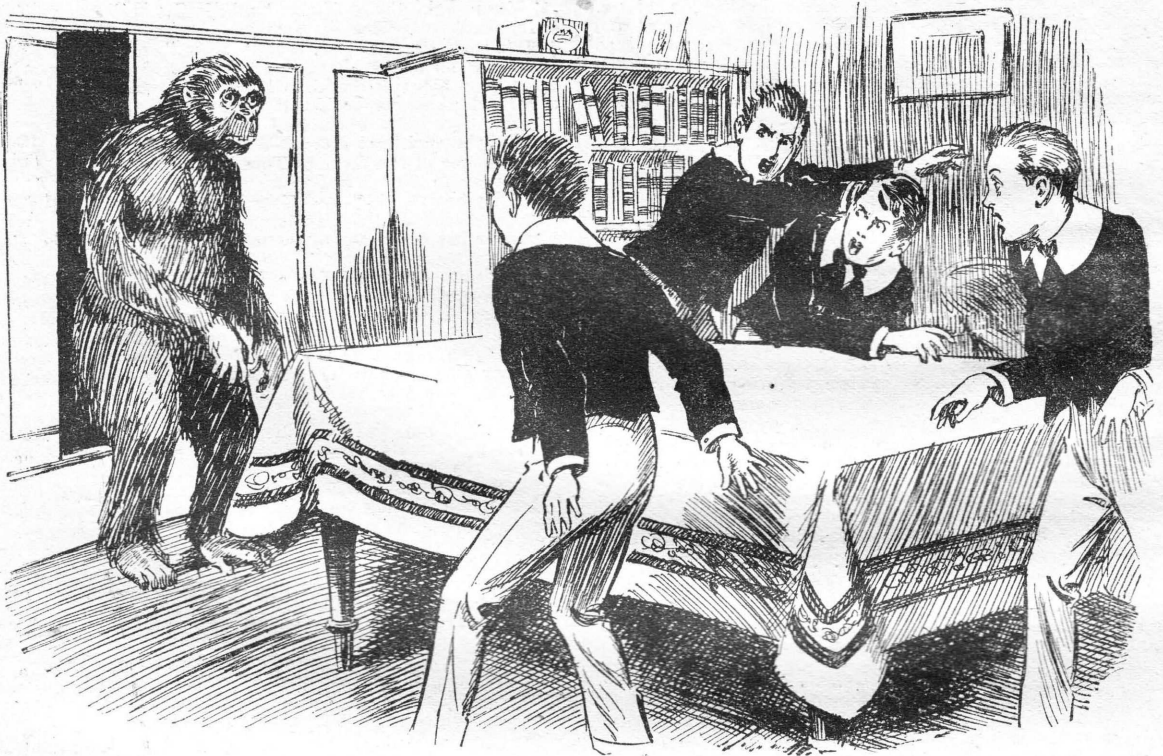
Arthur Augustus had lost patience. Forgetting the effect his strange appearance would have on his chums, Arthur Augustus slid back the panel and stepped out with dignity.

His chums saw nothing at all dignified about him.

The effect on them was electrical.

They yelled.

Tom Merry dived beneath the table, as did Blake and Herries. They collided in the centre, and there was another series of yells—of pain this time. Lowther and Manners ran round the table, meeting each other with a



Forgetting the effect his strange appearance would have on his chums, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy slid back the panel and stepped out into the study. The effect was electrical! A gorilla was a little too much even for Tom Merry & Co. to face! (See page 18.)

crash and crack as their heads met. They also yelled with pain. Digby was wiser than any of them; he made a desperate leap for the door.

But Arthur Augustus was there before him, and Digby howled and joined the struggling forms under the table.

The next moment Lowther and Manners had also joined them under the table.

Amidst gasps and yells of fear the alarmed juniors scrambled and struggled in a confused medley of arms and legs beneath the study table.

Tom Merry & Co. were plucky enough in the ordinary way, but a real live gorilla was too much of a good thing to face. They never even gave Gussy a thought in that horrible moment. The dreaded apparition had quite banished that hapless youth from their minds.

But even as they struggled thus, once again came the voice of Arthur Augustus.

"Weally, you fellows are funks, you know! You are worse than that silly fellow Punchah Barton! Yaas, wathah!"

"M-mum-my hat!"

In sheer amazement Tom Merry blinked under the tablecloth. He was just in time to see the "gorilla" calmly jamming a chair back under the knob of the door.

And as he stared in petrified astonishment the "gorilla" started fiddling with his head. After dragging at it for some moments the gorilla apparently pulled its own head off—revealing the face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

It was a very red face, streaked with dirt and perspiration. But it was the face of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom Merry blinked dazedly at it; the rest of the astounded juniors blinked at it. They had never been so astounded in their lives.

"Gussy!" breathed Tom Merry.

"Old Gussy!" choked Herries.

"That awful ass Gussy!" articulated Blake.

"Well, upon my word!"

Arthur Augustus grinned down at them. He was feeling much better now.

"Pway come out and help me out of this howwible dwees, you fellows!" he remarked cheerfully. "Weally, you know, you look like a gang of fwightened wabbits, bai Jove!"

The gang crawled from under the table. Then they stood and blinked at Arthur Augustus.

"Gussy!" gasped Blake faintly. "Is it really you? Well, my hat!"

"What does it mean?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "My hat! You weren't the blessed boxing gorilla, were you, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus chuckled and nodded.

"Yaas, wathah!" he said. "And nevah have I evah played such a wotten, howwible part in my life before! It was too howwible for words, deah boys!"

"You—you were boxing dressed up in that skin this afternoon, Gussy?" gasped Blake faintly.

"Yaas!"

"You took part in that awful swizz, Gussy?"

"Oh! Ah! Ahem! Well, yaas! But——"

"You awful fraud!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"Fancy Gussy helping in a swizz like that! Well, upon my word!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

Arthur Augustus went pink.

"You—you awful fathead!" gasped Blake. "This comes of losing sight of you! You not only get into trouble all round, but you lose what shred of—of integrity you possessed."

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, it isn't as bad as that, I fancy," grinned Tom Merry, still gazing curiously at the extraordinary figure. "But, for goodness' sake, tell us what it all means, Gussy, you ass!"

Arthur Augustus blinked, in no little distress, at his chums. Blake's remarks regarding a "swizz" had only confirmed his own secret fears regarding what he had done.

"I will vevy soon do that, deah boys," he said quietly.

"And when you have heard the weason, I wathah fancy that you will agvee that the end justifies the means—or, wathah, that common gwatitute obliged me to act as I did; and that my integrity has not suffahed undah the circs. Your wemarks, Blake——"

"Oh, cut the cackle and get to the hosses!" snorted Blake, who was eyeing his chum fixedly. "What the thump did you play the silly game for, Gussy?"

"I will tell you," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

And he was just about to tell them when an interruption occurred.

In the passage sounded a heavy tread, and next instant the door-knob rattled. It was followed by a harsh, well-known voice—the unwelcome voice of Knox of the Sixth.

"Open the door at once! Do you hear?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh, by Jove!"

The juniors blinked at each other in sudden alarm. Arthur Augustus remembered suddenly his appearance, and he dived under the table. The next moment Knox placed his shoulder to the door and put his weight against it. The chair happened to be insecurely fixed, and as the door flew open, sending the chair flying, Knox stepped quickly into the room.

CHAPTER 11. Very Strange!

HERE was a silence for several seconds. Tom Merry & Co. trembled lest Knox's glowering eyes should fall upon the hairy form of Arthur Augustus under the table. The tablecloth, luckily, fell low, but quite a lot of the gorilla's hairy skin was in view, for all that.

And plainly Knox was suspicious—very suspicious. It was not often juniors, either, locked their study doors, and this fact made the suspicious prefect very suspicious indeed. His eyes roved round the room and searched the faces of the juniors.

Luckily, Arthur Augustus had slid back the sliding panel when he left it; and, luckily also, Knox never once looked towards the floor.

"Well," he snapped, "what thundering game are you up to now? You didn't fasten that door for nothing!"

"Do you really wish to know, Knox?" asked Lowther anxiously.

"I'm asking you, aren't I?" snarled Knox.

"Well, it's like this," explained Lowther sweetly, "there are one or two fellows at St. Jim's—only one or two, luckily—who have been dragged up so badly that they never think of knocking at a study door before entering. And we fastened the door like that to prevent the nosy, ill-mannered bounders from barging in. See?"

Knox, the prefect, did see. One of his little failings—and one that added to his unpopularity—was the trick of charging into junior studies without knocking. He had not knocked on this occasion, in fact.

He glowered at Lowther as if he contemplated knocking that cheery joker to the floor. But he controlled himself, and said instead:

"Take a hundred lines, Lowther, for insolence!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Lowther.

He felt that his little chaff had cost him dearly.

"I knew your kids were up to some game or other!" snapped Knox, glaring round him again. "Smoking, I expect—as you were this afternoon on the fair-ground, you little sweeps!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Were we smoking on the fair-ground? First I've heard about it, anyway, Knox."

Knox grinned—it was an unpleasant grin.

"You can tell that to Railton," he said grimly. "Come along—you three Shell fellows, I mean, not the others."

The Terrible Three stared at him.

"Eh? Follow you to Railton?" asked Tom blankly. "But what for? What on earth do you mean, Knox?"

"I mean what I say," said Knox coolly. "You were smoking on the fair-ground this afternoon, my pippins! You even had the dashed cheek to have your photos taken with fags in your cheeky mouths! That's what Railton's going to talk to you about now. Come along!"

And Knox—greatly to the relief of Arthur Augustus under the table, and the others also—marched out, signing to the Terrible Three to follow.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom blankly. "What is the fellow gassing about?"

"Is he serious?" gasped Manners. "Shall we follow the cad?"

"Better had!" grunted Tom Merry. "This is the limit! I don't like—"

Tom Merry paused as Knox popped his head back into the room again.

"If you don't follow me this instant I shall go and report to Railton that you refuse to come!" he said.

Knox was serious, without a doubt. And the Terrible Three exchanged blank looks with Blake & Co. and followed Knox. That senior led the way to the headmaster's study. Mr. Railton had just finished his tea, apparently, and he looked slightly annoyed at Knox.

"Well, Knox?" he said coldly.

"I'm sorry to bother you, sir," said Knox. "But I have brought these three juniors to you on rather a serious charge."

"What is the charge, Knox?"

"Smoking, sir—smoking on the fair-ground on Wayland Common. I happened to be there by chance this afternoon, and I caught them."

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton.

He looked at the Terrible Three in a very surprised manner.

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"You caught them, Knox?" asked Mr. Railton, as if he could scarcely believe his ears.

"Well, I as good as caught them," explained Knox. "There is no doubt about it, however—unfortunately. The three boys actually dared to have their photographs taken at a freak photographer's with cigarettes in their mouths."

"Oh, indeed!" ejaculated Mr. Railton. "That is certainly surprising, Knox. Well," he added, turning a sharp glance at the faces of Tom Merry & Co., "what have you to say to that, boys?"

"It isn't true, sir," said Tom Merry calmly.

"It's all rot, sir!" said Manners indignantly.

"Knox has made one of his usual—ahem!—mistakes, sir," said Lowther meekly.

A twinkle appeared for a brief instant in the Housemaster's eyes, and he turned abruptly on Knox.

"Merry, Lowther, and Manners deny the charge, Knox," he said, rather dryly. "Have you proof of what you claim? I know the reputations of these three boys well, and I certainly can scarcely credit that they have been caught smoking. Are you sure you are not making a mistake, Knox?"

"Certainly not, sir!" said Knox, biting his lips. "I have not the proof with me at the moment, but—"

"Did you actually see them smoking, Knox?"

"Well, I did not actually see them, sir," admitted Knox.

"But—I happen to know that they had their photographs taken smoking."

"You can prove that, Knox?"

"Certainly, sir," smiled Knox. "I have not a print of the photo with me now; but the photographer has promised to post one to the Head to-night, sir."

"You have asked him to do so?" said Mr. Railton, frowning.

"Yes, sir. I felt it my duty to take the matter up. I warned the photographer not to allow that sort of thing again, and I asked him to forward a print to the Head so that the culprits could be made an example of."

"Oh, did you?" said the Housemaster, in any but a pleased tone of voice. "It would have been wiser if you had brought the matter to me to deal with, Knox; you should not have bothered the headmaster. However, it is done now. It is useless for me to attempt to deal with the matter now—until the Head receives the—er—proofs, at all events. Merry, Manners, and Lowther, you may go for the time being. In the morning, you may be sent for to answer the charge before Dr. Holmes."

He nodded to the juniors, and they left the study with looks of bewilderment on their faces.

What it meant they could only conjecture. It seemed scarcely possible that even Knox would bring such a trumped-up charge against them, unless he had proofs, or believed he had them or could get them.

It was really most extraordinary.

It was rather disturbing, also. Knox's attitude was one of supreme confidence, and this fact made the juniors rather uneasy. They certainly had clear consciences on the matter, but—what did it mean? Had an enemy been at work? Was there some deep plot behind the strange affair?

It almost seemed so, certainly.

Almost dazedly, they returned to Study No. 6. They found the door fastened on the inside again, but after a word from Tom, it was cautiously opened, and they squeezed in.

They soon saw why. Arthur Augustus had discarded his gorilla attire and was donning a suit of Etons, apparently fetched from the dormitory by one of his chums.

"Well?" inquired Blake, eyeing the faces of the Terrible Three curiously. "What was Knox's gaffe?"

"A jolly queer one," said Tom glumly.

And he explained what had taken place in the Housemaster's apartment.

Blake & Co. listened in astonishment.

"And you didn't smoke at all?" asked Blake, grinning.

"Of course not, you ass!"

"Not even a chocolate cigarette?" asked Herries.

"Or a herbal cigarette—just for a lark?" asked Digby.

"No. Don't talk rot!"

"Well, it's strange!" exclaimed Blake, shaking his head rather soberly. "Knox wouldn't do that for nothing. Looks to me as if someone's trying to put you in the soup—though I'm blessed if I can see just why. We've just cleared up one giddy mystery; and now there's this!"

"My hat! I was forgetting about old Gussy," grinned Tom Merry. "Well, what's your giddy explanation, old chap? You were just going to tell us when Knoxy chipped in."

"Sing it over again to them, Gussy!" urged Herries.

"I shall certainly do so," said Arthur Augustus, rather coldly. "I am vewy desiruous that Tom Mewwy should not misjudge my actions, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus launched out into the explanation as to why he had taken the part of the "boxing gorilla" for that

eventful afternoon. The detailing of the story reminded the juniors of the events in the cage, of the redoubtable Puncher's downfall, and of Gordon Gay's Waterloo, and they chuckled explosively.

"So that's it!" said Tom Merry, trying not to grin, but failing. "Well, you deserve a putty medal for putting that cheeky rotter, Gay, in his place, anyway, Gussy. And as for that chap, Gubbins—well, I can't say I blame you; in fact, I think I should have done the same myself."

"Hear, hear!"

"The plucky chap certainly saved your bacon, Gussy, and he must be a jolly decent sort, swizz or no swizz," said Tom Merry frankly. "But—my only topper! What an afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors looked at the blushing Arthur Augustus, and then they yelled with laughter. The events on the fair-ground, the rout of the challengers, and Gussy's mad fight with the yelling crowd in chase, followed by the uproar and wild excitement at St. Jim's over the "escaped gorilla," came back to Gussy's chums, and they roared.

Arthur Augustus eyed them rather frigidly.

"I confess," he remarked icily, "that I uttably fail to see any cause for hilawity. It was a howwible affiah ffrom beginnin' to end. I have nevah had such an awful time in my life befoah. Nevertheless, I do not wegwet the step I took, and I look upon your hilawity with contempt, bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"You would have had cause to regret it, my lad," gurgled Tom Merry, "if you hadn't managed to get through that sliding panel in time. You're not out of the wood yet, either. You'd better hide that dashed gorilla-skin somewhere, and take it back to-morrow!"

Arthur Augustus eyed his chums serenely.

"You appeal to be labouwin' undah a misapprehension," he said, with calm dignity. "I do not considah that I have ended my caweer of boxin' gowilla until Mr. Gubbins is fit to wesume his job—not in this distwict, at all events. I ppropose to have my tea, and then I am takin' back the skin, in ordah to wear it at this evenin's performance. Unpleasant as the pwspect is, I shall not faltah ffrom what I considah to be my duty."

"Great Scott!"

"But, you mad hatter—"

"I have quite made up my mind," said Arthur Augustus, waving his hand. "Nothin' you can say or do will make me change my mind. Perhaps some of you will be good enough to get tea weady while I am makin' myself pwsentable once more."

And with that, having already hidden the bulky gorilla-skin in the cupboard, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched from the room with his noble head in the air, en route for the bath-rooms and a much-needed wash.

CHAPTER 12.

Not Necessary!

THERE was trouble in Study No. 6 that tea-time—as there usually was when Arthur Augustus "took the bit between his teeth" and got "on the high horse," as Lowther humorously put it.

Neither the Terrible Three nor Blake, Herries, and Digby liked the idea of Arthur Augustus taking such a risk again. And they did their utmost to dissuade their chum from his self-chosen martyrdom.

But it was useless. Pleadings and threats were of no avail. Though D'Arcy's loving chums agreed that it was jolly hard lines on Mr. Gubbins, and that Arthur Augustus certainly owed him a deep debt of gratitude, they did not at all approve of the course Arthur Augustus was taking.

Had they been in his place, they all agreed they might have done the same. But they were different, as they were careful to explain to Arthur Augustus, greatly to the youth's wrath. They were not likely to make such a muck of things as had Arthur Augustus that afternoon.

"And it will be worse to-night," warned Blake. "You won't have the luck you had this afternoon, my lad! All the hefty chaps from the works at Wayland will be there to-night, and you'll get smashed to little bits."

"I shall not allow myself to be smashed to little bits, Blake," said Arthur Augustus haughtily. "Pway pass the jam, and do not be wedic."

Blake passed the jam, breathing hard as he did so.

"If Gussy's determined to go," said Tom Merry, "then there's only one thing to be done. Potty as Gussy undoubtedly is, we cannot allow him to be smashed up."

"Certainly not," agreed Blake. "What would we do without his fivers?"

"And where would we go when we wanted to borrow a quid?" asked Lowther gravely. "We shouldn't miss Gussy himself, of course, but we should miss his quids."

"Yes, rather."

"Bai Jove! Weally, you feahful—"

"As I say," proceeded Tom Merry, "there's only one thing to be done, and that is that we shall all go with Gussy to-night—that is, if he really has made up the thing he calls a mind."

"I have quite made up my mind, Tom Mewwy."

"Very well. Then we'll make ours up to go, too," said Tom Merry. "And my idea is this, chaps. After Gussy has his exhibition bout with that thin chap in tights, we'll accept the challenge one after the other—just to keep any dashed bruisers from tackling Gussy and smashing him. How's that?"

"Jolly good!" said Blake heartily. "It will only be necessary for one of us, though, I fancy. Any of us could easily keep Gussy on the go for the length of the performance—or for a month for that matter."

"Bai Jove, Blake, you—"

"Shut up, Gussy, and let us settle our plan," said Blake severely. "Aren't we trying to save you from the dreadful results of your reckless folly? Well, we'll settle on that, chaps. No knocking Gussy about, of course. Just handle him gently, and pretend to let him hit us now and again for the sake of effect."

"That's it! Understand, Gussy, old chap?"

Arthur Augustus gazed at the grinning faces of his loving chums and breathed hard—very hard.

He controlled himself with a mighty effort.

"I am well aware that you are attemptin' to pull my leg, you wottahs," he said calmly. "But you will vewy soon discover that the weseults will be the othah way about. I have not the slightest objection to you fellows doin' as you pwspose. I shall just dispatch you one affah another, and your intervention will make little difference to the length of the pprogwamme; it will meahly enhance the pworess and pwestige of the gowilla boxah."

"Oh, my hat!"

After that there was no more to be said. All the juniors agreed upon that. Arthur Augustus had evidently got a "swelled head"—probably as a result of his success in the ring that afternoon.

At all events, tea ended quite amiably, Blake and the rest having agreed to let Gussy run on. They also—privately—agreed to carry out Tom Merry's idea when the time came. They had little fear of Arthur Augustus dispatching them "one affah another"—great fighting man as he undoubtedly was.

And when, after roll-call, Arthur Augustus stealthily left the School House—breaking bounds by way of the playing-fields—Tom Merry & Co. and Gussy's own personal chums were with him, and they took it in turns to carry the bag containing the gorilla-skin to Wayland Common.

Dusk was already deepening into darkness, but they crossed the shadowy fields in safety, and at last the glare and dazzle of the fair-ground came in sight and the brazen strains of the steam-organ struck on their ears.

Headless of the jollity about them, Arthur Augustus led the way without delay to Mr. Joe Gubbins' living-van and knocked on the door. It opened to reveal Mr. Joe Gubbins himself, a big sock enveloping his sprained ankle.

His dismal features brightened up at sight of Arthur Augustus and the bag.

"So 'ere you are at last, young sir!" he gasped, eyeing the bag anxiously. "I was afearad as something 'ad happened to you—something serious. And right glad I be to see you safe and sound, young gent. You—you've got the skin?" he added in a strained whisper, with a glance at the juniors behind Gussy.

"Yaas, wathah, Mr. Gubbins," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "Eweythin' is quite all wight, deah boy. I am only sowwy if my absence has caused you any distwess. Howevah, heah I am, weady to take the wing again."

Mr. Joe Gubbins clapped Arthur Augustus on the back heartily.

"I reckon you are the right sort of a young gent," he exclaimed warmly. "You got me outer a nice hole this arternoon, and you made a rare good job of it. All the town is talking about the boxin' gopilla, and I reckon as we'll 'ave record houses arter this. I reckon as I'm rare thankful to you, young gent. You're a sport, you are."

"Pway don't mention it, Mr. Gubbins," returned Arthur Augustus gracefully. "I only did what I considahed my duty undah the circs. And I shall go on doin' so as long as you are incapacitated."

Mr. Gubbins grinned, and pointed with his pipe into the interior of the van. On one of the bunks a man was sitting—a man whose features were vaguely familiar to the juniors. They felt certain they had seen him in Wayland. He was a very "beefy" individual, and he sported a broken nose, and had "retired pug" written all over him.

"This 'ere gent is an old pal of mine," grinned Mr. Gubbins. "He keeps the Pig and Whistle over in Wayland now, though he was a pro pug when I knowed him. He

happened to come over to-night, and when I told 'im what a hole I were in he kindly offered to take on the job—if only you brought that there skin back. Well, you 'ave brought it back, and now it ain't necessary for you to run no more risks for me, young gent. I'm rare grateful for what you've done, and don't you forget it."

"Oh, thank goodness!" breathed Jack Blake.

Arthur Augustus said nothing regarding his feelings, though the look of utter relief on his noble features told without words.

"Bai Jove, I am vewy glad to heah that, Mr. Gubbins!" he said. "Heah is the skin, and I twust that ewevythin' will go well with you and that you will once again accept my gwateful thanks for what you did this aftahnoon."

And Arthur Augustus bowed gracefully and was about to turn away, when Mr. Gubbins gave a sudden start as though he had just remembered something.

"'Ere, hold on!" he said excitedly. "I was durned near forgettin' summut as I wanted to tell you—summut as concerns three of you gents, I reckon. Did three of you gents 'ave your photos took at Flash Steve's this arternoon?"

"Why, yes," said Tom Merry, nodding at Lowther and Manners. "These two and myself did, Mr. Gubbins. Why do—"

"And did you three young gents happen to be the young gents as helped chuck Flash Steve back inter his show?"

"Yes," said Tom, chuckling, "we took part in that."

"Then someone—or some of your own skulefellers—'as been tryin' to do the dirty on you," said Mr. Gubbins grimly. "It's like this, young gents. I reckon as you didn't know as my son—the big 'un—is assistant to Flash Steve—helps him with the photos like?"

"We know it now," said Tom, smiling.

"Well," went on Mr. Gubbins in a still grimmer tone, "young Sam comes home for 'is tea with a fine yarn this arternoon. He tells me—indignant like—as three young gents from your skule—foxy young fellers, he said they were—came inter his show arter that there rumpus and arks Steve if he'd like to get his own back on the young gents as downed 'im. Naturally, always 'aving been a spiteful bloke, Steve says yes—if he were paid to do it."

"My hat!"

"Well, they comes to terms at last, and these three gents as weren't no gents 'ad their photos took with cigarettes in their hands, and Flash Steve undertook to have you young gents' faces, like, shoved on their bodies—you know what I mean—a faked photograph as would show you three young gents smoking cigarettes when you never 'ad smoked cigarettes at all."

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"So—so that's it!" breathed Tom Merry. "So—so that's the meaning of that Knox business. Great pip!"

"Oh, the cads!"

"Racke, Crooke, and Mellish for a pension!" said Lowther.

"No doubt about that!"

Mr. Joe Gubbins grinned cheerfully at the sensation his story was arousing.

"I see you young gents 'ave seen through the game," he grinned. "Well, Flash Steve did it all right, and one of the young rascals paid him a quid ter do it, and another young feller—a bigger chap as come arterwards—paid him summut to send on a print to your headmaster at the skule."

"Knox!" breathed Tom Merry, setting his lips. "And—has that rascal Flashley posted one to our Head?"

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, great pip!"

"But you got no need to worry, young gents!" grinned Mr. Gubbins. "You see, my son Sam happens to be a sport—a bloke as won't 'ave no truck with dirty work like that there. And he thought he'd take it on hisself to teach those young rascals a sharp lesson how to play the game. So arter Flash Steve 'ad shoved the print into the envelope, young Sam had a go at it unbeknown to him. And—well, the print as was posted to your headmaster to-night was a print showing them clever, crafty young rascals smoking cigarettes—jest as they was took in the first place."

"Oh!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, well—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

As the point of Mr. Gubbins' story struck home, the chums of the School House at St. Jim's doubled up and simply howled with laughter. Angry and disgusted as they were, the end of the sad story proved too much for them, and they roared.

And they were still roaring when, after bidding a hearty farewell to Mr. Gubbins, and promising to visit him on the

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morrow, they started back for St. Jim's. Mr. Gubbins had tried to urge them to stay to see the show, but the juniors wisely decided to make tracks for home. All agreed that the sooner they reached their studies before their absence was discovered the better.

"Well," remarked Arthur Augustus as they hurried back across the dark fields, "I told you fellows so, didn't I?"

"My hat! Did you?"

"You can always wely upon me to do the wight thing, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I think I have often remarked to you youngstahs that you can always twust to my tact and judgment, bai Jove! Now, if I had not done the wight thing in takin' the gowilla's part, Tom Mewwy and Mannabs and Lowthah would have been in feahful twouble. Yaas, wathah!"

"Rot! You silly dummy, that had nothing at all to do with it. The chap was a decent chap, and he—"

"Wubbish, Blake! He was gwateful for what I had done for his patah, and he natuwallly wepaid the debt in that way."

And Arthur Augustus insisted that that was the correct reason, and, not being in the mood to squabble, his chums grinned and let it go at that. They not only grinned, but they roared—but not always at Arthur Augustus. They were thinking of the coming interview in the Head's study in the morning, and of the surprise in store for Gerald Knox—and especially for those shady plotters, Racke, Crooke, and Mellish. And they were still laughing when they stole into their respective studies in the School House—having successfully run the gauntlet without being spotted. Nor had they apparently been missed.

Several times in the Common-room, and on the way up to the dormitory that evening, Tom Merry & Co. noted Racke & Co. looking at them with grinning faces. And to Racke & Co.'s surprise, the Terrible Three grinned cheerily back at them.

They were soon to know why.

CHAPTER 13.

Hoist with their own Petard!

"COME in!"

It was the Head's deep voice, and, pushing the door of the Head's study open, Tom Merry led Lowther and Manners inside the usually dreaded apartment.

But this time the apartment was not dreaded by the Terrible Three. Far from that being the case, the Terrible Three had cheery faces, and they looked as if they were about to witness something comic instead of something tragic—as was more often the case.

It was after nine the following morning. As he had stated, Mr. Railton had reported the matter to Dr. Holmes, and in his turn Knox had also reported the matter to Dr. Holmes. And now the Terrible Three were about to go before Dr. Holmes for trial.

They certainly did not look like fellows up for trial.

As they entered the room, Dr. Holmes looked at their cheery, healthy faces in some surprise. Knox also looked at their faces in some surprise—and not a little uneasiness.

He had expected Tom Merry & Co. to look pale and fearful; he had certainly not expected cheery smiles from them.

Mr. Railton eyed them very grimly. What was passing in his keen mind could only be guessed at. But he was the only one—excepting the Terrible Three—who did not seem surprised at what came afterwards.

Before opening the proceedings Dr. Holmes ran through a little pile of unopened letters on his table. He selected one at last, and, picking up his paper-knife he slit it open and drew out a small photograph.

He looked at it, and then he gave a sudden start. After a sharp look at Knox, he turned the photo face downwards on his desk.

"Knox," he began coldly, "you reported these three boys, Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell Form, as being the boys you claim were smoking on the Wyland Fair-ground yesterday?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Knox promptly.

"You are quite sure these were the boys?"

"Absolutely, sir."

"The boys whose photograph that—that itinerant photographer promised to send on to me this morning?"

"Certainly, sir," smiled Knox.

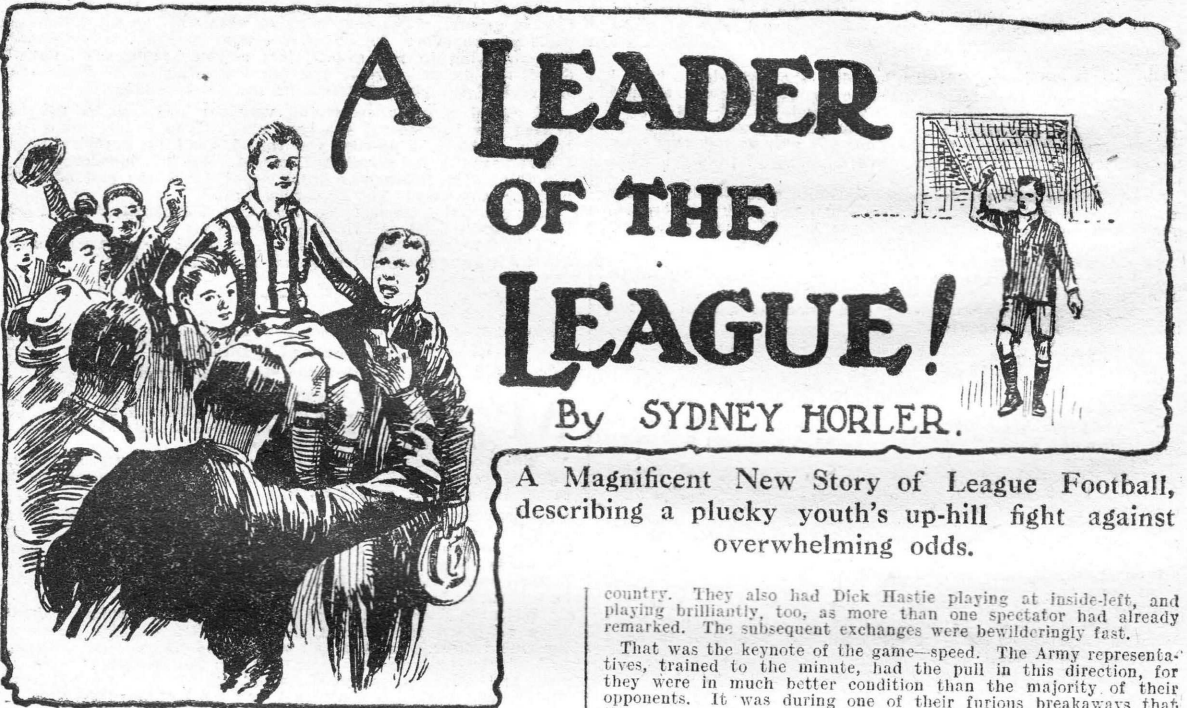
"You have no other proof that these were the boys?" demanded the Head, nodding to the Terrible Three.

"Oh, no, sir! But I think that," smiled Knox, pointing to the photograph on the desk, "is enough proof, sir. Don't you think so, sir?"

"No; I do not think so, Knox!" snapped the Head bitingly. "Have you seen this—this wretched photograph, Knox?"

(Continued on page 27.)

HARD KNOCKS! Dick Hastie thrills at the sound of the whistle, fairly revels in the hard knocks of a keenly-contested footer match. He finds, however, there are some nasty knocks to be picked up off the footer pitch. But you'll never see him flinch!



A LEADER OF THE LEAGUE!

By SYDNEY HORLER.

A Magnificent New Story of League Football, describing a plucky youth's up-hill fight against overwhelming odds.

CHAPTER 1.

A Coming International!

"WELL played! Oh, well played, sir!" What the crowd lacked in size, it made up in enthusiasm. Cheers sounded continuously as the justly famous forward line of the Bohemians, the finest amateur team of the country, went sweeping down the field again on one of their dangerous raids.

The Bohemians, the crack London amateur club, were playing a picked side representative of the Army, and the game right from the start had been fast and occasionally brilliant. Particular attention had been forced to the Bohemians' left wing, which, by wonderful concerted play, had evoked the plaudits of the enthusiastic spectators time after time. This left wing, the most brilliant by far on the field, was the Bohemians' particular pride and joy, and had been so since the commencement of the season.

The inside forward now came weaving a path through the Army defence, controlling the ball with a suave surety that was fascinating to watch. After beating two opponents, he proved he was far more than a mere individualist by sweeping out a perfect pass to his partner, who snapped it up as joyfully as a dog snatches a bone.

The outside-left had little to do; practically all the work had been performed for him. All that was required of him was to outpace his back—which he did—and then send over a good centre. So good was this cross that the centre-forward's final task was also easy; the ball coming straight and true to his right foot, he simply had to drive past the outstretched hands of the Army goalkeeper. The goal was credited to the Bohemians' centre-forward, but amongst those who knew it was generally admitted that the priceless point really was the work of the inside-left.

"He's a coming International, young Hastie is!" remarked one of the enthusiasts, who were vigorously pounding their hands. "One day young Dick Hastie will be playing for England! Now, you mark my words if he isn't!"

There seemed no one disposed to dispute the statement, startling as it was. Indeed, "young Hastie," the subject of this high eulogy, looked a footballer as well as played like one. Standing five feet nine inches, he carried himself with the easy grace of the youth born to play games. Craftsmanship showed in every move he made; he could bring a ball, no matter how awkwardly it came, into instant subjection with a mere flick of either boot; he had a natural swerve which carried him past opponents at a pace that left them standing, and how deftly true was his shooting had already been proved by those three smashing drives of his, two of which had shivered the crossbar, whilst the other had made the whole framework of the goal shake when it thudded against the far upright. A few inches difference, and each of those three shots would have been bound to score!

1-0 in the Bohemians' favour!

The football duel waged more fiercely than ever after the Army had sustained the opening reverse. This annual fixture between the Army XI and the famous Bohemians was always fought out with the most desperate keenness, if characteristic good sportsmanship, and the present game was no exception to the rule.

The crowd had their fill of thrills. There were three Amateur Internationals playing for the Army, whilst the Bohemians boasted two players who, as amateurs, had likewise been honoured by their

country. They also had Dick Hastie playing at inside-left, and playing brilliantly, too, as more than one spectator had already remarked. The subsequent exchanges were bewilderingly fast.

That was the keynote of the game—speed. The Army representatives, trained to the minute, had the pull in this direction, for they were in much better condition than the majority of their opponents. It was during one of their furious breakaways that the scores were equalised, for the outside-right, receiving on the half-way line, simply stormed past the Bohemians' left back, and then, cutting inwards, literally hurled himself and the ball into the net at one and the same time.

The tension, both of players and spectators, was now greater than ever. Half-time was drawing near, and, in the desire to achieve a lead before the breather, both sides redoubled their efforts.

Just five minutes before the interval, with a shouted "Dick!" the Bohemians' skipper, playing at centre-half, emerged from a melee with the ball at his toes. He shook off yet another opponent by means of a vigorous shoulder-charge, and then spurned the ball forward.

"On your own!" he shouted.

He could have saved his breath. The young inside-left had already taken careful stock of the position. He knew he was faster than the centre-forward, and in a much more favourable position than the outside-left. He decided to make this a single-handed attempt to put his team ahead.

By the time the half-back came plunging at him, he was on his way, the ball tucked snugly at his toes, and with every fibre, nerve, and muscle taut. Dick Hastie going into action was a stimulating sight, and the crowd burst into a fresh orgy of cheering.

Hastie foiled the half-back by pretending to stumble over the ball, and then recovering himself so quickly that his opponent was left amazed. Then, dribbling on at express speed, he swerved past the Army right back—a young lieutenant-colonel, by the way—like a train. Before the defender could recover either his surprise or his position, Hastie was standing in front of the Army goal.

This was the testing-time. A sure sign of a born footballer is his ability to keep his head in front of goal—when the time has come to apply the finishing touch to all the good work he has done before. Poor finishing is the curse of modern football. What the great football crowds of this country passionately demand are goals, and only a player who possesses the inestimable faculty of keeping his head when he approaches the rival goalkeeper with the ball at his toes can supply this desperate want.

Dick Hastie showed that he possessed it by neatly side-stepping the burly Army goalkeeper as he came rushing from his lair, and whipping the ball into the net at one and the same time.

Delirium reigned amongst the Bohemians' supporters as the lead was thus regained, and the cheers were still sounding when the referee's whistle called the players to the dressing-room beneath the small stand.

Dick Hastie was making his way towards the dressing-room with the last of the Bohemians when he felt his elbow nudged. Turning round, he saw a man wearing a sporting-looking bowler-hat keeping pace with him. This man was eyeing him keenly.

"My card, Mr. Hastie," he said, thrusting a piece of pasteboard into the hand of the astonished footballer. "I'll be wanting to see you after. You won't disappoint me, will you? It may be well worth your while, and, anyway, no harm can be done. That was a fine goal you've just scored, young man; and when I tell you that it's my job in life trying to find young fellows who can score just such fine goals as the one you've just got, maybe you'll guess my business beforehand. But there'll be no harm in that. When the match is over, I'll take the liberty of knocking at the dressing-room door for you."

With these final words, the mystery man—for such he was to the young footballer—politely raised his hat and slipped away.

"What's the rumpus, old boy? Come into a fortune, or going to be arrested after the game for killing a goalkeeper?"

Tommy Durrance, Dick's greatest pal in the team, the outside-right, asked the question jokingly. He was not able to resist smiling at the bewildered expression which was so plainly visible on Dick Hastie's face.

"I don't quite know, old man," replied the inside-left. "All I do know is that that fellow with the light-grey bowler stopped me just now, pushed his card into my hand, said it was a good goal I had just scored, and added that he was going to take the liberty of calling on me after the game was over to talk over some business or other. Jolly queer, isn't it, Tommy? I don't know the chap from Adam!"

"You precious innocent!" laughed Durrance uproariously. "Have a look at the man's card, and then you'll get your eyes opened, unless I'm very much mistaken. What do you think that chap is?" Tommy added, with a quizzical look at his pal.

"I haven't the faintest notion," said Dick Hastie. And then, recalling the other's advice, he looked at the card he held in his hand.

As he read his eyes threatened to fall out of his cheeks. As one mesmerised, he repeated what he saw:

"MR. J. B. TOVEY,
The Swifts Football Club,
Torrington High Street, N."

"Now do you know what Mr. J. B. Tovey wants to see you about after the game?" demanded Durrance, chucking once more.

"Hanged if I can think!" Hastie evidently spoke in most complete sincerity, and Tommy Durrance shook his head sorrowfully over such crass stupidity. Good chap as he was, Dick Hastie seemed hopeless.

By this time the two had reached the door of the dressing-room, and, flinging this open, Durrance declaimed dramatically:

"Boys, those who have tears prepare to shed them now! We are about to lose our esteemed colleague, Dick Hastie! A football scout from the famous Swifts has just whispered honeyed words into his ear, thrust his visiting-card into his hand, and threatens to give him a call at this dressing-room after the match is over! What do you think about it all? Ain't it wonderful to be a player of real genius?"

"Ass! Shut up!" roared Dick Hastie, flushing in the wildest confusion.

"He may get a thick ear if he turns up here!" This from Sandilands, the Bohemians' skipper and centre-half. "Hang it all!" he went on to exclaim fretfully. "Why can't these professional teams leave us alone? Do they want to hog every decent footballer in sight?"

"I'm afraid so. Next week I expect to be considering half a dozen offers myself."

Tommy Durrance made a motion with his hands as though he was pushing aside the riches of the world.

"But, seriously, you ass," replied Sandilands angrily, "this sort of thing is becoming a little too thick! Only last month we lost Blackford to Aston Villa. He was the best half we have ever had—with all due respect to present company, myself included—or are ever likely to have. And now there's a chance of you going, Hastie—"

"I haven't said so, Sandy," responded the inside-left. "Up till now the whole thing is a complete mystery to me. I have never

seen this man before to-day, neither have I ever had any communication with him. This yarn has been made up by Durrance, the silly ass! Mr. Tovey, or whatever his blessed name is, hasn't made me any offer, nor is he likely to make me one!"

"H'm! I wouldn't bet on it!" commented the Bohemians' captain grimly. "The only thing is, what will you say if he does make you an offer? That's what I want to know. It's the very dickens trying to run a high-class amateur team these days!" Sandilands growled afresh, and brooded darkly as he flung away the rind of the piece of lemon he had been sucking.

"I should consider everything very carefully, Sandy, not forgetting how jolly decent you have always been to me," said Dick Hastie. "And I'll promise you this—I don't do anything unless I like your full and unqualified consent. But it's ridiculous talking like this! The fellow may be an agent for a new pair of footer boots or something! There's nothing in it."

And yet within an hour the man who had thrust his card into the forward's hand at half-time was saying:

"Listen to me! Take my advice, do what I want you to do, and I'll make you an International within two years!"

"The Chance of a Lifetime!"

MR. J. B. TOVEY, representing the Swifts F.C.—for so the card said—had kept his promise. Directly the game with the Army had finished he knocked politely at the door of the Bohemians' dressing-room.

"Will you kindly tell Mr. Hastie that Mr. Tovey is waiting for him outside?" he said; and, with a satisfied smile on his rather fattish face, moved away.

If there were no mishaps, Mr. Tovey was congratulating himself that he had done a good stroke of business that day. He had arrived on the ground quite by chance, but it was by the most deliberate design that he had remained. When he thought of the football craft there was in the youth for whom he was waiting he rubbed his hands with glee.

"What did I tell you?" said Sandilands, the Bohemians' skipper, when he heard the message that was given to Dick Hastie by the club trainer. "If you had only played rottenly in the second half you might have put the fellow off; but as you got another goal, and played a perfect 'blinder' all the way through—well, slip on your togs, and come back and tell me the worst!"

Sandilands was overwrought. Even his joy at defeating the Army by three goals to one was forgotten in his annoyance at the possibility of his losing the services of the finest forward he had.

Dick Hastie, naturally, was all on edge to know what the representative of the famous club—one of the most famous teams in English football—could possibly have to say to him, and he hurried with his changing.

When he showed himself outside the dressing room, the man with the sporting bowler-hat drew his arm through that of the footballer.

"I don't want everyone to hear what I've got to say," he said. And then, when they had got to a safe distance, he added: "The Swifts, as perhaps you know, are the cleverest side in England to-day. You are just their style. How would you like to play for them?"

There it was, what Tommy Durrance might have termed "all hot and strong and straight from the horse's mouth," and the words literally flabbergasted Dick Hastie for some moments. It was true that he had expected the man to say something about football, but, although it would have been very different in the case of the average youth, Dick had not been conceited enough to think for a moment that he was going to be offered a chance to play for the most classical side in England!

He had hesitated to make any reply through sheer surprise—delighted surprise—and it was then that the Swifts' representative had used the words quoted at the end of the previous chapter:

"Listen to me! Take my advice, do what I want you to do, and I'll make you an International within two years!"

Dick Hastie had looked at the man then.

"You're trying to make a fool of me, telling me nonsense like that!" he said sternly.

Mr. J. B. Tovey placed a hand on the other's shoulder. "When you know a little more than you do at present about big football, you'll know—someone is pretty sure to tell you—that J. B. Tovey never wastes his words. I'm a fat man, and I like to save my breath—see? No, I'm not joking, young man, neither am I trying to make a monkey of you. What would be the sense of that? What I do say is that, given the proper coaching and instruction—and Walter McKinnon, our manager, is the cleverest football man in all the wide, wide world—you'll walk into England's team one of these days—that is, if you were born in England!"

"Yes, I was born in England all right," replied Dick, wondering if he could believe his own ears—"in Springdale, as a matter of fact."

"Springdale—eh?" repeated Tovey. "Well, I haven't known you very long, but I'm going to give you a piece of very sound advice—if ever you return to Springdale, don't let anyone persuade you to play for the Albion."

"Why not?" "Why not? I'll tell you why not. The Albion are about the worst team in the country for a young amateur like you to hitch on to. They would ruin you. They play dirty football—as dirty as it can be played, let me tell you; the directors are—well, perhaps I had better not say any more. There is such a thing as a law for libel in this country, and although I'm sure of my facts, and, what is more, could prove every word, second thoughts are best, no doubt. And I don't want you to think for a moment that I'm telling you this to do myself a good turn. The Swifts and Springdale Albion are not in the same class of football. The Swifts are in the First Division of the League, and the Albion are

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in the Third Division, Northern Section, so that they would never be likely to clash unless it chanced that by a fluke they were drawn together in the Cup.

"No, if you don't mind my saying so, I've taken rather a fancy to you, Mr. Hastie—to you personally, as well as to the way you play football—and I should hate to see you do the wrong



Dick Hastie possessed the inestimable faculty of keeping his head. He neatly sidestepped the burly goalkeeper as he came rushing out from his lair, and gently whipped the ball into the corner of the net.

thing. Avoid Springdale Albion as you would something unclean!" The man's seriousness was beyond all dispute or question.

"That's awfully kind of you, Mr. Tovey," responded Hastie, whose amazement, as may be imagined, had not lessened on account of this, to him, astonishing speech by his companion, "but I think it is extremely unlikely that I shall ever turn out for Springdale Albion. For one thing, they have never asked me, nor, so far as I can see, are they ever likely to ask me; while, for another thing, I do not expect to return to Springdale, although it is my home, for at least another two years. I am studying to be a solicitor; my studies will not be completed for at least another two years. I shall go home, of course, for holidays; but I don't think you need have any fear that you will find me wearing the Springdale Albion colours."

He smiled again. Really, this was more like something out of a book than real life. To be beseeched to play for one club—and this one of the finest in the English League—and to be solemnly and dreadfully warned against playing for another! It was almost melodramatic.

"I don't mind you smiling," replied Mr. Tovey, in perfect good-humour, although he still spoke seriously; "but I've had far greater experience, both as regards football and as regards life, than you, and I know what I've seen with my own eyes. I've seen many a promising young fellow go straight to the dogs through joining the wrong club, and mixing, consequently, with the wrong type of companions as a young professional. And what can happen to a pro may happen to an amateur—for I suppose you would continue to play as an amateur? That is why I spoke as I did."

"I'm sorry I smiled, and I can't thank you enough," said Dick, instantly contrite. "I will promise you to steer clear of Springdale Albion, and—"

"Play for the Swifts, eh?" broke in the football scout. "How old are you—twenty? An admirable age to take up big football. Now, whether you continue to play as an amateur or as a professional—and we shall be pleased to sign you on as either—a lad with your outstanding ability—no, I'm not trying to soft-soap you, lad—would naturally desire to play in the best company. The Bohemians, your present club, are a fine amateur side, but, of course, you would not play the same class of football with them as you would if you joined the Swifts. Imagine it! First League football, lad—doesn't it appeal to you? We get sixty thousand at some of our matches; wouldn't you like to play in front of crowds like that?"

It is an attribute of Youth to be ambitious; to do one's best and to take one's chances are only natural impulses when the blood races freely through the veins. To Dick Hastie, a normal, healthy youth whose love for England's greatest game was an absorbing passion, the proposition which had just been put to him did appeal. What else could it have done? He felt tremendously bucked about it, and if there was one fly in the ointment—one twinge of pain to mar his joy—it was the remembrance that if he did accept this offer—and he knew already in his heart he would accept it—he would be forced to break the jolly association he had with the Bohemians. No one could have wished for

better pals, both on and off the playing-pitch, than he had met whilst wearing the green and white stripes of the Bohemians, and the parting with them would be a very big wrench. But the Swifts—At the thought of playing with some of the finest football craftsmen in the land he felt his nerves tingling.

"Well," broke in the football scout upon his reverie—"what's your answer? There's a reserve match on Monday—a London Combination game against Clapton Orient—and if you say the word you shall play for the Swifts at inside-left. Walter McKinnon said to me this morning, 'Joe, go and see how that young fellow Hastie, who plays for those amateurs, the Bohemians, shapes, and if he's the goods, bring him along, and we'll play him on Monday against the Orient.' So, you see, your place is all ready for you. All you have to do is to say the word."

Now, this was not strictly true. As has been stated, Mr. J. B. Tovey had strolled on the Bohemians' enclosure that Saturday by accident; but, in the circumstances, he thought that a little variation from the path of strict veracity might be forgiven him. Hence his deception. But it should be stated that he felt so confident that this prospective recruit of his would be a pronounced success that he had no qualms for the future. This boy was a coming "star," or he was a Dutchman.

"I must see my old captain before I can say anything definite," answered Dick Hastie slowly.

"Go at once! I want this matter finished to-night. It's not every youth who has the chance that I've just offered you. Go to your captain, Mr. Hastie; but when you come back, don't let your answer be 'No.' Don't let him influence you out of it."

"There will be no fear of that." Dick walked back in the direction of the dressing-room.

By the time he had reached the door all the Bohemian players had finished their more leisurely changing, and were grouped together, eagerly discussing the sensation of one of their players being asked to join a big League club. Not that it was too much of a sensation, however, for, as Sandilands, the skipper, had said, the club's best half, Blackford, had listened to the wiles of a charmer from Aston Villa a month before, and was now playing brilliant football as a professional. Thus a precedent had been set.

"Sandy," said Dick Hastie, coming up, "just a minute, if you don't mind."

He spoke seriously, for it was a serious moment for him. He scarcely liked to look his old skipper in the face, although he had done nothing of which he need be ashamed.

Sandilands was the first to speak.

"Has he made you a definite offer, old man?" he said.

"Yes. He wants me to play for the reserve team on Monday against Clapton Orient in the London Combination."

"And you will have to play!" replied the Bohemians' captain, with unexpected earnestness. "While you've been talking with this chap, Dick, I've been doing some pretty hard thinking, and I've come to the conclusion that it would be rottenly selfish on

my part if I stood in your way. We aren't a bad side, Dick, but you're miles above us as a football player. Your place is in big football, the highest possible class of football, and I jolly well wish you luck!"

"Then you are quite sure you don't mind, old man?" asked Hastie eagerly.

John Sandilands was a fine sportsman.

"Mind," he repeated, "I'm only too jolly glad that you're going to be given such a fine chance, and if I can squeeze half a day off on Monday I shall be at Torrington High Street myself to see you play. The best of luck, old son!"

Sandilands shook hands heartily before walking away. He had been touched by the evidence of loyalty to himself which Dick Hastie had given when he said that he would do nothing unless he had his—Sandilands'—consent beforehand. He hated losing his star forward, but he was far too good a sport to stand in his colleague's way. After all, sport was like life itself; any youngster with proper spirit wanted to get to the top, and Dick Hastie would have far more opportunities of showing his real worth with the famous Swifts than ever he would have with the Bohemians. The eyes of the whole sporting world were upon the Swifts these days.

"Thanks awfully, Sandy!" answered Hastie. His heart was very full at that moment, and he could do no more than wring his captain's hand in turn.

The Telegram!

DICK HASTIE was in a new world, and the sensation was leaving him rather dazed. He had never seen such a dressing-room as this spacious and well-appointed apartment before, and he could only stand and stare stupidly round him for some minutes. Then the Swifts' assistant-trainer, the man who had charge of the club's reserve team, tapped him on the arm.

"Do you want anything besides a jersey, Mr. Hastie?"

The question recalled Dick to himself. He had forgotten himself, and almost forgotten his manners!

"No—only a jersey, thank you; I have everything else."

The same note of friendliness which the trainer had sounded was echoed by everyone else in the room. There is jealousy in big football—plenty of it—as in every other walk of life; but it was not noticeable in the Swifts' dressing-room. In fact, everyone present seemed to go out of his way to make the young amateur who had come on trial, feel at ease and at home in his new surroundings.

"My name's Layton—Bob Layton—and I'm playing on the wing to you to-day," said a man of thirty or so, strolling over after he had completed his changing.

The player with the pleasant face did not add that he was the regular outside-left for the Swifts' famous League team, and that he was only turning out for the reserves that day because

he had been injured, and the management wanted to test his damaged knee before he went back to the highest class of football with the premier eleven.

Dick Hastie flushed. He had always followed professional football, even if he had never before played in it, and he knew the name of Bob Layton as belonging to one of the cleverest wing players that had ever touched a ball. To play alongside such a master—

"I am awfully pleased to meet you," he said, almost humbly, "and I hope I sha'n't let you down."

"You wouldn't be here if there was much fear of that," returned the wing artist. "The Swifts aren't in the habit of giving trials to duds. Just play your usual game—which must be pretty good—and you won't have anything to fear."

So it turned out. Dick Hastie had nothing to fear; he fitted in as to the manner born with the Swifts' classical style of play, which was a wonderful blend of Scottish science—Walter McKinnon, the manager of the team, was one of the greatest half-backs that had ever worn the Scottish jersey—and English speed. Dick's was essentially a case of native talent forcing itself to the front, and soon he was helping his famous partner, Bob Layton, to lead the Clapton Orient defence a right merry dance.

That fine old veteran, Fred Parker, who has been such a valued servant for the Orient team for so many years, and who has played in every position on the field for the "O's" from goal-keeper to outside-left, was playing right-half for the Orient that day, and his tussles with his clever young opponent not only amused the crowd, but brought out all the skill that Dick Hastie possessed.

It was an education to see how Bob Layton lent assistance to the boy—he was little more—who was on trial. Great player though he was, Bob was not above "fetching and carrying," and giving Hastie every help in his power. Of course, his own reputation was already secure, but not every First League player would have sacrificed himself as Bob Layton did that day. The climax came when, after finding himself in a perfect position near goal, he unselfishly passed to his young partner, who immediately rammed the ball home for the Swifts' first goal with a force that was astonishing.

As crowds on the Swifts' ground went, this was a small, almost a puny gathering—remember, the match was being played on a Monday, and was only a London Combination game—but Hastie almost reeled as the mighty shout that greeted the goal he had scored went up.

"Good boy, Hastie!" shouted a fervent North London enthusiast.

And the young amateur flushed with pleasure. In that moment he knew that he would stay with the Swifts if they would have him.

As the game progressed it was patent to everyone that the Swifts had unearthed another "star" in the making. In this respect they had only given another instance of the almost uncanny instinct their "scouts" possessed in finding youngsters who were almost "ready-made" to be put into their teams.

Of course, the scoring of that opening goal had given Dick tremendous confidence. Moreover, he had been wonderfully sustained by the kindly treatment he had received from his new colleagues, both on and off the field. If he had been snubbed in the dressing-room, and starved and ignored on the playing-pitch, he might have given an awful display. His nerve would have gone at the start, no doubt, and he would have been a failure. As it was, however, he gave a scintillating display, and the crowd was continually shouting his name.

The Swifts ran out somewhat easy victors by three goals to one, and in each of the winners' points Dick Hastie had had a part. Bob Layton had scorched in a drive from the wing after he had received a pass from his partner, and it was also entirely due to the young inside-left that Wilcox, the Swifts' centre-forward, had rammed home the third goal close on time. It was a personal triumph for the recruit.

That the management shared the views of the enthusiastic crowd was shown directly the dressing-room was reached after the match. Accompanied by Mr. J. B. Tovey, whose face was one vast beam, a gentleman, who was introduced to the young footballer as the chairman of directors of the Swifts Club, held out his hand, and said:

"Let me congratulate you most warmly on a very fine display! I won't worry you any more until you have had your bath and plunge. But when you have changed I shall be pleased if you will favour me by coming into my private room. Mr. Tovey here will show you the way."

After the official had left the room the players joined in the congratulatory chorus. Bob Layton was especially enthusiastic.

"Going to keep on playing for the Swifts, lad?" he inquired.

"I hope to—that is, if I'm good enough!"

"Tssh! Don't talk about being good enough after the game you played this afternoon! If you didn't look so bloomin' innocent, I'd say that you were fishing for more compliments! But I guess you're not that style of chap. Well, I couldn't do better—or as well. I've been playing for the Swifts for eight years



The chairman of the directors advanced upon the young recruit. "Let me congratulate you most warmly on your very fine display, Hastie," he said kindly.

GUSSY'S GOOD TURN!

(Continued from page 22.)

"N-nun-no, sir!" stammered Knox.

"Then look at it!" thundered the Head. "And possibly, on future occasions you will be more careful, Knox!"

Knox gaped, and picked up the photograph. It was not really a bad photograph at all. It really did Racke, Crooke, and Mellish more than justice.

What Knox's opinion of it was that flabbergasted senior did not divulge. He just stared and stared in dumbfounded amazement at the photograph.

But the Head did not wait for Knox's view at all. He turned to the Terrible Three.

"Were you smoking on the fair-ground at Wayland yesterday afternoon, Merry?" he demanded.

"Certainly not, sir."

"You, Manners?"

"No, sir."

"You, Lowther?"

"No, sir."

"Very well, boys. Apparently a mistake has been made. I will accept your word. You may go."

"Thank you, sir," chorused the Terrible Three meekly.

They filed out, and, being only human, they smiled sweetly at Gerald Knox as they filed out. As they went they heard the Head say in a very grim voice:

"Will you kindly ask Marsh to find Racke, Crooke, and Mellish, and bring them to me, Mr. Railton?"

The Terrible Three had just been about to hug themselves in delirious glee, and they only just jumped apart in time as Mr. Railton rustled out.

He found Racke, Crooke, and Mellish without troubling Toby Marsh, the page. As a matter of fact, those shady schemers had been hovering about at the end of the passage, waiting for the Terrible Three to emerge. They had looked forward with unholy glee to the sight of the Terrible Three staggering out of the dreaded sanctum, groaning and gasping after their flogging.

They followed Mr. Railton in great surprise and no little fury. They naturally imagined that Knox had, after all, given them away as the "informers," and they were furious. They little dreamed of the truth.

The Head's door opened and closed upon them.

The Terrible Three were waiting in the passage when the Head's door opened again, as were Blake & Co. and quite a number of fellows who had been let into the meaning of what was "on."

It was Gerald Knox who came out, and his face was scarlet. It became more scarlet still—with fury as well as humiliation—when Knox saw the crowd of grinning faces.

He had scarcely vanished along the corridor when from within the Head's study came a sudden sound of swishing, interposed with gasps and groans that gradually grew to howls.

There were three separate series of these extraordinary sounds, and then the door suddenly opened and three doubled-up forms emerged into the passage, gasping and groaning and writhing with anguish.

It was Racke, Crooke, and Mellish, and those shady schemers were almost weeping with mingled rage and shock and pain.

Never had the guilty trio had such a surprise as they got when the Head placed the incriminating photo before them. Useless to deny it, useless to mumble desperately about "fakes," their guilty faces, coupled with their known characters, were enough for the Head and Mr. Railton. And they dared not tell the truth. That would undoubtedly have meant something far worse than a flogging. So after stammering and stuttering and contradicting themselves again and again Racke & Co. had been forced to accept the Head's only possible construction of the case—and to be thankful it was no worse.

A flogging was, after all, better than the sack.

And a flogging was much less than they deserved!

All the juniors agreed upon that, and only grinning faces greeted Racke & Co. as they tottered from the Head's study that morning. There was a plentiful lack of sympathy for the black sheep.

"Well, Racke, old man," remarked Lowther cheerily, "do you think you've got your giddy quid's worth?"

Racke stopped at that. His face went pale and he stared at Lowther aghast. He had been bowled out, but he had never dreamed that the Terrible Three were fully aware of the real inwardness of the affair.

He knew now, however. The Terrible Three must know, else why had Lowther mentioned the quid—the quid he had paid to Mr. Steve Flashley?

With white, strained face and a hunted look Aubrey Racke followed his groaning, gasping, and dismal chums along the passage between the row of grinning faces. He knew his punishment was not over yet.

Nor was it. Before evening the story was an open secret in the School House—and also in the New House, for that matter. Some of the fellows persisted in looking at the funny side, and they showed it in their grins and remarks to Aubrey Racke & Co. Other fellows persisted in seeing only the grave side, and they showed their views in the manner they treated Racke & Co.—with open scorn and contempt. Grundy of the Shell even showed it by taking it upon himself to give Aubrey a "thundering good hiding" by way of a lesson. Taken altogether, Aubrey Racke's life during the next few days was not exactly a bed of roses.

THE END.

(Look out for next week's topping tale of St. Jim's entitled: "CARDEW'S BIG BLUFF!" By Martin Clifford. You are bound to enjoy it.)

A LEADER OF THE LEAGUE!

(Continued from previous page.)

now, and it's the finest club in England, bar none! You get treated right, both by the fellows alongside of you and by the directors. And you're just the type that the Swifts like to get hold of. Well, good luck, and I hope we shall be playing together again before very long!"

These were cheery, heartening words, and Dick, as he walked by the side of the man who had introduced him into big football, felt that he was stepping on air. This was immeasurably the happiest day of his life; the world, like a football, seemed to lie at his feet. He little knew that within a few hours this pet world of his would be lying in shattered fragments, and that the whole course of his life would be changed.

It is a good thing that none of us can peer into the future, no doubt; and certainly as Hastie stepped into the comfortable room where the Swifts' chairman of directors was awaiting him he had no qualms.

"Well, do you think you would care to continue to play for the Swifts?" asked the chairman.

"I certainly should, sir! I have been literally overwhelmed with kindness to-day, and I am not likely to forget it."

"I am glad to hear that. We like to make new as well as old players feel comfortable; in fact, that is the foundation, I feel sure, of our long and continued success as a club. Don't you think so, Tovey?"

"I am convinced of it, Mr. Mapleson. That was why I had every confidence in recommending the Swifts to our young friend

here, just as I had every confidence, after seeing him play, in recommending Mr. Hastie to you, sir."

"Well, you certainly were right in both respects, Tovey. Now, Mr. Hastie," went on the official briskly, "do you wish to continue as an amateur, or will you play for us as a professional? If it is all the same to you, I should like you to sign a professional in preference to an amateur form, because it gives us more authority over you—authority that won't be abused, I can assure you," the speaker hastened to add.

"Oh, I am confident of that, sir! But for the present I think I must play as an amateur. You see, I do not know what my father's views would be about my becoming a professional player, and—"

"Very well; it rests entirely with you, of course. If you decide to change your mind later on—if you feel that a starting salary of five pounds a week, which is the legal limit—or I would offer you more—would be useful, you have only to make known your views. I will now introduce you to Mr. Walter McKinnon, our club manager."

Dick Hastie will never forget meeting the taciturn Scot whose name as a football manager was a household word, nor will he ever be able to forget the feelings with which he left the ground.

From success to tragedy! It is but a short—such a pitifully short—step!

The first thing that struck Dick Hastie's eye when he reached his lodgings in West Kensington was a telegram on the hall-stand. It was addressed to himself, and read:

"Come home at once. Terrible news.—SYBIL."

Sybil was his only sister.

(How will this sad news affect Dick Hastie's chance to play for the Swifts? See next week's grand instalment, boys.)

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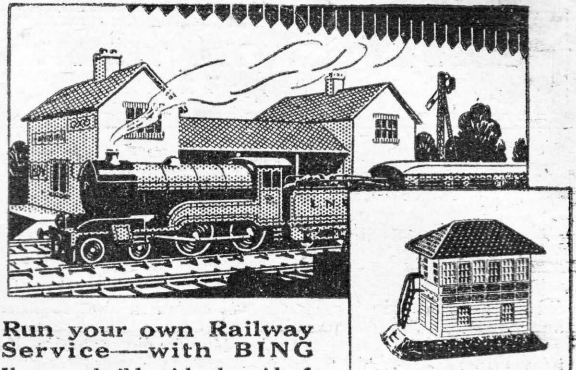
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