

"GUSSY SEES IT THROUGH!"

THIS WEEK'S EXTRA-LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL
STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2!

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No. 1,013.
Vol. XXXII.
July 16th,
1927.



"THEY'RE ALL AFTER
GUSSY!"

(A diverting incident in the long,
humorous school tale inside.)

A QUESTION OF DIGNITY! The one and only Gussy of St. Jim's would far rather "wetiah" from the school than apologise to Mr. Selby, the master of the Third Form, for Gussy considers that if there's any question of an apology it should come from Mr. Selby. And Gussy, after a series of amazing adventures, gets his own way in the matter!

GUSSY SEES IT THROUGH!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co., and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the Chums of St. Jim's.

BY
MARTIN CLIFFORD.



CHAPTER 1. Good News for Knox!

"SHUSH!"
"Shush! Quiet! Don't look round!"
"Eh?"
"What the thump——"

Tom Merry's chums did look round. Then they stared at Tom Merry in no little mystification. Afternoon lessons were just over at St. Jim's, and the juniors were walking in the quad chatting. And from the gloomy looks on their faces they were obviously not discussing anything very cheerful.

Then Tom Merry had suddenly startled them with his excited exclamations—though what he saw to get excited about they could not imagine.

"What's biting you?" grunted Blake. "This affair of old Gussy's getting on your giddy nerves, or what?"

"No; but——"

"It's getting on mine," groaned Digby. "Gussy's antics are enough to turn a fellow's hair grey. Blow Gussy!"

"Yes; but——"

"Bless and bother him!" said Manners. "If Gussy insists on asking for the sack, why doesn't he do it some other way without bringing us into it, and causing all this commotion. Blow Gussy!"

"Will you shurrup and listen?" hissed Tom Merry.

"Can't you see him, behind that elm?"

"Eh?" gasped Blake, with a jump. "Gussy——"

"Fathead! I mean that sneaking cad, Knox!"

"Blow Knox!"

"Rats to Knox!"

Evidently Tom Merry & Co. were not in good tempers that afternoon.

"Blessed if I can see him, anyway," grunted Blake, looking round again. "There's Trimble——"

"Bless Trimble!" said Tom Merry, in great exasperation. "I tell you Knox is sneaking behind that tree. He's tracking us again. I just happened to glance round and spotted him nicely. He dodged behind that elm."

"Rotten cad!" sported Digby. "I suppose he thinks we know where Gussy is, and is following us to find out."

"What hopes!" murmured Lowther. "Perhaps he's sneaking round to try to find out who chucked that water over him. I thought that would have cured him of following us; but apparently it hasn't. We'll have to give him another lesson."

"It's queer!" said Tom Merry, frowning. "The cad knows Gussy took to the woods when he bolted; he can't suspect Gussy's still here——"

"He does, I bet, or he would have gone to help the other seniors hunting for him," said Manners. "They're still searching the woods, I believe. Anyway—— Hallo, there goes Knoxy——"

All the juniors saw Knox of the Sixth this time, and plainly Knox realised they had seen him. With an elaborate show of carelessness he strolled from behind the shelter of the big elm and sat down on the seat which surrounded the base of the tree.

The juniors exchanged grins and walked on.

If Knox, the prefect, hoped that by tracking them they would lead him to where the runaway Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was hiding, he was booked for a disappointment on this occasion. Tom Merry & Co. knew no more than did Knox where Gussy was hiding—they wished they did. But since Gussy had bolted, covered from head to foot with soot, and with half St. Jim's chasing him, he seemed to have vanished completely.

It was all very worrying to Tom Merry & Co.. None the less, they could not help grinning at the thought of the officious and unpopular prefect wasting his time tracking them.

"I say, you fellows——"

Baggy Trimble came rolling over to the chums.

"He, he, he! I say, you chaps, Knoxy's tracking you," he grinned. "I spotted him."

"Tell us something we don't know!" grunted Blake.

"He thinks you know where Gussy's gone," cackled Trimble, evidently highly entertained. "Better watch out, Lowther! I heard him tell Darrell he was dashed well going to find out who threw that bucket of water over him from the roof if it took him all term."

"Shurrup!" hissed Lowther, glaring at the fat youth. "No need to tell the world, you fat ass! Who told you it was me, anyway?"

"He, he, he! That's telling!" grinned Baggy. "I happen to know you chaps were up on the roof with old Gussy, anyway. If I were to tell Knox what I know——"

"You wouldn't live to tell another tale," said Lowther ferociously. "You daren't——"

"I'm not going to," chuckled Trimble. "I always back my pals up, you know. You fellows can rely on me, you know! I say, fancy old Gussy running away from school, though, just to escape a giddy flogging—isn't he an awful ass?"

"You burbling duffer!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully. "He didn't run away to escape a licking at all!"

"Well, what was it?" jeered Trimble. "He refused to be flogged! He refused first to apologise to old Selby, and when the Head was going to lick him because he wouldn't apologise, Gussy bolted. Mind you, I don't blame Gussy; Selby had no right to call Gussy a thief and a liar. I admit that," said Trimble, shaking his head. "But Gussy had no right to call Selby an old donkey and a giddy fab-fabricator. Awful check!"

"Oh, dry up!" grunted Blake. "And clear out, you fat frog!"

"Shall I go and tell Knoxy who drenched him?" grinned Trimble. "It's really a fellow's duty, you know."

"You dare—"

"But I won't," said Trimble cheerfully. "As I'm going to take old Gussy's place, it's up to me to back you fellows up, of course."

"Eh?" ejaculated Blake.

"I bet you fellows are jolly glad Gussy's gone," rattled on Trimble. "He was an awful ass to have in a study, I'll admit—bit potty, you know. You'll find me different. I shall start well by standing a few study feeds, and I'm going to get the pater to send down some decent study furniture from Trimble Towers. Lathom won't object to me changing studies, I suppose?"

"Oh," gasped Blake, comprehending at last. "You—you fancy we'll have a fat frog like you in our study now Gussy's bolted? Why, you—you cheeky owl!"

"Bump the fat ass for his cheek!" snorted Herries.

"Here—hold on!" gasped Trimble, jumping back hurriedly. "Look here, no games, or I shall feel bound to tell Knoxy what I know. As we're such pals— Leggo!"

Trimble ended with a roar as Blake grasped him by the collar and planted a hefty boot behind him.

"We're not letting you go, my pippin!" said Blake grimly, with a meaning glance at his chums. "I fancy we know now who locked poor old Gussy out on the roof, chaps!"

"Yes, rather! It was Trimble," said Tom Merry. "We met the fat ass coming away from the box-room staircase. We suspected him then."

"Oh, really, Blake, that's not true!" said Trimble, in great alarm. "It wasn't me—of course, it wasn't!"

"Then how the thump did you know we'd been up there at all?" yelled Blake. "Nobody else knew. By James, I see it now! It must have been Trimble who bolted the skylight!"

"That's it! The fat worm!"

"I tell you it wasn't!" yelled Trimble. "If you chaps think I happened to be hiding in the box-room and spotted you come through the skylight, you're jolly well mistaken. I didn't! Honour bright!"

"So that's it!" said Tom Merry, setting his lips. "You were hiding in the box-room and saw us—"

"Not at all! Certainly not!" gasped Trimble apprehensively. "I never even went near the blessed box-room! Besides," he added, blinking hopefully at the juniors, "it was all Gussy's fault; if he hadn't gone for me just because I wanted to join him up there on the roof the blessed spirit-stove wouldn't have got knocked over and his tent wouldn't have caught fire, would it? You fellows can't deny that!"

"Phew!"

The juniors exchanged looks, and then they glared at Trimble. That fatuous youth did not seem to be aware that he had given himself hopelessly away. The juniors had been puzzled to know who had bolted the skylight after they had left it unbolted. Now they knew. They also knew how the fire had been caused—the fire that had roused the whole school to excitement, that had brought the fire engine out, and had resulted in Gussy's hiding-place on the roof being discovered, and in his having to escape down one of the chimneys.

"So now we know how it all happened," said Tom Merry, taking a deep breath. "Only we knew Gussy was camping out on the roof, and we left the skylight unbolted. The beaks found it bolted, and that's why poor old Gussy had to escape down a chimney. You fat worm, Trimble!"

"I tell you it wasn't—"

"Bump him!" gasped Blake wrathfully. "Bump the fat cad to teach him a lesson!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Here—hold on! I tell you— Yaroooogh!"

Bump!

"Yoooooop!"

Trimble howled, first in anticipation, and then, in realisation. Tom Merry & Co. were angry, realising that but for Trimble's interference Gussy would still have been safely camping out on the roof. They were far from approving of Gussy's astounding conduct in setting authority at defiance. Yet they were Gussy's chums, and they felt bound to back him up.

"Go it!" gasped Blake. "Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yaroooogh!" roared Trimble. "I tell you it wasn't me! Leggo! Stop it, or I'll tell Knoxy it was you who tipped that—yow-wow!—bucket of water over him! Yooop!"

Bump!

"Yoooooop!"

"Stop that!"

It was another voice, and the sound of it made Tom Merry jump. They released Trimble suddenly.

It was Knox.

For the moment they had forgotten all about the unpopular prefect. But evidently Knox had not forgotten them. He came from behind a near-by elm-trunk, and his eyes were glinting with triumph.

"Let Trimble go!" he snapped. "That's enough! You'll come with me to Mr. Railton—the lot of you! So now I know who pitched that bucket of water over me! You—you little sweeps!"

"Oh crikey!"

CHAPTER 2.

Knox's Triumph!

"OH crikey!"

Tom Merry stared in dismay at the prefect.

Knox stared at them and grinned; it was an unpleasant grin. The juniors had known that Knox was spying on them, and yet they had allowed him to overhear the very thing they did not want him to know.

"So you were the sweeps that did it," said Knox. "I suspected it! I made up my mind I'd find out who did it if it took me the whole dashed term. Gad! I'll make you sit up for it, you young rotters!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, his lips curling. "You seem ready enough to take Trimble's word for it that it was us!"

"I know it was!" shouted Knox furiously. "I thought it was Grundy at the time. But Wilkins and Gunn swore to Railton that it wasn't Grundy. Then when I knew D'Arcy had been on the roof I knew that's where the water came from. Now I've as good as heard you admit you did it."

"It's something new to learn of a prefect spying and eavesdropping," said Blake bluntly. "You were sneaking after us when you got the water, too!"

"I was carrying out my duty!" snapped Knox savagely.

"I guessed you young hounds knew where D'Arcy was hiding. Now I know I was right. Railton will be glad to know this, and I'll see he knows it, and about the water, too, by gad! You're for it! Come on—sharp!"

"I say, Knox," stammered Trimble, "I've nothing to do with it, you know!"

"You'll come, too," said Knox. "Your evidence is what I want, my pippin! Get a move on!"

"Oh dear!"

Bitterly did Trimble regret that he had opened his mouth on the subject of the drenching of Knox. Trimble was quite certain that it was Lowther, and he was now quite certain that Lowther and the fellows who had been with him were "for it." Undoubtedly they were. But Trimble would also be "for it" when Railton learned that he had been up on the roof with Arthur Augustus, the runaway.

"Oh dear!" groaned Trimble again.

But there was no help for it. Knox was a prefect and his order had to be obeyed. With Knox bringing up the rear, Trimble and Tom Merry & Co. made tracks for the School House, and soon they were standing before Mr. Railton in the latter's study.

The School House master looked none too pleasant—indeed he looked exceedingly angry. His brow was knitted, and his eyes gleamed with wrath. The "bolting" of Arthur Augustus was causing great hilarity among a goodly number of the thoughtless Lower School at St. Jim's. But the masters—and especially the Head and Mr. Railton—naturally did not look upon the matter in the same light.

"Well?" snapped the Housemaster, glaring at the juniors.

"Why have you brought these boys to me, Knox?"

"I've found out who drenched me with water, sir," said Knox. "I've also found out that these juniors were up on the roof with D'Arcy before he bolted. They knew he was there, and had evidently been aiding him in his defiance of authority."

"Oh, indeed!"

There was a wealth of significant grimness in the Housemaster's exclamation.

Tom Merry & Co. and Trimble looked more unhappy.

"Oh, indeed!" repeated the master, fixing a steely look on the face of each hapless junior in turn. "Am I to understand that Knox's charge is correct, Merry?"

Tom Merry said nothing, not being in a position to deny it. Trimble wasn't in a position to deny part of the charge, either; none the less he did.

"Knox is mistaken, sir," he mumbled. "I—I wasn't on the roof at all. It's a mistake, sir. I was over in the New House at the time."

"Trimble is lying, sir!" said Knox. "I've heard him admit that he was on the roof, and I heard these other juniors admit that they were, too. I also heard Trimble charge Lowther with having emptied that bucket of water over me from the roof. Lowther as good as admitted it

and threatened Trimble, as a matter of fact, if he dared tell anybody."

"Is this true, Merry?" snapped Mr. Railton. "Do you admit having been on the roof with D'Arcy?"

"Ahem! You—you see, sir—" "Yes or no!" thundered the Housemaster. "Do not bandy words with me."

Tom Merry jumped. It was unusual for the Housemaster to wax quite so wrathful as that.

"Ye-es, sir!" he stammered. "I was there."

"We were all there, sir," said Blake, seeing there was no help for it. "We—we hoped to persuade D'Arcy to drop his silly—I—I mean, chuck—that is to say, give himself up, you know."

"That, at least, is some measure of excuse," said Mr. Railton tartly. "None the less, you are aware that it was your duty to report D'Arcy's presence there to someone in authority. I have already been obliged to punish you boys for having aided that wretched boy, D'Arcy, in his reckless and unheard-of escapade. I shall do so again."

"Oh!" "D'Arcy has exceeded the bounds of patience and reason," said the Housemaster sternly. "In attempting to aid D'Arcy you are only making matters worse both for yourself and for him. His punishment will be very severe indeed."

"He—he doesn't really mean to be disrespectful, sir," stammered Blake. "He—he can't help being an awful ass, sir!"

"What?" "He—he thinks he's doing right, sir," said Blake, determined to put in a good word for his absent chum. "Mr. Selby, as you know, charged him with theft and called him a liar without troubling to make sure he was right. He charged D'Arcy with having taken a ten-pound note of his, and all the time the note was in Mr. Selby's pocket. Naturally, being rather particular, he felt the apology was due from Mr. Selby, and not from him."

"I am well aware of that, Blake," said Mr. Railton. "There was some excuse for the boy to be angry and disturbed. None the less, he had the audacity to call a master disgraceful names, and he has had the effrontery to defy his headmaster and to absent himself from the school."

"It's only his way, sir," said Blake eagerly. "He's on his high horse now, but he'll come round—"

"That is quite enough, Blake. I do not wish to hear your views of his conduct," said the Housemaster icily. "Dr. Holmes will know how to deal with D'Arcy when he is apprehended, as he surely will be. As you have admitted, however, going up on to the roof, I shall not trouble Dr. Holmes in this matter, but will punish you myself. Knox, kindly hand me my cane."

"There's the matter of the water, sir," reminded Knox, his eyes glistening at Lowther.

"Ah, yes!" snapped the master. "Lowther, were you the boy who emptied the water over Knox—over a prefect?"

Lowther groaned, but there was no help for it now.

"Ye-es, sir!"

"You—you actually emptied a bucket of water from the roof on to Knox?" said Railton sternly. "Why, may I ask?"

"Because Knox was sneaking and spying, sir," said Lowther.

"Wha-at?"

"He was sneaking after Blake, sir," said Lowther frankly, quite enjoying Knox's savage glare. "I felt that a chap in Knox's position who went crawling and spying on juniors needed a lesson, and so I gave him one. It served—"

"Lowther," snapped Mr. Railton, "that will do! I will deal with you first. Hold out your hand!"

Lowther stifled a groan and held out his hand. It was the second time he had had to do so that day. But the licking he received now was far worse than the first. When the Housemaster paused Lowther was doubled up with woe, and he had good reason to regret having drenched a prefect.

Then Mr. Railton dealt with the rest. Though they came off better than Lowther, it was a record caning, and Tom Merry & Co. were all in a sad state at the end of it.

"Oh dear! I—I say, sir," groaned Trimble, when it came to his turn, "it's all a mistake. I wasn't there at all. These fellows will tell you that, sir!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Blake.

"Was Trimble on the roof with you, Merry?" demanded Mr. Railton.

"Not with us, sir," said Tom Merry, anxious enough to shield the shivering fat junior. "We didn't see him at all, sir."

"They know Trimble was there, sir," said Knox. "They know it was Trimble who set the tent and bed on fire, too."

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"What?" ejaculated the master.

"He wanted D'Arcy to let him join him on the roof," said Knox spitefully. "D'Arcy rushed at him, and then the spirit-stove was knocked over, and that was how the skylight after him; trapping D'Arcy on the roof."

"Bless my soul! Is that the case, Trimble?"

"Oh dear! Nunno, sir! I never went near the roof, sir, honour bright!" groaned Trimble. "Besides, it was all D'Arcy's fault—you can ask these chaps, sir! They know D'Arcy rushed at me—"

"That will do, Trimble!" said the Housemaster, cutting him short abruptly. "You are an untruthful boy, and I shall punish you more than I would otherwise have done for daring to tell such untruths to me."

"Oh dear! I say, sir, it was like this—"

"Silence! It is obvious that Knox's statement is correct. Hold out your hand!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Hold out your hand!"

Trimble jumped and held out his hand. As the cane swooped down he jerked it back again, and the Housemaster all but overbalanced as the cane swept downwards, meeting only the empty air.

Mr. Railton did not attempt to give Trimble another "hander." He just caught the fat youth by the coat-collar, and then he brought the cane down over Trimble's broad back.

Whack, whack, whack!

It was like beating a carpet. Trimble roared and howled. Like Tom Merry & Co., he had good reason during those next hectic seconds to regret having visited the fugitive on the roof. And when he tottered out of the study after Tom Merry & Co., a few moments later, the only intelligible sounds that came from him were "Yow!" and "Wow!" But Tom Merry & Co. said quite a lot—chiefly concerning Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Gerald Knox. It was the second time in one day Knox had got them licked—all through Arthur Augustus. And the things Tom Merry & Co. said concerning Gussy and Knox were both loud and deep and sincere.

CHAPTER 3.

Poor Old Gussy!

"G WIMEY, deah boy!"

Grimes, the grocer's boy from Rylcombe, jumped.

It was no wonder, perhaps, that Mr. Sands' errand-boy was startled, for the voice seemed to come from the skies.

Then, as he looked up, Grimey became aware that it came from the thick foliage of a tree just above his head. Amid the greenery a face was just discernible. It was a rather curious face, black as a nigger's, with an eyeglass that still gleamed in the sunshine over one eye. Like the face, the owner's hair was black, and surmounted by a rather battered silk hat, worn at a rakish angle.

"Oh!" ejaculated Grimes. "It's you, Master D'Arcy!"

Grimes looked very relieved, though he blinked up at Arthur Augustus rather anxiously. As a matter of fact, Grimes happened to be looking for Arthur Augustus—otherwise he might have been very surprised and startled indeed. But Grimes had already got over the shock of seeing the aristocratic Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, whom he greatly admired, wearing a soot-blackened face and clothes.

Nor was that the only shock Grimes, the grocer's boy, had sustained that day. He had been standing by the gates of St. Jim's with his bicycle and an empty basket, when, without warning, Arthur Augustus, looking like a wildly-dishevelled nigger, had come rushing through the gates, had grabbed his bike and gone tearing up the lane on it.

That was not all, either. Hard on the heels of Arthur Augustus had swarmed a crowd of seniors and juniors—all, apparently, in chase of the swell of the Fourth.

What it had meant Grimes could not for the life of him imagine. But he was very disturbed by the amazing happening. Arthur Augustus was a great friend of his, and it was obvious to him that Arthur Augustus was in deep trouble of some sort—that he was badly wanted by the school authorities.

Moreover, Grimes was anxious about his bike. It was a tradesman's machine and the property of Mr. Sands, his boss. So Grimes had followed the crowd chasing Gussy, anxious to know what had become of both Gussy and the bike.

Now he knew what had happened to Gussy. That hapless fugitive was up a tree—having, obviously, given his pursuers the slip. The tree was overhanging the lane, some twenty yards from the stile leading into the woods. Near the stile Grimes had already seen several of the seniors standing,



"Buck up, old chap!" said Cutts, yawning in the stern. "It'll be lock-up before we get going at this rate!" "Lend a hand, then, you lazy slacker!" growled St. Leger, tugging at the sail. "You're jolly smart at giving orders, but when it comes to— Why, what— Great pip!" "D'Arcy!" There was a combined howl from the three Fifth-Formers as they sighted the stowaway. (See Chapter 5.)

apparently holding a council of war. Grimes understood the caution and warning in Gussy's desperate voice.

"Yes, it is I, Gwimey," answered Arthur Augustus. "Pway come neawah into the hedge and those wottahs will not see you then."

"Right you are, Master D'Arcy!"

Grimes glanced along the road, and then he stepped swiftly into the ditch, hidden from view of the seniors now by the overhanging bushes of the hedge.

"Thank you, Gwimey," said Gussy gracefully. "I am vewy sowwy indeed if my action in helpin' myself to your machine has caused you any annoyance and twouble, deah boy."

"That it ain't," said Grimes loyally. "If it 'ad bin any other bloke I'd punch 'is nose, that I would! But if it's helped you, Master D'Arcy, I don't mind if the bike's busted even."

"That is vewy good of you, Gwimey. It is quite safe, howevah. I have left it lyin' in the hedge just beyond the stile, deah boy. It is quite all wight, and I am much obliged for the loan of it. It has enabled me to escape my pursuahs for the time bein'."

"I'm sorry to see as you're in trouble, Master D'Arcy," said Grimes, keeping a cautious eye and ear open. "If I can do anythin' to 'elp you—"

"You can, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, blinking down at him. "You see, I have been obliged to wetiiah fwoim St. Jim's for a time. I shall not weturn until Dr. Holmes assuahs me that I shall weceive justice at his hands."

"My heye!" said Grimes, looking scared. "You've bin and run away from school, Master D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove! Watah not," said Arthur Augustus hastily. "It would be infra dig to wun away fwoim school. I have simplay wetiiahed until I weceive justice."

"Oh!" said Grimes; he did not understand, but he was not disposed to argue such a delicate point as to whether retiring from school and running away from school were one and the same thing. Apparently they weren't to the noble Arthur Augustus, and Grimes was ready to take his word for it. "Oh! My heye! And them fellers is arter you, Master D'Arcy!"

"Yaas! I knew they would pwobably telephone to the village for someone to stop me," explained Arthur Augustus rapidly. "So I left the bike in the hedge there and dodged

back behind the hedge and shinned up this twee. Most of the ewowd are searchin' the wood for me. Howevah, the point is that I was obliged to climb down a wotten chimney to escape, and my clobbah is uttably wuined. I wondah if you would be so vewy good as to take a message to Blake for me, askin' him to bring me a fwesh supply."

"I would—jolly quick!" said Grimes dubiously. "Only it ain't safe. There's a lot of fellers by the gates and they'd see Master Blake bringing the stuff out. 'Sides, them fellers there would spot you in a crack."

"It is vewy awkward; but I am afwaid you are wight, Gwimey," said Arthur Augustus, frowning. "The twouble is, howevah, that they are bound to twy this twee soonah or latah. Bai Jove! There is Dawwell lookin' up into that twee ovah there now. Oh deah! I am afwaid—"

"Crikey! I got it, Master D'Arcy!" said Grimes, grinning. "What about you and me changin' togs? Then I'd rush out, let 'em spot me and lead 'em a fair old dance while you get's clear! 'Ow's that?"

"Bai Jove! Would you weally—"

"Like a shot! You trust me, Master D'Arcy," said Grimes, his rugged face brightening. "Look 'ere! You shin down into the ditch and I'll squeeze through this gap 'ere."

"But what about your clobbah, Gwimey—"

"Blow that!" said Grimes stoutly. "You knows where I live?"

"Oh, yaas! Büt—"

"Then jest you trot along there when it's safe, and then we can change back again," said Grimes. "Better buck up!"

"But weally—I am afwaid of gettin' you into twouble, deah boy!"

"Blow trouble!"

Grimes did not stop to argue further. He squeezed through the hedge, and at that Arthur Augustus made his noble mind up, and a moment later, with due caution he had joined his friend below. The tree hung very low, overshadowing the hedge, so that the seniors could scarcely have seen Gussy drop down into the inner ditch. Here the exchange was swiftly made—Arthur Augustus handing over his sooty jacket and hat whilst Grimes handed over his cap

and coat and apron—the latter having been worn by Grimes twisted round his waist.

"That'll do it!" grinned Grimes. "You 'ang on until they're all arter me, and then do a moonlight."

"Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus, though he still seemed dubious. "I will make for the boathouse I think, and hide there, you know. I twust all will go well. Dawwell is not a bully, and he will not touch you if you are captuahed—othahwise I would nevah 'consent, deah boy. Howevah, I am vewy, vewy gwateful, Gwimey!"

"You watch me!" grinned Grimes. "I'll take 'em a nice run. Up you goes agen inter that tree."

"Wight-ho!"

Arthur Augustus shinned up the tree again. Then Grimes started off, moving cautiously along the hedge nearer the seniors. Then quite suddenly he broke cover and went crashing through some bushes bordering the thick woods.

There was an almost instantaneous howl:

"There he goes!"

"After him!"

With Gussy's topper jammed tightly on his head, Grimes took to his heels, skirting the woods for some seconds, and then he branched off and went scudding across the meadows. To enter the woods was likely to mean capture, and Grimes did not want capture yet—if at all.

Darrell yelled, and several other seniors yelled, and answering yells sounded from the woods, followed by the crashing of feet. In the tree Arthur Augustus could not help grinning as he saw fellows swarming out of the woods to join in the chase after Grimes.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "What a weally splendid fwient Gwimey is! I do hope he gets on all wight. I think it will be quite safe to twy my luck now."

And after a cautious blink round to make quite certain nobody was left near the stile, Arthur Augustus slipped down into the ditch again. Then he dived through the hedge, scanned the lane up and down, and then he scudded across the lane and dived through the farther hedge.

A moment later he was scudding hard for the boathouse, which lay in the opposite direction to that in which Grimey had so gallantly drawn the pursuit.

Meanwhile Grimey was still going strong, the string of excited seniors trailing behind him. Across hedges, fields and by-paths the gallant village boy stuck it gamely. He had had a good start at the beginning, but he knew it could not last for very long.

Nor did it. Kildare and his fellow seniors were much too good for him, and though he tackled hedges they refused to tackle, they slowly began to overhaul him. At the end of a mile Darrell, North, and Baker were scarcely a dozen yards behind the panting, labouring Grimey.

"Stop!" shouted Darrell wrathfully. "D'Arcy, you silly young fool, stop! We've got you now!"

Grimes did stop—too exhausted and breathless to go on, in fact. He stopped and allowed the wrathful, panting seniors to come up to him.

"Got him!" panted Darrell, jumping at the fugitive.

"Now, D'Arcy, you little— Why, what—"

"It isn't D'Arcy!" yelled Baker.

Grimes turned and grinned at the prefects. It was rather an apprehensive grin, however.

"Ere I am," he said breathlessly. "What you young gents runnin' arter me for? I ain't done you no 'arm as I knows of."

"Well—well, I'm jiggered!" panted Baker.

"Well, upon my word!" came from Darrell, wrathfully.

"It—it isn't that young fool, after all!"

"It's that grocer kid from the village," gasped North, grabbing Grimes furiously. "You cheeky young sweep, what does this mean?"

"Hold on, North," said Darrell, with a rueful laugh. "It's pretty clear what this means. We've been had. Those are D'Arcy's togs he's wearing—his hat and jacket, anyway. We've been led on a false trail, blow it!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Baker. "We'll be the laughing stock of St. Jim's over this."

"Can't be helped," grunted North, glaring at Grimes in speechless wrath, now he understood. "But we can make this cheeky young imit up. Now, you little sweep," he added, shaking Grimes angrily. "You've made fools of us—"

"Leave the kid alone, North," said Darrell, though he looked as if he was itching to use his boot on Grimes. "No good taking it out of the kid. Jolly plucky of him to lead us off like that, I think. He must have known we'd get him sooner or later. He's done us brown, but he isn't going to be touched."

"Well, that's so," said North, bursting suddenly into a laugh. "Oh, my hat! Won't we have our legs pulled over this."

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There was no doubt about that. Quite a crowd had dashed up by this time, breathless and triumphant. Their triumph vanished and their disgust and wrath was terrific when they sighted Grimes' crimson face, and understood.

Many of them laughed and took it like good sportsmen, but some of them wanted to boot Grimes. Darrell's word was law, however. He told Grimes to clear, and Grimes cleared, grinning all over his cheery, good-natured face. And, realising the hunt for Arthur Augustus was pretty well hopeless now, the pursuers returned to St. Jim's, breathing threats against the runaway Arthur Augustus that would have made his aristocratic hair curl had he heard them. And Darrell was obliged to report to the exasperated Mr. Railton that Arthur Augustus had indeed run away from school in earnest.

CHAPTER 4.

Not a Capture!

"H ALLO! Here comes dear old Grimey!"

Tom Merry chuckled deeply as he sighted Grimes coming along Rylcombe Lane. It was some minutes since Tom Merry & Co. had had that terrific licking by Mr. Railton, and the juniors had gone off for a walk out of gates before tea, partly because they hoped they might see something of the missing Gussy, and partly because they felt that, if they stayed in the school, they would have committed assault and battery on Knox or Baggy Trimble, or on both. But though they were still writhing with their pains, and far from feeling cheery, they could not help grinning at sight of Grimes.

On leaving the Housemaster's study the juniors had found Darrell and his fellow seniors and hunters back again, and the story of how Grimes had led them on a false scent was already causing hilarity in the school.

Naturally it brought relief and comfort to Tom Merry & Co., and the story seemed to lessen the pains in their aching, smarting palms not a little.

"Good old Grimey!" grinned Blake. "But what the thump does he want to risk coming near St. Jim's again? I should have thought he'd give the giddy Fifth and Sixth a wide berth after leading 'em on a wild goose chase like he did."

"Perhaps come to see us—a message from that ass Gussy?" said Manners.

"That's it, I bet!"

And it was. Grimey returned the juniors' grins as he came up and stopped, glancing cautiously down the lane as he did so. He was looking a trifle breathless, but quite cheery.

"Cheerio, Grimey, old son!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Coming to see us, I bet?"

"I got a message from Master D'Arcy," said Grimes. "Nobody about, Master Merry? If anybody sees me a-talkin' to you arter what I did—"

"My dear old chap, you're a giddy hero," chuckled Blake. "You put it across those long-legged seniors like a good 'un! Blow anybody watching. Where's that born idiot, Gussy? That's what we want to know."

"He's in the boathouse, 'iding, Master Blake," grinned Grimes. "It were arranged arter I'd got clear as I was to meet 'im at my 'ome. But it struck me as they'd be lookin' out for a feller wearin' my togs and apron, and so I hurried along to the boathouse to see if I could see 'im, so as we could change there."

"And you saw him?" demanded Blake.

"Yes. He was 'iding outside in the bushes awaitin' for a chance to slip inside when old Adams' back were turned. He's going to hide up in the loft, and he wants you young gents to take him some new clothes," added Grimey, with a grin. "E says as he can't wear them sooty things no longer. If you young gents can't take him some, I will, if you'll kindly get 'em for me."

"We'll take him some togs," said Blake darkly. "And we'll take him some boots, too—six pairs! I'm just itching to get 'mine into play on his trousers!"

"Same here!"

"Oh! You—you gents are standin' by 'im, I 'opes?" said Grimey in great alarm. "I thought—"

"All serene, Grimey," laughed Tom Merry. "We're going to back Gussy up all right, never fear. But we also feel he needs a good kicking for his own good. He's acting the goat, and though we're supporting him, we don't approve of his silly antics."

"Oh! Then—then it's all right?"

"Right as rain, kid!" chuckled Blake. "You leave it to us, Grimey. You played up like a little man this afternoon."

"Then I'll be trottin'," said Grimes, grinning in relief. "The old bike's lyn' in the hedge yet, and I'll get it 'ot from the boss when I gets back for bein' late. I 'opes Master D'Arcy'll not get into no serious trouble over this."

Tom Merry & Co. also hoped that, fervently, but very doubtfully. But they did not acquaint Grimes with their doubts and fears, and the village youth trotted away, having given his message.

"So he's hiding in the boathouse," said Blake, drawing a deep breath.

"Not a bad place, either!" said Lowther. "There's a loft full of canvas and stuff, and he should be quite comfy there until—"

"Until he's caught and sacked," said Blake gloomily. "I suppose we'll have to help the silly, burbling, potty lunatic! Oh, wouldn't I just like to get him now and punch some sense into his silly napper!"

"Same here!"
It was the sentiment of all Gussy's dear chums. Their one desire was to punch the misguided Arthur Augustus—and punch him hard. None the less, they were quite resolved to be loyal to him, come what might. After all, there was a great deal to be said for Gussy's point of view—even the Head and Mr. Railton had shown that they realised that fact. Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, who had caused all the trouble to begin with, had undoubtedly been careless and worse than careless in charging Gussy without good proof. In the view of Tom Merry & Co., as in Gussy's own view, it was for Mr. Selby to apologise if anyone.

"We'll have to help the fathead, though," said Blake glumly. "That's asking for more trouble for us, of course. Still, those togs we shoved in a bundle for him are still hidden in the bushes by the toolshed. We'll get them and smuggle 'em out somehow."

"Better watch out for Knox, though," grunted Manners. "Knoxy-woxy will leave us alone for a bit, I fancy," said Blake. "He'll think we not dare try— Well, I'm blowed!"

"What's the matter?"
"Didn't you see?" breathed Blake. "Well, isn't he a coughdrop? Knoxy again; I just spotted him coming out of the gates, but he dodged back when he spotted us."

"I saw him," said Tom Merry, setting his lips. "He must have just been about to come out after us—the spying cad!"

"It's getting beyond a joke," grunted Digby. "We're not having that sneaky rotter dogging us like this all the time, are we?"

"He's determined to bowl poor old Gussy out," grunted Blake. "He knows we'll be likely to know where he is and how to get to him."

"Well, why shouldn't he find Gussy?" said Lowther, with a sudden soft chuckle. "I say, you fellows, leave Knoxy to me."

"I should have thought you'd had enough of dealing with Knoxy after what Railton gave you," said Tom Merry.

"All the more reason why I should settle accounts with Knoxy," said Lowther coolly. "Leave it to me, you chaps! I'll— Hallo! He is talking to Cutts. Back me up now, chaps!"

"But what—"
"Shush!" Lowther's eyes were fixed on Knox, who had apparently been stopped by Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger, who were in boating flannels. Knox looked impatient, and his eyes glinted under his lowered brows at Tom Merry & Co. Lowther noted it and went on in a loud voice: "He's there, I tell you! I spotted him, though it was dark in the shed. He must have doubled back, and he wants his clobber taken— 'Shush!"

Lowther broke off with assumed alarm, as if he had only just sighted the prefect talking to Cutts & Co. He hurried his chums on, Knox's eyes fairly glittering as his eyes followed them.

"He's swallowed it!" gurgled Lowther when out of hearing. "Oh, joy! I spotted his optics light up!"

"But what the thump—" began Tom Merry.

"You chaps leave it to me," said Lowther once again. "I've got a little wheeze that ought to discourage Knoxy-woxy from doing any more spying on little us. You chaps hang about here; Knox won't move until he sees you move."

With that Lowther scudded away, vanishing round by the tuckshop towards the toolshed behind the chapel. Tom Merry waited, speculating as to what "silly game" Lowther was

up to this time. They were not a little anxious, either, for Lowther's great wheezes oft-times brought dire trouble to Tom Merry & Co.

They had not to wait long, however. Lowther came scudding back after a few minutes, and his face wore a broad grin.

"All serene!" he announced. "By a stroke of luck I met young Wally and his pals. I asked them to do the job, and they jumped at it, the young scamps! So now I'll be able to say quite truthfully that I didn't do it."

"But do what?" almost yelled Tom Merry.
"Shush! You'll see in a second. Don't get excited and give the game away. Where's Knoxy?"

"Goodness knows! Still gassing with Cutts, I suppose!"
"I bet he's sneaking round watching us now," said Lowther, taking an apparently careless glance behind. "He'll be behind a giddy tree watching us. You see? Now come along and see the Gussy young Wally and his pals have rigged up."

The juniors followed, not quite so mystified after Lowther's last remarks. They followed him to the toolshed, where Lowther threw open the door.

"Where's Wally, though?" asked Blake.
"Not far away," grinned Lowther. "He's lying low; better for him not to be about when Knoxy comes along. He and his pals are going to spread the glad news when Knoxy finds Gussy. Here you are!"

The juniors saw it now—a dim form at the back of the toolshed, apparently seated on a box. The face was hidden, but the juniors could not help giving a start as they noted the gleaming topper and Eton dimly visible in the corner of the gloomy shed.

"It—it— Oh, I see!" said Blake. "It's a dummy! So that's the wheeze!"

"Fathead! Of course it is! Young Wally and his pals rigged it up for me."

"But Knoxy will spot it at once, you awful ass!"
"I bet he won't!" grinned Lowther. "You know what a chap he is for jumping at conclusions and acting rashly. He'll just see it, take it for dear old Gussy, and rush off to fetch Railton."

"And leave Gussy to escape—supposing it was Gussy!" jeered Herries.

"Fathead! I've left the key in the outside so it'll be handy for him," smiled Lowther. "He won't try to yank Gussy off to Railton himself, just because he's a funk, and will fear that we'll chip in and try to rescue Gussy."

"Oh! I—I see!"
"Rotten, silly wheeze!" sniffed Manners. "Thousand to one against it coming off!"

"You'll see. Now, come on and let's see if dear old Knox will swallow the bait!"

"No need," said Tom Merry abruptly. "Look out!"
There was a sudden rush of feet, and Knox of the Sixth dashed up to the shed, his eyes gleaming with deep suspicion. It was only too clear he had overheard Lowther's remarks near the gates.

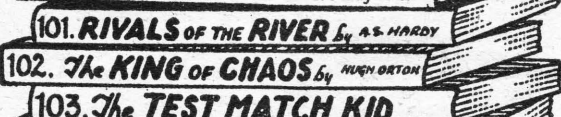
"Stand away, Lowther!" he snapped.
Lowther, who had just locked the door, gave a jump.

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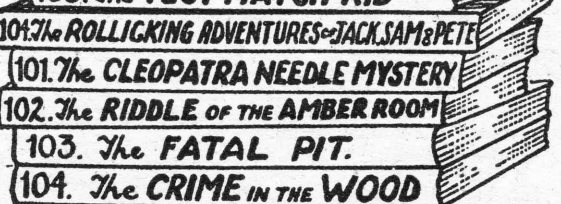
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"Oh!" he stammered, in apparent confusion. "It—it's you, Knox!"

"Hand me that key, Lowther!" said Knox.

"Look here——"

"Hand it over!" shouted Knox. "You hear me, Lowther?"

"Look here—— Oh crumbs!"

Lowther gasped as Knox grasped him and fairly dragged him from the door. Knox turned the key in the lock and tore the door open. He gave an exclamation of deep satisfaction as he glanced into the shed.

"I thought so, you rascals!" he said. "D'Arcy——"

The prefect was just striding into the shed when he pulled himself up abruptly. Stepping out of the shed again, he slammed and locked the door. Lowther had joined his chums a few yards away; and, after shoving the key into his pocket, Knox gave them a bitter glance and rushed away, making for the School House.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Blake. "Well—well, my only summer bonnet! It's come off!"

Lowther chuckled. It undoubtedly had. Knox was a very suspicious-minded fellow indeed, and in his deep suspicions of Tom Merry & Co. he had been ready to "swallow" anything. It was clear he had swallowed now, just as it was clear that he did not intend to give the chums the chance of aiding Gussy to escape him. He knew that Tom Merry and his chums were not above rushing him had he attempted to take D'Arcy to his Housemaster singlehanded, and, as Lowther had anticipated, was taking no chances.

"Better make ourselves scarce until the crowd turns up," murmured Lowther. "Come on—behind the tuckshop will do! We can spot what goes on from there."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors hid behind the tuckshop, grinning expectantly. None of them—excepting Lowther himself—had expected the jape to "come off." But it looked as if it was going to be a great success. The juniors had not long to wait. Across the Close, with his gown fluttering behind him, came Mr. Railton, with Knox hurrying at his side. Behind them came Kildare and Darrell, and behind the prefects was a motley crowd of grinning juniors and seniors.

"Oh, good!" grinned Lowther. "Old Wally's gang's been busy and no mistake! I told them to rake up all the chaps they could as soon as they spotted Knox rush indoors. Now for it!"

It was safe enough now for the chums to join the crowd, and they did so, smiling expectantly. As they came up Baggy Trimble greeted them with an excited squeak.

"I say, you fellows, it's all up with old Gussy!" he grinned. "Knoxy's got the awful ass locked up in the toolshed. He, he, he!"

Apparently Trimble was very cheerful and happy at the thought that Gussy was captured at last. Indeed, from the grins, it was looked upon by many as an entertainment. The bolting of D'Arcy had caused a sensation in the school, and now the word had gone round that the fugitive was locked up in the toolshed fellows came rushing up from far and near to get a glimpse of the runaway.

Mr. Railton looked grim—very grim! And he also looked distinctly relieved—possibly at the thought that the annoying affair was soon to be ended. Knox just looked what he was—triumphant, and his mean, malicious grin made more than one fellow yearn to kick him.

"You say the wretched boy is locked in the shed, Knox?" snapped the Housemaster, pausing at last before the toolshed door.

"Yes, sir," said Knox, handing over the key. "I locked him in myself and came straight away to fetch you."

"Very good!"

Mr. Railton's face set, and he unlocked the door, flinging it wide. He sighted the dummy form at once.

"D'Arcy!" he thundered.

The figure did not move—naturally enough. Mr. Railton stepped towards it, while Knox stood in the doorway to prevent an escape if necessary.

But it wasn't necessary. Mr. Railton had scarcely taken two steps into the shed when he pulled himself up short with an exclamation—a startled, angry exclamation.

"Knox!" he stuttered. "Knox, is—is this what you took for D'Arcy? Bless my soul! Come here, sir."

Mr. Railton's tone quite startled Knox. He stepped into the shed—and then he saw! He almost fainted as he got a clear view of the dummy figure.

"What—what—why?" he stammered faintly. "It—it's only a dummy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a perfect howl of laughter from the crowd in the doorway, who had pressed forward to see what was to be seen. Knox went a beautiful crimson—a colour which

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almost rivalled the colour in the Housemaster's wrathful features.

"Knox!" he gasped. "Do you mean to tell me that you took this—this bundle of faggots for that wretched boy?"

"Oh gad! I thought—I thought——" Knox stuttered and stopped, completely overcome in utter dismay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was another howl of laughter—a howl that grew in volume as those outside grasped the situation.

"Silence!" thundered the Housemaster, fairly seething with wrath. "Knox, I—I am amazed, astounded that you, a senior and a prefect, should make such an idiotic mistake! You have wasted my time and made yourself a laughing stock!"

"Sir!" panted Knox. "I—I——"

"There is no excuse whatever for such absurd carelessness," shouted Mr. Railton. "You have brought me here on a fool's errand. You have allowed yourself to be taken in by a trick which would not have deceived a child. Why did you not make quite certain before rushing to me?"

"I—I—I——"

"Pshaw!"

Mr. Railton did not wait to hear Knox's excuses, nor did he stop to discover the authors of the practical joke, wrathful as he was. Possibly he felt he wanted to get out of such an undignified position as soon as possible; possibly he felt the over-zealous Knox did not deserve to have the pleasure of seeing the culprits discovered and punished. At all events, he whisked away, the crowd jumping away to allow him to pass. He vanished into the School House in a matter of seconds.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

His going was the signal for another roar of laughter. Knox was not popular—far from it—and the crowd were enjoying and making the most of his discomfiture.

Almost beside himself with fury and bitter chagrin, Knox strode away, his eyes glittering with hatred as they rested on Lowther's smiling features.

"Like to know where D'Arcy is, Knox?" asked Lowther sweetly.

"You—you little sweep!" hissed Knox, halting. "I know it was you, and I'll make you smart for this, you young cad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out!"

Knox made a savage rush at Lowther, and Lowther bolted. But Knox did not follow him far. Realising he was only making himself more ridiculous, he stopped suddenly and strode savagely towards the School House.

"Let this be a lesson to you chaps," said Lowther, rejoicing his chums. "It's low and wrong to be suspiciously minded—as Trimble often tells us when we suspect him of raiding grub. Knox ought to be sorry he was so suspicious of us now."

"You awful ass, Lowther!" grinned Tom Merry. "You ought to feel jolly lucky Railton seems to be letting it pass. Anyway, what about getting Gussy's clobber now and taking it down to the boathouse?" he added, lowering his voice. "Dear old Knoxy is out of the way now, and the coast's clear."

"Good egg! We'll do it!"

And when the last of the laughing crowd had left the precincts of the toolshed, Tom Merry & Co. stripped the bundle of faggots of its gorgeous apparel, and, packing it up, started off with due caution for the boathouse.

CHAPTER 5.

Very Unfortunate!

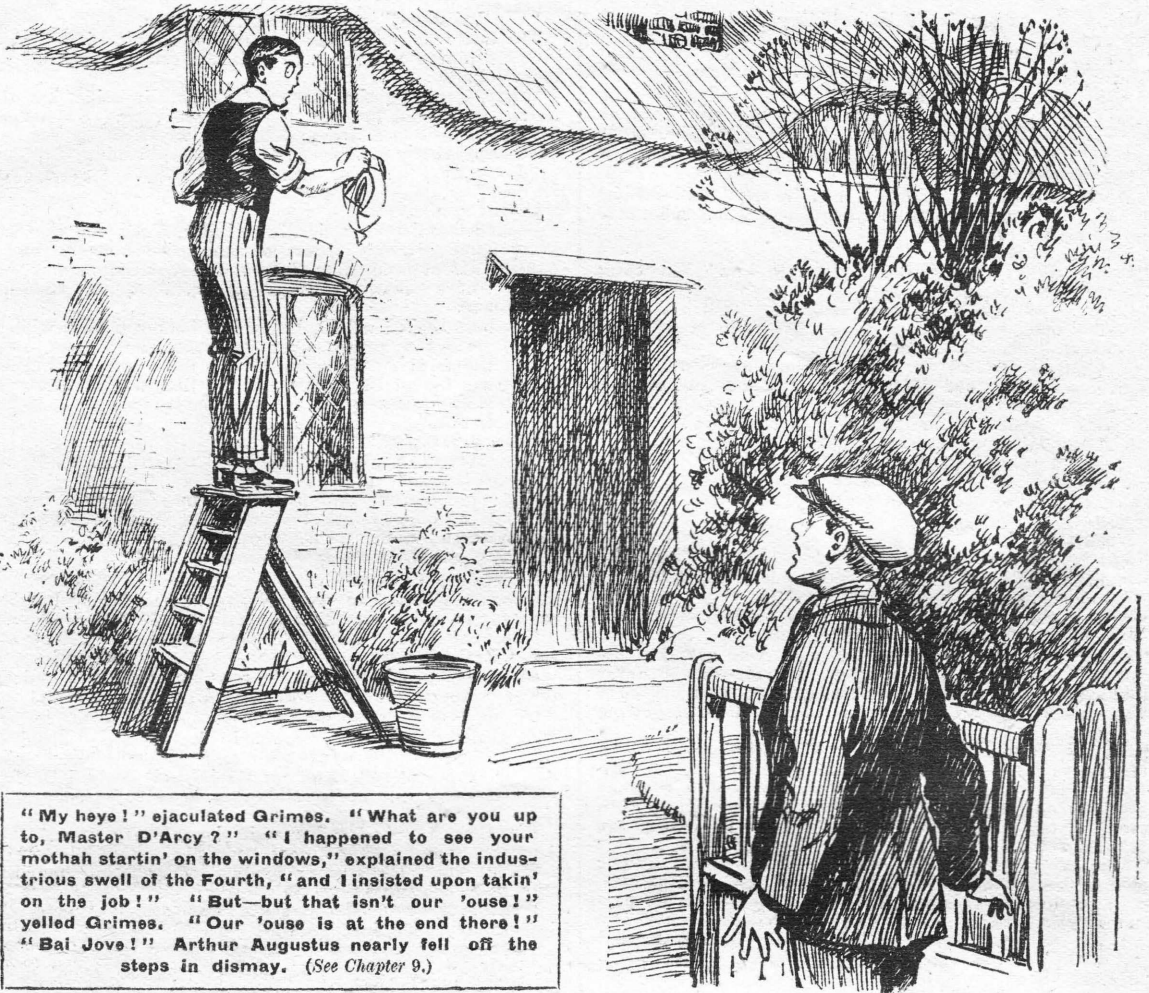
"**B**AI Jove! This is weally wathah twyin'!"

Arthur Augustus was feeling hot and bothered and half smothered. The swell of the Fourth was lying, very uncomfortably, in the bottom of one of the boats in the boathouse. After a long wait outside, Arthur Augustus had slipped inside when the back of Adams, the school boatman, happened to be turned. There being no time to reach the dressing-rooms where the trap-door leading up to the loft was situated, Arthur Augustus had scudded to the nearest boat and hidden himself under a heap of canvas in the prow.

It happened to be one of the biggest gigs, and quite roomy; none the less, on a hot day, it was none too comfortable, and was certainly hot and stuffy.

Gussy had now accomplished half of the journey to the haven of refuge in the loft, and he intended to lie low until the troublesome Adams gave him another chance.

Unluckily, that chance did not come. Very few fellows would be coming for a pull up river until after tea, and so Adams, having no boats to lift out, carried on with his job of splicing a damaged oar. And as he was working scarcely half a dozen yards from the boat wherein Gussy crouched, the situation was certainly trying for the runaway.



"My heye!" ejaculated Grimes. "What are you up to, Master D'Arcy?" "I happened to see your mothah startin' on the windows," explained the industrious swell of the Fourth, "and I insisted upon takin' on the job!" "But—but that isn't our 'ouse!" yelled Grimes. "Our 'ouse is at the end there!" "Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus nearly fell off the steps in dismay. (See Chapter 9.)

"Oh deah!" murmured the fugitive to himself. "If Adams does not move soon I shall be obliged to reveal myself. How vevy twyin', bai Jove!"

Scarcely had Arthur Augustus murmured these remarks when footsteps and voices sounded, and three seniors came in through the open double doors of the boathouse. Taking a peep from under the heap of canvas—which was the boat's mainsail—Arthur Augustus recognised Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger of the Fifth.

"Oh, good!" murmured Gussy in great relief.

He braced himself, ready to slip out from his hiding-place and make a bolt for the dressing-room the moment Adams had carried out the Fifth-Formers' boat.

But Gussy's relief was very short-lived.

It so happened that Cutts had already booked the very boat Gussy had taken refuge in, and it was Cutts who had placed the sail in the prow in readiness. Cutts & Co. were lazy youths, and they never rowed when it was possible to use a sail. Indeed, sailing was about the only healthy sport Cutts & Co. were enthusiastic about. They were enthusiastic about quite a number of unhealthy "sports."

"Here we are," remarked Cutts, walking up to the boat. "Now, Adams, old sport, get a move on!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus breathed the exclamation in deep dismay as he heard Cutts' voice almost at his ear, but before he could move, much less think the position out, the boat under him was lifted off the trestles by Cutts, St. Leger, and Gilmore, who were obviously anxious to be off.

The next moment Adams had dropped his work, and, hurrying up, he took his part in launching the craft. Under the sail, the unfortunate runaway was overwhelmed with dismay and startled indecision.

"Jolly heavy," commented Cutts, panting under the strain. "Why the dickens didn't you have the old tub ready on the trolley, Adams?"

"Sorry, sir," murmured Adams. "It do seem extra 'eavy, and no error!"

Splash!

The craft hit the water, and the boat rocked and swayed

as Cutts jumped in and fixed the rudder. Then he seated himself in the stern with the rudder lines. Gilmore joined him, while St. Leger took the sculls from Adams, and before Arthur Augustus had reached a decision as to what he should do the boat was rocking out into mid-stream.

"Oh, bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

Escape was out of the question now; indeed, it was doubtful if he could have escaped had he attempted to do so. Cutts & Co. were not at all disposed to be friendly with Tom Merry & Co., and they would have taken a savage delight in chasing Gussy had he made a dash for it.

It was too late for that now, however. In deep dismay Gussy realised that he was fairly trapped. It was only a matter of seconds now before discovery, unless the Fifth-Formers did not intend to use the sail.

Arthur Augustus determined to sell his liberty dearly, if it did come to that. He did not have to wait long. St. Leger pulled out into mid-stream, and then he dropped his sculls and started along the rocking boat to the prow.

"Buck up, old chap!" said Cutts, yawning, in the stern. "It'll be lock-up before we get going at this dashed rate."

"Come and lend a hand, then, you lazy slacker!" growled St. Leger, tugging at the sail. "You're jolly smart at giving orders and criticising. But when it comes to—Why, what—Great pip!"

"D'Arcy!"

It was a combined howl.

As St. Leger dragged at the heap of sail the hapless Arthur Augustus was revealed.

He jumped up, stiff and cramped, but resolved to make a fight for it, or take a header over the side—a last desperate resource. Cutts & Co. stared at him blankly. With his sooty features, his apron, rough coat, and cap, Arthur Augustus certainly presented a striking picture. But for the fact that it was known the fugitive was wearing Grimes' rig-out the Fifth-Formers would scarcely have believed their own eyes.

But it was D'Arcy without a doubt.

"Well—well, I'm hanged!" stammered Cutts. "So—so this

is where the young fool's been hiding! Oh, good gad! Look at him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three Fifth-Formers burst into a roar of laughter. Arthur Augustus eyed them coldly and warily, jamming his eyeglass into place to aid him in the process. Through all his recent troubles and trials Arthur Augustus had stuck to his eyeglass. But it made his strange appearance all the more ridiculous now, and Cutts & Co. roared again.

"When your senseless hילawity has ceased," said Arthur Augustus cuttingly, "pewwaps you will be good enough to wew me ashoah?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perhaps!" gurgled Cutts. "Hark to him! He wants us to row him ashore!"

"Cheeky young cad!" grinned Gilmore. "Pitch the silly young fool overboard!"

"No fear!" grinned Cutts, his face showing gleeful spite. "We've got more than one score against dear old D'Arcy. We're going to do our giddy duty and hand him over to justice, of course!"

"I uttably wefuse to be handed ovah to justice!" panted Arthur Augustus, stepping back, with his fists up. "If you twy to captuah me I warn you that I shall fight!"

"Oh, great Scott! He's going to fight," murmured Cutts. "Can you fellows see me shivering with fright at the prospect?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be too merciless, will you, D'Arcy?" begged Cutts, apparently inclined to be humorous. "Think of our age and grey hairs. Temper the wind to the shorn lamb, you know. Are we the shorn lamb, or is D'Arcy, Gilmore?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared St. Leger.

"Chuck it, Cutts!" grunted Gilmore, who was too unpleasant a person to be humorous. "Overboard with the little sweep! We don't want to be bothered with the dirty young villain! Boot him over the side and let's be getting on!"

"No fear!" smiled Cutts. "I'm takin' the path of duty, if it does mean a little trouble. We'll take him to the boat-house, tie him up nicely, and send Adams with a message to Railton. I think this is where I settle old scores with friend D'Arcy. To-morrow, if I fancy, he'll be taking the long trail home."

"You are a wewengeful wottah, Cutts," said Arthur Augustus disdainfully. "I have no intention of wequestin' you to put me ashoah again, as I would wefuse to accept a favah at your hands. Wathah not. I wefuse, howevah, to allow you to captuah me, and I warn you that I shall wewist with the utmost force at my disposal."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts & Co. were highly entertained by Gussy's stout defiance. Cutts started across the boat, evidently in no wise terrified by Gussy's threats. Being a good head taller than the Fourth-Former, this was really not to be wondered at.

"Here, hold on!" gasped Gilmore in great alarm. "No rumpus until we land, you silly ass, Cutts!"

"Rats! I'll soon settle his hash," grinned Cutts, and he made a rush at Arthur Augustus.

It was a very unwise move indeed, for a gig, however roomy, is scarcely a suitable place for a scrap. Cutts would undoubtedly have been well advised to leave the capture of Gussy until landing.

But Cutts of the Fifth very often did unwise things, and he very often suffered for them.

He did so now. As he grabbed at Arthur Augustus, that gallant youth's fist clumped on his nose, and Cutts howled, the boat rocking and lurching violently as he staggered back.

"Cutts, you born idiot!" howled St. Leger. "You'll have us over!"

"Chuck it!" shouted Gilmore angrily.

He jumped up in alarm, thus making the boat rock more. And just then, all his humour vanished now, Cutts made a savage lunge at Gussy. But Gilmore's move overbalanced him a little, and his blow went wide, whilst Gussy's return slam caught him clean under the chin.

Thump!

"Yow!"

Cutts yelped, and then his face went red with fury, and he went for Arthur Augustus in earnest.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Gussy, in alarm.

The boat was really rocking dangerously now, but though his pals howled at him, Cutts paid no heed; he had lost his temper badly.

Gussy, realising the danger, tried to slip aside, but the narrow prow did not permit smart footwork. He dodged a wild slam from Cutts, and then, to avoid being knocked overboard, Gussy grabbed at Cutts and held him.

"Look out!" roared Gilmore furiously. "Cutts, you fool—"

Crash!

Locked together in a deadly embrace, Cutts and the runaway came crashing down on the port bow—to use a nautical term—and next instant what Gilmore and St. Leger were fearing happened with quite startling abruptness.

The boat rocked wildly, lurched still more wildly, while a torrent of water poured over the side. The sudden lurch threw the swaying Gilmore off his feet, and his weight, falling on top of St. Leger, did all that was necessary to complete the catastrophe.

"Look out!"

"Oh, great pip!"

"Bai Jove! Cutts—"

Splash, splash!

Cutts and Arthur Augustus were in. The next instant Gilmore and St. Leger had followed them as the boat turned turtle, amid an uproar of yelling and spluttering.

"You—you little whelp!" spluttered Cutts.

Apparently Cutts was blaming Arthur Augustus. At all events, the moment he came up and sighted the floundering runaway he flung himself through the water towards him.

"Oh, bai Jove!" choked Arthur Augustus. "Keep off, you wottah!"

But Cutts was in a towering rage now. Gilmore and St. Leger swam to the boat and hung on to it, but Cutts was thinking only of vengeance.

As Arthur Augustus recovered himself and started to swim ashore, Cutts went after him like a hungry pike. Arthur Augustus put it on for all he was worth. He had got a ducking, and he wasn't going to be captured as well if he could help it.

But, though a good swimmer in the ordinary way, Arthur Augustus found Grimes' coat very heavy and difficult to swim in, whilst Cutts was a much stronger fellow, and had only light boating things on.

Ten yards from shore Cutts was almost up to the desperately swimming junior.

The runaway was just feeling all was up with him, when suddenly he sighted several figures scudding at top speed along the towing-path.

"Stick it, Gussy!"

It was the welcome voice of Tom Merry, and Gussy's heart gave a thrill. The next moment Tom Merry & Co. rushed up, and they did not waste time before joining in the proceedings.

Whiz, whiz, whiz, whiz!

Grabbing up turfs and chunks of clay from the bank they started to pelt the swimming Fifth-Former.

"Go it!" gasped Tom Merry. "Let him have it hot and strong!"

What the meaning of the extraordinary scene was Tom Merry & Co. did not know, nor did they stop to ask. They just pelted Cutts. A rain of whizzing turfs hissed into the water all round the swimming senior, more than one of them finding a billet on Cutts' face and head.

"You young fiends!" roared Cutts. "Stop it! By gad, I'll make you— Yoooop!"

Splutter, splutter, splutter!

A particularly hefty chunk of turf took Cutts full in the mouth, and he seemed to stagger and stop like a ship running on a rock, whilst weird splutterings and gasps came from him as his head went under the water.

"Here you are, Gussy!"

The momentary respite was enough for Arthur Augustus. Blake and Herries grabbed him and hauled him ashore, where he staggered, panting and gasping and spluttering, with water pouring from him in streams.

"Oh!" he panted. "Oh, bai Jove! Oh, gweat Scott!"

"Run for it!" panted Blake.

"Go it, Gussy, you idiot—into the woods!"

"Wathah not! Have you fellows bwought my clobber?"

"Blow your clobber!" gasped Blake urgently. "Run for it, you idiot, unless you want to be copped!"

"But—"

"Your clobber's in the boathouse!" snapped Tom Merry. "We had to hide it as Kildare and Darrell came along behind us. They're in the boathouse now, and will be—"

"Here they come now!" warned Herries.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus understood now, and suddenly he caught sight of Kildare and Darrell dashing along the towing-path

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from the boathouse. They had evidently seen the boat overturned, and were coming along at top speed to investigate.

It was certainly not the time to bother about "dobber," important as that matter was to the swell of the Fourth.

Arthur Augustus gave one look at the approaching prefects, and then he dived through the hedge bordering the towpath and vanished into the thick wood beyond.

Once again the luckless fugitive was on his travels. "Oh crumbs!" groaned Blake. "Isn't he a—a cough-drop! He's got a genius for finding trouble, the awful ass! This means a licking again for us, I— Look out!"

Cutts clambered ashore just then, his face fendish with rage. And Tom Merry & Co. did not stay for further discussion. They flew, going back towards the boathouse.

"What's the matter?" yelled Kildare, as they passed him. "Who—"

"Cutts!" called Tom Merry cheerily. "He's had an upset! All serene, they're not drowned, worse luck!"

It was clear that Kildare and Darrell were ignorant that the runaway Arthur Augustus was connected with the overturned boat. And Tom Merry & Co. did not propose to stay whilst they found out. Cutts was looking far too dangerous, and they felt that even the prefects would not save them from his wrath. So they pelted back to the boathouse, where they got the parcel of clothes they had hurriedly hidden there, and then took to the woods in a forlorn hope of finding Arthur Augustus.

But it proved to be a vain hope. And, after searching for twenty minutes, the juniors hid the parcel and returned to St. Jim's. They had done their best for Gussy, and until they knew where he was they could do no more. But they felt very, very sorry for him.

CHAPTER 6.

A Change of Attire!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY ran hard, puffing and panting, water squelching in his boots as he ran. Gussy was, naturally, under the impression that Kildare and Darrell had seen him, and that they would be hard in pursuit of him. In any case, it was necessary to put as big a distance as possible between his hapless self and the scene of the unfortunate happenings.

Really, the luck of Arthur Augustus seemed to be out completely. It was sheer bad luck that he had chosen the very boat Cutts & Co. intended to use for his hiding-place. But for that luckless decision, Arthur Augustus realised dismally that he might even at that moment have been in possession of his own clothes again.

But it was of no use repining, and Arthur Augustus pelted on through the woods until his clothes began to steam and his breath came in great gasps.

He wondered if his loyal chums had followed on his trail; yet he dared not risk stopping, of course. When the coast was clear he would return to the boathouse in another desperate attempt to get some fresh garments.

And his position was desperate now—desperate in the extreme. His new plight was worse than his former. He still wore Grimes' clothes, and now they were drenched through, likewise his own trousers and under garments.

"Oh deah!" groaned the swell of the Fourth. "Weally, this is too awful for words!"

He dropped into a walk at length, panting and exhausted. It was neither pleasant nor comfortable running in wet things. Luckily, it was a very warm afternoon, and his chief feeling was one of sticky discomfort. No sound of pursuit had he heard at all; but he had refused to take any risks, for all that.

Feeling safe enough now, however, he trudged on until he came suddenly out on the fringe of the woods. Scarcely twenty yards away from him was a ruined cottage, with shattered walls and tattered, thatched roof.

"Bai Jove! The vevy place!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

It was a case of any port in a storm, and Arthur Augustus was thankful for any shelter just then. He entered the ruined cottage and closed the rickety door. Then he started to undress. After a quick make-shift rub-down with Grimes' apron, Gussy squeezed as much water from his clothing as he could and donned it again.

He felt a trifle more comfortable after that; but not much, and it was obvious that something had to be done to get a fresh supply.

"Wotten!" groaned Gussy. "I weally think that I had bettah pwoceed to Gwimey's home, as he suggested. I wish I had done so to begin with. It is witten to have to twouble—"

Gussy's reflections terminated there, for at that moment footsteps sounded, and three juniors came out of the wood and started along the field-path past the cottage. They wore Grammar School caps, and Arthur Augustus, peering

through the broken window eagerly, recognised them in a flash.

They were Algernon Lacy, Carker, and Price—three Fourth-Formers, and three rather shady characters of the Grammar School. Arthur Augustus frowned his disappointment. He had hoped the newcomers would be friends, instead of which they were enemies. Lacy & Co. were very much up against Tom Merry & Co.

None the less, Arthur Augustus determined to appeal to them. Even such cads as Lacy & Co. would scarcely be so mean as to refuse to aid him in his dire extremity. So thought Gussy in the innocence of his own generous nature.

"Lacy, deah boy!" he called out eagerly.

"What the dickens—"

Lacy & Co. jumped. Then they sighted Arthur Augustus, and Lacy grinned. The story of the running away of Arthur Augustus had obviously reached the Grammar School.

"Oh gad!" exclaimed Lacy, with a chuckle. "Here's Gussy—the giddy runaway!"

"You are labourin' undah a misappwehension, Lacy," said Arthur Augustus rather tartly. "I am not a runaway at all—wathah not!"

"Then what the thump are you?" asked Lacy. "A giddy walk away?"

Carker and Price giggled. Arthur Augustus frowned through the window at the grinning Grammarians. He was beginning to wonder if he had been wise, after all, in calling to them.

"I am neithah, Lacy," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I have meahly wetiathed fwom St. Jim's for a time until my headmastah sees fit to tweat me with the justice that I wegard as my due."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Not runaway, or walkaway, or crawlaway, or swimaway, or flyaway—just retired, eh?" said Lacy gravely.

"Yaas, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, eyeing Lacy a trifle uncertainly. "The stow which led to my takin' such a sewious step would take wathah a long time to welate. But I assuah you fellows that it was impossible and uttably inconsistent with my dignity to do anythin' else in the cires."

"So you retired!" murmured Lacy. "You didn't run away and you didn't walk away, nor did you hop away; you just retired. You understand, you fellows?" said the humorous Lacy. "Our friend Gussy did not run away, mark you, he just—"

"Weally, Lacy," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, frowning severely, "I see nothin' to gwim about! I believe you are attemptin' to pull my leg."

"Go hon!"

"It is not a jokin' mattah to me, I can assuah you," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I am in a tewwible pwe-dicament, and I called to you because I felt certain that in my dire extwemity you would allow bygones to be bygones, and would be willin' to help a fellow in distwess."

"Doesn't he talk like a gramophone record?" murmured Lacy admiringly. "Dear old Gussy, of course we will! Won't we, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!"

"A real pleasure to be of some help and assistance to beauty in distwess," said Carker, referring possibly to Gussy's face, which was now less sootier, but far more streaky and hideous.

"Ha, ha! Just so!" said Lacy. "But, speaking seriously, D'Arcy, what is the trouble? You look awfully sooty and awfully wet! Don't say they've started making you wash at St. Jim's?"

"Weally, Lacy—"

"Worse than that, I fear," said Carker solemnly. "Looks to me as if they've started making them bath; only Gussy's made a mistake and put soot instead of bath-salts into the bath. Is that so, Gussy?"

"Wats! Pway do not be widic, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus with admirable patience. "I can quite undahstand that in my pwesent condition I must look wathah stwange. The mattah is far fwom bein' a joke, howwah. Pway be sewious. I have been obliged to escape by climbin' down a chimnay in the School House, and since then I have had the misfortune to fall into the wivah!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I have also been obliged to change clobbah with Gwimes, Mr. Sands' ewwand-boy," said Arthur Augustus. "He is a vevy decent fellow, and I am vevy wowwied at the thought that his clobbah is dwenched, and I must get the things dwied and returned to him at the earliest possible moment. Unfortunately, I do not feel that it is safe for me to ventuah out of hidin' yet, as Kildare and Dawwell of the Sixth happen to be aftah me. Also, it would be vevy wiskay, and would attwact attention, for me to pwoceed through the village to Gwimes' home with dwenched clobbah."

"Go on," murmured Lacy, stifling a chuckle. "And so—"

"So I wondahed if you fellows would be so vevy kind as to bwing me a fwesh supply, or take a message to Blake, at St. Jim's, for me. If you do not care to undahtake the task, possibly you would not mind asking Gordon Gay to do so?"

"My dear man, consider it already done," said Lacy, winking at his chums with the eye farthest away from the innocent and trusting Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, rather!" said Carker.

"Oh, quite!" murmured Price.

"Thank you vevy much, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus innocently. "We have not been fwriends in the past, and I wathah feah I have wegarded you as bein' smoky, shady wottahs. I am quite sure, howevah, that in the cires you would dwop past diffeences and aid me in my extwemity."

Arthur Augustus spoke quite gracefully; but his choice of words was unfortunate. But Lacy smiled, though his eyes glittered a trifle. Only for a moment, though.

"Thank you for those words, Gussy," he said solemnly. "You are very kind—ain't he, you fellows? We'll get some clobber from our school I think—it's nearest, of course. You won't mind havin' to use Grammarian clothes, I hope? We know you are rather particular."

"Not at all, deah boy! Beggahs cannot afford to be ehoozahs," replied Arthur Augustus, with a graceful smile. "Pway huwvy if you do not mind, Lacy?"

"Oh, certainly! Come along, you fellows!"

"Right-ho!"

The fellows hurried away with Lacy, both of them looking rather curiously at Lacy, though they still grinned. Possibly they wondered what fresh jape the humorous Lacy was hatching. Arthur Augustus watched them go rather dubiously. Not that he suspected them of treachery or japes. But because he was still doubtful if they would really carry out their promise.

"Lacy is wathah a disweputable fellow," murmured the swell of the Fourth, shaking his head. "But weally, if he does keep his word I shall feel obliged to change my opinion of him considwably. Aftah all, there is good in ewevybody. Bai Jove! The boundahs are laughin'. Howevah, I have no doubt my appeawance is wathah widiculous to othahs."

And Arthur Augustus seated himself on a broken box to await Lacy & Co.'s return. He knew he would not have to wait long, for the Grammar School was only one or two fields distant. He watched the three Grammarians vanish into the wood, not at all disturbed by the fact that they were laughing, though doubts did certainly assail him as to whether Lacy & Co. really intended to carry out their promise.

But all doubts fled when, at the end of a quarter of an hour, hurried footsteps sounded, and the next moment Lacy, followed by Carker and Price, came running up to the cottage. And Lacy was carrying a bulky brown-paper parcel tied round with string.

"Oh, good!" breathed Arthur Augustus.

"Here we are!" said Lacy cheerily. "Got trousers and jacket, but couldn't get a cap, and you'll have to keep your giddy underclothes on, I'm afraid."

"Pway come in, deah boys."

The "deah boys" entered the cottage, Lacy sticking to the parcel.

"You'll have to buck up," he said. "I fancied I spotted Kildare and Darrell in the woods, though I'm not quite certain."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"You've just got time to change and hide yourself," said

Lacy hurriedly. "Buck up and get those things off. As it happens we're going past Grimey's shop, and we'll leave his things there for him if you like. I suppose he'll be needing them. In any case, they ought to be dried."

"Yes, buck up!" gasped Carker, glancing cautiously out of the window.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus started to tear off his clothes. Lacy started to untie the string from the parcel—or, at least, he seemed to be trying to untie it, though he certainly fumbled a lot over the task. Possibly he had his reasons for not hurrying.

But the trusting Arthur Augustus did not notice that fact. He tore off Grimes' apron and jacket and then he slipped off his own drenched trousers.

He had just done so when Lacy gave a chuckle, grabbed up the jacket and apron, and bolted out of the cottage. And scarcely a second behind him went Carker, having grabbed up Gussy's soaked trousers, while Price grabbed the scarf and waistcoat and followed in his chums' wake.

"Oh, bai Jove! What—what—"

Arthur Augustus was thunderstruck.

He stood rooted to the floor for a moment, and then he jumped to the window and looked out. He was just in time to see Lacy & Co. vanish into the wood with the clothes, roaring with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

Really it was most amazing—to Arthur Augustus! Why Lacy & Co., after having been so kind, should race away yelling with laughter like that was a mystery. Certainly they had intended to take Grimes' clobber, yet—

A sudden suspicion entered the mind of Arthur Augustus, and after a brief hesitation, he jumped to the parcel, and without troubling to try to untie the string, wrenched it off and opened the parcel.

Then he jumped!

Inside was a pair of knickers and a tunic. They were thin and of a rather unpleasant yellowish colour. And they were sprinkled generously with broad, black arrows! There was also a pair of hideous striped stockings.

It was a convict suit!

Gussy could have yelled in dismay.

"Oh, gwreat Scott!"

CHAPTER 7.

On the Move Again!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS had never been more astonished and dismayed in his life. He blinked and blinked at the terrible suit. It was nice and dry certainly, and clean. But—

"Oh, gwreat Scott!" repeated Gussy again.

He understood the laughter of Lacy & Co. now. They had been pulling his leg all the time. They had kept their word certainly, but they had brought a suit which Arthur Augustus certainly did not want to wear. Arthur Augustus guessed—and rightly as it happened—that it belonged to the Grammarian dramatic society's property-box.

Arthur Augustus had been taken in—taken in badly. And as he realised the fact his aristocratic features crimsoned under the streaks of soot—crimsoned with humiliation and most terrific wrath.

"Bai Jove!" he breathed, seething with indignation. "The—the fwightful wottahs! The—the feahful spoozahs! The—the howwid, tweachewous boundahs! I was a duffah indeed to twust the feahful wottahs! They were pullin' my leg all the time and I nevah suspected it! Oh cwumbs! What shall I do now?"

Pursuit was out of the question. Already the hilarious laughter of Lacy & Co. had died away in the distance. Yet Arthur Augustus had to do something—he could not possibly remain as he was in his underclothing. Besides, it was vitally necessary, with Kildare and Darrell knocking about—though even Gussy doubted that now—to be ready to bolt at a moment's notice if necessary.

Really it was very worrying indeed. Yet there was nothing else for it. Moreover, though the weather was very warm, Gussy felt none too warm now standing in his under-clothing.

Something had to be done if he wanted to keep warm and avoid a chill, and the only thing to be done was to don the convict suit.

"Oh deah!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

He stooped for the knickers and drew back again. Then he stooped again, his mind made up, and picking them up he started to put them on, his face showing his utter dismay and agitation. Then, realising there was really nothing else for it, donned the tunic, shuddering as he did so. Certainly they were clean, and he knew they were made only for amateur theatricals. None the less, Arthur Augustus could



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not repress a shudder as he completed his scanty toilet by donning the stockings and tunic, finishing up by jamming his eyeglass into his eye—Arthur Augustus would have perished rather than have parted with that.

But he looked a really extraordinary picture when he had finished his dressing.

"It is fearful!" he groaned. "Howevah, it is bettah than those wet things, and I shall be warmah. It is impossible to ventuah out in the daylight now, howevah. I will remain heah until dark, and then I will make my way to Gwimes' home. It is vevy unfortunate. I will give those wottahs a feahful thwashin'—"

Arthur Augustus paused.

From the woods came the crashing of approaching feet and deep voices—excited voices. The next moment, as the startled runaway blinked out through the gap in the window, he jumped as he sighted a number of men.

One was a gamekeeper, carrying a gun; another was obviously a farmer; two others were woodsmen, one carrying an axe in his hand. And behind them were Lacy, Carker, and Price.

"Oh, gwreat Scott!" gasped Gussy.

Even then he did not grasp the full extent of Lacy & Co.'s treachery. He supposed that Lacy & Co. had brought the gang to capture him—in order to take him back to St. Jim's.

But this was not the case, as it happened. Lacy & Co. had told the men that they had seen a convict hiding in the ruined cottage, and the men had come to investigate. They were not quite convinced yet, having been taken in more than once in the past by humorously inclined jokers from the Grammar School.

They were very soon convinced, however.

For a brief instant the alarmed Arthur Augustus stared at the oncoming men, and then he gave a startled gasp and dashing to the door, he fairly flew out and took to his heels.

"There he goes!"

"By hokey! Arter him!"

Bang, bang!

The yells were followed by the instant discharge of the gamekeeper's gun. As it was only loaded with blank cartridge it scarcely did much harm. But it brought a thrill of desperate fear to Arthur Augustus.

He gave another stifled gasp, and fairly flew for his life, his feet scarcely seeming to touch the ground.

"Arter him!" roared the keeper.

The men went tearing in pursuit, yelling excitedly. And at that juncture Lacy, Carker, and Price doubled up, choking with laughter. Then, having recovered a little, they turned back and vanished into the wood. They had done their fell work, and they had no intention of being at hand when the "convict" was captured.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus once again was going strong. He was one of the best runners in the Lower School, and he certainly needed all his running powers now. To be chased by a keeper who was recklessly discharging a double-barrelled gun and by a woodsman carrying an axe—not to mention the other men—was very alarming and disturbing indeed. Moreover, another cry had reached Gussy's ears—a cry that brought a sudden, startled thrill to Gussy:

"Stop 'im! Stop that durned convict!"

It was a bellow from the keeper, and he was shouting to someone in front of Gussy. Then the hapless runaway became aware that men were working in a ploughed field just ahead of him.

"Oh deah!" panted Gussy.

He understood now that the men took him for an escaped convict, and his fear of that double-barrelled gun was re-doubled—trebled, in fact. He also had a mental vision of the woodman waving his keen-edged axe.

Escaped convicts were notoriously dangerous characters to deal with, and there was no knowing what the honest, excited pursuers might do if they caught him.

Arthur Augustus made a desperate resolve not to be caught, and he spurred frantically to get past the farm-labourers in the ploughed field.

He was past before they actually grasped the situation. Then they understood—or imagined they did—and, armed with hay-forks, spades, and other agricultural implements, they joined in the mad chase.

"Oh deah!" panted Gussy, almost beside himself with dismay. "This is frightful!"

The thought of giving himself up did come to Arthur Augustus, but he did not consider it. It was a case of "No surrender" for the swell of the Fourth. He had placed his aristocratic hand to the plough, so to speak, and he meant to plough his lonely furrow to the end.

He went tearing across three fields almost without knowing it. And suddenly, as he crushed his way through a gap in a high hedge, he pulled himself up short, with a panting gasp of alarm.

Before him was a cricket field, dotted with white flannel figures. Round the field were also dotted figures, many in flannels and blazers, many in Etons, and round the pavilion was a crowd. In the background some distance behind was a pile of buildings.

It was the Grammar School cricket ground, and the buildings behind were those of the Rylcombe Grammar School. Arthur Augustus knew exactly where he was now.

"Oh cwumbs!" groaned Gussy.

But there was no time for thought and reflection—no time for anything but flight! Behind him—perilously near now—came yells and the thudding of heavy feet on the sward.

"Hi! Stop 'im! Stop, you scoundrel!"

Arthur Augustus grimly refused to stop; instead, he went on full-pelt across the cricket field. Really, there was nothing else for it—excepting capture. To go off at a tangent was to invite capture by the yelling, perspiring, but grimly determined men behind.

Bang, bang!

The gamekeeper's gun went off again, making every individual on the cricket ground jump and look in that direction. Evidently the keeper still cherished a hope that his gun would strike fear into the fugitive's heart and cause him to give in.

But Arthur Augustus was made of sterner stuff.

He went on, and as the cricketers and onlookers grasped the situation yells went up all round the field—yells of alarm and amazement.

"Great pip!"

"A giddy escaped convict! Look out!"

"Hi! Stop 'im—stop the yillain!"

Bang, bang!

Amid a perfect uproar of startled yells and howls Arthur Augustus scudded across the trim sward desperately. The cricketers for the most part scattered to make way for him. With his streaky, heated face, Arthur Augustus certainly looked a desperate character, and they were taking no chances. Only Delamere, the Grammar School captain stood his ground, and as Arthur Augustus dashed past him, Delamere made a blind, thoughtless swipe at him with his bat.

It missed Gussy—happily by yards, and Delamere grunted and pitched his bat after him, and then went tearing in pursuit. And he was not the only one. Now that the "convict" was past them, everybody became valiant and eager to join in the pursuit.

Delamere was leading the way now, with the gamekeeper and his band of hunters at his heels. After them came a swarm of seniors and juniors, excited and yelling. Possibly they could easily have outpaced the gallant villagers, who were obviously getting badly pumped, but they all seemed to prefer to be behind the gamekeeper's gun rather than in front of it.

The fugitive was making for the school buildings now. In his desperate plight it had occurred to Arthur Augustus that it was hopeless to think of trying to outpace the Grammarians, who were fresh while he was badly pumped. And an idea had come to him in a flash.

Gordon Gay & Co. who were in the Fourth, were great friends of his, and if he could only reach their study safely and take shelter there he knew he could rely on their help in such an emergency.

So Gussy made tracks for the Grammar School House, ignoring the few fellows he met en route—who quickly made way for him with yells of alarm.

"Stop him!" roared Delamere.

Delamere was, like Kildare of St. Jim's, a very decent fellow, and also a very keen-witted fellow. He had already noted the size of the fugitive, and he had already noted also the eyeglass that streamed behind Gussy at the end of its cord—a rather strange thing which nobody else had noted. And as Delamere had heard about D'Arcy having run away, he was not long in putting two and two together.

Being a dutiful senior and a prefect, Delamere deemed it his duty to apprehend the runaway if he could.

But nobody stopped Gussy, and Delamere didn't catch him. Gussy had had a good start, and, with refuge in sight, he put on one last, pumping spurt, which took him round the school chapel and into the quad in a matter of seconds.

Then Gussy made a bee-line for the School House steps.

As he did so there came another yell from Delamere behind:

"Stop him! Stop him, Gay!"

Gussy suddenly saw why. On the steps four juniors were standing. They were Gordon Gay, Frank Wootton, Harry Wootton, and Frank Monk. They fairly jumped as they sighted the "convict" and heard Delamere's frantic yell.

"A giddy convict!" gasped Gay. "Oh, my hat!"

"Back up!" yelled Monk. "We'll jolly soon—"

"Here he comes! Oh, great pip! It's— Don't stop
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him; let him get past, you idiots! It's old Gussy—D'Arcy, from St. Jim's!"

Gordon Gay hissed the order desperately, suddenly recognising Arthur Augustus, despite his streaky face.

Grasping the situation, the astounded Grammarians jumped aside as Gussy leaped up the steps, taking them three at a time. He was through in a flash, and the next moment Delamere dashed up.

By accident or design—it looked suspiciously like the latter—Gordon Gay got in his way as he rushed up the steps, and there was a sudden collision and a yell.

Crash!

Delamere and Gay rolled over together, only just saving themselves going headlong down the steps. Delamere was up in a flash again, seething with wrath.

"You clumsy young ass!" he panted. "Out of the way!"

Flinging Frank Monk aside, he dashed into the House. But Arthur Augustus had vanished. And Delamere, after a swift glance round the Hall, came hurrying back to the doorway. He knew there would be a terrific row if the House was overrun with villagers and other strangers—especially in search of an escaped convict who didn't exist. So Delamere hurried out to stop the rush, and he was only just in time.

A swarm of fellows were already in the quad, and Delamere shouted to Walters, a prefect.

"Clear this lot out, for goodness' sake!" he gasped. "Tell those dashed villagers it's a mistake—a jape of some sort!"

"Good gad! But—but—"

"It was only a kid from St. Jim's in convict's clothes," snapped Delamere wrathfully. "It's a silly joke—a kid named D'Arcy, who's run away from St. Jim's! Explain to these villagers, and clear them out before the beaks come on the job."

"Oh, my hat!"

Chuckling explosively as he understood, Walters started to carry out his orders, and soon howls of laughter in the quad told that the facts were becoming known. And, meanwhile, Delamere, calling a few prefects to his aid, started a search of the School House.

CHAPTER 8.

Friends in Need!

"WELL, my only Sunday topper!"

"Did you ever?"

"No, never!" admitted Frank Monk, with a chuckle. "Isn't that chap D'Arcy a coughdrop? But—but I'm sorry for him!"

"Dashed sorry!" agreed Gordon Gay reflectively. "I'm jolly glad I just spotted his chivvy in time! I wonder—"

"Eh?"

Gay paused reflectively. Then he nodded.

"I wonder," he said, "if old Gussy's still about the giddy premises? The prefects have searched the whole show, and Delamere thinks he's escaped through one of the ground-floor windows. I overheard him telling our respected Form master. But it's just struck me. Gussy knows what dear, generous, kind-hearted fellows we are."

"We is!" agreed Wootton major. "Go on!"

"Well, our giddy study's about the only place Gussy knows, and it's just struck me he might make for it, hoping we'd hide him and help him."

"By James! That's it!"

"Supposing the dear chap's hiding there now?" murmured Gay. "I vote we go and have a squint, anyway."

"Let's!" grinned Frank Monk.

The chums hurried away without more ado. It was quite possible—indeed, highly probable—that the runaway St. Jim's junior might have made for the only place he knew in the school—Gordon Gay's study. Tom Merry & Co. often went over from St. Jim's to see their friendly rivals, and more than once they had had tea together in Gay's study.

So Gay & Co. hurried there now, anxious to make sure. They were ready enough to help Gussy, if it came to that, and, moreover, they were frightfully keen to know the meaning of it all. They had known that the hapless Arthur Augustus was a fugitive at large, but how he came to be dressed in convict's attire was a mystery to them.

As they entered the study Gordon Gay closed the door and glanced quickly round the room. There was no sign of anyone; but Gordon Gay chuckled and looked under the table. There was nobody under the table.

"Gussy, old top," murmured Gordon Gay, "if you're here, come forth! The coast is clear."

"Bai Jove! Heah I am, deah boy!"

The juniors jumped as the voice came from under the couch, though they had half expected an answer. It was Arthur Augustus right enough, and he crawled from under the couch, dusty and dishevelled and looking an extraordinary figure in his convict's attire.

Gay hurriedly locked the study door.

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"So—so you were hiding here all the time, you giddy law-breaker!" gasped Gordon Gay. "I guessed you might be! Well, you awful young ass—"

"Weally, Gay—"

"What's it all mean?" exclaimed Frank Monk, looking fixedly at Arthur Augustus. "Great pip! I know that suit! Where the thump did you get it from?"

"Fwom that feahful wotah Lacy!" panted Gussy breathlessly, wiping his perspiring features.

"Lacy!"

"Yaas! I had been in the wivah and got my clothes dwenched, and I was hidin' in that wuined cottage on



"Excuse me, but would you be kind enough to direct me to the astonished tea-party the question. "I have brougth the gwceow dignified gentleman—had risen to his feet. Gussy recognised him

(See C

the fringe of Wylcombe woods," explained Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Then Lacy, Carkah, and Pwice came along. They pwetended to be weady to help me, and they wushed back heah to get me some dwy clobbah. Instead of bwingin' me decent things, howevah, they brougth me this feahful wig-out!"

And Arthur Augustus related his stirring adventures with Lacy & Co. and afterwards.

Gordon Gay & Co. could not help laughing. None the less, they felt quite sorry for the unfortunate Arthur Augustus, and grimly angry on hearing of Lacy & Co.'s treachery.

"The rotten cads!" granted Frank Monk. "A bit beyond a joke! But we'll make the sweeps sit up for it, never fear, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I would wathah fight my own battles, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I have been twicked by those wotahs, and I am goin' to give them each a feahful

thwashin' for the wotten way they have tweated me. They have made me look widiculous, and have caused me to go through a most fwightfully distwessin' and unpleasant expeahcence. Howevah, that can wait, deah boys. As you know, my object in hidin' in heah was to see you and wequest you to supply me, as a fwriend of yours, with some suitable clobberah, as it seems impossible for me to get any fwm St. Jim's now. If it is not twoublin' you too much—"
 "My dear man, consider it done," grinned Gordon Gay. "We'll jolly soon do that. But look here, Gussy old dear. Why don't you chuck it?"
 "Bai Jove! Chuck what, deah boy?"



swadesmen's entrance?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked the m Mr. Sands, and—Oh, bai Jove!" One of the party—a tall, inding flash. It was Dr. Holmes, the headmaster of St. Jim's!

"This silly game, of course!" said Gordon Gay, becoming suddenly serious. "We've heard all about it from Blake, of course. You're absolutely begging and praying for the sack. You're a good sort, and it would be rotten if you were booted from St. Jim's. Chuck it!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass and regarded the Grammarian leader more in sorrow than in anger.

"Imposs!" he said, a trifle stiffly. "I do not wegard my action in fwetahin' fwm St. Jim's as a sillay game at all, Gay; far fwm it, bai Jove! My self-respect and dignity wequire me to wefuse to submit to injustice and indignity. Pway do not suggest to me that I should go against my pwinciples, deah boy, as I do not wish to put our fwendship to any stwain."

"But look here, old fellow," pleaded Gordon Gay sincerely. "You don't jolly well realise what you're doing. You've set the whole giddy school by the ears, and you're bound to be collared sooner or later. Chuck it! Give

yourself up and take your medicine like a little man. You may save yourself from the high jump by doing it now. But if you leave it any longer—"

"It means the boot, I bet," said Frank Monk, nodding. "Take our tip and chuck it, Gussy."

"Hear, hear!" said both Woottons together.

Arthur Augustus held up his hand.

"That is enough, deah boys," he said calmly. "I quite undahstand that you mean well. But what you suggest is uttably imposs. Pway leave the mattah to me. I admiah you fellows as decent youngstahs. But I must wemark that you are uttably lackin' in judgment, and do not undahstand the posish. You are wathah dense and dull, if I may say so?"

"Oh!"

"Howevah, I am weady to make allowances for your limited weasonin' powahs," resumed Arthur Augustus kindly. "Pway do not twouble your heads about mattahs you do not quite gwasp, deah boys. Leave it to me and you will see it will come out in the end quite all wight. It is quite useless to argue."

"Oh dear!"

Gay & Co. groaned. They saw that it was quite useless. Had it been any other St. Jim's fellow they would have fallen on him and smitten him hip and thigh for his "cheek." But they could, in the kindness of their hearts, make allowances for Arthur Augustus.

And they did. They did not argue with him any further, however.

"Right!" said Gordon Gay, with a sigh. "If you're determined to go through with this silly—I mean with the matter, then we'll have to help you, I suppose. Come on up to the dorm, Franky, and we'll get him some clobber now. He can change in here."

"Thank you vevy much, deah boys!"

Gordon Gay looked expressively at his chums, and then he and Frank Monk went out, Harry Wootton carefully locking the door after them. They were not long away, and when they returned they carried between them a cricket-bag containing underclothing and an Eton suit. Arthur Augustus' features lighted up amazingly as he sighted them.

"Now get behind that screen and shove the things on," grinned Gordon Gay. "You'd better wait here until dusk before venturing out, though. What the dickens are you going to do afterwards, Gussy?"

"I have alweady decided that," replied Arthur Augustus, quite cheerful now. "I am goin' to call on my fwind Gwimey, and wequest him to put me up for the night. His matah is a widow, and she takes in boardahs, I believe, at times."

"Oh, my hat! And after that?"

"I do not weally know; it all depends upon wheihah a wemittance has awvived fwm my patah. Blake has pwomised to get it for me when it does come," explained Arthur Augustus. "I shall then, I think, go home and explain ewevythin' to the patah, who will undahstand and support my just demands, I am sure. The mattah will vevy soon be put all wight then."

"Oh!"

Gordon Gay & Co. did not seem at all certain about that. But they did not argue the point, not knowing Gussy's noble pater.

"Right-ho!" said Gordon Gay. "Perhaps it'll be just as well if you do go home, Gussy. I hope it'll be for the best, anyway. Now get your clobber changed, old chap. Have you had your giddy tea, by the way?"

"Bai Jove!—Wathah not! Howevah, pway do not twouble about that. Aftah all, it is a vevy small mattah, and—"

"You're going to have some tea, my pippin," said Gay promptly. "It shall never be said that this study turned a hungry prodigal away. Get some grub ready, chaps, while Gussy's changing his clobber."

"Vevy well, deah boys. You are vevy good."

"Not at all," said Gordon Gay politely.

Arthur Augustus retired behind the screen, taking his things with him. He was beginning to feel quite chery now; the tide of luck seemed about to turn for the fugitive. Moreover, he was really very hungry, and the prospect of a feed raised his spirits considerably. When he came from behind the screen at last he looked a different fellow. Gay had supplied a wet sponge, and Gussy's face was now quite clean, and his monocle fairly glimmered in his eye. Gay's second-best suit fitted him well.

"Good man!" grinned Harry Wootton. "Gussy is himself again."

"Now get outside this grub!" suggested Gay.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And, seating himself at the table, Gussy got going strong on the food taken from the study cupboard for the un-

expected guest. His appetite was satisfied at last, and then Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"Had enough?" asked Gordon Gay, smiling, as he looked up from his prep.

"Thank you vevy much—yaas," said Arthur Augustus. "I will place these things back in the cupboard and then I will depart, I think."

"You won't wait a bit? It's scarcely dusk yet."

"I weally think I had bettah go," said Arthur Augustus. "I am vevy anxious to see Gwimey and awwange mattahs, and I feah I had bettah not wisk leavin' it too late. I must take my chance of captuah."

"Well, I think it would be as well to try it on now, now all the fellows will be at prep," said Gay reflectively. "Come on, you chaps, we'll keep round Gussy and smuggle him out."

"Right-ho!"

It was going to be a risky business in any case, and all the good Samaritans were looking a bit anxious. But it had to be done, and it was certainly safer now while the fellows were busy in their studies with prep. Arthur Augustus thanked the Grammarians gracefully for their kindness, and Gordon Gay unlocked the door and looked out.

"All serene. Better hustle along now."

They started off on the risky adventure, Gordon Gay and his friends keeping round Arthur Augustus as they piloted him along the passage.

Gay gave a warning hiss as a junior came out of a study ahead of them. He was an elegant individual, with a pimply, unpleasant face and lofty expression. Arthur Augustus recognised him at once, and his face went suddenly dark.

"Bai Jove! Lacy!" he exclaimed, his voice trembling with sudden wrath. "That wottah Lacy! Pway hold on, deah boys, while I administah a feahful thwashin' to the wottah!"

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

He grabbed at Arthur Augustus just a second too late. Arthur Augustus elbowed Frank Monk aside and made a rush at the startled, amazed Algernon Lacy.

"Put your hands up, you fighful wottah!" he gasped.

"Gussy! You awful ass!" gasped Gay again. He jumped forward just as Arthur Augustus landed a hearty clump full on Lacy's long nose.

"Yoooooop!"

Lacy's wild howl ran along the quiet passage.

"Oh, great pip! That's done it!"

It undoubtedly had! The Grammarians jumped forward and grasped Arthur Augustus, but the St. Jim's fugitive wrenched himself free with a desperate wrench. It was just like Arthur Augustus. The sight of Lacy just then was like a red rag to a bull to the runaway. He quite forgot his position and the need for caution—indeed, Arthur Augustus forgot everything that moment in his overwhelming desire to "thwash" the fellow who had fooled him so completely that afternoon.

That his reckless action was likely to get his friends into trouble did not even occur to him—or he certainly would never have let himself go. But he did let himself go with a will.

After that first clump Lacy ducked desperately and attempted to dodge away, but Arthur Augustus was too quick for him, and he was obliged to put his hands up.

But his feeble defence availed him little, and the next moment the irate Gussy was driving him along the passage in great style.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Gordon Gay. "Stop the awful idiot, for goodness' sake!"

Lacy was yelling now as Gussy's avenging fists rattled on his nose, chin, and body. Duck and dodge and dive as he might, the Grammar School cad could not escape them. Lacy's yells of rage and pain fairly echoed along the passage. Doors opened and fellows came dashing out to see what the rumpus was about.

They stared in amazement at the St. Jim's runaway.

"What the thump—"

"Oh, great pip! It's that chap who's run away from St. Jim's!"

"The giddy convict! Oh, my hat!"

"Look out! Cave!"

There was a rustle along the passage, and the crowd parted suddenly as a master came along. It was Mr. Adams, the Fourth Form master, and he stopped and blinked aghast at the disturbance.

"Boy! Who—Lacy! What—what—"

The master almost fell down as he saw that the fellow who was punching Lacy was not a Grammar School boy.

"Stop him!" howled Lacy. "Stop the brute! It's that cad—Yoooooop!"

A jab in the mouth caused the howling Lacy to end his remarks with a yelp of pain.

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"Stop! Boy, how dare you!" thundered Mr. Adams, scandalised beyond measure.

He stepped forward as if to grasp Arthur Augustus. But his voice had been enough—the runaway had heard it at last, and it brought him to himself.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

In a flash Gussy realised his danger, and as Mr. Adams' hand touched his shoulder, he wriggled and dodged desperately. Then he made a frantic rush to escape.

The crowd of staring juniors scattered—they were obliged to do so, and Arthur Augustus went through them like a knife through butter.

He reached the head of the stairs, and the next moment he was going down them two at a time, the Grammar School master shouting angrily after him to stop.

But Gussy knew better than to stop. He was aware of his recklessness now, and he was taking no more risks. Moreover, he had given the astonished and raving Lacy quite enough to be going on with.

In the passage below he met a Grammar School senior striding along. Gussy just dodged his swift grab, and a moment or two later he was through the open door of the House and flying down the steps into the quad.

When Gordon Gay and a swarm of startled juniors and seniors ran out into the quad a moment later the fugitive had vanished in the summer dusk outside.

Gordon Gay was grinning now. All danger was past. He knew that Lacy would never dare to split—would never dare to tell the master that Gussy had been with them.

That thought also occurred to Arthur Augustus, and it was no little comfort to him as he scudded along out through the old beech-trees near the gates. He knew the gates would be closed, and he made for the wall. Luckily the wall was fairly low, and after a couple of desperate springs, Arthur Augustus got a grip of the top and drew himself up with difficulty. Then he dropped down into the lane beyond—gasping and panting, but safe.

"Bai Jove! That was a vevy nawwow escape!" he panted. "It was wathah wash to forget myself like that, and I weally do twust that cad Lacy will not give those fellows away."

It was the only thing that troubled Gussy now—though he felt fairly certain Lacy would not do so. At all events, there was no good to be got by worrying about it, and soon Arthur Augustus was hurrying to the village, which was not far away. As he hurried down the village street a youth came out of Sands', the grocer's, which was just closing.

"Gwimey!" called Arthur Augustus. "Oh, good!"

"Master D'Arcy!" gasped Grimes, his face lighting up. "So you got away, then?"

"Yaas, wathah! Are you goin' home now, deah boy?"

"Yes—just leaving off, Master D'Arcy. But—"

"Then I will come with you and explain mattahs," said Arthur Augustus.

And he did, whilst Grimes listened astonished and quite overcome that the noble son of Lord Eastwood was willing to take shelter under his humble roof. But he was only too delighted to be of help to his "nobby" friend, and luckily there did happen to be a bed-room unoccupied under the Grimes' family roof. And Mrs. Grimes, who was a kindly old lady whom Gussy had already met before, soon made the noble Arthur Augustus feel at home, and that night the St. Jim's runaway slept the sleep of the just under the Grimes' family roof. He had found rest for his weary head at last.

CHAPTER 9. More Trouble!

"OH crikey!"

Grimes was astonished—and well he might be! It was noon on the following day, and Grimes was just coming home for his dinner. Grimes had on his best clothes, for, unfortunately, since the rascally Lacy had rushed away from the ruined cottage with them, Arthur Augustus had not set eyes on the working clothes Grimes had lent him.

Grimes was looking worried—though it was not concerning his lost clothes; he knew Arthur Augustus would make that little matter right sooner or later. Grimes was worrying about Arthur Augustus. He knew the present arrangement could not go on indefinitely—sooner or later Gussy would be "spotted," and then the fat would be in the fire. The workings of the powerful brain of Arthur Augustus were something of a deep mystery to the rugged grocer's boy. He worshipped Arthur Augustus, who had been very kind to him on more than one occasion when he had badly needed a friend. But though Grimes did not understand Gussy's reasons for leaving St. Jim's, or the enormous and important difference that existed between running away from school and retiring from school, he was quite content

to leave it to Gussy and to believe that his friend was in the right.

Yet Grimes was worried. When he had started out that morning Arthur Augustus had requested him to call at St. Jim's if he got the chance and try to see Blake. Grimes had not seen Blake, but he had seen Tom Merry, and from Tom Merry he had learned what a really serious hole Gussy had landed himself into. It worried Grimes no end. Moreover, Grimes' errand for Arthur Augustus had been fruitless. There was no letter for Gussy from his pater—according to Tom Merry—and Grimes knew Gussy would be very disappointed.

So Grimes was looking and feeling worried as he trudged towards the row of humble cottages where he lived.

Then he had sighted Arthur Augustus—and Grimes was astounded. Grimes had left him, early that morning, seated reading a "Holiday Annual" in the little front room. But now—

Grimes rubbed his eyes. Arthur Augustus seemed to be very busy indeed. He had his coat off, his sleeves rolled back, and he was standing on the top of a pair of steps, busily cleaning the windows of the end cottage. On the ground below was a bucket of water.

The fact that the noble and aristocratic Gussy was engaged in such a humble occupation was astonishing enough to Grimes. But what astonished him more was the fact that he was cleaning the windows of the end house—and Grimes' home was at the farther end of the row of cottages. The people in this particular cottage must have been perfect strangers to Arthur Augustus.

It was really surprising. "Oh, crikey!" repeated Grimes, staring up at the industrious swell of the Fourth. "What you up to, Master D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus started and looked round—all but falling off the steps as he did so. "Bai Jove, you quite startled me, deah boy! I am vevy busy, as you see, Gwimey. I had no ideah that cleanin' windows was such a weally difficult job. Perhaps I am usin' too much watah. Do you think I am, Gwimey?"

"My heye! But what you doin' it for, Master D'Arcy?" ejaculated Grimes.

"I have been quite busy all mornin'," said Arthur Augustus, beaming round at Grimes. "I have been fetchin' coal in and choppin' wood, and doin' all sorts of odd jobs to help your mothah, Gwimey."

"But—but—"

"I happened to see your mothah startin' on the windows," explained Arthur Augustus, "and I insisted upon takin' on the job as there seemed to me wathah a lot for her to clean. It is weally twyin' work, and wequires gweat care. Your mothah had to go to the village shoppin', and so I undahtook to do the job."

"But—but that isn't our 'ouse!" almost yelled Grimes.

"Eh?"

"Our 'ouse is at the end there, Master D'Arcy. This don't belong to us."

"Bai Jove!"

"You're cleanin' the wrong windows!" grinned Grimey.

"You mean to say as you've cleaned all these along 'ere?"

"Oh cwumbs! Yaas, deah boy!"

"There's five 'ouses in this row," grinned Grimey. "It don't all belong to us, Master D'Arcy."

"Oh cwikey!"

Arthur Augustus very nearly fell off the steps in earnest this time. But after wobbling about a bit he regained his balance, fortunately. But he was certainly astonished at the news. The aristocratic Gussy was used to a many-windowed mansion like Eastwood House, and having arrived at the Grimes' home at dusk, and having but a very vague idea as to the extent of the property, he had gone on cleaning the windows of all the houses in the row.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grimey.

Really it was rather heartless of Grimey to roar in the circumstances; but he simply could not help it.

"Bai Jove!" faltered Arthur Augustus. "Weally, Gwimey, what a vevy remarkable thing! I wondahed why there were so many paths to the house, now I come to think of it. It is vevy stwange that nobody seemed to want to stop me. Perhaps they were wathah pleased to have the windows cleaned for nothin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is weally no cause for such wibald hilawity," said Arthur Augustus, gazing down severely at his friend. "It was a mistake anyone might have made, you know. How-eh, I do not think I will clean any more, as I am wathah fed-up with the job. I do not think I am cut out for— Oh, gweat Scott! Go away, you bwute!"

Arthur Augustus gave a startled yell just then as a rather nasty-looking black-and-white terrier came darting round from the back of the cottage, and jumped up at him, snarling and snapping viciously.

"Oh, bai Jove! Go away, you bwute! Good dog! Bai

Jove, call him off, Gwimey! Oh, cwumbs, the feahful bwute will— Yoop! Oh, gweat Scott!"

Wobble, wobble—

Crash!

It happened in a flash. The terrier took a swift nip at Gussy's elegant calf, and as Gussy kicked frantically out at it the rickety steps collapsed under him.

Unfortunately, he fell clean on the snappy young terrier, and a most fearful yelp rent the morning air as Gussy's weight nearly flattened him to the shape of a pancake.

Yelp, yelp, yelp, yelp!

Arthur Augustus rolled off the hapless canine, a series of doleful and shrill yelps rending the air as he did so. It was really a wonder the dog was alive to tell the tale; it was certainly a wonder Arthur Augustus hadn't broken his neck or his limbs.

But Arthur Augustus soon proved that he was very much alive.

For at this juncture an elderly female came hurrying round from the back yard of the house, a well-worn broom in her hands. She was not a handsome lady; her nose was red, and her face was sharp and very cross-looking.

She seemed to take in the situation in a flash, and her eyes gleamed with indignation.

"Well, you great hulkin' brute!" she cried shrilly. "To hurt a poor dumb hanimile like that! Take that, you brute!"

Crack!

"Yawooooogh!"

Gussy took it, being just a fraction of a second too late in jumping away—a fearful clump from the broom it was.

"Take that!" shrilled the lady. "I knowed you was up to no good the very munit I sets eyes on you! Winder-cleaner, eh? A swell crackman, that's what you are! I've seen villins like you on the pictures! 'Ere, out of my gardin you goes!"

She made another blind swipe at the dumbfounded Arthur Augustus with her broom; but this time Arthur Augustus was ready for it.

With a startled gasp, he leaped for the little gate, tore it open and flew for his life, the broom just missing his aristocratic head as he went.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Grimey in utter dismay. "My 'at! 'Ere, Mrs. Moggeridge, you let—"

Grimes did not stay to finish. The irate lady turned on him, her terrible broom ready, and Grimey turned and bolted after Gussy. He caught him up at the top of the street. Gussy was rubbing his head and looking scared out of his wits almost.

"Bai Jove!" he panted. "Oh, gweat Scott! What a weally tewwible expewience! Oh deah!"

"It's Mrs. Moggeridge!" explained Grimes, eyeing Arthur Augustus in dismay. "She's a regular scorcher, I can tell you, Master D'Arcy. I orter 'ave told you to clear out of that garden afore it 'appened."

"Oh deah! I am weally all of a fluttah, Gwimey!" panted the swell of the Fourth. "And I have left my jacket and cap on the wailings, deah boy."

"The old girl will be goin' in in a minute, I expect," said Grimes confidently. "The bloke as collects the rents will be along soon—it's about 'is time—and she always keeps outer sight when he calls, and pretends she's out."

"Bai Jove!"

"We'll wait a bit and then we'll dodge back," said Grimey.

"Gweat Scott! I weally would wathah not," said Arthur Augustus hurriedly, glancing back along the street. "I weally dare not wisk meetin' that lady again. I think I will— Bai Jove! What is the mattah, Gwimey?"

Something evidently was the matter with Grimes. He was hopping on one foot, hugging his ankle, his face rather pale.



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"Bai Jove! Gwimey—"

"It ain't nothin' much," gasped Grimey. "I jest did it this minute—slipped off that there keeb when I was stoppin' runnin' like. Gave my ankle a rare twist. It'll be all right in a bit."

"Bai Jove! I wondahed what you were hoppin' on one leg for, Gwimey," said Arthur Augustus, in some concern.

"I didn't seem to feel it at first," panted Grimey, "his face twisted in a rueful grin. "But now— Oh crikey! I'd better get off 'ome an' get me boot-off."

"How vevy unfortunate!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, taking Grimey's arm. "Pway allow me to help you, deah boy!"

"Don't you bother, Master D'Arcy—"

"I insist!" said Gussy firmly. "I am tewwibly afraid of meetin' that ewwaged lady again, but we shall have to wisk it. You must have your ankle seen to without delay, deah boy."

With great fortitude Grimes started back along the road, and with desperate bravery Arthur Augustus suppressed his fears of the angry old lady and helped him to limp to his home. Fortunately, Mrs. Moggeridge had vanished indoors, and the terrier had also vanished—possibly regretting, in his doggy mind, that he had ever emerged to tackle Arthur Augustus.

They found that Mrs. Grimes had returned from shopping, and soon Grimes' ankle, which was considerably swollen, was being bathed and bandaged. It was rather a nasty sprain, and Grimes was almost in tears about it.

"What will the boss say?" he groaned. "I can't stand on me foot. And 'ow'm I goin' to get to the shop, let alone do me work? Old Sands'll say I've bin larkin', and perhaps he'll sack me. He's always sayin' he would."

"Bai Jove! That is vevy awkward!" said Arthur Augustus, frowning reflectively. "Howevah," he proceeded, his eyes suddenly gleaming, "I think I see a way out of the difficulty, deah boy."

"How's that?"

"I will offah my services to Mr. Sands instead," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I do not approve of slackin' a'round, even though I cannot vevy well do my lessons. It will occupy my time and I shall not feel I am slackin'."

"Oh crumbs! Master D'Arcy—" Grimes was quite overcome at the thought of the aristocratic Arthur Augustus taking on his job as errand-boy to Mr. Sands.

"I insist!" said Arthur Augustus, raising his hand. "Pway do not argue the point, Gwimey. It will be wathah wiskay; but I can wear your clobbah and apwon, and I will keep out of sight as much as possible of anyone who knows me. It is not a half-day, and it is vevy unlikely anyone f'rom St. Jim's will be abwoad—until tea-time, at least."

"But—but you mustn't, Master D'Arcy!" gasped Grimes, in great alarm at the idea. "Besides, old Sands—"

"I know Mr. Sands vevy well," said Arthur Augustus. "He is wathah an iwritable old gentleman; but he is not weally a bad sort, and I can soon talk him w'ound. Bai Jove, it is a vevy good ideah!"

"But—but—"

"Pway stop buttin' like a billy-goat, Gwimey! My mind is quite made up, deah boy. I am sure I shall be a great success at weighin' sugah and wunnin' ewwards."

"Look 'ere, you can't do it—"

"Wats! I am goin' to do it, Gwimey. That point is quite settled. It was all my fault that the accident happened, and it is up to me to prevent you gettin' into t'wouble with Mr. Sands, deah boy! I absolutely refuse to allow you to turn me f'rom my decision. The mattah is settled."

"But look here, supposin' you're spotted—"

"Wubbish! I shall refuse to be spotted, deah boy!"

"But old Sands—"

"Wats! Pway do not argue the point, Gwimey!"

"Jest listen—"

"I wufuse to listen!"

Grimes grinned and gave it up. Like Gussy's chums at St. Jim's, he was finding it out that nothing would turn Arthur Augustus from his purpose when once his noble mind was made up.

And when dinner was over Arthur Augustus, dressed in Grimes' jacket, cap, scarf, and apron, and started off to do Grimes' job at the grocer's—if Mr. Sands would let him!

CHAPTER 10.

A Surprise for Gussy!

"GOOD-AFTAHNOON, Mr. Sands!"

"Good-arternoon, Master D'Arcy! Nice arternoon—"

Mr. Sands, the Rylcombe grocer, paused, his eyes opening wide as he suddenly noted the clothes Arthur Augustus was wearing. Really those clothes did not fit

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well with Gussy's elegant trousers and footwear, nor with the glimmering monocle in his eye.

Mr. Sands blinked over his spectacles, very astonished indeed. Moreover, he fancied he recognised the cap and scarf and jacket as those belonging to his errand-boy, Grimes.

It was no wonder the worthy grocer was astonished. And especially was he astonished at the fact that Arthur Augustus was wearing Grimes' white apron, in the approved fashion for out of doors, with the lower part tacked round the waist.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed. "Master D'Arcy—"

"You appeal to be vevy surprised, Mr. Sands!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, smiling gracefully. "The fact is you will be wathah sowwy to heah, no doubt, that Gwimes has met with wathah an unfortunate accident."

"Eh? The young scamp! What's he been up to now?"

"It was not his fault in any way, Mr. Sands," said Gussy earnestly. "It was all my fault weally, and I must express my wewgets to you, as I have done to him. He has spwained his ankle, and will be quite unable to wesume his work heah this aftahnoon."

"The young scamp!" puffed Mr. Sands wrathfully. "He's always gettin' into scrapes, that young imp is! An' what am I to do, Master D'Arcy? I'm due to go on me rounds for horders this arternoon, and there's nobody to look arter the shop, it being washing-day with the missis!"

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"There is a vevy easy way out of the difficulty, Mr. Sands!" he exclaimed. "As Gwimey is unable to fulfil his engagement, and as it is partially my fault, I have come to offah my services in his place."

"Well, upon my word!"

Mr. Sands nearly fell down. He understood why Arthur Augustus was wearing Grimes' clothes and apron now. He blinked over his spectacles in great amazement at the swell of the Fourth.

"Master D'Arcy!" he gasped. "I—I— Really, that is impossible! You will be expected at school, and will be punished if you play truant, my boy."

"I am not expected at school," said Arthur Augustus diplomatically and truthfully. "The mattah has already been awwanged with Gwimey, and all that remains is for you to give your consent to the awwangement, Mr. Sands. I am weady to tackle any job, and I am quite certain that I shall give ewvey satisfaction. I have had considahable expewience in dustin' and bwushin' at St. Jim's, as our studey gets in a feahful mess sometimes. And I am quite sure I can weigh sugah and w'ap soap and slice bacon. I have sliced bacon lots of times when campin' out, you know. And I am quite sure I can tell the difference between buttah and margawine."

"But, Master D'Arcy, really this is most unusual."

"Pway do not place obstacles in the way, Mr. Sands," said Gussy gracefully. "Weally, I shall be vevy pleased and intewested to do Gwimey's work, and, of course, I shall wequiah no salawy whatevah. If any lack of expewience on my part should happen to cause you any financial loss I am quite willin' to make the loss good, of course."

"Oh!"

Mr. Sands eyed Gussy very doubtfully indeed. But he imagined that it was a holiday at St. Jim's, and Gussy's assurance that he didn't expect a salary—a very important point to Mr. Sands—relieved his mind on that score. Moreover, his customers would be expecting him to call for orders that afternoon, and he did not want to have to close the shop while he was away. Also, he knew Gussy very well, Tom Merry & Co. often calling at the shop for biscuits, sweets, chocolates, tinned fruits, and many other things. The St. Jim's fellows were good customers, and as Arthur Augustus was obviously very keen on the job, he did not wish to offend him. But he was very doubtful—exceedingly dubious, in fact. He nodded at last, however.

"Very well, Master D'Arcy. If you really want to do it?"

"I am vevy keen to do it, Mr. Sands."

"Right! Then I'll agree, and I hopes it'll be all right," said the grocer without enthusiasm. "If you gets into any difficulty you only got to go through into the house and ask Mrs. Sands. I shan't be long away, as it ain't my busy-round. I'll give you some sugah to be weighin' out to keep you outer mischief."

"Weally, Mr. Sands—"

Arthur Augustus paused, unwilling to enter into further argument and thus risk causing the grocer to change his mind. Mr. Sands showed him where to find the sugah and how to set about the task of weighing it, and then he shed his apron, and with numerous parting injunctions not to upset the sugah, or give overweight, or sell anything below the marked price, or get up to any larks, Mr. Sands departed on his round.

Feeling very important and responsible, Gussy set to work



"There he is!" shouted Mr. Selby. "Kildare—Knox——" "Collar him!" roared Knox. He made a wild grab at Arthur Augustus. That startled youth dodged desperately, and then ducked and butted the prefect in the waist-coat. "Yow!" Squelch! Knox howled and sat down violently in a box of eggs! (See Chapter 12.)

with a will. But in his eagerness he upset the sugar, after all, among the sawdust on the floor.

It was really most unfortunate and a bad start. But Arthur Augustus made the best of it, and brushed the sugar up carefully, though it was rather a delicate matter, owing to the sawdust. But he salvaged most of it, frowning as he noted that it was, unfortunately, fearfully speckled with sawdust. Arthur Augustus had often heard that grocers were sometimes suspected of mixing sand with the sugar, and now he began to understand how such base suspicions got abroad. It was evidently sawdust, not sand, that brought about the suspicious circumstances, and it was probably the fault of careless errand-boys, and not the grocer himself.

Gussy felt that grocers were very misunderstood persons, unjustly libelled by the unthinking public.

The incident did not damp Gussy's enthusiasm, however, and, salvage operations being completed, he set to work briskly. It was quite an interesting job, and after weighing all the sugar in the box, Gussy tied the paper bags up and packed them on the shelf in the compartment provided for them. Then he put the box away and cleaned up the counter, very proud indeed of his industry.

This done, he looked about him for fresh worlds to conquer.

He soon noticed a thin layer of dust on the articles stocking the shelves, and, finding a duster, he set about dusting them briskly.

Unfortunately, in order to dust the various tinned stuff and bottled stuff, Arthur Augustus thoughtlessly removed the price labels, and when he had finished dusting he hadn't the faintest idea to which articles the various printed price cards belonged.

"Oh, bai Jove!" murmured Gussy. "How vewy awkward. I weally ought to have thought of that."

Arthur Augustus stepped back, eyeing the shelves reflectively, and leaned against a stack of tinned goods and bottled goods on the counter whilst he considered the matter.

But the stack was not a fixture, and certainly wasn't built up by Mr. Sands for errand-boys to lean against. It

promptly collapsed amidst a fearful crashing of tins and bottles as they showered down on counter and floor.

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

The horrified Arthur Augustus gazed and gazed at the scene of havoc. The tin stuff, beyond being dented and stained, had suffered little from the catastrophe, but several bottles had been smashed and several packets burst open. Jam and baking-powder, salad-oil and salt, sauce and packet patent foods, ginger-wine and self-raising flour were mixed up in a fearsome-looking mass on the floor.

"Oh, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, blinking down in utter dismay at the mess. "How vewy, vewy unfortunate!"

It certainly was. But it couldn't be helped now, and Arthur Augustus set about the task of cleaning up, very anxious indeed to get the job done before Mr. Sands returned. Really, Arthur Augustus was beginning to admire the absent Grimey more and more. An errand-boy's job was not so simple and free from cares as he had supposed.

The luckless junior piled up the tinned stuff and the rest of the undamaged goods as best he could on the counter again, making as artistic a job of it as his lack of experience permitted. Then he brushed up the conglomerated mess of glass and mixture and shovelled it into an empty box. Then he resumed his reflections regarding the labels.

He decided at last, wisely, to leave them off, and explain to Mr. Sands on his return.

As yet not a customer had visited the shop—to Gussy's relief—but now they started to come in, and Gussy was soon busy serving them with their requirements. Luckily, most of the things required were plainly marked, and save for a slight accident with a few eggs, Gussy got through very well indeed. Only one customer asked for one of the things that had lost their labels—a tin of pears—and making a guess at it, Arthur Augustus asked fourpence, which happened to be a trifle less than half the real price.

The lady promptly bought half a dozen tins and went out looking very satisfied, which made Arthur Augustus wonder if he had made a mistake.

Fortunately Mr. Sands came stamping in just afterwards, and Gussy was saved from any more blunders.

Mr. Sands came in with his handbag, wiping his face and panting. The grocer had hurried very much on his round that afternoon, and he was breathless and streaming with perspiration, for it was a very warm afternoon.

"Well, 'ere I am!" he exclaimed, glancing round the shop. "And how have you gone on, Master—"

Just then Mr. Sands sighted the stack on the counter, which was very obviously not as he had left it.

"Here, here, Master D'Arcy!" stammered the grocer. "What's 'appened to this stack?"

Blushing a little, Arthur Augustus told him, Mr. Sands going redder and redder as he listened to the sad tale. Then Gussy related the accident to the eggs and his thoughtless removal of the labels, ending up by gracefully announcing that he was quite prepared to keep his word and make good whatever loss had been sustained.

At that Mr. Sands brightened up a little.

"Well, I suppose it can't be 'elped, Master D'Arcy, and only what I might have expected," he grunted. "However, if you're goin' to make it right I can't say nothing about it. It looks as if your job's goin' to cost you summat before you've finished, at this rate."

"That is quite all wight, Mr. Sands," said Arthur Augustus, looking rather disappointed at Mr. Sands' lack of praise for his afternoon's work. "Howevah, I am weady for the next job, Mr. Sands."

"Then you ain't fed-up?" ejaculated the grocer.

"Not at all, Mr. Sands. I wathah pwide myself," said Arthur Augustus, "that when I undahtake anything I nevah fail to see it through!"

"Oh, all right! Well, I'm rather glad as you ain't fed-up, as Mrs. Bland up at the Manor says she must have her groceries this afternoon without fail, Master D'Arcy. You just get your cap and basket, and I'll soon have 'em ready for you."

"Vewy well, Mr. Sands!"

Arthur Augustus felt it was rather risky going as far as Rylcombe Manor, but he couldn't very well refuse—indeed, Gussy never dreamed of refusing. Mr. Sands took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and very soon had the basket of groceries ready. Then Gussy started out, blinking up and down the High Street rather uneasily as he emerged into the afternoon sunshine.

But he saw nobody he knew, and he hurried on, the heavy basket over his arm. He was soon out of the street, and very glad he was to get out.

An errand-boy carrying a basket, with a glimmering monocle in his eye, was rather a curiosity in the village, and Gussy was quite relieved to reach Rylcombe Lane. He was also very relieved when he reached the path through the woods, which, fortunately, was a short cut to the Manor. He was also glad of the shade from the trees, for it was a very hot afternoon, the basket being surprisingly heavy, and seeming to get heavier every step he took. Arthur Augustus' admiration and sympathy for Grimes grew and grew.

He was very glad indeed when he reached the gates of Rylcombe Manor at last. He felt safe now, at all events, and would soon be rid of the terrible load in the basket.

Arthur Augustus staggered up the drive to the front door and rang the bell. A trim maidservant answered it, and her eyebrows—likewise her nose—lifted as she sighted Gussy with the basket.

The swell of the Fourth raised his cap with his free hand politely.

"I've brough't the gwocewies fwom Mr. Sands," he announced, smiling.

"Oh, 'ave you?" sniffed the maid. "Just you take 'em round to the tradesmen's door at the back, then! Like your cheek to bring 'em to the front door! Fetchin' me all through the house, too!"

Slam!

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Gussy blinked at the closed door in dismay. Then he understood, and started down the steps, blinking about him.

"Bai Jove! What a feahful lot poor old Gwimes has to put up with!" he murmured, frowning. "I am vewy sowsy for him! Now, I wondah how to get to the w'etched tradesmen's doah!"

After blinking about him for a moment or two, Gussy left the gravel drive, and made his way round the house, crossing some flower-beds and a lawn to do so. He came suddenly upon a second lawn, stretching from a french window, with pleasant shady trees all round. In the shade of the trees, scarcely a dozen yards from him, tea was set on a wicker table, and near the table, in wicker chairs, were two ladies and two gentlemen.

It was a very pleasant scene, and Arthur Augustus,

squeezing his way through some laurels and trees, came upon it abruptly, hearing voices just a trifle too late.

But Arthur Augustus was not taken aback—though obviously the tea-party was. He bowed gracefully and raised his cap.

"Excuse me, but would you be kind enough to direct me to the twadesmen's entvance?" he exclaimed. "I have brough't the gwocewies fwom Mr. Sands, and— Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus fairly jumped.

One of the gentlemen—Arthur Augustus had not even glanced at him until now—had risen to his feet. He was a tall, dignified gentleman. Gussy recognised him in a blinding flash.

It was Dr. Holmes, the headmaster of St. Jim's!

"Oh, gwreat Scott!" mumbled Gussy.

CHAPTER 11.

A Narrow Escape!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS stood as if transfixed.

Horrified was not the word to express the dismayed feelings of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy just then.

"D'Arcy! Boy!"

Apparently, Dr. Holmes had already recognised the runaway. He stared and stared at Gussy as if he could scarcely believe the evidence of his own eyes.

"What—what—" Colonel Bland followed the Head's example and stood up, wrath changing to amazement as he heard Dr. Holmes address Gussy. Mrs. Holmes looked startled, whilst Mrs. Bland, the gallant colonel's wife, stared in haughty surprise at Mr. Sands' new errand-boy.

"D'Arcy! Boy!" repeated the Head, in scandalised tones, before Colonel Bland could go on. "How dare you! How dare you, I say! Bless my soul! D'Arcy, wretched boy, what ever are you doing here in those extraordinary clothes?"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus stood it a brief moment longer, and then, with another started, dismayed gasp, he dropped his basket and bolted for his life.

"Stop, boy! D'Arcy—I order you—stop!" thundered Dr. Holmes.

For once Arthur Augustus D'Arcy disobeyed his headmaster's order. He vanished through the laurels, going strong for the distant gates, his celebrated eyeglass streaming behind him at the end of its silken cord.

"Stop!" roared Dr. Holmes, decorum and dignity alike forgotten in his keen anxiety lest D'Arcy should escape him.

He hurried through the laurels, and Colonel Bland, looking a very astonished old gentleman indeed, hurried after him.

"What—what, Dr. Holmes—" he gasped. "Good gad! Who—"

"It is D'Arcy—a junior boy of St. Jim's, who has run away from school!" explained Dr. Holmes, greatly agitated. "The boy must not be allowed to escape, colonel! Bless my soul! This—this—"

The headmaster hurried on without stopping to finish. There came a sudden yell from somewhere ahead, and, rushing round the corner of the house, the Head was just in time to see Arthur Augustus sprawling face downwards over a flower-bed, having tripped over a rake, apparently. As he did so a green-aproned individual—obviously a gardener—rushed up to him, dragged him to his feet, and started to clump his head vigorously.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head. "Hold that boy, my man!"

"Yes, hold the young villain, Benson!" bellowed Colonel Bland.

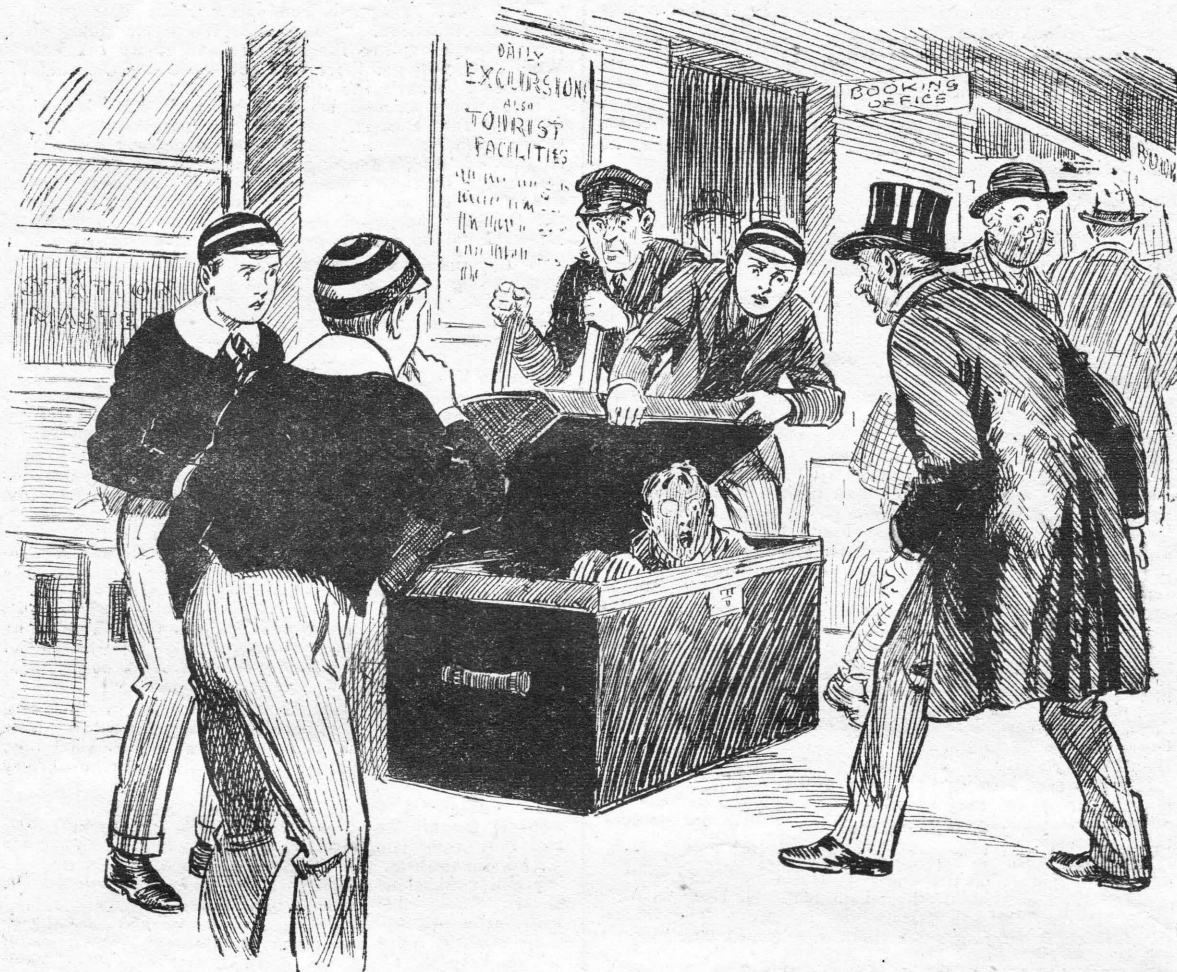
The gardener jumped and looked round. But he held on to Arthur Augustus. It was sheer bad luck that Arthur Augustus had tripped over that unseen rake—as the hapless fugitive was realising only too well. The gardener had been naturally angry at having an errand-boy rushing across his flower-beds. But his anger and promptness were very unlucky for the runaway.

"Oh deah!" Gussy wriggled desperately, but he wriggled in vain.

"Thank you, my man—thank you very much!" panted Dr. Holmes, hastening up to them. "D'Arcy, do not dare to escape me! You will come with me at once to St. Jim's! Colonel, I beg that you will excuse me, as I must return without delay to the school with this—this boy!"

"Good gad! A dashed runaway—eh?" pumped the red-faced old colonel, his eyes fixed curiously on Gussy's crimson features. "But what the deuce—"

"He has absented himself from school without permission,



Kildare took out his knife and cut the cords fastening the trunk. Then he dragged open the lid. "Oh, bai Jove!" A crimson and perspiring face was revealed. It was the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—the St. Jim's runaway! "Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Selby triumphantly. "So we have caught the young rascal at last, Kildare!" And Tom Merry and Blake groaned in dismay. (See Chapter 14.)

after a series of unparalleled outrages!" said the Head sternly. "I can only surmise that he has had the impudence—the audacity—to obtain a post as errand-boy to the village grocer. It is outrageous! Perhaps you will be kind enough to give my apologies to the ladies, colonel. This matter cannot wait, and if I can have my car round—"

"Good gad! I'll see to it at once, doctor!"

The colonel hurried away, his rugged face showing his amazement at the happening.

"Come!" said the Head, in a terrible voice. "Come with me, D'Arcy."

"Oh deah!"

Arthur Augustus went—he had no choice in the matter. The gardener blinked after them in scared wonder. The Head led the way to the front of the house where the two waited a few moments. Soon Colonel Bland came hurrying along, and the next moment the Head's car came along the drive round the corner of the house, with Johnson, the Head's driver, at the wheel.

It stopped opposite to where the Head and Gussy were standing. Without waiting for Johnson to dismount to open the door, the Head wrenched at the handle and dragged it open.

"Get in, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus groaned and entered, sinking down in dismay on the seat, too utterly disgusted for words. The Head, his stern old face grim, turned to speak to Colonel Bland.

The runaway, glancing round, noted that the colonel was hidden by the door, while the Head's back was turned as he spoke to the old warrior.

The noble eye of Arthur Augustus gleamed.

With sudden decision he rose to his feet, opened the other door of the car, and gently stepped out on to the drive. Then he dived into the shrubbery and took to his heels.

A sudden shout came from behind him, but Arthur

Augustus did not heed if he heard. He reached the thick laurel hedge bounding the property, vaulted the low, white-painted iron railings, crossed the dusty lane beyond, and dived through the hedge.

Before him stretched fields, with the village of Rylcombe nestling in the summer haze in a hollow below.

Arthur Augustus made a bee-line for it and fairly flew.

In less than five minutes he came out into Rylcombe Lane, within a few minutes' walk of the village, and soon he had reached Mr. Sands' shop.

Mr. Sands blinked at him in no little surprise. Grimes had never been so quick as this in going to and returning from the Manor. Moreover, Arthur Augustus was breathless, and his noble features were red and streaming with perspiration.

"Hallo, you're back soon, Master D'Arcy," he exclaimed, staring curiously at the runaway. "Why, where's your basket?"

"Oh cwumbs!" Arthur Augustus halted in dismay, having forgotten all about that. "Oh cwumbs! I have left the basket at Wylcombe Manah, Mr. Sands. I am vevy sowwy indeed. Howevah, it will be quite all wight, I am surc. Mrs. Bland will take care of it I am quite convinced. It is all wight!"

"Oh, is it?" grunted Mr. Sands. "Well, it can't be helped I suppose, but you oughter have brought it back. Baskets cost money, Master D'Arcy."

"I am vevy sowwy indeed, Mr. Sands," murmured Arthur Augustus. Not for worlds dare he have told the worthy grocer in what unfortunate circumstances he had left it. After all, the incident would reflect no blame on the grocer—only on Arthur Augustus. So Arthur Augustus—for once—kept his own counsel. "Is there anythin' I can do now, Mr. Sands?" he went on hastily.

"Yes, you can put some more sawdust on this floor," said

Mr. Sands. "Arterwards you can help me get these orders ready to go out to-morrow."

"Wight-ho!"

Arthur Augustus carried on. But he was not a little worried now. The Head would undoubtedly desire to look into the matter as to what he was doing taking groceries out for Mr. Sands. The unfortunate runaway realised his "job" at Mr. Sands was going to be much shorter than he had anticipated.

CHAPTER 12.

On the Track!

"**P**HEW! Somebody goin' it and no mistake!"

Tom Merry paused and listened.

With Manners, Lowther, and Blake, Herries and Digby, he was walking along Masters' Corridor at the moment. Tea was just over, and the chums were going out, intending to walk to Rylcombe. And their destination was Grimes' home in the village. They had, as it happened, good news for the runaway. By the tea-time post a letter had come for Arthur Augustus, and it bore the crest of the D'Arcy family, and was obviously from D'Arcy's pater.

Why it had not come before had been a strange mystery to Arthur Augustus, for his noble pater rarely failed him—he sent the usual remittance regularly. Why it had come now was a still stranger mystery to Tom Merry & Co., for they deemed it certain that Dr. Holmes had acquainted Lord Eastwood with his son's conduct, and they had never expected his lordship to send any money to Arthur Augustus in the circumstances. But it had come after all.

Actually, the explanation was simple. Lord Eastwood had been away, was ignorant of Gussy's running away, and having just remembered his hopeful son, had now sent him a tip.

So, having learned from Grimes earlier in the day where Gussy was to be found, his chums were now going to pay the runaway a visit.

It was while making their way along Masters' Corridor after a hurried tea that Tom Merry had paused as he heard a loud, insistent ringing of the telephone-bell in the Masters' Common-room.

"Someone goin' it," grinned Tom. "Must be no giddy masters in there. We'd better—Hallo, here's Selby!"

Mr. Selby had evidently heard the bell. He came rustling along the corridor and passed into the room. They heard the bell cease ringing, and then they heard Mr. Selby's voice.

"Hold on!" breathed Tom Merry. "Perhaps it's something about that awful ass, Gussy."

"Phew! I shouldn't wonder!"

The juniors waited. They could hear Mr. Selby's excited voice, though they could not distinguish his words. The bell tinkled suddenly, and then the master of the Third came rushing out, his face excited and triumphant.

He sighted Tom Merry & Co.

"Boys, I wish to see Kildare or— Ah! Here is Knox! One moment, Knox."

Knox, who happened to be striding along the passage just then, halted.

"Yes, sir?"

"I wish you to come with me to Rylcombe without delay, Knox," said Mr. Selby excitedly. "That boy—that wretched runaway D'Arcy is within our grasp at last! I have just been speaking to Dr. Holmes on the phone. He states that while at Rylcombe Manor, D'Arcy—the audacious young rascal—visited there with a basket of groceries, having apparently had the astounding daring and impudence to obtain a post with a grocer in Rylcombe—Mr. Sands. Dr. Holmes succeeded in capturing him, but the young rascal escaped again."

"Oh!"

"No time must be lost, Knox. The boy would undoubtedly return to that shop in Rylcombe, where he is apparently employed. If we hasten we shall capture him. If you see Kildare kindly ask him to join you. I will be in the quadrangle in a very few moments."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Knox's eyes gleamed and he hurried away, giving the juniors standing near a meaning glance as he did so.

"Oh, great pip!"

The startled juniors looked at each other aghast.

They felt they knew at once how it had happened. Arthur Augustus had evidently been out helping Grimes to deliver groceries; they could think of nothing else to account for it.

But the matter was serious—urgent.

"Oh, the—the silly, daring duffer!" gasped Blake, in great alarm. "His number's up now. Oh crumbs!"

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"Not yet!" snapped Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming with determination. "Come on! We're not going to let those sweeps capture the silly fathead if we can help it. We'll jolly well get there first and tip Gussy the wink!"

"Phew! What's the wheeze?"

Tom Merry started off with a rush, and his chums followed fast enough. It was the only chance to save Gussy from capture. Much as they disagreed with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's amazing defiance, and still more amazing conduct, his chums were determined to back him up through thick and thin. They were certainly determined not to allow the hated Mr. Selby and the detested Gerald Knox to be the ones to capture him, at all events.

Within the space of a minute they were scudding at top speed along the dusty Rylcombe Lane.

"Put it on!" gasped Blake. "We'll save the awful idiot, and then we'll punch his silly head until he agrees to chuck up the game and come back. I'm fed-up with it all!"

"Same here!"

Gussy's chums were fed-up—fed-up with the worry of it all more than anything else. They ran hard, panting and perspiring. But their running availed them little.

There came the roar of a motor-engine behind them, and suddenly a motor-cycle combination roared past them, going at great speed towards the village. In the saddle was Kildare, and in the sidecar was Mr. Selby, holding his hat on with his hand. Next second, with another roar, a second motor-bike roared past them with Gerald Knox in the saddle.

"Oh, my hat!" panted Blake. "Done, after all!"

"Done in the eye!"

The sight of the master and prefects filled Tom Merry & Co. with utter dismay. It seemed that all was up with the runaway now. Tom Merry did not think of giving in, however.

"Keep it up!" he panted. "We may be in time to do something, anyway. I bet Knox suggested the blessed jiggers. He spotted us, and guessed we'd dash off to give warning. Go it!"

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry & Co., dismayed and apprehensive now, went it for all they were worth. It was a forlorn hope, and they knew it. But they stuck it.

And, meanwhile, the speeding combination and the roaring motor-bike had reached the village, and they drew up at Mr. Sands' shop almost together. Mr. Selby leaped with surprising agility out of the side-car and ran into the shop, with Kildare and Knox at his heels.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Gussy was there. He was standing before the counter busily engaged in tying up a parcel of groceries. Behind the counter Mr. Sands was busy making out an account.

Arthur Augustus jumped and almost yelled in alarm as he saw who the intruders were.

"There he is!" shouted Mr. Selby. "Kildare—Knox—"

"What—what—" babbled Mr. Sands, almost overcome.

"Collar him!" shouted Knox.

He made a wild grab at Arthur Augustus. That startled youth had recovered from the shock now, however, and he dodged aside desperately, and then ducked and butted the prefect with terrific force in the waistcoat.

"Yow!"

Knox howled and sat down violently into a box of eggs marked at thirteen for a shilling.

Squelch!

Kildare shouted and jumped forward, and Arthur Augustus treated him the same with amazing swiftness, and then he jumped for the door. Kildare roared, and, staggering back against Mr. Selby, sent that gentleman with a thump against the butter counter, where the master's frock-coat came into greasy contact with an opened tub of butter on the marble-topped counter.

"Stop!" roared Kildare. "You young rascal, stop!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus, defiant and full of fight as ever, vanished through the doorway. He went streaking down the quiet High Street, going great guns. Once again the runaway was on his travels. Arthur Augustus wasn't done yet!

CHAPTER 13.

Blake's Wheeze!

"**O**H deah!"

Arthur Augustus ran hard, nor did he slacken speed until he was well outside the village. He panted like old bellows, and his aristocratic features were grim. Arthur Augustus was beginning to feel the strain badly. There seemed no respite, no rest, no peace for the hapless runaway. He groaned as he ran,

feeling that every man's hand was against him, and that he was an outcast in the land.

Then suddenly Gussy remembered Grimes, and he promptly revised his feeling that every man's hand was against him. In his hour of dire extremity Grimes, the gallant village youth, had not been found wanting. He would not be found wanting again. Arthur Augustus felt sure of that, and he decided to make for Grimes' cottage and seek sanctuary there once again.

But just as he was about to turn in that direction the runaway sighted several running figures along the lane ahead. Gussy paused, and very soon recognised them. They panted up, and their faces lit up with relief as they recognised Gussy in their turn.

"Gussy!" panted Blake. "Oh, good! Here the burbling idiot is at last! He's not been collared!"

"Weally, Blaké, I wufese uttably to be wiferred to as a burblin'—"

"Cheese it, old man!" gasped Tom Merry. "Have you seen Selby? Are the cads after you?"

"Oh, bai Jove! They will be aftah me vewy soon," said Gussy, looking alarmed. "Pway do not wemain heah, deah boys. I am just makin' for Gwimey's home, and I must wun like anythin'."

"Go it, then!"

Guessing Arthur Augustus was being chased, the chums did not ask further questions. They followed him as he dived through the hedge and cut across the meadows, making for the towing-path of the river. This would lead them by a roundabout way to the end of the narrow street where Grimes lived.

They ran hard, and after a couple of fields had been crossed Tom Merry called a halt.

"Hold on, Gussy!" he panted. "I'm blest if I think it's safe to go to Grimey's, after all. Tell us what happened at the shop, anyway. We knew Selby was going there after you, and we raced off to warn you. But they did us down by having motor-bikes."

Arthur Augustus, glad enough of a rest, told them the story. Entertaining as it was, his chums scarcely grinned. They realised that the matter was getting more and more serious.

"Well, this is a nice go!" said Tom Merry, eyeing the runaway grimly. "How's it going to end? And what the thump are you going to do now? It won't be safe to stay with Grimey after this."

"I am beginnin' to wealise that, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus dismally. "I do not weally know what to do."

"I jolly well know what you ought to do," said Blake, with a grunt. "Chuck it at once. Give yourself up and do your best to get round the Head. It may only mean a flogging—"

"I uttably wufese to be flogged, and I uttably wufese to dweam of givin' myself up until I am assured that my just demands will be met in a weasonable spiwit," said Arthur Augustus.

The swell of the Fourth was still on his high horse. It was no good.

"Gussy—" groaned Blake. "For the love of Mike—"

"It is useless to argue the point, Blake," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "The question is—what am I to do now, howevah? If I had the money I would go home and lay the whole mattah before my patah. I weally cannot undahstand why he has not w'itten and sent my usual wemittance. I think he must be—"

"My hat! I was forgetting all about that, Gussy," said Blake, drawing a letter from his pocket. "Here's your giddy pater's letter. It came at tea-time, and we collared it from the giddy postman before the beaks could get it. Here you are."

"Gweat Scott! How wippin'!"

Arthur Augustus brightened up and tore open the letter. It contained a fiver right enough. Gussy scarcely glanced at the letter.

"That settles the mattah, deah boys," he said. "I will go home at once. The patah will be home by now, and he will see my view and will support my just demands."

"Good idea!" said Blake heartily.

All of them thought it a good idea. They felt pretty certain that when Gussy went home his noble pater would bundle him back again very quickly—and they hoped he would spank him well before he did send him back. But they did not tell Gussy of that hope. Lord Eastwood, however, would undoubtedly either bring Gussy back himself or see that he was escorted safely back. And they felt it would be for the best—they were certain it would. Matters could not go on for much longer as they were.

"Hold on, though!" said Manners. "How's Gussy going to get away?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"The station people have been warned to look out for

him," said Manners, "and it isn't safe by road, either, if he goes to Wayland."

"Oh dear! That's the trouble."

"He'll be all right if once he gets to Wayland Junction, though," said Blake reflectively. "Look here, I have it! We'll get a box, or a trunk, or something like that, and shove Gussy in it. Then we'll take it by train to Wayland, let Gussy out there, and see him safe on the train. How's that?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Jolly good!" said Tom Merry, after a moment's thought. "How the dickens are we to get Gussy in it, though? And how are we to get a box?"

"A trunk's the thing," said Blake, quite taken with his wheeze. "There's one that would just suit at Cragg's, the second-hand shop just off the High Street. If Gussy could sneak along there and get in the trunk we'll soon fix him up. We'd tip old Cragg to keep mum."

"Great!"

Only Arthur Augustus did not seem enthusiastic. But when he realised that it was the only safe way they could think of he dubiously agreed.

"I shall have to go to Gwimey's and get my clobber changed, of course," he said doubtfully. "Howevah, it will not take a few minutes, and I shall have to take the wisk of bein' found theah."

"You needn't!" grinned Blake. "We'll see to your clobber and take Grimey's clothes back later. Well, is it a go?"

"Oh deah! Vewy well, deah boys. It seems the onlay thing to be done in the w'etched circumstances," groaned Arthur Augustus. "But I am thinkin' of how my clobber will get wumped, though weally it belongs to Gordon Gay. Bai Jove! He will be wondahin' whatevah is happenin' to it. I twust you fellows will explain the mattah and apologise to him. I will make the mattah wight with him on my return."

"Never mind Gay now," grinned Tom Merry. "Now, cut off along to Cragg's, and mind you don't get copped! Cheerio, and good luck!"

"Cheerio, deah boys! And thank you vewy much!" The chums parted hopefully, Gussy and Blake to go to Cragg's, whilst Tom Merry and the others cut off for Grimes' home to fetch the needed clobber.

CHAPTER 14.

The Unexpected!

"THE young rascal!" gasped Mr. Selby.

"The—little sweep!" hissed Knox.

"He's done us again!" said Kildare. "That youngster's a coughdrop!"

Mr. Selby and Knox fairly seethed with fury. They stood outside Mr. Sands' shop and shook. Knox's trousers were smothered in squashed eggs. The back of Mr. Selby's coat was smothered in greasy butter. Inside the shop Mr. Sands looked out at the three and, like them, he seethed with wrath. Somebody, as he had told Mr. Selby and the seniors, would have to pay for those eggs, and he also told them he would send the bill up to the school if they did not pay.

Knox certainly had no intention of paying. And after a rather heated argument—for it was obviously useless going after the runaway now—the master and the two seniors had stamped out of the shop.

"I'm going back, anyway!" growled Knox, still rubbing at his nether garments with an eggy handkerchief. "Confound the slippery young hound! I'm off!"

And Knox went to his motor-bicycle, and a minute later he was roaring back to St. Jim's, his face showing his fury and bitter disappointment.

"We will hunt for that wretched boy!" said Mr. Selby, gritting his teeth. "Dr. Holmes will be exceedingly annoyed, Kildare, if we return without him. He will consider we have been careless in allowing him to slip through our fingers. First of all, however, I think I had better go to the station and telephone to St. Jim's, asking for prefects to be sent to aid us in the search."

Mr. Selby spent several minutes in the telephone-box, and he was just emerging, when Kildare gave a startled gasp.

"Look, sir—over there!"

"What, what—"

"Blake, sir!" snapped Kildare, his eyes gleaming. "Blake and Merry—they've just sneaked through on to the station. I spotted them! They were walking behind a porter who had a big trunk on a trolley. This way, sir—quick!"

"Really, Kildare—"

Mr. Selby did not comprehend at all, but he followed Kildare as that senior rushed on to the platform. There

were quite a number of people on the little platform, for a train was due. But Mr. Selby easily sighted what had attracted Kildare's keen eyes.

A porter was wheeling a truck along the platform, and on the truck was a large trunk. This of itself was of no interest. What was of interest was the significant fact that Blake and Merry, two juniors who were known to be aiding the runaway, were walking behind it, looking not a little uneasy.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Selby, with a start. He understood now, and he fairly rushed after Kildare. Kildare had reached the porter now, and he called to the man to stop. Then Blake and Tom Merry saw Kildare, and they almost fainted in dismay.

"Oh crumbs!"
"So this is the game!" snapped Kildare. "Are you fellows with that trunk?"

There was no good denying it—none whatever. The look on the porter's surprised face was enough to prove that.
"Open it at once!" snapped Mr. Selby, his eyes glinting with expectation. "Do you hear me, Merry—Blake? I demand to know what is in that trunk! Open it this instant!"

Mr. Selby's thin, acid voice trembled with excitement. The juniors groaned in deep bitterness of spirit. It was all up now, with a vengeance.

As they did not move to obey, however, Kildare took out his knife and cut the cords swiftly. Then he dragged open the lid of the old-fashioned trunk.

"Oh, bai Jove!"
A flushed, crimson, and perspiring face was revealed, likewise a crumpled-up body. It was the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the St. Jim's runaway!
"Oh, bai Jove!" he groaned.

He had heard Mr. Selby's unpleasant voice from within the trunk, so that he was not quite so taken by surprise as he might otherwise have been.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Selby, his voice trembling with triumph. "So we have caught the young rascal—the daring young villain—at last, Kildare. It was exceedingly fortunate that you saw those juniors. D'Arcy, you will get out of that trunk this very moment, and you will accompany me back to the school. Your insolent defiance and career of impudent buffoonery is ended. You hear me? Get out of that trunk this instant!"

"Oh, yaas, sir!"
Arthur Augustus got out, climbing out with no difficulty. But his glittering eyes should have warned both Kildare and Mr. Selby. For the moment he was out and his feet had touched the platform he ducked desperately, digging Kildare full in the ribs. Kildare staggered backwards, the inside of his knees came against the edge of the trunk, which was now on the platform, and next instant he was sitting, half out of sight, in the trunk.

Blake and Tom Merry might have laughed—they undoubtedly would have done but for what happened next.

After dealing with Kildare, D'Arcy dodged Mr. Selby's outflung arm and jumped to escape. Once again his luck failed him. A second before Gussy made his dash a passenger happened to place his handbag on the platform while he lit a cigarette, and over this bag Gussy sprawled headlong.

The next moment Mr. Selby had sprawled over him as he dashed in pursuit.

Crash!
Nor was that all, unfortunately. Mr. Selby sprawled over the edge of the platform, and then he rolled over, falling heavily on to the rails below, with a terrified shriek.

It was echoed by wild shouts of alarm, for at that critical moment the expected train came steaming in.

There followed another wild shriek from the master, more startled shouts, and then the grinding and shrieking of hastily-applied brakes and the hissing of steam, above which sounded the sharp whistle of the thundering engine.

Had the train been passing through nothing could have saved Mr. Selby just then. Even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could never have saved him, for it was that ill-used junior who did save him!

Scarcely had Mr. Selby struck the metals when Gussy leaped up and sprang recklessly down on the line. Then he charged the master frantically—charged him as a rugger player charges his man.

The terrified master was making a desperate attempt to rise at the instant, and Gussy's charge took him full in the back, sending him headlong forward on his face, but happily well clear of the danger lines.

Then Gussy leaped after him, falling in a sprawling heap on top of the master, just as the lumbering monster of iron rumbled past amid clouds of steam and an earsplitting shrieking of brakes that rang loud above the wild shouts.

"D'Arcy!"

Mr. Selby's voice trembled.

The master of the Third was white as a sheet. He sat up dazedly on one of the waiting-room seats where he had been lying. The commotion was over now. In a half-fainting condition the master had been carried to the waiting-room, only Kildare, the dazed Arthur Augustus, and the station master being present now. Arthur Augustus looked a trifle pale, while he had a bandage round his noble brow where his forehead had struck a jagged chunk of road metal as he fore on to the line. Strangely enough, Mr. Selby did not bear a bruise, though he was obviously very badly shaken indeed.

"Yaas, sir?" said Arthur Augustus.

He was calm and composed now. He was captured—even Gussy realised there was no chance of escape for him again. But he was resolved not to show that he was beaten, for he certainly wasn't beaten yet.

"D'Arcy," gasped Mr. Selby, "I—I desire to speak to you! You—you have just saved my life!"

"That is all wight, sir."

"But for you," gasped the master, "I might at this moment have been crushed beneath those terrible wheels!"

Mr. Selby shuddered.

"Pway do not wowwy about that, sir. It is ovah and done with."

"But it is not over and done with, my boy," said Mr. Selby, his voice trembling again. "I—I should be lacking in common decency if I allowed it to pass without speaking about—"

Mr. Selby paused.

"The other day, D'Arcy," he went on quietly, "I charged you with theft. I also called you a liar. I was wrong! I should not have spoken as I did without making quite certain that I was right. I—I wish to say that I regret—I—I regret what happened. I am sorry!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus flushed red.

Fellows had grinned—had laughed—when he had stated that he would never apologise until Mr. Selby had apologised. Lowther had remarked that all of them would have grey whiskers by the time that happened.

Yet it had happened. And Arthur Augustus, generous-hearted and forgiving as ever, was not going to be outdone by Mr. Selby. He realised what it meant to the master to say what he had said.

"That—that is all wight, sir!" he stammered. "I wegwet vewy much that I evah called you an old donkay and a fabwicatah, and I am vewy sowwy I did so. I realise that I should have had more respect for your wibe yahs. As one gentleman to anohtah, I beg you to accept my apology, and I twust that Dr. Holmes will accept my sinceah apology to him and will allow the mattah to west heah. In any case, as there is no weason why I should object now, I am quite weady to return to St. Jim's and weecive any punishment Dr. Holmes chooses to impose. Yaas, watah!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Kildare; and as he heard the taxi outside just then Kildare hurried out. He was quite overcome.

It was twenty minutes later when Tom Merry & Co. reached St. Jim's, not having had a word with Gussy since before the accident. They rushed at once to the Head's study to await Arthur Augustus when he came out. They were anxious and troubled, fearing the worst.

Then Arthur Augustus came out. He was quite calm and smiling. His chums blinked at him.

"Gussy, old man, then—then it isn't the sack?" gasped Blake.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and regarded him in mild surprise.

"Bai Jove! Why should you imagine I have been sacked, deah boy?"

"But—but—"

"On the contwawy," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Dr. Holmes has pwaised me for what happened at the station—said I had been rather plucky, you know. It was watah embawwassin'. It is quite all wight now, deah boys. I have apologised to the Head as fwom one gentleman to anohtah, and though he smiled, I weally think he has accepted it. Isn't it wippin'? But I must wush away now and see what has happened to my neckties. I left them on the studay mantelpiece when I wetahied fwom St. Jim's the ohtah day, and if that feahful bwute Towsah has touched them—"

And Arthur Augustus hurried away without finishing.

"Well—well, upon my word!" gasped Tom Merry.

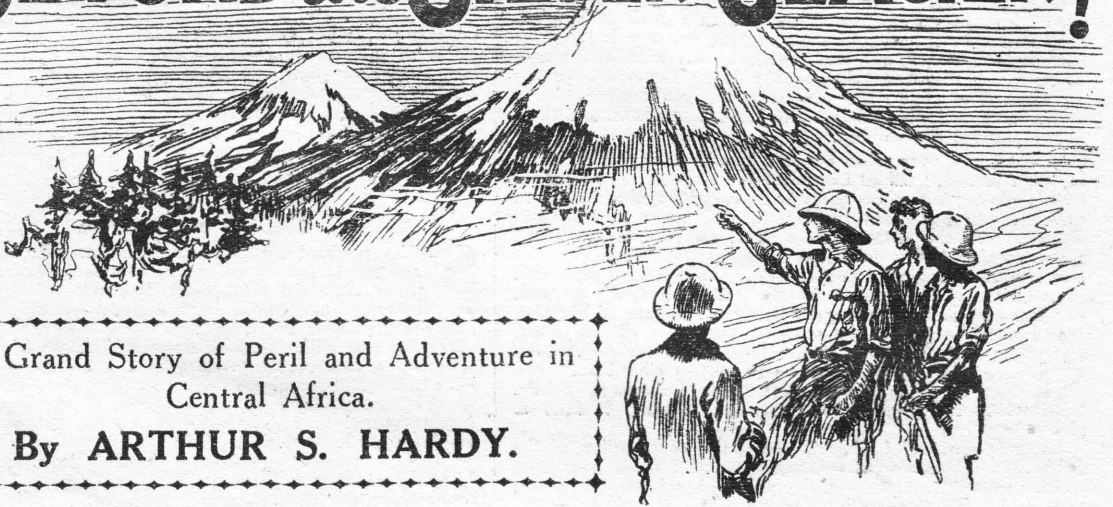
It was all he could say.

THE END.

(Now look out for "Kit Wildrake's Peril!"—the first of an amazing series of yarns dealing with Tom Merry & Co.'s vacation in the wild and woolly West—starts next week.)

NOW WE SHAN'T BE LONG! There seemed little hope of Professor Byrne and his party ever escaping from the hidden city of Barcoomba until a giant airship unexpectedly arrived on the scene. But the airship and its crew did the trick—the crew being regarded by the superstitious natives as white gods of the air!

BEYOND *the* SILVER GLACIER!



A Grand Story of Peril and Adventure in
Central Africa.

By **ARTHUR S. HARDY.**

Preparations for Departure!

FOR the rest of that day the sun blazed with undiminished and never-ceasing splendour. The Hokahulas having recovered from their fright, and having been told by their white king that the white gods of the air, who could blot out the entire race in a single moment if they wished, had forgiven them and were now their friends, spent the hours in great rejoicings.

Beeda, the chief, took no part in the festivities. He was nursing his bruises, and was so sorely wounded in spirit that he had not the heart to show himself.

Even the high priest Choitae, swallowing his pride, bent his knee in humble submission.

Marching at the head of an army of horned priests, all clad in gorgeous robes and bearing with them offerings of treasure, fruit, meat, and wine, he came to where Professor Byrne sat in front of his palace with his friends gathered round him and the officers of the Mirawala seated before him, and there bowed in humble submission, his arms folded across his breast.

Now, at last, he believed in the magic of the great white gods, he said. Now he knew that they could fly and that his words had been the words of a disbeliever. Yet, seeing that—save for the fact that their skins were white—they bore such a close resemblance to the human shape of the Hokahulas, or of the men and women of any other race that he—Choitae, the high priest—had ever seen or ever heard of, maybe they would pardon him for his scepticism. Now he knew that the tubes of death that barked out loudly at the will of the white gods could kill. Now he knew that he had been presumptuous in desiring that the white princess should be married to the chief Beeda.

He had brought with him rich gifts at the request and desire of the chief and the leaders of the Hokahula race. He prayed fervently that the white king of the Hokahulas, the white princess, and the men who sailed in the bowels of a ship that was of silver and which came through the air would accept these peace offerings and stay the hands which might slay them.

Adam blinked and stared. In the baskets which were laid at their feet he saw heaps of uncut stones, jewels of rarest value, nuggets of gold and silver, fruits and meats that made his mouth water, and mead or wine in great stone vessels which made the eyes of Jimmy Brown start out from his head.

The professor could afford to be magnanimous. With an assumption of dignity which

would have been ludicrous had it not been so sincere, he advanced, and taking Choitae, the high priest, by the elbows, raised him up.

"Choitae, my friend, kneel not to me!" he cried. "As the white god you have made king is strong"—here he coughed, for as he turned his head he saw Sandy McTavish solemnly wink at him—"so is he truly merciful. All that your king desires is that he shall live at peace with the people of the Hokahulas until such time as he shall fly away in the great ship of silver which is named Mirawala, and which has come hither at his summons because he feared that he might become the victim of thy chieftain's treachery.

"That, my dear son," he said, as he stalked majestically back to his chair of wood with seat of hide, his arm set about Adam, "is, I think, a good one. Blessed is the man with an imagination; and like unto a mongrel cur is he that hath none!"

In the great square that night there was feasting and dancing to the music of drums and horns and cymbals. The Hokahulas, awakening from their fear, abandoned themselves to a frenzied celebration of the coming of the silver ship which they had seen with their own eyes sweeping through the air and descending to the very ground with white gods in it.

They danced as it rocked gently at its tethering ropes on one side of the city square, and as they noticed how the light shone from the windows of its cabins or cages they shivered in awe.

When night fell a great searchlight was flashed from the airship which swept the dancing crowds of men and girls, so that they cried aloud and fled.

Never had they seen such dazzling gleams as the beams of the searchlight gave as it moved slowly round, sweeping the square.

Wonderful—and yet more wonderful!

And whilst they gained renewed courage, and again celebrated, Captain John Skinner, master of the Mirawala, told his story.

He had flown from the north of Africa to the south. He had been feted and feasted whilst the ship underwent repairs, and then had set forth again upon his voyage through the air over unknown lands, making a return at regular intervals to the station or base appointed for his safe harbourage.

He had arrived at Baruda but a few days after the departure of Adam and Harry and their companions and

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

For four years or more Professor Byrne and his daughter Rosa have been virtually prisoners in the hands of the Hokahulas, a race of skulbald natives who inhabit the secret city of Barcoomba, hitherto unexplored by a white man. These Hokahulas regard Professor Byrne as a white god, and they make him their king. But when the professor's son Adam and a party of white men, led by Muta, a giant black, penetrate the secret African city in order to rescue the professor and his daughter, the high priests of the Hokahulas are all for wiping out these white men, who, they now declare, are not gods. At the critical moment, however, a giant airship, the Mirawala, piloted by Captain Skinner, reaches Barcoomba, and the superstitious natives prostrate themselves in worship, for Captain Skinner and his crew are looked upon as white gods from the air, sent specially to the succour of the other white gods.

(Now read on.)

crew in the aeroplanes, and had listened to the story that Walter Beavan, the bearded settler, had to tell. Owing to a mishap to the airship he had stayed at Baruda many days. Then, when they were ready to resume their journey, having received a fresh supply of fuel after many days of weary waiting, they had flown northward, looking out always for a sign of the adventurers.

They had sighted the Silver Glacier and the Mountain of the Hidden Crest at last, and had then returned to the airship base they had built at Cheelonga. A time had been spent in refitting, and then, with plentiful supplies, they had set out to explore further the country beyond the glacier, or ice-field, and the Mountain of the Hidden Crest, these newly discovered landmarks being the guide to the unknown land where the professor and his daughter were imprisoned, and which Adam and Harold Franklin and their party had set out to find.

"Flying low over what appeared to be a region of interminable forests," stated Captain John Skinner, as he sucked at his pipe, "we came upon a place where the trees and undergrowth had been burnt out, and there espied what looked to be the charred remains of an aeroplane. These we could see plainly by means of our powerful glasses. We saw a strange and wild people painted to resemble skeletons, of whom we had never heard. We travelled onward, keeping low, and after lengthy flying saw a race of pigmies, who seemed to live in the open on the skirts of the forest, and there we made out, raised upon a hill or mound, an aeroplane, which appeared to be in perfect condition."

"It was the machine we left there!" laughed Adam. "No doubt the pigmies will treasure it until it falls to pieces."

"It was our belief, then," stated the commander of the Mirawala, "that you and your devoted friends had been slain. We could see the pigmies—hundreds of them, thousands of them—waving to us and making signs. Then we flew over the ice-field, and, keeping the Mountain of the Hidden Crest upon our right, passed a wide river and a wonderful waterfall. From that time onward we were scarcely ever out of the all-pervading mist. Now and then it would lift, and we would see wonderfully fertile country below us, with innumerable villages and hamlets scattered here and there, and we believed that this must be the land in which was situated the City of Barcoomba. We journeyed at half-speed, and believed that if only the mist would rise and enable us to view the country spread below us we would find the City of Barcoomba. We endeavoured to keep in touch with our base by means of our wireless, but lost contact—"

"And so it was we picked up the signals you were sending forth in Morse from the Mirawala!" laughed Adam.

"Ay, boy!" smiled the commander. "And so it came about that to-day, after the dawn had broken, and the splendour of the sun above the mist was overpowering, whilst we were sailing with our engines stopped, we were able to pick up the clamour of a mighty crowd somewhere below us. Having made sure of this, we tacked and returned, then heard the frenzied shouting of enraged people and the firing of guns, saw the mist disperse, and beheld, fluttering at the masthead, the Union Jack you had planted in Barcoomba. It needed only that symbol, my dear boy, to tell us we were right. Then the smoke of the guns and the sight of white men did the rest. So here we are, and whenever the professor pleases"—here John Skinner's eyes glistened brightly as he glanced at the white king of the Hokahulas—"we will hoist him aboard and resume our journey home."

Harry Franklin, who was seated next to Rosa, laughed.

"There is only one snag to that," he declared. "Professor Byrne will lose his kingly dignity."

"Has a king dignity in shoes of skin and a crown of leather—even if it be adorned with precious metals?" queried George Willis Byrne, as he pulled with infinite satisfaction at a fine cigar. "Still, what you say is true, my boy—a king in Barcoomba, a dry-as-dust at home; though, to be sure, I shall have that to say which will startle the members of the Geographical Society, I believe. Rosa, my dear, when shall we start upon our journey home?"

"The sooner the better, father," smiled the girl. "I am simply longing for the sight of London."

"In view of what you have told us," said the commander of the silver airship, "we could find our way back to safety and civilisation, using Kyhte as our guide, even if my ship was utterly destroyed where it is anchored here. Yet that way we would have to face the trials, privations, and great dangers of a journey through unknown countries and

among unknown peoples. We could trust your pigmies, Adam, my boy, but I possess a very natural antipathy to and distrust of your Hekebus. Those Skeleton men are dangerous. So my advice is that we fly back to Baruda in the Mirawala."

Here Julian del Rivo cut in sharply, his voice rasping. "Why should that be necessary?" he asked. "Why bother about returning to that desolate place, where lives only the outcast settler—Walter Beavan?"

"Poor Beavan—my poor friend," sighed the professor. "One of the finest men I have ever met, who might have done anything but for the curse of drink!"

"With your consent—and I don't suppose you have any desire to stay here any longer," John Skinner went on, turning to Professor Byrne, and ignoring Del Rivo—"we will sail the day after to-morrow."

"The time will suit," smiled the white king of the Hokahulas. "It will permit of one saying good-bye."

Good-bye to Barcoomba!

SO the professor, summoning Choitae, the high priest and the Hokahula chieftains to a conference, informed them that the day after to-morrow he would be leaving Barcoomba in the great silver ship which had come to bear him home.

Loudly and with lamentations they begged him to stay.

Standing erect, and presenting a grotesque figure with his leather and metal crown, his gaudy robes, and his shoes of skin, yet with a certain amount of dignity, the professor replied in a long-winded oration, the substance of which is given here.

"It had been his wish and desire," he stated, in the Hokahula tongue (adding an aside in English, "and may I be forgiven for the exaggeration"), "to dwell in happiness and peace in the land of the Hokahulas, who had rescued and saved him and the white princess when they must have died, since in some ways even white gods are mortal. But as they had plotted to marry the white princess to their chief, Beeda, and had doubted the power of the white gods to fly in the air like the birds, or to kill with their tubes of fire and death, it had been necessary to give abundant proof of their omnipotence. Therefore, they had called the silver ship to their aid, and, since it had come, there was no alternative but for them to return by it to their own far-distant land. Yet, in leaving, they would so bless the people and the land that the Hokahulas would experience great peace and plenty and prosperity just as long as they deserved it.

"A neat touch that, my dear boy," remarked the professor, turning to his son. "Which lets me out as a prophet whatever may happen in the future."

Very much more to the same purpose he said, and then, with arms raised, he blessed the chieftains and the priests.

"So be it," said Choitae, hanging his head in meekness. "The Hokahulas will grieve at the going of the white gods, but since it cannot be otherwise we must submit."

"The day after to-morrow," said the professor, "we sail, taking with us the guide Kyhte, whose life is forfeit according to the laws of your people, O Choitae, the high priest, and Muta, the black god of the Hokahulas. It is so written in the book of fate, and no power can alter it."

Muta, who had been stirring restlessly, advanced at that, and, bending his knee before the white king, spread his arms wide in supplication.

"Not so, my great white master," he said. "Muta will remain behind with his people. His mother, the Queen O-Kama, foretold that he would return to the land in which she was born and the city of Barcoomba."

Choitae turning, observed Muta craftily. He had seen him lay violent hands upon the sacred person of Chief Beeda and treat him as one would a dog or a slave. In the city the talk of the people concerned only the coming of the silver airship, the magic of the white gods, and the strength and might of Muta, the black god, who spoke their tongue, who proclaimed himself son of O-Kama, the queen, who had led these white men to their great city, and had produced the magic charm Oyorara.

After the stirring events of the past few days the power of Beeda was as nothing.

The cunning brain of the high priest revolved the situation, and he came rapidly to a decision.

"Let Muta, the black, be our king!" he cried, and the horned priests and gaily robed princes uttered a shout of acclamation.

(Another sensational instalment of this splendid story next week, boys.)

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR.

THE CALL OF THE CITY!

THIS week's mail contained a very manly, well-written letter from Dudley Bishton, a loyal GEM chum who lives at East Devonport, Tasmania. He's on a farm with his father, and although he admits that the life is healthy and invigorating, he finds it awfully dull. It seems that the bright lights of the city call to my correspondent, and he's now wavering between the city and the farm, as it were. Should he leave the farm and try his luck in the city? he asks. Frankly, I don't advise it. My correspondent tells me that before he went to the farm he was in poor health, but the fresh air and the exercise soon pulled him round, and now he's as strong as a horse. Well, the answer to the question that troubles him lies in his own experience. After all, good health is the big thing. Without it all the best city jobs in existence wouldn't be worth much. But what I suggest is that my chum sticks to his farm life and occasionally pays a visit to the city. These periodical visits will brighten up the dull spots of farm life and provide something to look forward to.

FREE CHEWING GUM!

Some of you fellows will remember that during last summer the special representatives of the GEM were touring

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