

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS IN LOVE! *Read the screamingly funny story of St. Jim's inside.*

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A Splendid Complete
Story of
TOM MERRY & CO.
By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1.

Doing the Polite Thing!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY came into Tom Merry's study in the School House at St. Jim's, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther laid down their pens and looked at him. They knew at once that something unusual was on.

D'Arcy was the swell of the School House. He was always elegantly dressed. Even fellows in the Sixth, who fancied themselves in a dressy way, never quite equalled the style of Arthur Augustus.

But on the present occasion Gussy had surpassed himself. The Terrible Three simply gasped as they looked at him. Never had his trousers been so beautifully creased, his patent leather shoes so remarkably shiny, his coat so well-fitting, his collar so high and spotless, his necktie so elegantly tied. From the summit of his silk hat to the tips of his lavender gloves, Arthur Augustus looked a picture.

"My word!" said Tom Merry.

"My hat!" said Manners.

"My only Aunt Mary Matilda!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus gave an elegant bow, and then a languid smile. His beautiful coat was open to show the really remarkable colours of his waistcoat, as well as a gold watchchain, and he carried a gold-headed cane in his hand.

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"What's the game?" Tom Merry asked. "What are you doing this afternoon, Gussy? Is that nobby get-up going to be wasted on us common people at St. Jim's?"

"Hardly, deah boy!"

"Are you going to mash Mary, the housemaid?" demanded Lowther.

D'Arcy gave him a withering look.

"No, it's the girl in the confectionery shop in Rylcombe," said Manners. "I've seen D'Arcy making sheep's eyes over a pile of penny buns, and—"

"Weally, deah boys, you are remarkably fwivolous this aftahnoon!" said Arthur Augustus, screwing his monocle into his right eye and surveying the Terrible Three. "I weally do not approve of these wemarks. I have come to wopose to you—"

"To which of us?" asked Tom Merry innocently. "You know you're irresistibile in that get-up. We might have guessed that you were going to propose to somebody."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! I've come to wopose to you to go to Wylcombe to meet the aftahnoon twain. I have asked Blake and Hewwies, and they said I was an ass, you know."

"Well, they were quite right, as a matter of fact. But what do you want to meet the afternoon train for? Is your governor coming down, or what?"

"You haven't heard, then?"

"Heard what?" demanded the Terrible Three, with one voice. "Any news?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, get it off your chest, Gussy."

"Dr. Holmes' niece is coming down to St. Jim's," explained D'Arcy. "You wemembah her, of course. She came down once last term."

"I think so. She was a nice girl. She used to come down and see the cricket."

"Yaas. Well, she's coming down to St. Jim's to stay a time here, so I hear, and she is comin' by the aftahnoon twain."

"What has that to do with any of us?" asked Lowther.

—THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S, IN THE ROLE OF ARDENT ADMIRER!

"Why, you see, deah boys, I have an ideah. I thought it would only be polite for us to make up a party to meet the lady at the station, and escort her to St. Jim's," explained D'Arcy.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, of all the nerve!"

"I weally fail to see where the nerve comes in," said D'Arcy. "In my opinion we are called upon to be polite. She was a wippin' gal, and took a great interest in cwicket, and I think we ought to do the wight thing."

The chums of the Shell grinned at one another.

"I think," said Tom Merry, "that we'll follow the example of Blake and Herries, especially as we've got an impot to write out. Doesn't it occur to your mighty brain, Augustus, that the Head will send the trap to meet the train, and that an escort of Lower Form boys will be superfluous?"

"That is vevy pwob; but it is no reason why we shouldn't be there to meet the twain. The gwoom will go in the trap, but we——"

"You'd better go over to the New House and get Figgins & Co. to take a hand," said Tom Merry. "We're not giving any receptions this afternoon."

"That's so," said Manners. "Good-bye!"

"But weally——" said Arthur Augustus.

"Gussy, you're interrupting the work."

"Blake and Hewwies have wefused to come, and if you wefuse I shall have to ask those New House wastahs; but it will be an infraction of the dig of the School House——"

"Never mind that. Why don't you go alone, Gussy? You look killing enough for anything, and you'd only put us commonplace persons in the shade."

"Yaas, I suppose I would," said D'Arcy. "Still, I should like——"

"You'll be late for the train," said Tom Merry, looking at his watch. "Better cut across and rope in Figgins & Co. while there's time."

"Vevy well I considah that you are wude boundahs," said Arthur Augustus; and he left the study with his nose in the air.

The swell of St. Jim's walked out of the School House, followed by a good many glances. He crossed the quadrangle towards the New House, looking out for Figgins & Co.. Although there was usually deadly warfare between the two Houses at St. Jim's they had been known to unite on friendly terms on sufficiently important occasions. And to D'Arcy's mind the present occasion was more important than any other that had ever arisen in the history of St. Jim's, and so he had no hesitation in approaching Figgins & Co.

He spotted the great Figgins under the leafless elms on the New House side, laying down the law to the Co. on the subject of football. Figgins was in football garb, and had an exceedingly muddy ball under his arm, and had evidently just come off the playing field.

Kerr and Wynn, the famous Co., were also looking muddy and rumped after a rough game.

"They can't play for toffee!" Figgins was saying. "Look at that fellow Green, for instance. I had to charge him, and he blubbed. You hear me? Blubbed!"

"I say, Figgins——"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn turned round and looked at D'Arcy. They looked him over and round about, and up and down.

"Hallo!" said Figgins. "What is it?"

"Just got out of the Zoo, I expect," said Kerr.

"I wonder what they call it," Fatty Wynn remarked. "It's one of those queer specimens they keep in the School House."

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye.

"You are decidedly wide," he said; "but I have not come to quawwel with you. I have come to pwopose to you to meet the aftahnoon twain——"

"The one Miss Courtney is in?" asked Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! I considah that we ought to do the polite thing, and gwect the doctah's niece on her awwival," explained D'Arcy.

Figgins & Co. chuckled.

"Think she would be pleased?" asked Kerr.

"She would be bound to be pleased, deah boys. It would be only a pwopah mark of esteem and wespsect."

"Why don't you take Blake and Herries?"

"They have wefused to come. They're goin' to play football."

"The Terrible Three, then?"

"They won't come, eithah. They're doin' impositions."

"Well, you can put us on the same list," said Figgins.

"We won't come, eithah. You can go and make a giddy ass of yourself all on your lonesome, Gussy."

"I weally cannot see the asinine aspect of the case," said D'Arcy frigidly. "It will be only polite to gwect the lady——"

"Rats!"

"Wewy well, I shall go alone. I wegard you as wude boundahs."

And Arthur Augustus walked away.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Figgins & Co.

D'Arcy heard them laugh, but it made no difference to him. When the swell of St. Jim's got an idea into his head, wild horses would not drag it out again. D'Arcy was always the quintessence of politeness. He had the idea firmly rooted in his mind now that he was called upon to do the "wight" thing, as he put it, and so the matter was past discussion.

Leaving Figgins & Co. still cackling, the swell of St. Jim's walked down to the gates and stepped out into the lane leading to Rylcombe.

Tom Merry, looking out of the study window in the School House, watched him go. The hero of the Shell was laughing.

"He's off," he remarked. "Figgins & Co. apparently haven't come up to the scratch. Gussy is going alone."

Lowther chuckled.

"I say," Manners remarked thoughtfully, "you know Gussy was awfully struck with Miss Courtney last term. Is it possible that our Adonis is in love?"

And at the suggestion the Terrible Three were unfeeling enough to burst into a roar of laughter.

CHAPTER 2.

How D'Arcy Met Miss Courtney!

"**B**AI JOVE!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking at his gold watch. "I shall be late! I have wasted too much beastlay time oval those boundahs, as a matter of fact. I'm afwaid I shall be late at the beastlay station."

It was a discouraging thought.

The swell of St. Jim's was not dressed for speed, and the walk was a long one to Rylcombe. The trap from the school, evidently going to Rylcombe to meet the train, had passed D'Arcy some time back.

"Beastlay wotten!" said D'Arcy, restoring his watch to his pocket and striding on. "I would wun, only it is so extwemely undig, and, besides, I am not dwessed for wunnin'. How extwemely unfortunate it is that I should be late!"

But a moment later even the disagreeableness of being late to greet the charming Miss Courtney vanished from D'Arcy's mind.

Three youths were coming up the lane from the village, three village boys who D'Arcy knew by sight. There had been many rows between the "Saints" and the boys of the village, and the moment he caught sight of these three, D'Arcy saw that their looks were hostile. They had spotted the exquisitely-dressed swell of St. Jim's at once, and their grinning faces showed that they anticipated some fun.

D'Arcy was dismayed for the moment. He wasn't afraid of them by any means. The swell of the School House had boundless pluck; but they were three to one, and a combat was the last thing in the world he desired just then. His clothes would be spoiled, and his last chance of meeting Miss Courtney at the station would be gone.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "This is weally most unfortunate. I am afwaid that the young wuffians mean to attack me. Bai Jove!"

They were advancing upon him rapidly, and there was not much doubt as to their intentions. Pilcher, the butcher's boy, Grimes, the grocer's boy, and Craggs, who honoured the local barber with his assistance, were the three. They evidently regarded the swell of St. Jim's as fair play.

D'Arcy had heard of the power of the human eye to quell the ferocity of wild animals. He had never heard of its effect being tried upon a butcher's boy before, but he thought he might as well try it. Unless he could overawe the enemy, he was in a bad fix.

So he strode on haughtily, his nose in the air, apparently too lofty to notice the existence of the three village youths. Pilcher stopped directly in his path.

"Whatcher!" he said cheerfully.

D'Arcy gave him a freezing stare.

"Pway stand aside," he said. "You are stoppin' me!"

Pilcher grinned at Grimes and Craggs.

"Get off the earth, you common persons," he directed.

"You are a beastly nuisance to this great person."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Grimes and Craggs.

"Pway stand aside," said D'Arcy. "I am in a great huvwwy. I weally do not want to be put to the twouble of thwashin' you now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When I explain to you," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "that I am goin' to meet a lady who is comin' by twain, and that I am already late, I am suah that as gentlemen you will immediately allow me to pass."

Pilcher shook his head solemnly.

"Can't be done," he replied. "You see, as gentlemen, we must punish you for being late when you're going to meet a lady. Ain't that so, mates?"

"It are," said Grimes and Craggs together.

"Then, besides, we must not let you burst upon her vision all at once like this," said Pilcher, who had a local reputation as a wit, and was always trying to live up to it. "You might startle her into a fit, you know."

"I wegard that remark as impertinent. Pway let me pass, or I shall have to use violence."

"Let's see you do it," said Pilcher, with interest.

"Vewy well."

And D'Arcy hit out so good a blow that Pilcher sat down in the muddy lane. The next moment, however, Grimes had D'Arcy round the neck, and they were reeling to and fro.

They went down together, and rolled into a ditch.

"Ow!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

There were six inches of muddy water in the ditch, and slime and mud galore. Grimes let go of the swell of St. Jim's and scrambled out, puffing and gasping. D'Arcy followed him, and the village three yelled with laughter.

The swell of St. Jim's presented a terrible appearance.

His silk hat was still in the ditch, and so was his gold-headed cane. His clothes were muddy from head to foot, his nice white collar wet and crumpled, his hair ruffled, his gloves caked with mud.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Pilcher. "My hat! Look at him!"

"Look at him!" shrieked Craggs, doubled up with merriment at the sight.

D'Arcy glanced down at himself, and could have wept with mortification at the sight of his shocking state. But instead of weeping, he became angry.

"You howwid, howwid wuffians!" he gasped. "You have completely spoiled my clothes. I will thwash you feahfully. Look out!"

And, reckless of the odds, D'Arcy went for the three village jokers.

Grimes went flying under his attack, but Pilcher and Craggs seized him, and ran him towards the ditch again.

"Let him go in and fetch his hat," suggested Craggs.

"Good!" said Pilcher. "Good dog! Fetch it!"

"Pway do not be such wuffianly bwutes!" gasped D'Arcy.

"I wufuse to go in and fetch my hat. My hat is quite useless now, and I do not desiah to wecovah it. Pway—"

"One, two, three!" shouted Pilcher.

"Now then!" said Craggs.

They swung the swell of St. Jim's to and fro, to give him a good send-off.

D'Arcy struggled frantically.

"Off—Hallo!"

There was a rattle of wheels in the lane. The village lads stopped for a moment and looked round. D'Arcy looked round, too, and could have whooped for joy when he recognised the St. Jim's trap, with James, the groom, in it.

"James!" he shouted. "Pway assist me, James!"

A young lady was driving. A charming girl with flaxen hair and blue eyes, and the sweetest smile in the world. She drew the trap to a halt instantly, and spoke to the groom, who jumped down at once.

"Bunk!" said Pilcher tersely.

The village boys cut off across a field, shrieking with laughter. D'Arcy stood alone, and for the first time became aware that Miss Courtney was looking at him from the trap.

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"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy, in utter dismay.

For a moment he sincerely wished that the trap had not come along at that moment, even if he had to be left in the hands of Pilcher & Co. To be seen by Ethel Courtney in his present plight was too fearfully humiliating.

The girl tried hard not to smile at the ridiculous appearance of the swell of St. Jim's, but suspicious dimples were showing round the corners of her mouth.

"Do you belong to St. Jim's, my poor boy?" she asked sympathetically.

"Yaas, wathah, Miss Courtney," said D'Arcy, with his best bow. "I must apologise fwom my heart for appeawin' before you in such a feahful state, but it was weally not my fault. Those howwid wuffians—"

"Ha, ha, ha! I mean, I am very sorry. It was too bad of them!"

"Yaas, wathah! I shall give them a feahful thwashin' when I meet them again. They actually had the feahful impertinence to fling me into the ditch, Miss Courtney."

"You must get into the trap," said the girl. "Come, I will drive you to the school."

"Oh, weally, Miss Courtney, you are vewy kind, but I could not think of takin' advantage of your offah," said D'Arcy. "I am such a disgwaceful-lookin' object."

"Never mind, jump in!"

"Vewy well, since you are so kind," said D'Arcy, "I am vewy gwateful to you, Miss Courtney. I weally do not feel up to walkin' aftah my feahful expewience."

The girl made room for the muddy swell of St. Jim's beside her.

James, the groom, grinned to himself as he resumed his place.

The trap drove on.

"What about your hat?" asked Miss Courtney. "Are you going to leave it there?"

"Yaas, wathah! It is no use whatevah now," said Arthur Augustus. "Fortunately I have sevewal othahs at St. Jim's. You do not wecognise me, Miss Courtney?"

The girl looked at him dubiously.

"There's so much mud on your face," she said demurely. "Is it D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, much gratified at being recognised, in spite of the mud that plastered his classic features. "Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, don't you know. I had the pleasuah last term of bwingin' you a glass of lemonade duwin' a cwicket match, Miss Courtney."

"Yes, I remember perfectly."

"As a mattah of fact," pursued D'Arcy, "I was comin' to Wylcombe to meet the twain, Miss Courtney, when those howwid wuffians attacked me."

"That was very kind of you," said the girl, smiling.

"But, weally, I am ashamed of appeawin' like this," D'Arcy said, scraping a patch of mud from his nose. "I am awaiiah that I look most disweputable, and it is vewy kind of you to give me a look. I weally hope that none of the fellows will notice me go in."

D'Arcy's hopes were ill-founded.

Figgins & Co. were at the gate, and they chuckled as the trap drove in, with the muddy swell sitting beside the fair driver.

D'Arcy turned crimson.

The Terrible Three had just come out of the School House when the trap drove up. They, too, stared at the swell of St. Jim's as he alighted. D'Arcy's complexion assumed the rich hue of a beetroot.

The doctor came out to meet Miss Courtney. He glanced curiously at D'Arcy.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Is it D'Arcy? How did you get into this terrible state, D'Arcy?"

"I have been attacked by howwid wuffians, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I have been wolloid in an extremely muddy ditch. Miss Courtney was kind enough to give me a lift home."

"Indeed!" said the Head. "You had better go and get yourself cleaned, I think, D'Arcy."

"Certainly, sir!"

The doctor entered the house with his niece.

D'Arcy, affecting not to see the curious looks of Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, marched into the School House.

Blake and Herries, his study-mates in Study No. 6, met him in the doorway.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "What have you been doing, Gussy?"

"I've had a most howwid expewience."

"You don't mean to say that you went to meet a lady like that!"

"Weally, I have no time to talk. I must go and change

my clothes," said D'Arcy. "I shall not be more than an hour!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy was rather under the hour. He came into Study No. 6 in time for tea. The chums stared at him. He was exquisitely dressed, and wore a flower in his beautifully fitting jacket.

"My hat!" said Blake. "You're going it lately! What's the game, Gussy?"

"Why this gorgeousness?" Herries wanted to know.

D'Arcy affected not to hear. He strode to the window and stood looking out.

"Aren't you going to have tea, Gussy?" said Blake, looking at him in astonishment. "There's some ripping sardines, and a jolly good cake I've just got from home—"

"Thanks, no," said Arthur Augustus languidly. "I'm not hungry."

"What rot! It's tea-time!"

"I don't want anything, thank you!"

CHAPTER 3.

D'Arcy is Mysterious.

"KILDARE!"

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, looked up as Arthur Augustus came in at the open door of his study.

"Yes, what do you want?" he said, eyeing D'Arcy with some curiosity.

There was an expression upon D'Arcy's face which told of some inward nervousness.

"Pway pardon me for disturbin' you, Kildare!" said D'Arcy, with his usual politeness. "But I should like you to give me a pass, if you have no objection."

"You want to go out?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You can't go out this evening," said Kildare. "It's too late. You can have one to-morrow, if you like. Where do you want to go?"



Arthur Augustus rode homeward deep in thought, carrying the box on his handlebars. Unfortunately he failed to notice three figures in front of him, and with a crash he rode straight into them!

Blake and Herries stared at one another. Arthur Augustus stood looking out of the window. Suddenly the sound of a deep sigh was heard. It proceeded from D'Arcy.

Blake gave a jump.

"I say, D'Arcy, old chap, are you ill?" he asked, with real concern.

"No."

"What's the matter, then?"

"Nothing."

Blake and Herries were puzzled. They went on with their tea.

The sound of a deep sigh was heard again. They looked at D'Arcy, but he did not notice it. His gaze was fixed upon the sky, where the stars were coming out. The stars appeared to have a great attraction for Arthur Augustus. He gazed at them, and sighed again.

Blake and Herries began to look alarmed. It was evident that there was something wrong with Arthur Augustus, but they hadn't the faintest idea what it was.

"To Wylcombe, please, Kildare."

"Well, you can't go to-night. For one thing, it's going to pour with rain. You can have a pass to-morrow."

"To-morrow won't be any good, Kildare, please."

The captain of St. Jim's smiled.

"Some awfully important business?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm afraid it will have to wait. You can't have a pass to-night. You can go and ask your Form master, if you like."

Kildare spoke in a tone of finality.

"Thank you!" said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose I shall have to approach Mr. Lathom on the subject."

He left the captain's study, and proceeded to that of the master of the Fourth.

Mr. Lathom was there, and he asked the swell of St. Jim's what he wanted. He raised his eyebrows when Arthur Augustus proffered his modest request.

"A pass this evening to go down to the village? Certainly not!"

"But, sir, I weally——"

"You may go, D'Arcy."

D'Arcy went, rather disconsolately.

He passed Mr. Railton's door, and as a last chance he tapped there.

The Housemaster's voice bade him enter.

"What can I do for you, D'Arcy?" asked the master of the School House, laying down his pen.

"Can I have a pass to go to Wylcombe this evening, sir?"

Mr. Railton stared at him.

"A pass to go down to Rylcombe—after locking up—and rain coming on? Certainly not!"

"If you please, sir——"

"You may go, D'Arcy."

D'Arcy retired, but the eye of the School House swelled with gleaming behind his eyeglass now. He was in a determined humour.

"They are all weally beastlay wude!" he murmured. "It's no good explainin' what I want to go for, as that would only make them more wresolute on the point. But if I can't get a pass I shall have to go without one, that's all."

"Hallo! What are you muttering about?" asked the voice of Blake, at his elbow.

D'Arcy started and turned round.

"I have been twyin' to get a pass out," he replied. "Kildare won't give me one, and Mr. Lathom and Mr. Waitton have also wufused."

"I should think so," said Blake. "You must be off your rocker. What do you want to go out for?"

"I'm going down to the village."

"But what do you want there? Are you thinking of standing a feed?"

"No, I'm not thinking of standing a feed," said Arthur Augustus, with withering scorn. "I'm not thinkin' of anything so beastlay common and vulgah."

"My hat!" said Herries. "Gussy is getting funnier every day. First we catch him blowing like a pair of bellows while he gazes at the giddy stars, and then he calls a feed common and vulgar. What's the matter with you, Gussy? Is it your liver?"

"Indigestion, I suppose," said Blake sympathetically. "That boiled beef at dinner-time was tough, and I noticed that Gussy shoved away a second helping."

"You are a pair of wude boundahs," said D'Arcy. "I should wufuse to weward you as fwends from this moment, but I stand in need of your assistance."

"Ha, ha, ha! Glad we're still of some use."

"I want you to help me, deah boys. I simply must get down to the village to-night."

"Why?" asked Blake and Herries together.

The swell of St. Jim's hesitated and coloured. D'Arcy was not usually secretive, nor was he given to blushing, and the chums of Study No. 6 gazed and wondered.

"I can't tell you," said D'Arcy, at length. "It's weally a pwivate mattah. But I weally must go, and, as I can't get a pass, I must bwreak bounds. I am extremely sowwy to do that, as I had made up my mind never to bwreak a wule of the coll again."

"Had you? Where, and why?"

"Never mind that, deah boy. I have turned ovah a new leaf. No more foolish twicks and pwanks for me," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "But I simply must go down to the village this evening. Will you help me out?"

"Of course we will," said Blake instantly. "I can see you've got something on your mind, or else on your chest. But you can keep your giddy secrets to yourself, if you like. We'll stand by you—eh, Herries?"

"Right-ho!" said Herries. "But, I say, it's going to rain, you know."

"Let it wain," said Arthur Augustus.

"The rain may spoil your waistcoat," said Blake, appealing to the swell of the School House upon what was usually his tenderest point.

"Let it," said D'Arcy absently.

The other two could only stare. They could not understand Arthur Augustus at all. What had come over the swell of St. Jim's? He was totally unlike himself.

"Come along, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "My coat is in the studay. I will put on the one I had on this aftahnoon, as it is already soiled, and does not mattah. I shall have to get ovah the wall. Buck up!"

They went into Study No. 6. Blake helped D'Arcy on with his coat. The School House page had been tipped to

brush it, but it still showed signs of the rough handling of the afternoon.

D'Arcy wound a scarf round his neck, and then went to his desk, and the chums saw him take a five-pound note from a drawer, and slip it into his pocket.

Arthur Augustus was always rolling in pocket money. He was the son of an earl, and he was kept well supplied. Fivers were less to him than five-shilling pieces to most boys. Blake wondered what he was going to squander that banknote upon in Rylcombe.

When he was ready to start D'Arcy turned to the door. Then he turned back and looked at the chums. He looked as if he were on the verge of imparting to them some deep and weighty secret, and Blake and Herries waited curiously to hear it.

But the swell of St. Jim's did not speak, after all. He only sighed deeply, and turned away again.

Blake and Herries exchanged a look of alarm.

"I say, Gussy," said Blake, "if you're ill, old chap, don't mind telling us. Was it the boiled beef to-day?"

"I am quite well, thank you!" said D'Arcy frigidly. "I weward that wemark as fwivolous. Are you coming to help me out?"

"But, I say, I don't like to let you go out like that. You may not be fit enough to take care of yourself, and——"

"You are insulting. I wufuse to——"

"Oh, don't get ratty, Gus! But I wish you'd tell us what's the matter, old son. Surely you can confide in us," said Blake seriously. "If there's anything wrong, you know we'd stand by you, and help you out like a shot."

Again D'Arcy seemed on the verge of imparting the dread secret. But he only shook his head and sighed.

"Pewwaps anothah time deah boys," he said. "Not now—not now. Pwavy come along! I should like to be back before bed-time, if possible."

"There's a fearful row in store for you if you're not, Gussy," said Blake, as they went down the stairs.

They crossed the quadrangle where the rain was beginning to fall.

"I am not afraid of a fearful wow," said D'Arcy. "I shall try to be back to pwevent inqwivy. This is the place."

"Would you like either of us to come with you?" asked Blake, who was really a little anxious.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No, thank you. Pwavy give me a bunk up."

"It's raining, you know," said Herries.

"Is it?" said D'Arcy absently. "Yaas, bai Jove! So it is!"

It was evidently hopeless to argue with D'Arcy. They helped him over the wall, and promised to be there to help him back at eight o'clock.

D'Arcy disappeared. They heard him drop into the road and then they turned back towards the School House. As they departed three youthful figures loomed up from the shadows, and gathered on the spot. Blake and Herries walked on, little dreaming that Figgins & Co. had been witnesses of the whole proceedings.

"Well, this is a stroke of luck," said Figgins. "Gussy has gone over the wall. He's going to the tuckshop, of course. No doubt about that."

"Not a bit of it," said Kerr. "I suppose he couldn't be going anywhere else. Some of the chaps have been breaking bounds, and going down to the Golden Pig. But D'Arcy's not that sort."

"Oh, no! It's the tuckshop, and that means a feed in the School House after lights out," said Figgins. "A feed—if we don't interfere."

"Which we're going to do," said Fatty Wynn, smacking his lips.

"Well, rather! It's a shocking thing that those youngsters should gorge themselves of a night," said Figgins. "We ought to look after their health, you know. We can't allow surreptitious feeds——"

"Well, that's a good word, anyhow," said Kerr.

"These surreptitious feeds," repeated Figgins, with emphasis. "We can't allow them, I say. Blake said he'd be back here to help D'Arcy in at eight o'clock. I think we shall be back here, too, kids."

"Good idea!" said the Co. at once.

"Blake can help D'Arcy over the wall, and we'll help ourselves to what he brings back with him from Rylcombe," said Figgins complacently. "I think there is going to be a feed in the New House to-night, kids. Come along!"

And Figgins & Co., with a chuckle, melted away into the darkness.

CHAPTER 4.

A Raid and a Surprise!

TOM MERRY looked curiously at Blake and Herries as he met them in the Common-room a little later. Both the chums of Study No. 6 were looking unusually serious.

"Anything up?" asked Tom.
 "Have you lost ninepence and found a threepenny-bit?" asked Monty Lowther, with much solicitude, "or has your Form master insisted upon the Fourth wearing clean collars on other days besides Sundays—"

"Or upon washing their necks in the morning?" asked Manners anxiously. "Don't worry, kids. It will come as a bit of a shock at first, but—"

"Oh, cheeso it!" said Blake. "There's nothing the matter, only—well, the fact is, we're a little bit worried about Gussy."

The Terrible Three looked serious at once.
 "Nothing wrong with him, is there?" asked Tom Merry.
 "N-no, I suppose not," said Blake. "But he's queer in his manner. He's got something on his mind, I believe. Haven't you fellows noticed anything?"

"Yes. Come to think of it, I've noticed that he's been going about in a sort of dream."

"That's it. He wouldn't have any tea this evening!"
 "That's serious!"

"And he was sighing like a pair of bellows. Of course, it might be dyspepsia. But he swears it isn't."

"Where is he now?"
 "He's gone out," said Blake, looking worried. "I really hardly liked to let him go alone. He's gone down to the village. We helped him over the wall. He put a five-pound note in his pocket, but he wouldn't tell us a word of where he was going."

"That looks queer," Tom Merry remarked thoughtfully. "Perhaps he's going to stand a feed, and he's keeping it back as a sort of surprise."

Blake shook his head.

"No, it's not that. He alluded to feeds as common and vulgar. Now, there must be something wrong in a chap when he doesn't like the idea of a feed."

"I should say so."

"I'm worried," said Blake. "He's an awful ass in some things, but a better fellow never breathed. I wish I could get on to the mystery."

Tom Merry could not help him.

Blake and Herries waited rather anxiously for the hour to strike when they were to meet Arthur Augustus at the wall. They whiled away the time in the gym, but at last eight strokes boomed out from the school tower.

"Come on, Herries," said Blake, with a sigh of relief. "Let's get down to the rendezvous! We don't want to keep Gussy waiting."

Rain was falling in a steady drizzle. They reached the wall in the dim mist. Herries hoisted Blake up to the top of it, and Blake stared down into the road.

"Are you there, Gussy?"

There was no reply. Blake could hardly see into the road for the rain and mist, but it was evident that Arthur Augustus was late.

"He's not here," growled Blake. "Crumbs! I wish I had thought of bringing an umbrella! No good sticking up here to get soaked."

He slid from the wall again. The chums crouched close to the ivy-clad wall to escape the rain as much as possible. But in five minutes or so came a well-known whistle from the road.

Jack Blake gave a grunt.

"That's Gussy! He's still alive, at all events."

Again Herries hoisted his chum to the top of the wall. Blake dimly discerned the figure of the swell of St. Jim's standing in the rain, a large box under one arm.

"Oh! So Tom Merry was right!" murmured Blake.

"It's a feed after all. Hand up the box first, D'Arcy, and then I'll give you a hand."

"Here you are, deah boys! Take great care of it."

"That's all right," said Blake, reaching down for the box.

"I say, this is awfully light. There can't be much in it."

"I assuah you it is full, and of the best that money could buy," said D'Arcy. "You shall see for yourself when we get into the study."

"Oh, all right! Take it, Herries!"

Blake handed the cardboard box down to Herries, who received it, and then turned to help D'Arcy up the wall from above.

There was a sudden scamper of footsteps in the gloom, and a yell from Herries. Blake let go of D'Arcy, who dropped back into the road in a sitting posture.

"What's up?" shouted Blake, peering down at Herries.

The latter staggered to his feet.
 "They've got it!"
 "Got what?"
 "The grub!"
 "Who's got it?"
 "Figgins & Co."
 "My hat! After them! We might have suspected this." Blake jumped down from the wall.

D'Arcy, on the other side, picked himself up from a puddle, and shouted and whistled, and whistled and shouted, but in vain. Blake and Herries were hot on the track of the raiders.

They caught a dim glimpse of three running forms in the misty gloom, making for the New House. They ran after them with desperate speed.

"Stop, thieves!" howled Blake. "Give us our grub!"
 "Hand over that tommy!" yelled Herries.

A mocking laugh floated back from the darkness. Figgins & Co. were running hard, and they had a good start. Figgins had the box under his arm, and its weight did not incommode him much. They dashed into the porch of the New House, while Blake and Herries were still a dozen feet in the rear.

Figgins looked round as the pursuers came dashing up. He kissed his hand to Blake, and then disappeared into the House. The chums of Study No. 6 halted wrathfully.

It was impossible to pursue Figgins & Co. into their own stronghold. It was a victory to the New House.

Slowly and disconsolately the chums retraced their steps to the wall.

"A rotten sell, and no mistake!" growled Blake. "Give us a bunk up!" He drew himself up on the wall. "Hallo! Are you there, Gussy?"

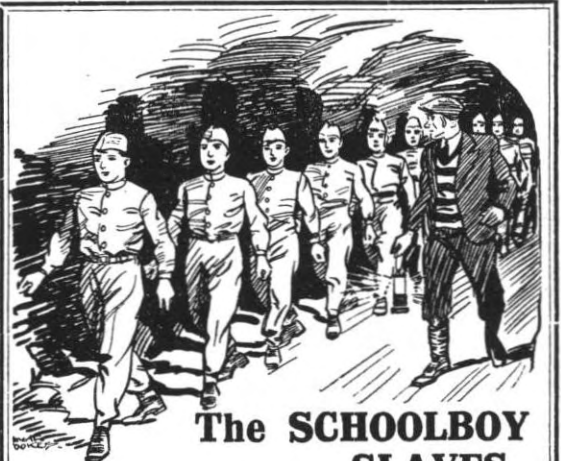
"Yaas, wathah!" came a voice from the gloom. "What do you mean by dwoppin' me in the mud, Blake?"

"Couldn't be helped. Give us your fin!"

Blake grasped D'Arcy's hand, and helped him up the wall. D'Arcy came across the top of it on his chest, with a gasp. Then he scrambled over and dropped into the quadrangle. Blake followed him.

"Where is the box, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy anxiously.

(Continued on the next page.)



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"The box! Didn't you know? Figgins & Co. have collared it."

Arthur Augustus gave a yell.

"You've let them collar my box."

"You don't think we did it on purpose, do you?" said Blake. "We couldn't help it. I was on top of the wall, and they rushed Herries. We tried to get it back, but it was no go. Where are you going?"

"I'm goin' to the New House to get that beastly box!"

"Don't be an ass! You'll get scalped!"

"I'm goin'!" exclaimed D'Arcy excitedly. "I tell you I'm goin'! I—"

"No, you're not!" said Blake. "Give him a run to the School House, Herries!"

"Right-ho!" grinned Herries.

And, taking the swell of St. Jim's by either arm, Blake and Herries ran him towards the School House, and into the House, and upstairs to the study, in spite of his frantic protests. Meanwhile, Figgins & Co. had carried their prize into the New House in gleeful mood.

The news spread in record time that a capture had been made from the enemy, and a crowd of New House juniors followed Figgins & Co. into the Common-room.

Figgins set down the box upon a chair. The juniors gathered round in an admiring circle, and Pratt offered Figgins his knife to cut the string. Figgins regarded the box, now that it was in the light, with something like uneasiness.

"I say, it weighs remarkably little for a box of grub," he said, as he slowly cut the string. "And, curiously enough, it's got the name of Flowerdew, the florist, on the outside."

"The florist!" ejaculated Kerr.

"Yes, look! I say, we—we haven't made a mistake, have we?"

"Look and see!" said Fatty Wynn, with deep anxiety.

"If you've found a mare's nest, Figgy, and there's not going to be a feed, after all, I don't know how I can ever forgive you."

"Oh, rats! Don't blame me! We couldn't do more than we've done. I thought it was a feed."

Figgins removed the lid from the box, and a score of necks were craned forward to look. There was a general howl of disappointment.

A sweet odour came from the box; but the New House juniors were not on the look-out for the scent of flowers. They wanted something a little more solid.

"Flowers!" said Figgins, in amazement.

The box contained a bouquet—a really magnificent bouquet, which must have cost the swell of St. Jim's a goodly sum. But any fellow there would willingly have changed it for a dozen tarts.

"Flowers!" ejaculated the Co.

The juniors stared at the bouquet in amazement and chagrin. Flowers! What on earth had D'Arcy broken boxes for, just to get a box of flowers to the school?

"Off his rocker, I suppose," said Figgins.

It was generally agreed by the New House juniors that the swell of the School House was off his rocker. But that didn't lessen their disappointment. Fatty Wynn was almost in tears. He had counted with such absolute certainty on that feed. And now it had gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream.

CHAPTER 5.

Gussy's Secret I

"**W**ELLEASE me! I insist upon your welceasin' me at once!"

Blake and Herries had plumped D'Arcy down in an easy-chair in Study No. 6. He jumped up again like a jack-in-the-box. Blake shoved him into the chair again with a playful push on the chest.

"Now, Gussy, don't be a howling ass!" he remonstrated. "You must be off your silly onion to think of tackling Figgins & Co. in their own quarters. Why, the New House kids would simply wipe the floor up with you!"

"I insist upon weclaimin' my pwoerty. If it was a feed I wouldn't mind—"

"Well, what was it, then?" exclaimed Blake, in astonishment.

"Did you think it was a feed, Blake?"

"Of course I did; and so did Figgy, or he wouldn't have collared it. What the dickens was it, then?" demanded Blake.

The swell of the School House could not help grinning.

"Then it will be a disappointment for Figgins," he remarked. "Do you think I should be thinkin' of anythin'?"

so common and vulgah as a feep? The box contained a bouquet."

"A-a-a what?"

"A bouquet," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "Flowers, you know."

"Do you mean to say," said Blake, in measured accents, "that you've been and gone and broken bounds, and taken us out in the rain to fetch a box of rotten flowers from Rylcombe?"

"They are not wotten flowers. They are the vewy best that money can buy. Now, pewwaps, you will let me go and weclaim my pwoerty."

"You—you ass! What did you get them for?"

"To pwesent to Miss Courtney."

Blake and Herries stared at him, and at one another. "You went to Rylcombe for a bouquet to present to Miss Courtney?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why?"

The direct question seemed to take Arthur Augustus rather aback. To the surprise of the chums he coloured deeply, and dropped his eyes.

Herries looked at Blake and tapped his forehead inquiringly. Blake shook his head. He did not think that the swell of the School House was mad. A stranger suspicion than that had come into his mind.

"You haven't answered my question yet, Gussy," he remarked.

"I—I weally do not know what to say," said D'Arcy, colouring still more deeply. "But I say, chaps, isn't Miss Courtney a weally wippin' girl?"

"Yes, rather," said Herries. "If she wasn't four or five years older than I am, I should lose my giddy heart. But—"

"She's not so old as that," said D'Arcy hastily. "She's only eighteen."

Herries stared at him.

"How do you know?"

"I—I do know. I—I say, Blake, old chap, do you—do you think—" D'Arcy paused, overcome with confusion, and dared not meet Blake's eyes.

"Do I what?" asked Blake calmly.

"Do you—do you—do you think—"

"Yes, sometimes, when my thinking-box is in working order."

"I—I mean—do you think—do you think that Miss Courtney is' vewy much older than I am?" said D'Arcy blushing.

Herries stared at the swell of the School House as if transfixed. For the first time a glimmering of the truth dawned upon him.

Blake remained as grave as a judge.

"Certainly not," he said. "Let's see. You're coming on for fifteen, Gussy, aren't you?"

"Yaas," murmured D'Arcy. "Vewy nearly fifteen, Blake. Call it fifteen."

"And Miss Courtney is eighteen. That's only three years difference, only it's on the wrong side, you see. If you were eighteen, and she were fifteen—"

"Ah, yes!" said D'Arcy, with a deep sigh. "But still, the difference is not so vewy gweat, is it, Blake? Only three yeahs."

"Of course not," said Blake, winking at the astounded Herries. "That's nothing at all. Why, she'll only be fifty when you are forty-seven."

D'Arcy shuddered. It was evidently painful to him to picture his divinity as ever being fifty at all.

"D-d-d-don't talk like that, Blake! It's howwid!"

"Well, she will be fifty if she lives long enough," persisted Blake. "You don't want her to die young, do you, D'Arcy? Don't be hard-hearted."

"Of course I don't," said Gussy. "But—but never mind that. Blake, old chap, I—I—"

"I know all about it," said Blake comfortingly. "I've been there myself."

"You—you understand. You see, Blake, she's such a wippin' girl," said D'Arcy shyly. "She takes such a deep interest in ewicket and football."

Blake laughed.

"Exactly! She's simply stunning! And I'd punch the head of anybody who said she wasn't."

"Hem!"

"And she gave me a lift to-day when I was lookin' such a feahful object," said D'Arcy. "I weally owe my wescue from those feahful wuffians to her, you know."

"I'm not surprised, Gussy," said Blake. "I ought to have guessed that before. I'm not a bit surprised, because she—"

"Because she's such a wippin' girl."

"No; because you're such a howling ass!" said Blake

politely. "My hat, D'Arcy in love! Oh, my only maiden Aunt Maria Jane Jemima, I shall never get over this!"

And Blake sat down in a chair and yelled. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries. "So that's the secret, is it? Oh, Gussy, you'll be the death of me yet! I know you will!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell at the open doorway, and Figgins looked into the study. "Gussy, how could you? Oh, Gussy!"

The three juniors shrieked in chorus. D'Arcy looked from one to another. He seemed undecided which one of them to go for.

"Excuse me," said Figgins, wiping away his tears—"excuse me, chaps." He laid a cardboard box on the table. "I was coming in, and I couldn't help hearing. I came to return Gussy's property. He is welcome to it. We thought

get out of this study. I've got to write a note to send with these flowers. Get out!"

Blake put his arm round Herries' neck. "Come along, Herries, old man," he sobbed. "Hold me up, or I know I shall collapse. Come along; and let's explain to Tom Merry that we've discovered the horrible mystery. Oh, my only hat! Ha, ha, ha! Gerrooh!"

Blake and Herries staggered out of Study No. 6. But Arthur Augustus soon forgot them and their ribald merriment. He was busy with pen and paper composing a note to put with the bouquet when he left it for Miss Courtney.

D'Arcy was in deadly earnest. He was always in earnest when he got an idea firmly into his head; and now he was desperately in love, and no mistake about it.

He wrote a note, and then another, and then another, tearing them up in turn, dissatisfied with all of them, until



The unfortunate Arthur Augustus was tied to his overturned bike by Pilcher & Co., and left by the roadside. He was indeed a very forlorn and miserable sight!

it was a feed when we raided it; but we've got no use for a bouquet. My hat—ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy jumped up and seized the box. He opened it to assure himself that his treasure was all right, and gave an exclamation of relief at the sight of the undamaged flowers.

"That is vewy decent of you, Figgins," he exclaimed. "I can forgive your wude and beastlay wemarks if you will kindly clear out at once!"

"I'll clear out," gurgled Figgins. "This is too good to keep. Kerr and Wynn will have a fit when I tell them. My only pyjama hat! Oh dear, you'll kill me, Gussy!"

And Figgins staggered away almost helplessly.

"Don't you dare to say a word!" shouted D'Arcy, running to the door. "Figgins, I will give you a feahful thwashin'! Figgins—Figgy, old man—Figgy—"

But Figgins was gone. The news, as he said, was too good to keep, and it would probably console the Co. for the loss of the feed. D'Arcy in love was better than a feed any day.

D'Arcy turned back wrathfully into the study. Blake and Herries were still shrieking themselves into hysterics.

"If you chaps can't be quiet," said D'Arcy, "you'd better

he made the alarming discovery that he had reached the end of the common stock of notepaper kept in the study. He had only one sheet left, and it was now or never. So he stopped writing and tearing up, and began to gnaw the handle of his pen by way of a change.

"From a humble adorer"—"From one who worships the ground you tread on"—"From one who lives only in your eyes"—these, and many more to the same effect, D'Arcy had written and rejected, dissatisfied with each in turn.

He wanted to show his adoration, yet he had the natural shrinking of a delicate-minded lad from seeming anything like forward. What was he to write? Time was passing, and ere long the Fourth Form would be marshalled into the dormitory, and the chance would be gone. It seemed like impertinence for a Form master to interfere with a love-lorn Romeo, but Mr. Lathom would not understand.

D'Arcy dipped the pen in the ink at last, and wrote: "From a humble friend." That seemed all right, and did not hint of boldness. It was the last sheet of paper, so it

had to do. He carefully folded the sheet and concealed it in the bouquet.

The question now arose how to get the gift to the lady of his heart. It was impossible to march up to the Head's house, bouquet in hand. One roar of laughter from all who saw him would be the result of any move like that. The bouquet must be conveyed secretly to its destination.

"Ah, I have it!" murmured D'Arcy. "I will place it on the window-sill of her room, and she will find it in the morning."

It was a bright idea. He had already discovered which was Miss Courtney's room in the Head's house. The window was on the first floor, and it was an old-fashioned one, deep-set in the thick stone wall, with ivy hanging clustering round it. The sill was long and broad. It would be easy to climb the ivy and place the bouquet there, and it would be quite sheltered from the rain and weather. Then Miss Courtney would be bound to find it in the morning.

No sooner thought of than done. D'Arcy put a ball of string in his pocket, picked up the bouquet, and sallied out into the quadrangle. The mists were thicker now, and the rain coming down in a steady drizzle. Little did Arthur Augustus care for that.

He was quickly standing under Miss Courtney's window. To his dismay there was a light on in the room, though the blind was drawn. But as he looked up, Miss Courtney came and stood near the window, so that her shadow was cast on the blind. Arthur Augustus stood gazing upwards, a look of sublime adoration on his face. So intrigued was he, that he did not hear stealthy footsteps behind, nor did he at first notice a slight pull on the bouquet, which he was holding behind his back.

But, feeling a stronger tug, he whipped round with a startled exclamation—to find himself staring at Taggles' goat! The animal had been attracted by the bouquet and had started to eat it, but luckily it had only eaten a piece of the asparagus fern which surrounded the flowers.

"Go away, you feahful bwute!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in a fierce stage-whisper. "How daiah you eat this bouquet! It is for a lady, not a beastly animal like you!"

The goat, startled either by its reception or the look on Gussy's face, turned and trotted away. With a sigh of relief, Gussy removed the chewed leaves and turned once more to the window. The light was out now.

He attached the end of the string to the bouquet and climbed the ivy.

The ivy was thick and strong, and the actual climbing was not difficult. But every shake of it brought a shower of water upon Arthur Augustus. He was hardy in the cause of love, but the water ran up his sleeve, and down the back of his neck, and soaked through his waistcoat. He was gasping and shivering by the time he lodged a leg in the ivy under the stone sill, but he was still undaunted.

He had brought up the loose end of the string in his teeth. Now he drew the bouquet carefully up by the string, and placed it, with that tender note still hidden in it, close to the window, and then dropped the string to the ground again. He followed it more slowly down the ivy.

The wind howled among the leafless elms, and the rain lashed in gusts upon Arthur Augustus. But he did not feel it; he was elated and happy.

As he entered the School House he encountered Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, who was speaking to the Housemaster. Both stared in amazement at D'Arcy, who coloured and tried to slip past, but was instantly called back.

"What does this mean, D'Arcy?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, peering at Arthur Augustus through his spectacles. "Bless my soul, you are quite wet!"

"You are wet through," said Mr. Railton severely. "It is very foolish of you to go out into the rain. D'Arcy. Go to bed at once! Get those clothes off without delay!"

"Yes, sir," said D'Arcy.

And he scuttled off, glad to escape questioning. Mr. Railton looked after him, pursing his lips. He had noticed D'Arcy several times that day, and he did not quite understand him.

CHAPTER 6.

The Joke of the Season!

TOM MERRY gave a sudden jump. He was writing at the time, and his jump scattered an assortment of blots, large and small, over the sheet, and, naturally, Tom was wrathful. It was the sudden entry of Blake and Herries into the study that had made him jump; and Manners and Lowther jumped, too. They stared at the chums of the Fourth in amazement and exasperation.

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Blake and Herries seemed to have taken sudden leave of their senses. They had staggered into the study clasping each other round the neck, and now they were standing unsteadily, shrieking with hysterical laughter, still supporting each other.

Tom Merry reached for a ruler.

"You howling asses!" he exclaimed. "You—you blessed lunatics, look what you've made me do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've spoiled my Latin exercise."

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"What are you cackling about?"

"He, he, he!"

"Fire 'em out!" exclaimed Manners, getting exasperated. "This isn't a place for silly geese to come and cackle in!"

"That's it," said Lowther. "Come on! And wipe up the passage with their hungry bones, as Shakespeare says! I'll—"

"Pax!" giggled Blake. "Oh, pax—pax, it's the joke of the season!"

"The creamiest joke of the giddy season!" gasped Herries.

"What is it, then?" demanded Tom Merry. "Something up against the New House?"

"Oh, no! Ha, ha, ha! It's Gussy—the one and only, the inimitable Gussy!"

And Blake went off into a fresh roar of laughter.

Tom Merry looked interested.

"Have you found out the secret?" he asked. "Do you know what it was that was weighing on his infant mind?"

"Yes—ha, ha, ha!—rather!"

"Then expound!" exclaimed Tom. "Can't you see we're curious? What's the giddy secret? Has Gussy committed a murder, or bigamy, or what?"

"No. Worse than that. He's—he's—he's— Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry rushed at Blake, and pinned him against the wall. Blake was too weak with merriment to resist.

"Now, you bouncer," said Tom Merry determinedly, "you'll explain, or I'll bang your silly coconut against the wall! Now, sharp!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Hold on! Gussy is—is— Ha, ha, ha!"

Biff!

Blake's head went against the wall with a bump. Tom Merry was true to his word.

"Hold on!" yelled Blake. "I'll tell you! Gussy is in love!"

Tom Merry released him in sheer astonishment.

"He's in what?"

"Love! L-O-V-E! Love!" said Blake. "It's a giddy fact!"

"Didn't I say so?" exclaimed Manners triumphantly. "I knew it! At least, it crossed my mind. I said so this afternoon when he was going to meet the train."

"So you did," said Monty Lowther. "But—but—but is this a joke, Blake?"

"Yes; the biggest joke of the season."

"I mean, is it a fact—honour bright?"

"Yes, honour bright," giggled Blake. "I know Gussy will be the death of me yet! Falling in love is his latest departure. He's got it bad."

"Fearfully bad!" sobbed Herries. "He's been and broken bounds to fetch a double-sized bouquet from the florist's in the village, and he's going to present it. Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three went into a roar. They laughed till the tears ran down their faces. Fellows came and looked into the study to learn what the laughing was about. Gore was the first to arrive.

"Hallo! Anything funny here?" he asked, putting his head into the study.

"Yes, now you've come," said Tom Merry.

"I say, what's the joke?"

Herries was about to burst out with it, when Blake kicked him. It had occurred to him that it would not be fair on Gussy to let it go too far. Herries understood.

"Oh, come, out with it!" said Gore. "Have you got a new wheeze on, Tom Merry?"

"Yes," said Tom. "I was wondering whether I could catch anybody standing at the door with ink from this squirt. Stand still, and—"

The door slammed, and Gore was gone.

"Time we went," said Blake. "Keep the secret, you chaps. We had to tell somebody, you know. But we mustn't make it the talk of the House, or Gussy will be chipped to death."

Tom Merry nodded.

(Continued on page 12.)



Address all letters: *The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*

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take you through the latest adventure that befalls them. It makes thrilling reading, too. Just one more word before we turn to the notebook of news—order next Wednesday's GEM To-day!

A CHANCE FOR A "BAD LAD"!

"If there is a fellow here who thinks he can act the part of a real bad lad in a play we are shortly going to produce, there is a job waiting for him." Words of this sort, voiced from the stage of a theatre recently, brought a response of two hundred "real bad lads" in the making. The title of the play, strangely enough, is "Walk this Way." One of the lads, a sixteen-year-old fellow with a taste for acting, beat the other one hundred and ninety-nine applicants, and got the job. It isn't every young actor of this age who can claim that he has played to audiences in the West End of London in his first professional part, so the successful "bad lad" can't grumble at the start he has been given if he doesn't at some time or other reach the ranks of the grease-paint stars. We wish him luck.

A MODERN PYRAMID!

Ten thousand years hence, when the people of this world are wondering what the inhabitants of the twentieth century thought and did, some scientist explorer is going to make history. He will find on a spur of the Ozark Mountains in North Arkansas, roughly two hundred and forty feet from the summit, a giant pyramid one hundred and twenty feet in height. Inside a special chamber he will discover many working models of present-day air liners, machinery, railway engines, etc., a vast store of photographs and learned books printed in ink that will not fade. Even clues to the English language will be plentifully stored in this pyramid, lest the language should be different in the year eleven thousand nine hundred and thirty-two. The walls of the pyramid

will be eight feet thick. The enlightenment of human beings ten thousand years hence is the big idea of Mr. William Hope Harvey, who is building this memorial. Once the pyramid has been built it will be left to dry for the space of a year, and then hermetically sealed. We hope a copy of the GEM will be included in the relics that are to be stored within its concrete walls.

ONE UP FOR ENGLAND!

In recent years we have read much too often of the defeat of British athletes at the hands of foreigners. Thus England's clear-cut victory over the Spanish football eleven at Highbury recently came as a welcome tonic. There was no fluke about that win either, as the score of seven goals to one proves. All Spain was interested in the result of the match, and we are told that their M.P.'s postponed their governmental business for an hour in order that they could follow the progress of the match. Those people who go about grumbling that British sport is on its last legs should take heart after this.

HOW IT'S DONE IN BERLIN!

"There were twenty scholars in the class and five skeletons." In that phrase lies a complete description of what a Britisher saw in a German school the other day. "Skeletons?" say you, and the answer is "Yes, skeletons. There was a bony skeleton at the piano, there was another one bending down as if to pick up a basket, there was still another sitting huddled over a desk, and two others in various attitudes. The great idea is this: German medical men are convinced that a lot of the ills to which we are subject are due directly to the spine. They say that if we sit limply at a piano our spine curves, our lungs are contracted, and our chest gets where our stomach ought to be. That, more or less, is ancient history. But the Germans have come to the conclusion that it's of no use telling youngsters of these things; they must be given a practical illustration. Right, then; just imagine you are in a German class. The master has pulled you up for sitting at your desk in a slovenly attitude. He doesn't bore you with a long-winded lecture on the evils of so sitting. He strides to the nearest skeleton, doubles it up into a passable imitation of how you were holding your own bones together, and leaves the rest to your imagination. They say the stunt is working well in Germany, but we don't think it would catch on over here.

THE ONE-MAN BAND!

Not so very long ago we used to marvel at the street musician who contrived,

by various devices, to play with one pair of hands and at the same time, a drum, cymbals, and concertina. But since the coming of the super cinema organ the original "one-man band" has had to relinquish his honours. There are organs to-day which are so cleverly contrived that it is difficult to tell the difference between them and a full band of mixed wind and brass instruments played by human beings. Such an organ has as many as two hundred stops, two hundred and forty keys, thirty-two pedals, and umpteenth other pistons and gadgets. This paragraph is included for the benefit of Thomas Hoskin, of Canterbury, who wants to know if it's really one man who plays the big cinema organ, or whether there are other organists hidden behind the scenes! One man only—the fellow you can see at the keyboard of the super-organ, which is in fashion to-day at the big cinemas—plays the instrument, but, needless to say, his specialised cleverness is only the result of continuous practice over a number of years.

MODEL RAILWAYS.

Every model railway owner aims at realism—he wants his lay-out to be a real railway in miniature. The Hornby programme for 1932 makes possible greater realism than ever before. Hornby Locomotives have always been famous for their strength and reliability. The 1932 designs retain these qualities, but they have been improved enormously and extended year by year. The Hornby System makes it possible to reproduce in miniature practically all the operations that are carried out daily by the great railways of the world. Hornby Trains are all-British and pre-eminent in the model railway world.

BURGLAR PROOF!

So clever is your modern burglar that those people to whom we entrust our valuables make doubly sure before they start to build their strong rooms that even with dynamite or the best oxy-acetylene apparatus, the cleverest cracksmen cannot "do his stuff." A super-strong-room was opened officially in London not very long ago, the door of which alone weighed nineteen tons of good British steel. In all, six hundred tons of this metal, which the burglar has come to regard as his worst enemy, next to a policeman, went into the making of this strong room. Not only that, there are elaborate safety devices of electricity which not only defy the efforts of any cracksmen, should he ever be tempted to pit his wits against them, but "arrest" him into the bargain.

CUP FOR STAMP COLLECTORS.

There's a great treat in store for you fellows who are stamp collectors, and who chance to be in London between the 6th and 23rd of January. For a great Pageant of Postage Stamps is to be presented at Dorland Hall, Lower Regent Street, within one minute of Piccadilly Circus.

A Schoolboys' Stamp Exhibition forms part of the pageant, and our companion paper, "Modern Boy," is putting up a topping Solid Silver Cup for competition. If YOU have a worth-while collection of stamps, buy a copy of this week's "Modern Boy," price 2d., and find out what you have to do to enter for that splendid cup.

"Modern Boy" has also arranged to have Saturday, January 16th, set aside as "Modern Boy's" day at the pageant. On that day all readers of "Modern Boy" will be admitted FREE. Buy a copy of this week's "Modern Boy," which contains full particulars and the FREE ADMITTANCE COUPON.

YOUR EDITOR
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,247.

"LOVELORN GUSSY!"

(Continued from page 10.)

"No, we'll keep it dark," he said. "Besides, it wouldn't be nice for Miss Courtney. Gussy is a good little ass, but, really— Ha, ha, ha! He ought to be in a museum!"

"Or an asylum," said Monty Lowther.

"Don't let Figgins & Co. get on to it," said Manners. "They'll give Gussy a warm time if they do."

"Unluckily, they know already," said Blake. "Figgins came into the study while we were talking about it. Gussy was asking me whether I thought Miss Courtney very much older than he was. Oh, my hat!" And Blake shrieked again.

"Bed-time," said Herries. "Come along! We must look after Gussy."

And the chums of the Fourth quitted the study. They left the trio of the Shell cackling away as if they could never stop.

"All the same, I am sorry for Gussy," said Tom Merry, calming down presently. "I was in love once—"

"Eh?" said Manners and Lowther together.

"It's a fact. I was twelve at the time, and I fell in love with the postmistress at Huckleberry Heath. She was twenty-seven. I was awfully in love for two days," said Tom Merry. "Therefore, I can sympathise with Gussy. I can't help shrieking when I think of it. But perhaps we'd better not chip him too much. I only hope Figgins won't spread the tale all over the New House."

"He'll tell Kerr and Wynn," grinned Lowther; "but he may not let it go farther. I—I wonder what Miss Courtney would say if she knew?"

"My hat! I wonder!"

And the Terrible Three returned to their work, but at intervals chuckles broke from them, showing that the lovelorn condition of Gussy was still uppermost in their minds. Blake and Herries looked in at Study No. 6 for Gussy, but he was not there. They found him in the dormitory. He was already in bed when they arrived there.

"Hallo! What does this mean?" asked Blake, stopping by his bedside to look at him.

D'Arcy was not asleep, for his eyes were wide open, but he seemed to be in a kind of dream. He turned his eyes slowly upon Blake.

"Is that you, Blake? I wish you had not disturbed me, dear boy. I was composing a sonnet. Can you tell me a rhyme for eighteen?"

Blake wrinkled his brow thoughtfully.

"Skating," suggested Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha! Will skating do, Gussy?"

"No," said D'Arcy scornfully.— "Skating will not do. Pway do not disturb me."

"But what do you mean by sloping off to bed so early?"

"I got wet putting the bouquet on Miss Courtney's window-sill," explained D'Arcy. "Mr. Waitton sent me up to bed. He— Pway do not make those sounds of vulgar mewmiment, Blake! You insult me—you do, weally!"

Blake and Herries went to bed. Blake felt that he would have genuine hysterics if he talked to Arthur Augustus any more that night.

Hysterics seemed the order of the day among the acquaintances of Arthur Augustus. Figgins, after the discovery he had made in Study No. 6, had returned to the New House in a state bordering on lunacy. He came into the study where Kerr and Wynn were doing their prep, rather late, and sat down in a chair, gasping.

The Co. jumped up at once.

"What's the matter, Figgy?" asked Kerr. "Anything happened over in the School House? Why, the beggar's laughing! What's the joke?"

It was some time before Figgins could tell them. When the truth dawned upon the Co. they simply shrieked.

"So that's Gussy's latest," gurgled Kerr. "Oh dear! And—and he's going to present that bouquet to the Head's niece?"

"I suppose he'll send it to her, with a little note," said Figgins. "It's too funny for words; but we'll keep the joke to ourselves, kids. No good making it the talk of the House. Can't be too careful where there's a lady concerned."

"That's right enough, Figgy," said Kerr thoughtfully. "But there's no reason why we shouldn't screw a little fun out of it for ourselves, is there?"

"None at all," said Figgins. "I'm on, if you've thought of a wheeze."

"Well, if Gussy sends Miss Courtney that bouquet, he won't be surprised to get a little note in return."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Asking him to keep an appointment, say, in the garden—"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"And—and you know I do impersonations pretty well, Figgy," said Kerr, who was the leading light of the New House Amateur Theatrical Society. "It will be after dark, and I don't see why I shouldn't meet Gussy and—"

Figgins and Fatty Wynn lay back in their chairs and yelled.

"Is it a go?" grinned Kerr.

"Is it?" said Figgins. "Well, I should say so. Ha, ha, ha!"

And so the plot was plotted by Figgins & Co.

Poor Gussy!

CHAPTER 7.

"Ich Liebe Dich!"

"DEAR me! What beautiful flowers!"

Ethel Courtney was looking out of her window in the sunlight. A bright morning had dawned upon St. Jim's after the rain of the night. The bouquet, reposing on the window-sill, caught the girl's eye at once, and she picked it up in wonder.

"What beautiful flowers! How could they possibly have come there?"

She looked at them in admiration and wonder. Arthur Augustus' taste was good, and the bouquet was really a lovely one, and it had been sheltered from the weather under the stone arch of the window, and had not suffered much. As the girl turned it over in her hands a note fell from the flowers.

Potts, the Office Boy!



She looked at it quickly. A blush came into her fair cheeks for a moment.

"It cannot possibly be from Frank."

Fortunately, D'Arcy was not near to hear the name of a rival on those fair lips. The girl read the note, and her amazement increased. "From A Humble Friend!"

"Dear me! I don't understand this at all," Miss Courtney murmured to herself. "I must speak to uncle about it."

She left the window, taking the flowers with her. She did not guess that at a distance, half-hidden by an elm, an eager youth was watching the window. It was Arthur Augustus, and he heaved a deep sigh as the girl put the flowers away. His gift had been accepted.

D'Arcy would have gazed up at the stars had there been any visible, like a true lover, but, unfortunately, it was broad daylight. So he sighed, and sighed again, and then went into the School House for breakfast.

Miss Courtney was carrying the bouquet in her hand when she came down to breakfast. Dr. Holmes looked at it in surprise.

"What lovely flowers!" he remarked.

"Are they not?" said Ethel. "And I found them on my window-sill."

"You found them where?" asked the Head of St. Jim's, in amazement.

The girl laughed.

"On my window-sill, with this note attached."

Dr. Holmes adjusted his pince-nez and read the note.

"Dear me! An act of extreme politeness on the part of one of the boys, I suppose," he remarked. "A token of welcome to the school, Ethel."

"And a very grateful one," said Miss Courtney. "I am very pleased."

Those words would have made D'Arcy happy if he could only have heard them. As a matter of fact, he was not very happy at that moment. Blake and Herries and the Terrible Three met him as he came in from breakfast, and Blake slapped him on the shoulder.

"I say, what do you mean by slithering off before any of us were up?" he demanded. "Thought you had taken to sleep-walking, or something."

"Don't be so extremely wuff, Blake," remonstrated Arthur Augustus. "You administrah a shock to my beastlay system, you know, with those beastlay thumps. I have been out."

"Your nose is very red," said Blake mercilessly. "I heard you sneezing in the night. You've caught cold."

"That is of no consequence."

"Isn't it? You'll spread it through our study," said Blake. "Look here, you'd better go to Study No. 10 and chum in with Tom Merry till your cold is gone."

"Not much," said Tom Merry.

"Now, don't be selfish, Merry. You know it would be beastly uncomfortable if I caught Gussy's cold," said Blake.

"I weally haven't a cold," said D'Arcy. "I got wathah wet last night, that was all. I am weally all right."

D'Arcy only nibbled at his breakfast. Tom Merry looked across at him from the Shell table, and noted how little he ate.

"He's got it bad, Monty," Tom Merry remarked. "He's

only eaten half a slice, and now he's moaning again. Poor old Gussy!"

"Silly young ass!" said Lowther.

"Oh, I don't know! What's the odds, so long as you're happy? I suppose he's bappy," said Tom Merry sagely. "I sympathise with Gussy."

Perhaps Arthur Augustus scented out Tom Merry's sympathy. After the first lesson that morning he ran Tom Merry down in the Hall, with an expression of earnestness upon his face which showed that he had something serious to say.

"Stop a minute, pway, Tom Mewwy! I should like to speak to you, if you're not in a huwwy," said Arthur Augustus diffidently.

"Certainly!" said Tom. "I've five minutes to spare, if you like."

"Thank you, Mewwy! I—I—"

D'Arcy coloured and paused. He looked round nervously to make sure that no one was within hearing, as if he were about to impart some secret of fearful importance. Tom Merry suppressed a smile.

"Go on, Gussy! What's the row?" he asked.

"Mewwy, you are a decent chap—I always liked you," said D'Arcy hesitatingly.

"Thank you!" said Tom demurely. "I'm very lovable, I believe. I am very fond of myself, in fact. Go on!"

"Don't wot, Mewwy. This is a sewious mattah. I—I am goin' to tell you a gweat secwet, because—because I want you to help me."

"Command me!" said Tom Merry, as grave as a judge.

"I—I—" said Arthur Augustus lucidly.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow," he said. "Say that again, Gussy."

"I—I—I'm in love, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, turning scarlet.

"That's all right," said Tom comfortingly. "I've been there myself. I had a desperate love affair when I was twelve, and—"

"Oh, pway be sewious! I am confidin' to you," said D'Arcy, "because Blake and Hewwies are so wuff, and lackin' in the finer sensibilities."

Tom Merry made a profound bow.

"That's nice of you, D'Arcy. I've got lots of the finer sensibilities. I've got 'em by the bushel. You can rely upon me."

"Will you help me, Mewwy?"

"What can I do? You don't want me to help you carry off the fair dame, like young Lochinvar, do you? But first of all, who is it? Mary, the housemaid?"

D'Arcy gave him a reproachful look.

Tom Merry's heart softened. It was usually softened very easily. He became grave, and gave D'Arcy a gentle tap on the shoulder.

"Excuse my little jokes, old chap. That's all right. I know whom you mean, and she's a stunning girl; but—but you're a little ass, you know."

"I know I am," said D'Arcy—"I know I am, Tom Mewwy; but I—I can't help it. After all, three years is not much, and she's not so much oldah than I am."

"That's so," said Tom Merry, trying to keep grave.

"But what can I do for you, Gussy?"

"I—I want to send her a note."

BOGEY!



"A note! You can't—you mustn't—you—"

"Then you won't take it for me?"

Tom Merry gave a jump.

"Take her a note from you! My hat! You must be off your rocker!"

"I am not off my wockah!" said D'Arcy. "If you refuse to assist me in this mattah, I must do without it, that's all. Oh, Tom Mewwy, if you only knew—"

"I do know!" said Tom Merry. "Kids of your age"—Tom Merry spoke as if he had himself reached the honoured age of Methuselah—"kids of your age often suffer like this, and it's been known to last as long as a week—"

"A week! Ah, I shall adore her for ever and a day!" murmured D'Arcy.

"My hat! If you're going to talk poetry I'm done!" said Tom Merry. "About that note—I think you're an ass, but if you've made up your mind—"

"I have made up my mind," said Arthur Augustus. "I am not the fellah to chop and change, Tom Mewwy! My Fate is fixed for the west of my life—"

"Rats! I mean, I'll speak to you about it after lessons. I must buzz off now, or Linton will be on my track!"

And Tom Merry "buzzed" off.

He left Arthur Augustus dreaming and sighing, and he continued to do so until Blake, who had been searching for him, seized him, and marched him off to the class-room.

Herr Schneider was taking the Fourth Form in German, and he looked at the two as they came in last, but made no remark.

D'Arcy was very inattentive during the lesson. That was underiable, and the German master, who did not know the cause of it, was annoyed. He was down upon the swell of the School House several times, but D'Arcy hardly noticed it.

Presently the class was told to write out the conjugation of a difficult verb, and there was a scratching of pens and wrinkling of youthful brows. D'Arcy was busy writing, and the German master's eye was upon him.

"Gif me your baper, ain't it, Blake," said Herr Schneider.

Blake handed him his paper, and the German master glanced over it.

"Ich werde gelobt, I am praised, du wirst gelobt, er wird gelobt. Tat is goot. Give me your baper, D'Arcy!"

D'Arcy seemed to wake up out of a dream.

"I beg your pardon, sir! Did you speak to me?"

"Ja, mein poy!" exclaimed Herr Schneider angrily. "I did speak to you, ain't it? I say gif me your exercise after."

"I—I—I—"

"Gif me tat baper at vunce, after!"

Arthur Augustus, blushing crimson, handed over the sheet. The German master looked at it, and adjusted his spectacles, and looked at it again.

"Mein Gott!" he ejaculated. "Vat is all tat after pefore?"

For this is what the absent-minded Gussy had written:

"Ich liebe dich (I love you), ich liebe dich, ich liebe dich, ich leibe dich, ich liebe dich," and so on to the end of the page.

"Ich liebe dich," said Herr Schneider aloud, glaring at D'Arcy. "Is tat te conjugation of te passive verb tat I gif you, D'Arcy? Vat does tat mean pefore?"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Figgins to Kerr. "Gussy has done it this time!"

"If you please, sir," said D'Arcy, as red as fire, with the eyes of the whole class upon him. "If you please, I—I was absent-minded, and I—I—"

"Fery goot!" said Herr Schneider grimly. "Den you vill write out te whole of te conjugations of six German verbs and bring tem to me tis evening, D'Arcy, vich vill perhaps teach you not to be absent-minded in class pefore again after. Ve vill go on."

And Gussy, crushed more by the discovery than by the heavy imposition, sat looking flushed and woeful.

"I say, Gussy," exclaimed Kerr, as the class filed out at last, "I've got something to say to you—something important!"

Arthur Augustus obligingly stopped.

"What is it?" he asked, as Kerr came mysteriously closer.

"You won't let it go any farther?" asked Kerr anxiously.

"Certainly not, deah boy!"

"Come nearer and I'll whisper." Kerr put his lips close to D'Arcy's ear, and whispered, "I say Gussy, I—I—I—I—Ich liebe dich!"

And Kerr darted off, leaving Arthur Augustus standing, the picture of wrath.

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CHAPTER 8.

A Friend in Need!

"COMING down to the footer, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, passing the door of Study No. 6 after school and looking in.

Arthur Augustus was there, carefully polishing a silk hat with a velvet pad, and bestowing a really loving care upon his headgear.

Gussy looked up and shook his head.

"No, not to-day, Tom Mewwy," he said. "I weally cannot think of football now. I am too busily engaged othahwise."

"Engaged—how? Polishing a beastly old topper?" said Tom Merry.

"This is not a beastlay old toppah!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "It is a new toppah I have just weceived by parcel post frow my hattah!"

"I beg its pardon!" said Tom Merry. "But you know



The cloaked figure, which D'Arcy supposed to be that of Miss Gussy, squirmed violently under the pressure, and at last

you mustn't neglect the footer if you want to play in the House match when it comes off."

"I weally care vewy little about it, Mewwy. Besides, I have to go out now. I am goin' ovah to Wayland on important business."

Tom Merry looked at him curiously.

But D'Arcy's attention had returned wholly to the brushing of the silk topper, and Tom went on his way, with a football under his arm and a thoughtful expression upon his sunny face.

He met Blake in the quad.

"What is Gussy going over to Wayland for?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know," said Blake. "He told me he was going, that's all. Perhaps it's for another bouquet, the young ass. Come down to the footer."

They went down to the footer. A little later they saw D'Arcy wheeling his bicycle down to the gates. He looked as neat as a new pin and there was a rose in his button-hole.

D'Arcy mounted at the gate, and, careless of the eyes upon him, pedalled away up the road, and took the turning which led to Wayland. Wayland was the nearest town to St. Jim's, and offered more facilities for shopping than the village of Rylcombe.

The dusk was falling thickly when D'Arcy jumped off his bike outside a large stationer's shop in Wayland, and entered it. He was about half an hour in the stationer's shop, and when he came out he went into the florist's, where he made another purchase.

It was dark now, and D'Arcy lighted up before he mounted his machine. Then he rode out of Wayland, and took the dusky road home to St. Jim's.

It was a dull night, with a gathering mist over the



...ney, advanced and seized his hand in a grip of iron. D'Arcy
...moment two forms sid up behind him!

fields. Arthur Augustus, satisfied with his purchase, whatever it was, pedalled on cheerfully enough. Naturally, as he rode through the gloom he was thinking more about a certain pair of blue eyes than about the road he was travelling, and, equally naturally, he came to grief.

There was a sudden yell in advance of him. D'Arcy, dreaming in the saddle, had not noticed that there were pedestrians on the road before him, and they, having their backs to him, had not observed his light. He overtook them, and ran right into three walkers, and a chorus of angry exclamations followed.

D'Arcy's machine twisted round, and the swell of St. Jim's tumbled off, and sat in a puddle. The bicycle lay down beside him, with the front wheel turned inwards. Three wrathful forms picked themselves up from the mud

and surrounded D'Arcy, and, to his horror, he recognised their voices.

"What's all this 'ere?" demanded the voice of Master Pilcher. "What a blessed cheek to run right into a gentleman from behind without ringing a blessed bell!"

"My eye—rather!" said Craggs. "The cheek of it!"

"Thinks the blessed road belongs to him!" said Grimes.

"Who is the jossler?"

"Why, bless me, if it ain't young Hopeful from the school!"

"D'Arcy, by George!"

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet. He had had rather a shock, and he stood a little unsteadily.

"I weally beg your pardon!" he exclaimed. "It was my fault. I should have wung my beastlay bell, you know."

"I think you should, you ass!" was Pilcher's uncompromising reply.

"I beg your pardon sincerely," said D'Arcy. "I hope I have not hurt you."

"But you have," said Pilcher. "You've nearly broken my back and spoiled my coat, which cost five guineas at my West End tailor's."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Craggs and Grimes.

"I am weally sowwy," said D'Arcy, greatly distressed. "It was all my fault. I shall be quite willin' to pay for any damage done."

"Who wants your tin?" said Pilcher rudely. "We're going to give you a lesson. Mates, it's dangerous for a cyclist to ride about with his eyes shut, and run into harmless pedestrians, ain't it?"

"Shocking!" said Grimes.

"For his own sake he must be taught a lesson," said the generous Pilcher. "We'll teach him one. You've got that cord, ain't you, Craggy?"

"Yes. What the dickens do you want with a cord, Pilcher?"

"Nothing. Only to tie this merchant to his bike, and leave him here till somebody comes along," said Pilcher, with a chuckle.

"Weally, I wufuse to submit to anythin' of the kind!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I shall be late for calling-over at the coll, and—"

"You should have thought of that before you ran into me, dislocated my spine, and spoiled my five-guinea coat," said Pilcher. "Shove him on the jigger, kids!"

Arthur Augustus struggled in vain. He was forced to sit upon the upturned bicycle on the bank by the roadside, and his wrists and ankles were securely fastened to the machine. He remained perfectly helpless, and the three young rascals surveyed him with grins of satisfaction.

"Are you quite comfortable, Adolphus?" said Pilcher.

"No," said D'Arcy, "I am not at all comfy. I insist upon bein' immediately weleased fwm this absurd position. I weward you as beastlay wuffians!"

"We'll come and have a look at you presently, perhaps," said Pilcher, with a wink at his companions. "Perhaps in three or four hours. Come along, mates!"

"Pway do not go and leave me in this widiculous position. I appeal to you as gentlemen."

Apparently they were not gentlemen. Pilcher & Co. disappeared in the mist, taking the bouquet with them.

"We'll leave him there for ten minutes or so," murmured Pilcher. "That will be enough to give him a lesson!"

And Grimes and Craggs chuckled assent.

D'Arcy, ignorant of the real intentions of the village jokers, fully believed that he was abandoned to the chance of someone passing. It was cold and damp, and the time was passing, and the fear of being locked out at St. Jim's worried him.

"My word!" murmured D'Arcy. "Whatevah shall I do? I cannot welease myself, and those feakful wuffians are now gone. It is a beastlay and weally widiculous position! I wish someone would pass."

He wriggled in his bonds in vain. He hurt himself considerably in the attempt to get loose, and had to give it up. Then he shouted for help. But the road was a lonely one, and no one was likely to hear.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

The sound of hoofbeats on the hard road was a welcome one to D'Arcy's ears. A horseman was coming along at a trot from the direction of Wayland. D'Arcy shouted again, with renewed energy.

A dim form loomed up in the gloom. A horseman came to a halt in the road and peered towards the unhappy swell of St. Jim's.

"Hallo! Who's that? Somebody hurt?"

It was a strong and pleasant young voice. The horseman jumped to the ground and came towards D'Arcy.

"Thank goodness!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Pway

release me, my deah sir! I have been tied up to my bicycle by a set of howwid wuffians!"

"By Jove!" said the young man, bending over D'Arcy. "You are in a fix and no mistake. I'll have you out of that in a jiffy!"

And he opened a pocket-knife.

"Thank you vevy much," said Arthur Augustus. "You are weally a fwiend in need. I am vevy gwateful for your assistance!"

He staggered up as the young man severed his bonds. The stranger lent him a helping hand, and then lifted up his bike for him. He looked at D'Arcy curiously in the light of the lamp.

"Haven't I seen you before somewhere?" he asked. "I think you belong to St. Jim's?"

"Yaas, wathah! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, sir."

"Ah, I thought so! I remember seeing you when I called upon Dr. Holmes last night," said the young man. "I dare say you've heard my name—Frank Lorraine."

"Captain Lowwaine!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Yaas, I wemembah your featuahs now, my deah sir. How vevvy fortunate that you happened to be passing on this woad, Captain Lowwaine!"

The young man laughed.

"Yes, wasn't it? And as I happen to be going to the school, I shall be able to keep with you in case you should fall in with those fearful ruffians again."

"Yaas, wathah! You are weally vevvy kind, sir."

"Not at all. Jump on your machine."

The machine had not been damaged. D'Arcy mounted, and Captain Lorraine jumped into the saddle. A short distance down the road they passed the village trio, who were just thinking of returning.

"Hallo! That merchant's got loose," said Pilcher, as the

cyclist and the horseman passed. "Well, he's had his lesson! I hope it will do him good!"

"You were goin' to the school, Captain Lowwaine?" D'Arcy remarked presently, wondering what the young man was going to St. Jim's for.

"Yes, to see Dr. Holmes," said Lorraine, smiling. "I believe there has been a new arrival at the school, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah! You mean Miss Courtney?"

"Yes. And here we are at St. Jim's."

The school loomed up from the mist. They parted, with a hearty handshake from the captain, and D'Arcy wheeled his bicycle away. He put it up, and, taking the precious packet from his pocket, went up into Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 9.

The Rendezvous.

TOM MERRY was in Study No. 6, having tea with Blake and Herries, when Arthur Augustus came in. The three of them looked round at the swell of St. Jim's as he laid down the packet he had brought home with him.

"Hallo! What have you got there, Gussy?" asked Tom. "What about that note? I came in to see you about it, and I've stopped to tea."

"I am going to write it," said Arthur Augustus. "I have been to Wayland to fetch the necessawy matwials."

"The what?" asked Tom Merry.

D'Arcy opened the packet. The juniors looked in amazed admiration at the contents as they were turned out. Beautiful, rose-coloured notepaper, with gilt edges and sweetly scented and delicate little envelopes that seemed specially designed to enclose billets-doux.

"My aunt!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy is doing this thing in style! Blake, I forbid you to laugh!"

"I've swallowed something!" said Blake, coughing. "Gussy, I commend your taste! Excuse my choking. I really can't help it."

"I wegard you as wude!" said D'Arcy. "It is weally too bad to be compelled to share my quartsahs with you two wuff boundahs. I ought to have a studdy to myself."

"You ought to have a padded cell to yourself, you mean," said Herries.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Blake. "I forgot. There's a note for you, Gussy."

D'Arcy turned red and gave a jump.

"A note for me!" he exclaimed eagerly. "Where?"

Blake jerked his thumb towards the mantelpiece.

"I put it there. I found it on the table when I came in. It's on the mantelpiece, unless it's fallen into the fire, old fellow."

Arthur Augustus dashed towards the mantelpiece. Sure enough there was the note. It was a small envelope of a pale-blue colour, and D'Arcy knew that it was the stationery used by Mrs. Holmes. His heart beat fast.

The juniors were looking at him curiously. D'Arcy took the letter, and, unconscious of the gaze bent upon him, pressed it to his lips. Then he turned crimson and dashed out of the study with it in his hand.

Tom Merry gave a whistle.

"What's the matter now? Is he off his giddy onion?"

Blake chuckled. He understood.

"That note came from the Head's house," he explained. "You can tell that by the envelope. I suppose it's an invitation to tea from Mrs. Holmes, but that young ass has jumped to the conclusion that it's from somebody else."

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha! Poor old Gussy!"

Heedless of comments, D'Arcy had rushed off with the precious note, to read it alone, far away from curious eyes and scoffing tongues. He dashed out into the quadrangle, but it was too dark to read the epistle there. He struck a match, and the wind blew it out. Then he got behind a corner of the gymnasium where he was sheltered from the wind, and struck another vesta, which burned this time.

In the glimmer of the match he read the superscription: "A. A. D'Arcy, Esq."

He thrilled at the sight of it. It was not Mrs. Holmes' writing. The Head's wife sometimes asked the juniors to tea on state occasions, and D'Arcy had several times been so honoured; but this was not a mere invitation to Dr. Holmes' tea table. It was written on Mrs. Holmes' stationery, and therefore came from the Head's house. From whom, if not from the adored one?

And it was not addressed to Master D'Arcy, either. "A. A. D'Arcy, Esq." Evidently the fair writer regarded him, not as a mere junior, but as a person quite grown up. D'Arcy was inclined to weep with joy, but he didn't. He opened the letter instead.

He struck another match. To his surprise the note inside

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was not of the same paper as the envelope. It was a line in pencil on ordinary cheap, white paper. That was very curious, but, after all, the note might have been written in haste.

D'Arcy's eyes devoured the line. The match burned down to his fingers unnoticed.

"I shall be in the garden at eight o'clock, near the fountain. Many thanks for flowers."

There was no signature; but there was no doubt as to whom the letter had been written by. If the envelope were not enough to prove it, there were the thanks for the flowers.

"Oh, I am so happy!" murmured D'Arcy tremulously. "At eight o'clock. Then I have nearly half an hour to get ready. Deah Miss Courtney! How kind of her! She guessed whom the flowers were from. She knows—she knows that I adore her. She knows that I— Ow! Wow!"

The match had burnt down to his fingers, and D'Arcy gave a yelp of pain as he dropped it. He sucked his finger and thumb ruefully.

"How extremely howwid!" He placed the note in his waistcoat pocket, nearest his heart. Then he slowly took his way back to the School House, still sucking his finger.

Loud voices and the trampling of feet were proceeding from Study No. 6 as the swell of the School House approached it. D'Arcy gave a sniff of disgust as he looked in and saw Tom Merry engaged in fencing with Blake, Herries acting as umpire.

"Got you!" yelled Blake, making a sudden dive at Tom Merry.

Tom darted backwards and parried the lunge, and came with a bump against D'Arcy as he entered the study.

"Hallo!" said Tom, looking round. "I didn't see you, Gussy."

"You are a clumsy ass!" said Arthur Augustus. "I weally cannot stand this feahful wow in this study. Will you fellows go along to Tom Mewwy's study?"

"What for?" asked Blake. "Do you want the whole blessed room to yourself?"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway oblige me, deah boys!"

"Oh, come along!" said Blake. "It's no good arguing with Gussy when he looks like a dying duck. Let's clear."

And the three juniors marched off to Tom Merry's study, leaving the swell of the School House in sole possession of Study No. 6.

Left alone, D'Arcy proceeded to cover the study with garments which he pulled out of various receptacles, and dressed himself with great care.

He would probably have spent a couple of hours upon that important matter, but he was afraid of hearing the clock strike, and he dared not. But he was really exquisitely dressed in the space of twenty minutes, with gleaming boots, nicely creased trousers, polished silk hat, high collar, and gorgeous waistcoat, nor forgetting the monocle.

"I weally think I look passable," murmured D'Arcy, surveying himself in the glass. "But, oh, I am so unworthy of her! But then, ewevy chap in the world is unworthy of her, as a mattah of fact, so I must not be discouraged."

He left the study, pulling on his gloves. He slipped out of the School House without attracting notice, and hurried towards the Head's garden.

The garden was private ground. Some of the Sixth Form sometimes walked there, but the Lower Forms were barred. The place was really awfully select. But D'Arcy did not think of that as he opened the gate and went in.

The hour began to strike from the clock tower. D'Arcy started and hastened his footsteps. It would be awful to be late for an appointment with a lady. He hurried on towards the fountain, and reached it ere the eighth stroke had boomed out from the tower.

He stopped at the fountain. The water was splashing in the basin. The place was gloomy and lonely. No one was in sight.

Arthur Augustus breathed a sigh of relief. He was first on the spot—first to keep the appointment. That was something to be grateful for.

He waited patiently. There was a footstep on the gravel path. The gloom was thick, and, in spite of his eyeglass, D'Arcy could not see much. But he made out the sound of a skirt swishing, and a female form loomed up before him.

"Miss Courtney!"

He murmured the words in a tone of ecstasy. The figure stopped, and a hand appeared from under the cloak, held out to shake. Arthur Augustus was bowing low over his silk hat. D'Arcy had hardly dared to hope for such an honour. He trembled with happiness as he clasped that

gentle hand. Then he gave an involuntary start of amazement.

The hand had closed upon his with an iron grip. Surely no girl, especially a girl like Miss Courtney, ever gripped a hand like that.

Arthur Augustus gave an involuntary wriggle. There was the sound of a faint chuckle from the darkness. It reached the ears of the swell of the School House, and he gave a jump.

"There is—is someone—"

"Oh, Gussy!" murmured the cloaked figure.

D'Arcy strove to free his hand.

"You are—you are not Miss Courtney! Go away at once!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"I beg of you to release my hand! Pway go at once, whoever you are! This is a vevy wrong deception, you wude person! Pway release me!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"I insist upon bein' immediately released!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly, as the iron grip on his hand tightened, in spite of his effort to release it. "Pway weleasome, whoevah you are! You must go away at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I mean— Oh, Gussy, ich liebe dich!"

Arthur Augustus started violently.

"Who—who—who are you?" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Invisible hands in the darkness laid hold of the swell of St. Jim's. He was lifted off his feet, and plumped down on the stone steps of the fountain. His silk hat was tilted over his eyes, and a wet hand smeared across his classic features. A chuckle floated back from the darkness, with a sound of retreating footsteps.

D'Arcy staggered to his feet.

He gazed wildly round him. Who was it that had met him there by the fountain—who had written that note? Evidently it was not Miss Courtney.

The truth rushed upon D'Arcy's mind that he had been done.

With feelings too deep for words, he set his silk hat straight, and made his way out of the garden. As he left it, three forms loomed indistinctly in the gloom near him. A voice came to his ears.

"You did that jolly well, Kerr!"

D'Arcy comprehended.

"Figgins & Co.," he murmured. "That—that girl was Kerr! The howwid, howwid boundahs! They must have put that note in my study! The beasts! They must have got an envelope from the Head's House somehow. The bwutes! That accounts for the paper bein' different. The wottahs! I will give Figgins a feahful thwashin' for this!"

Figgins & Co. had disappeared into the darkness. Arthur Augustus went on to the School House. He was in a wrathful and indignant mood, and his ruffled temper was not soothed by his reception in the House.

Gore met him as he went in and stared at him, and uttered a yell of laughter.

D'Arcy gave him an indignant glare, and strode on. In the passage he met Mellish, who shrieked at the sight of him. Walsh looked out of his study and yelled.

Arthur Augustus was amazed.

It was not likely that the School House boys knew the joke Figgins & Co. had played on him. Why they screamed with laughter at the sight of him was past his comprehension.

He hurried into Study No. 6. It was empty, and he went on to Tom Merry's study to find his chums. The Terrible Three were all there, with Blake and Herries. They stared at D'Arcy as he entered, and a yell of laughter went up.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy glared at them in speechless indignation.

"Where have you been?" gasped Tom Merry. "What have you been doing?"

"Where did you get that face?" yelled Lowther.

"My face! What's the mattah with my face?" demanded D'Arcy, remembering the wet hands that had smeared across his features in the darkness of the garden.

"Ha, ha, ha! Don't ask me! Look at it!"

Arthur Augustus rushed to the glass.

He gazed at his reflection with horror. His face presented a brilliant emerald appearance. The hand that had smeared over his countenance had evidently been full of green paint.

"Howwid! Deah me! Wnat a beastlay outwage!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus rushed away to get the paint cleaned off, followed by a yell of laughter, and greeted in the same way by everyone he passed.

It was a long time before the green paint all came off his face, and when he was clean once more his face presented a scrubbed and boiled appearance.

But to all the inquiries of his chums D'Arcy refused a single word of explanation. He was not likely to tell the story of the rendezvous in Dr. Holmes' garden, and the little joke of Figgins & Co.

CHAPTER 10.

Tom Merry Takes a Message.

TOM MERRY came along the passage to Study No. 6 and looked in. It was the day after the misadventure of Arthur Augustus in the Head's garden, and morning lessons were over.

Arthur Augustus was alone in the study. Blake and Herries were out, and Gussy had the place to himself. He was seated at the table, his left elbow resting upon it, his chin supported by his hand.

A pen was in his right hand, and he was chewing the handle. On the table and on the floor were dozens of sheets of spoiled notepaper.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

Arthur Augustus looked up with a start.

"Aw! You startled me, Tom Mewwy," he said. "I—I was thinkin'!"

"Have you had your dinner?"

"Dinner!" said D'Arcy vaguely. "N-no, I don't think so. No!"

"That's why you're gnawing that pen handle, I suppose? I prefer beef and potatoes myself," Tom Merry remarked. "However, everyone to his taste. Have you finished that note?"

"No; I have not quite finished it yet, Merry."

"If you take my advice you won't. It's a mug's idea," said Tom Merry, with his usual frankness. "If you've made up your mind, though, I'll take the note, as I said I would."

"That's vewy good of you, Mewwy. I have made up my mind, as I told you. I shall be extremely obliged to you if you will take the note."

"Well, get it finished, then," said Tom Merry. "I'll have a go at this punching-ball while I am waiting."

D'Arcy began to scribble, and Tom Merry began to punish the punching-ball, but in a few minutes the swell of the School House tore up another sheet and looked at Tom Merry with a troubled expression.

"I say, Mewwy, would you mind keepin' quiet for a few minutes while I wite this letter?" he asked.

"Oh, certainly!" said Tom, sitting down. "I'll whistle."

"Pway do not whistle! You will distwact my thoughts."

"Oh, go on, kid, and get finished, then!"

Tom resigned himself to his fate. Arthur Augustus went on writing, and Tom shifted from side to side as the minutes crawled by. But he did not speak.

Sheet after sheet joined those already on the floor.

Arthur Augustus had brought a goodly supply of stationery from Wayland, but he bade fair to get through it before he had written a note to his satisfaction.

At last, however, the letter was written, and D'Arcy, with a deep sigh, enclosed it in an envelope and sealed it.

Tom Merry jumped up with an exclamation of relief.

"Done at last! Thank goodness! You won't find me playing postman again in a hurry. Hand it over, Adolphus."

D'Arcy handed the letter to Tom Merry gingerly, as if he was not quite willing to part with it, after all.

"You'll take care to place it only in Miss Courtney's hands, Tom Merry?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, of course, I will. She always walks in the garden about this time, and I am sure of finding her there."

"Mind that no othah person sees you give her the lettah, won't you?"

"Of course. You can trust me, Gussy."

"Thank you, Mewwy," said Gussy, with a deep sigh. "I know I can. You are a true friend. But—but wait a minute," he added, as Tom Merry was leaving the study.

The hero of the Shell turned back inquiringly.

"Well, what's the trouble now?" he asked resignedly.

"I—I'm not quite satisfied with that lettah, on second thoughts," said D'Arcy hesitatingly. "I—I weally think I had better wite it ovah again. Wait while I—"

"Blessed if I do!" said Tom Merry. "I've waited long enough, and you've written letters enough, too, I think. I'm off!"

And Tom Merry left the study and went down the stairs in a twinkling by the simple expedient of sitting on the broad banisters and sliding down.

Arthur Augustus rushed into the passage after him, but he was gone.

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"Tom Mewwy! Tom Mewwy! Pway bwing that back! Deah me—he's gone! Well, I—I suppose I could not weally have impwoved upon it vewy much," murmured Arthur Augustus, as he returned into his study and began to pick up his unsuccessful attempts. "It is so extremely difficult to know exactly what to say in such a case."

Tom Merry, with the note in his pocket, crossed the quadrangle. He slipped into Dr. Holmes' garden without being observed, and looked round for Miss Courtney.

He caught sight of the girl in the distance and walked up to her.

Tom Merry raised his cap.

"Please excuse me, Miss Courtney," he said. "I—I am not really allowed to come here, but I have a note for you."

Miss Courtney looked surprised.

"A note for me?" she said inquiringly. "Indeed—"

"Yes, and I think I am to wait for an answer."

Tom Merry handed the note to the girl and then turned away his head and seemed to be deeply interested in watching some pigeons at a distance. But he could not help keeping the corner of his eye, as it were, surreptitiously on Ethel Courtney's face.

The girl opened the letter, with an expression of wonder. The delicate, rose-coloured paper and the gilt edges naturally excited her curiosity. But as her eyes dwelt upon the communication wonder changed to absolute amazement.

The letter of the lovelorn swell of the School House ran as follows:

"Dear and Respected Miss Courtney,—I feel that you will regard this letter, and the request I am about to make, as fearfully impertinent. Perhaps it is so. But, oh, dear Miss Courtney—if you knew how the writer of this humble letter worships the ground you tread—oh, you would forgive him for his presumption.

"I know you are older than I am. But since I have been in love, I have felt ever so much older, and really, you do not look very old, dear Miss Courtney!"

"Of course, I know I have no chance at present. But if you would only wait for me, I should be happy; and in a few years' time I shall be leaving Oxford, and then I can speak to your respected governor on the subject.

"Do not be angry. I cannot tell you how much I adore and respect you, dear Miss Courtney. If you would only consent to see me, I would try to do so. If not, pray forgive your humble worshipper,

"ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY."

Tom Merry, as we said, could not resist the temptation to keep the corner of his eye on Miss Courtney's face. That face was very sweet, but it was very expressive. Wonder and amazement gave way to another feeling; the dimples deepened, and the girl, in spite of herself, broke into a little musical laugh.

"Dear me!" murmured Miss Courtney. "How very surprising! I—I am very sorry!" She laughed again a little. "So you are to wait for an answer, Merry?"

"Yes, Miss Courtney," said Tom Merry demurely.

"Will you come back in a few minutes for the answer, Merry?"

"Certainly, Miss Courtney." And Tom raised his cap again, and turned away.

He had caught sight of Captain Lorraine, and guessed how matters stood in that direction.

The captain came down the garden and joined Miss Courtney. He looked at her curiously, seeing at once that something had happened.

"What is the matter, Ethel?"

She gave him Arthur Augustus' note, with a slight smile. The captain read it through, with a puzzled look, and smiled, too.

"Poor little chap! That note was written in deadly earnest, Ethel, and you must let the young beggar down lightly."

"I am glad you say so, Frank," said Miss Courtney. "That is what I was thinking myself. It is utterly absurd, but I would not hurt his feelings for worlds. I think I had better see him and speak to him."

Captain Lorraine nodded and strode away.

Tom Merry came up the path a few minutes later. The girl had made up her mind.

"Tell D'Arcy that I will see him," she said abruptly. "Tell him to come here, Merry, now. I want to speak to him seriously!"

Tom thought he understood, and he nodded.

"I'll give him your message, Miss Courtney."

And the hero of the Shell retired, and hurried back to the School House to deliver her message.

CHAPTER 11.

The End of the Romance.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS was waiting in Study No. 6 in feverish impatience.

He walked to and fro, thrusting his hands into his pockets and taking them out again, and occasionally looking at himself in the glass.

He gave an exclamation of relief as Tom Merry appeared in the doorway.

"Mewwy! What a feahful time you've been! Have you given her the note?"

"Yes, Gussy, I handed it over right enough."

"Vewy many thanks. What did she say? How did she look? Did she think it was a feahful cheek?" asked Arthur Augustus anxiously.

"She will see you if you go to Dr. Holmes' garden," replied Tom.

"Honah bwight?" asked D'Arcy, made suspicious by his previous night's adventure.

"Of course. You don't think I'd take you in, do you, Gussy? You'd better cut off at once, or you won't have time before lessons."

D'Arcy was feverishly polishing his silk hat.

"Do I—do I look all right, Tom Mewwy?"

"Look all right? You look simply ripping!" said the hero of the Shell, trying to keep grave, but almost failing. "Your necktie might be a little more to the right—just a trifle. That's perfect! There's a speck on your waistcoat—that's right, it's gone now. Gussy, old man, you look a regular coughdrop! Take my advice and cut off before your beauty fades!"

"Thank you, Tom Mewwy, I will go at once! Oh deah, theah is no scent on my handkerchief! Give me that bottle—just a little. You—you ass, I didn't say empty the beastlay bottle on it. That will do. I'll wun off now!"

And Arthur Augustus ran off.

When he reached the gate giving admittance to the sacred domain, he halted, and his heart beat so fast that he could hardly go on. It was sheer nervousness.

To actually face Miss Courtney was a terrible strain on his courage. To write her a note was one thing—but to meet her—to face the clear glance of those calm, blue eyes! D'Arcy felt his heart sink and sink, till it seemed to find a resting-place somewhere in the soles of his boots.

He felt strongly inclined to turn and bolt. But the lady was waiting for him. The beautiful Miss Courtney was actually waiting for him—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy! It was impossible not to keep the appointment.

D'Arcy opened the gate and passed through. He halted in the cover of the evergreens to mop his brow, which was streaming with perspiration. It was a cold winter's day, but D'Arcy's brow was wet as with the rain. He mopped it, and drew a deep breath. Then, taking his courage in both hands, as it were, he walked on.

"Master D'Arcy!"

That sweet voice—it went through him like an icicle! He dared not raise his eyes from the ground. His hand went mechanically to his hat, and he raised it and bowed his best bow, but his eyes simply could not rise to Miss Courtney's face. His complexion went red and white and red again.

"I have been waiting for you!"

D'Arcy stammered something unintelligible. He settled his hat on his head again, and tried to raise his eyes. But it was of no use; they were glued to the ground.

A smile glided over Miss Courtney's face. In his dismay

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and confusion D'Arcy looked very handsome and boyish, and she was sorry for him. He was so evidently in earnest, and at the same time was so evidently too young to understand!

"Won't you sit down?"

D'Arcy found his voice at last. He sat down limply upon the garden-seat among the rhododendrons, and stole a glance at Miss Courtney.

"Th-th-thank you, Miss Courtney!" he stammered.

The girl's face was very grave and kind now.

"You wrote me a note," she said. "You asked to see me. You had something to tell me?"

The swell of St. Jim's shifted uncomfortably, his face the colour of a beetroot.

He had had wild ideas of telling Ethel Courtney all—of some romantic sort of a speech he would have made; but now that he was in her presence he could no more have made a speech than he could have flown. He murmured something unintelligible, and then his lips closed again.

"You said in your letter," Miss Courtney went on, "that you were"—she hesitated for a moment—"that you were fond of me, D'Arcy."

"Oh, Miss Courtney!"

D'Arcy could not say anything but that, but there was a world of woe in his tone.

"My dear boy," said Miss Courtney—the word "boy" came like the thrust of a dagger to the unfortunate swell of the School House—"my dear boy, I am very proud to—to have gained your regard. I hope you will always regard me with affection, as if I were your own sister."

D'Arcy seemed to swallow something.

That was not exactly what he wanted Miss Courtney to say.

"But as it is, D'Arcy, I am sure you will listen to what I am going to say, and try to do as I wish—"

"Anything, Miss Courtney!" murmured D'Arcy.

"Then you will dismiss these foolish ideas completely from your mind—"

"Oh!"

"In a few weeks you will forget all about this matter—"

"I—I—I promise to twy."

"Very well. That will do," said Miss Courtney. "I know I can rely upon your honour, D'Arcy, and I have your word now."

"Yaas, wathah, Miss Courtney; but—but—but—"

"But what, D'Arcy?"

"But I shan't be a boy always, you know!" blurted out D'Arcy. "And—and some day—"

"My dear lad, you must not think of such things. It is foolish, as I have told you; and it is really wrong, as I am engaged to Captain Lorraine."

The unfortunate Gussy gave a jump.

"En-en-enga-engaged!" he stammered.

"Certainly—to Captain Lorraine, whom you know. You like him, I think."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "He's an awfully decent chap! He got me out of a beastlay fix the othah night. He's a vewy decent fellow."

"You will remember your promise, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, Miss Courtney," said D'Arcy humbly.

Miss Courtney gave the swell of St. Jim's her hand. He took it carefully, as if it had been some precious and fragile piece of porcelain.

"I—I believe I have been wathah an ass, Miss Courtney," said D'Arcy, in a low voice. "But—but I will wemebah my pwomise, and—and I shall always wegard you with the most pwofound respect, Miss Courtney."

And D'Arcy went his way. He had had a great shock, but he was already recovering from it. He held his head very erect as he entered the School House. Tom Merry was in the study when he returned.

"I say, Mewwy," said D'Arcy nervously, "I—I am afraid n. heart is bwoken, but—but isn't Miss Courtney weally a wippin' gal?"

"You've said it!" said Tom Merry. "She is!"

But D'Arcy's heart was not broken. Like most attacks of love at his age, this one was brief, and Miss Courtney's plain and kind speaking had helped the swell of the School House to see reason.

A little later he confided to Tom Merry his intention of sending Miss Courtney a "weally wippin' weddin' pwesent"—which was a very pleasant ending to D'Arcy's romance!

THE END.

(Tom Merry is always willing to lend a helping hand, but next week he is accused of sneaking—for saving an innocent boy! See "THE SNEAK OF THE SHELL," Next Wednesday).

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HANSOM DOES THE HANDSOME!

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CHAPTER 1. To Save Morny!

"MORNY wants to see you, Jimmy!"

"Oh, my hat!"
Jimmy Silver looked grave as Erroll of the Fourth came into the study and whispered that information to him.

"That's a tall order, Erroll," he said, frowning. "Poor old Morny's locked in the punishment-room, and it's a jolly serious matter if a fellow gets caught speaking to a chap who's expelled."

"I know, Jimmy!" Erroll's voice was low. Erroll was Morny's best chum, and his agitated face showed his distress at his chum's position. "I know it's risky, but—Morny's got to be saved, Jimmy. I've just been speaking to him through the keyhole. He wants you. He seems to think you can save him."

"Right! I'll go!" said Jimmy promptly. "You fellows stay here."

Leaving Erroll with Raby, Newcome, and Lovell, Jimmy hurried to the detention-room. Nobody was about, and Jimmy cautiously tapped on the locked door.

"That you, Jimmy Silver?"

"Yes. What is it, Morny?"

There was a movement inside, and Jimmy heard Morny come to the door. Then came the prisoner's low voice through the keyhole.

"Thanks for riskin' it, Jimmy. Listen! You know what's happened? I'm to be expelled in the mornin'. I'm charged with havin' destroyed a five-quid note that was on Greely's desk. Well, I didn't destroy it—I just hid it among some exercise books on Greely's desk. I did it to pay Greely back for havin' got me a lickin' unjustly. It was a silly trick—I admit that now! The Head won't believe my story. But you know it's true, Jimmy; I told you what I'd done just afterwards."

"That's so, Morny. But the fiver's gone—"

"Yes, it's vanished, and I simply can't understand it, Jimmy," came Morny's voice earnestly. "I know it must be there—it must be!"

"Greely's searched, and so have Dalton and Bulkeley," said Jimmy Silver. "You're certain you did hide it in the books, Morny?"

"Absolutely! Greely can't have searched thoroughly. It must be there still, I tell you! And that's why I asked you to come here, Jimmy. Only you chaps can save me now. I want to know if you'll have a hunt on your own—"

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"But Greely won't allow us—"

"I thought perhaps you'd try to sneak into his study when he's out some time," whispered Morny eagerly, "and have a good search on your own. It must be there! I tell you it's there! We've no thieves at Rookwood, and it can't have been pinched. Will you do it, Jimmy?"

"If I get half a chance I certainly will, Morny!"

"Good man! Buzz off now, then, and—good luck! I don't want you to get caught here. Cheerio, Jimmy!"

Telling Morny to keep his pecker up, Jimmy hurried away and rejoined his chums. But his face was glum. Though he had promised Morny to do his best, he had little hopes. Mr. Greely, Dicky Dalton, and Bulkeley had already made a thorough search, and it was scarcely likely juniors would succeed where they had failed.

Jimmy's chums felt the same, but they agreed willingly enough to help him, and, with Erroll, they went along at once to Master's Corridor. Jimmy grunted his disgust as they came in sight of the Fifth Form master's study door. It was open, and Mr. Greely himself stood there talking to Hansom of the Fifth.

"Blow!" said Jimmy. "Hallo! Old Hansom's getting it!"

The juniors were about to retrace their steps, but Mr. Greely's full, throating voice made them pause. Undoubtedly Hansom of the Fifth was "getting it." He stood before the Fifth master, his face crimson. Mr. Greely was glaring at him wrathfully.

"Answer me at once, sir!" Mr. Greely was booming angrily. "Why are you hanging about my room, Hansom? This is the third time within the last hour that I have found you loitering about my door in this suspicious manner!"

"I—I—I—" gasped Hansom. "You—you—you see, sir—"

"I do not see, Hansom!" thundered Greely. "I do not see your object in hanging about my room, Hansom! Yet it is clear that you are waiting for an opportunity of entering while I am absent. Am I to suppose—as I suspect—that you are contemplating a childish prank—"

"Oh, nunno, sir—certainly not, sir!" stammered Hansom.

"You—you see, sir—"

"I have already told you that I do not see, and I demand an instant explanation, Hansom!"

"I—I—I—I—" Hansom stammered and stopped. Evidently an instant explanation was not to be forthcoming from Edward Hansom of the Fifth. His crimson blush increased, but not his flow of language.

"Enough!" boomed Mr. Greely, as Hansom still gasped helplessly. "It is quite obvious that you contemplate a

"Handsome is as Handsome does!"
At least, that's what they say.
But it's quite sure that Hansom did
A Handsome thing one day!

childish trick—a rag—upon my room, Hansom! You, a Fifth Form boy! I am ashamed of you, Hansom!"

"Oh! Oh, really, sir—"
 "Enough! You will do me three hundred lines, Hansom! Go! And if I find you loitering around my study door again, I shall double them! Go!"

"Oh gad! Really, sir—"
 "Go! Obey me this instant, Hansom!" thundered the plump Mr. Greely.

Edward Hansom gasped, and turned away reluctantly.
 "Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver, trying to restrain a grin. "What the dickens was old Hansom up to, I wonder. Not like him to rag his blessed Form master!"

"Perhaps wants to search for that giddy fiver—like little us?" suggested Raby, with a chuckle.

"Ass!" began Jimmy. "It's queer, though—"

"Queer? It isn't queer at all!" breathed Lovell, his eyes suddenly beginning to gleam. "My only hat! I—I believe you're right, Raby! You've hit it! By Jove! That's it!"

"Eh? What is? What bee have you got in your silly bonnet now, Lovell?"

"What Raby said, of course! I see it all now—"
 "Ass! I was only joking!" said Raby.

"Exactly!" said Lovell, lowering his voice. "But you've put me on the right track, Raby! Hansom didn't want to search for the fiver. Oh, no! He's got a jolly different reason—"

"To put glue in Greely's chair, or carbide in his inkpot, I expect," yawned Newcome.

"Nothing of the kind!" said Lovell, lowering his voice still more. "Don't you idiots see it? Raby's put me on the track with his idiotic joke! Hansom wants to get into Greely's study when he's out, for the sole purpose of removing incriminating evidence."

"Oh, my hat!"
 "Evidence of what?" almost yelled Jimmy.

"Evidence of the theft, of course, thickhead!" said Lovell grimly. "We know Morny didn't take it, or destroy it! But it's disappeared, and it's pretty clear now that Hansom knows what happened to it. I'm sorry to have to think so. Hansom was always a decent chap, in my view. But you saw his face—if ever a chap looked guilty he did."

"Well, you—you—"

"Phew! Who'd have thought it!" breathed Lovell, his eyes fairly glimmering with excitement. "I'm dashed sorry. But justice is justice, and we can't allow the innocent to suffer for the guilty. Come on!"

"You—you silly owl—"
 "Come on! We'll tackle the rotter about it right away!" snapped the eager Arthur Edward, and he rushed away after Hansom.

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome looked helplessly at each other, and then they followed—with a rush. If Arthur Edward, in his mistaken zeal, intended to charge Hansom of the Fifth with theft, they wanted to be at hand to save Arthur Edward from being slaughtered.

They caught Lovell up, just as Lovell caught Hansom up outside the latter's study door. Lovell had grasped the Fifth-Former by the arm, and Hansom was glaring at him in wrathful amazement.

"Here, what the dickens— Leggo my arm, kid!"

"Not yet," said Lovell calmly. "I want to ask you a few questions, Hansom. I want you to explain before these witnesses," he added grimly, nodding to Jimmy & Co., as they ran up, "just why you were so anxious to sneak into Greely's study, Hansom?"

Hansom stared, and as he stared his face grew crimson.

"You—you checky young rotter!" he stuttered. "Why, I'll—"

"There's no need to get rough, Hansom," said Lovell. "I'd advise you, for your own sake, to be quiet and answer us—if you want us to keep it quiet!"

"Q-quiet!" gasped Hansom. "K-keep it quiet?"

"Exactly! We know all about it," said Arthur Edward gravely. "No wonder you blushed with shame when Greely tackled you about it! Your guilty conscience—Here, now, don't start— Oh! Oh crikey! Why— Yarroooooogh!"

Arthur Edward ended with a howl. Obviously, Hansom of the Fifth didn't want to keep it quiet. He suddenly grasped Lovell by the coat collar, swung him violently round, and planted a hefty boot behind Lovell. He planted it again and again, and then he sent Lovell spinning along the passage. Lovell crashed against the far wall and sat down with a thump that shook the corridor.

Hansom went into his room and banged the door shut with a terrific bang. Evidently the senior's temper was considerably upset. Lovell jumped to his feet. He was raging, and he made a rush for the closed door. But his chums had come to save him, and though they wanted to laugh they

refrained. Instead, they collared the furious detective and fairly rushed him away.

"Leggo!" roared Lovell furiously. "Leggo, you idiots! I'm going—"

"No, you're not, old fruit!" said Jimmy briefly. "You're coming! Think we want the whole Fifth Form round our ears? You can't act the goat here, Lovell! Come on!"

And with his chums grabbing him on all sides, Lovell went, and his investigations—and vengeance—had to wait.

CHAPTER 2.

Tubby's News!

"NOW, Lovell, old man—" said Raby.

"Lovell, old chap—" pleaded Jimmy Silver.
 But Arthur Edward was not in the mood to listen or heed. Even when they planted him in the end study he still struggled to get free.

"You—you burbling idiots!" he choked. "Lemme go! I tell you I'm going to smash Hansom! And I'm going to show him up—bowl him out! Isn't it plain as a pike-staff—"

"No, it isn't, old man!" said Jimmy soothingly. "It's far from plain, old chap. In any case, you can't lick Hansom, and if you tried in the Fifth corridor you'd get slaughtered and ragged by the Fifth. Have sense, old man—"

"I tell you I'm following this up while the scent's hot!" yelled Lovell. "Lemme go! Can't you see every minute's precious if we're going to save Morny? Leggo, you idiots!"

"Not much, old bean! Now Lovell— Oh! Ooooooh!"

Jimmy had released Lovell a mere second, but it was enough. He swung round with a jerk, throwing off Raby's grasp. Raby staggered against Jimmy, who tripped backwards over the fender and fell amid a terrific crashing and clattering of fireirons. Newcome reeled back from a punch in the chest, and sat down on the carpet with a bump.

Lovell—free now—leaped for the door. He stayed there just long enough to grab the key from the lock, and then he slipped out.

Bang! Click!

The door banged and the key clicked home in the lock. Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome jumped up, raging. They rushed to the door, and found it locked. Obviously, Arthur Edward had not only got his back up, but was bent on action. They heard his footsteps hurriedly retreating along the passage.

"Well," said Jimmy sulphurously—"well, the awful idiot! The—the blithering fathead! If he's gone on his lonesome to the Fifth quarters to make trouble, he'll find it and no mistake! Oh, my hat! And he's locked us in and we can't go after him to save his silly bacon!"

"And he can jolly well go, for all I care!" snorted Raby wrathfully. "He'll deserve all he gets, the stubborn owl!"

"Blow him! Let him rip!" hooted Newcome. "He's nearly pushed my ribs in!"

"Well, we can't blame him for being a footling idiot, I suppose!" growled Jimmy. "He was born like that! Look here, we've got to get out, you men! Hansom will simply smash the ass!"

"Well, let him—"

But Jimmy's sense of loyalty to a pal—even a misguided, stubborn pal—was too strong, and he started to bang on the door to attract attention. He had been banging several seconds when footsteps were heard, and then a fat, giggling voice:

"Hallo! What's the row? That you, Jimmy? My hat! You locked in?"

"Yes, of course we are, Tubby!" yelled Jimmy anxiously. "Open the door! Oh crikey! Is the key in the lock, Tubby?"

But Jimmy's sudden fear was groundless—the key proved to be in the lock. Next moment it was turned and the door flung open. Tubby Muffin's fat, grinning face looked in.

"He, he! I say, Jimmy, who locked you chaps in? Lovell? I saw the ass rushing off somewhere as I came along, you know."

"Yes. Which way did Lovell go, Tubby? Quick!" snapped Jimmy. "Towards the Fifth—"

"Yes. He was in a fine wax about— Here, hold on, Jimmy! Something important—awfully important!"

"Well, what is it, Tubby? Quick!" snapped Jimmy, halting.

"That cake!" said Tubby Muffin, pointing to the cake that graced the tea-table. "It looks a jolly good cake! I say, lemme have a slice and I'll tell you the latest joke—a real scream! It's— Here, hold on, Jimmy! It's about Hansom—"

Jimmy was already through the doorway, but he paused again as he heard Hansom's name. Somehow, Jimmy Silver was feeling very curious about Edward Hansom just

then. In the circumstances, Hansom's desire to get into Greely's room struck him as queer.

"Well, what about Hansom, Tubby?" he demanded impatiently. "You usually know everything, fatty! Cough it up!"

"What about the slice of cake?" said Tubby cautiously. "Hand the cake over first, Jimmy! Not that I don't trust you, but—"

"Give the fat ass a slice, Raby!" said Jimmy.

Raby wasn't at all anxious to comply, but at a nod from Jimmy he did so. Tubby grabbed the slice and took a bite.

"Now, Tubby, what's the joke?"

"He, he! I say, this is jolly good cake, Jimmy! Can I— Oh, all right! No need to bung that loaf at me, Raby!" said Tubby hastily. "It's all right. I say, isn't old Hansom a dream? Joke of the term, you know! The whole Fifth are screaming about it. Fact! Hansom's in love—he's spoons on that red-haired girl in the post office, you know."

"You fat idiot! Is that the joke?" demanded Jimmy. "Why, that's stale, Tubby! We heard about that—"

"He, he! I know, Jimmy. But you haven't heard the joke yet!" cackled Tubby Muffin, with his mouth full of cake. "The giddy joke is that Hansom—the awful ass!—wrote a blessed love-letter in class this morning! He wrote it under old Greely's nose and shoved it in his exercise book."

"His—his exercise book! Go on, Tubby," said Jimmy quietly.

"Yes— He, he, he! But before he could take the blessed love-letter out, old Greely collected the exercise books!" grinned Tubby. "See the joke? Greely's got the books in his room now, I believe, and Hansom and the whole blessed Fifth are wonderin' what Greely will do when he finds Hansom's letter. He, he, he! The Fifth are yelling about it, and poor old Hansom's in a fearful stew. He told Lumsden, and Lumsden's spun the yarn round. I say, I'll have another slice of that cake, Jimmy."

"So—so Hansom's love-letter's in his exercise book in Greely's room, is it?" said Jimmy slowly. "And Greely hasn't found it yet, Tubby—do you happen to know that?"

"Eh? Oh, no, not yet! When he does Hansom will get it hot, what? Though I heard Talboys say he'd got it back again," said Tubby, shaking his head. "Let's hope he hasn't. Spoil the joke if Greely doesn't find it. He, he! I say, I'll have another slice of that cake, Jimmy."

"You jolly well won't, Tubby, old fat man! You said a slice, and a bargain's a bargain. Now scoot!"

"Now, don't be mean, Jimmy, old fellow," grumbled Tubby. "It was only a measly small slice. I'll just take this little corner," said Tubby, moving to the table. "It's jolly good cake, and I know— Whoop! Oh crikèy!"

Tubby leaped for the door, just missing Raby's boot as he went. But he didn't miss Newcome's boot, and Tubby roared and went through the doorway like a shot from a gun.

Jimmy closed the door after him, and turned a startled face to his chums. He had quite forgotten Lovell now.

"Well, what d'you fellows think of that?" he demanded breathlessly. "I said Hansom's actions looked queer, didn't I? Well, you've heard Tubby's tale—"

"It does look a bit queer in the circumstances," said Raby, frowning in perplexity. "But I'm blessed if I can see what you're getting at, Jimmy."

"Nor I," grunted Newcome. "You don't think, like that fathead Lovell, that Hansom's taken the fiver—"

"Just what I do think!" said Jimmy slowly, wrinkling his brow.

"Wha-what?"

"Not knowing it was there, of course!" said Jimmy grimly. "Don't you see? Hansom had his blessed love-letter in the exercise book in class. Greely collects the books and takes 'em to his study to correct 'em there. While they're there on Greely's desk, Morny chips in and shoves that banknote in Hansom's exercise-book."

"How do we know it was Hansom's book he shoved it in?" said Raby dubiously.

"We don't know—I'm only suggesting," said Jimmy calmly. "And I'm suggesting that, just after Morny left the study, Hansom, after his precious love-letter, sneaked in and pinched the book."

"Phew! Yes, but Greely—"

"Greely and the others searched through the exercise books right enough," said Jimmy earnestly. "But did they count 'em? Did Greely count to see if any were missing? I bet he didn't! He wouldn't dream of any being missing, would he?"

"It sounds feasible," said Newcome slowly. "But it doesn't quite tally with facts. It's only ten minutes ago since we saw Hansom trying to sneak into Greely's study."

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If he had taken his exercise book, why is he trying to sneak in the room now, Jimmy?"

"Goodness knows! That's the question," said Jimmy. "But I'm wondering if this is the reason: Has Hansom taken his letter out? And is he now trying to slip the exercise book back again in case Greely misses it?"

"Phew! That's likely, Jimmy. In fact—"

"I think it is, simply because Tubby says he's heard Talboys say that Hansom had got it back again."

"My hat! You're right, Jimmy!"

"I'm beginning to think I am," said Jimmy, his eyes gleaming. "It's strange that Hansom hasn't found the banknote, apparently. On the other—he paused, and then went on grimly—"on the other hand Hansom may have found it, and that's why he's trying to get it back so stealthily. He may be afraid to return the book and note openly because of his precious love affair. It would get to the Head, of course, and—well, Hansom wouldn't want that."

"My hat! No fear!" grinned Raby. "Well, we ought to do something, Jimmy. We can't see old Morny sacked, even to keep that idiot, Hansom's love affair quiet."

"We're going to do something—and at once!" snapped Uncle Jimmy. "And— Oh, my hat! We'll just be in time to take away old Lovell's remains. Come on!"

And Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome rushed off to Hansom's study, determined to rescue Arthur Edward Lovell, whether he wanted them to or not.

CHAPTER 3.

Hansom Spills the Works!

"CHEEKY rotters!"

Thus Arthur Edward Lovell as he hurried off to Hansom's study to resume his investigations into the mysterious disappearance of the five-pound note.

He was referring to his own pals. Lovell fancied himself in the role of detective, and he was wrathful at his chums' interference.

Lovell was certain he was on the right track. Amazing as it seemed, shocking as it seemed, Hansom had taken the missing fiver! That much was now clear—in Lovell's mind. All that remained now to do was to prove it, and clear old Mornington. Hansom was an awful ass, but he was a decent chap, and Lovell hated to believe him guilty. Yet he had to. Justice was justice, and Lovell felt obliged to see justice done.

That he was putting his head into the lion's mouth by visiting the senior in his own quarters didn't trouble Lovell in the least. Detectives had to take their lives in their hands at times. Detectives couldn't afford to be funks, and Lovell certainly was no funk.

He tapped at Hansom's door, and marched in boldly.

Hansom was there with his pals, Lumsden and Talboys. Hansom's face was still crimson, and Lumsden and Talboys seemed to be having great difficulty in hiding grins.

"I tell you I've simply got to get that book back somehow, you chaps," Hansom was saying desperately. "That tic, Greely, suspects something. He's got me marked. Now, if one of you chaps were to have a go, you'd stand a chance. Greely's bound to start on those exercises this evening, and he's bound to miss mine at once. Now—Here, what the thump— Get out! Why, you cheeky young sweep—"

Hansom had suddenly sighted Lovell in the doorway.

Instead of getting out, Lovell went in, and the door of the lion's cage closed upon him. Hansom, Lumsden, and Talboys glared at him speechlessly.

"Get out!" roared Hansom. "Didn't I tell you to get out, young Lovell?"

"Yes; but I'm not going yet," said Lovell coolly. "I've a few questions to ask you, Hansom, and if you're wise you'll answer them truthfully."

"T-t-ruthfully!" gasped Hansom. "Are—are you talking to me, Lovell?"

"Of course!" snapped Lovell grimly, unheeding the danger signals. "And these chaps, remember, are witnesses. Well, first I want to know what you are after in Greely's study, Hansom?"

"D-do you?" stammered Hansom.

"Yes. I'm sorry to have to ask unpleasant questions, Hansom, but Morny's not going to be expelled if I can help it," said Lovell ruthlessly. "If you've anything to own up to, Hansom, I'd advise you to do it now. Morny didn't take that fiver, or destroy it. I'm not saying you stole it. But it looks jolly suspicious that you should be trying to sneak into Greely's room like this. If you did take the note—"

"M-m take that banknote!" stuttered Hansom dazedly, while Talboys and Lumsden stared fixedly at Lovell. "You—-you suspect me of pinching that dashed banknote, Lovell, and you come here to tell me so! Why, I—I—"

"Hold on!" snapped Lovell, raising his hand. "Now don't—"

But Hansom did. Lovell's warning, upraised hand did not stop him. He rushed at Lovell, and that youth yelled as Hansom grabbed him and strewed him over the hearth-rug. Then Hansom grabbed the fire shovel, and, twisting the wriggling junior over, began to raise the dust from Lovell's trousers.

With every ringing bang of the shovel, Lovell gave a lusty howl of anguish.

"Give it him strong, Hansom!" gasped Lumsden. "Fancy the kid having the cheek to come in here chargin' a Fifth man with theft! Ye gods! Lay it on, old man, and then we'll take a turn!"

Lovell, however, had recovered somewhat from his astonishment by this time, and he started to struggle with a will. Hansom, big as he was, could not hold him, and Lumsden and Talboys had to come to the rescue. There followed a terrific struggle on the hearth-rug.

some cinders from the hearth, Lummy, and I'll get the glue!"

Talboys released the prisoner, and so did Lumsden. Lovell instantly made a convulsive heave, at the same moment he whipped his wrists free, and lashed out with both. Hansom took his left in one eye, and his right clean on the nose. Hansom howled, and somersaulted backwards.

Lovell scrambled up, breathless and panting, and it was just then that Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome arrived. The door crashed back, and they rushed into the study—Lovell's spluttering yells having told them the case was urgent.

"Look out! Oh, my hat!" shouted Talboys.

Lumsden half-turned from the fireplace. As he did so, Raby planted a boot against his tightly stretched trousers from behind. Lumsden roared and nose-dived with his head in the coal-scuttle.

Newcome instantly tackled Talboys, while Raby jumped on top of the sprawling Hansom. Jimmy paused to close the door, and then he piled in with a will. Next moment a fierce and raging battle was taking place.

Lovell wrenched off the tablecloth, heedless of smashing



As Lumsden turned, Raby planted a boot against his tightly stretched trousers. Lumsden roared and went head-first into the coal-scuttle!

But it could only have one ending. Lovell fought like a Trojan, but the three seniors soon had him spreadeagled on his back, and helpless. He was an absolute wreck by that time. With Hansom kneeling on his chest he wriggled desperately, but in vain.

"Lemme getrup, you cads!" he choked. "This—Grooogh! Won't save you from justice, Hansom! Ger-roff me chest!"

"Not yet, old scout!" said Hansom breathlessly. "Thief—en? Of all the nerve! He must be absolutely potty! Hand me the ink, Lumsden, and you get some jam and stuff from the cupboard, Talboys! We'll make a dashed example of Lovell! Teach those cheeky Fourth kids a lasting lesson."

"Yes, rather!"

The ink was fetched from the bookcase top; Talboys took jam and marmalade from the cupboard. Ink was poured over Lovell's face and hair, and then jam and marmalade were added liberally.

He struggled and roared and gulped and gasped, but all in vain.

"Ha, ha! Don't he look a dashed picture?" roared Talboys. "Here, might as well make a job of it! Get

crockery, and started to mop his face and head with it frantically.

That was the scene upon which Bulkeley gazed as he flung the door wide and looked in. Over Bulkeley's shoulder quite a little crowd of Fifth-Formers also gazed from the passage.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Bulkeley blankly. "What the merry dickens— Here, stop that! Hansom, Talboys, Lums— Silver, you young idiot, stop!"

The skipper of Rookwood dashed into the study. His hand closed on Jimmy Silver's collar, and he was whirled away from Hansom. But the voice of authority had been enough. The battle ceased as they recognised Bulkeley's grim voice. Even Hansom & Co. weren't likely to disobey Bulkeley.

Bulkeley hurriedly slammed the door, and then he jumped as he suddenly sighted Lovell shampooing his hair with the tablecloth.

"Those—those beastly cads did this!" gibbered Lovell, spluttering a mixture of ink, jam, marmalade, and cinders from his mouth. "Grooogh! Just because that cad was afraid I'd give the game away. But I've not finished

(Continued on page 28.)

EASTWOOD CUP!

St. Jim's Rout First-Round Opponents! Sensational Results! Highcliffe Out!

By "Old Boy."

Southwold, Wed.

WHEN the draw for the first round of the Eastwood Cup was made known there was considerable excitement at the prospect of the Saints visiting Southwold, a school in Lancashire.

Gussy's "patah" certainly hit on a novel wheeze to aid his pet charity for Great War veterans when he presented this splendid cup—and sixty-four schools had entered both a subscription to the war veterans and a football team for the cup!

Most of these entrants were well known to Tom Merry & Co., but Southwold were in the nature of "dark horses." Information was eagerly sought, and Kangaroo was first to discover that the Southwold team had a most imposing list of victories to their credit—in fact, they had yet to lose a match! As their opponents included some of the best-known schools in the North, Tom Merry & Co. felt that they were in for a tough fight.

Training was "de rigueur," and Kangaroo and Kerr were watched anxiously to see if their injuries were progressing favourably. I was present at a trial game between School House and New House elevens, and was glad to note that Kangaroo and Kerr stood the test well.

I asked several fellows their opinion of the Saints' chances.

"Of course we shall win, deah boy!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in surprise.

"Rot! Unless I play, you'll be beaten to a frazzle!" snorted Grundy disdainfully.

"Two to one on Southwold!" chirruped Gore—to emit a yell next moment as Jack Blake caught him with a hefty boot.

"Don't listen to a cad like Gore," said Blake cheerfully. "We shall win hands down—that is, if Gussy doesn't miss any more open goals!"

"Weally, Blake—"

I left D'Arcy and Blake heatedly debating the former's unfortunate lapse against Highcliffe last week.

On the day before the match the team entrained so as to be fresh for the morrow's encounter. Kangaroo was reinstated at centre-half, but Kerr's knee was still giving trouble, and George Herries was retained at left back. In the train I noticed Harry Manners looking a little glum at being "dropped," but he soon brightened up. Being twelfth man is annoying, but better than nothing!

St. Jim's were early on the ground the next afternoon, ready for the fight of their lives. Hazelthorpe, the Southwold captain, proved a lanky fellow with a shock of red hair, and I could not help observing that his men eyed the workmanlike Saints at practice with something approaching alarm.

Southwold began amid wild shouting. "Southwold! Southwold! Southwold!"

With that vociferous backing, they ought to have swept all before them. But, somehow, they didn't. Somewhat to their astonishment the Saints' defenders found the Southwold forwards sadly

lacking in cohesion; indeed, it was not long before Kangaroo had the opposing centre-forward "in his pocket," and the rest of the defence began to get the upper hand too.

A neat pass from Kangaroo put Tom Merry through five minutes from the start, and Tom wound his way with rather surprising ease through the Southwold rearguard. A back rushed at him wildly, and Tom fainted and shot like a flash. It was a good shot, and would have taken a good goalkeeper to have stopped it. The Southwold custodian did not move until the ball was spinning in the back of the net—seconds too late! Tom Merry rubbed his eyes, and the ball rolled again.

"Southwold! Up, Southwold!" The shouting had no more effect than previously.

FULL RESULTS.

FIRST ROUND, EASTWOOD CUP.

SOUTHWOLD .. 0	ST. JIM'S .. 17
	Merry (6)
	Talbot (3), Noble,
	Levison, Blake
	(2), Figgins,
	D'Arcy (2)
	Lowther
GRANDBURY .. 3	GREYFRIARS .. 4
Smith (3)	Wharton (2)
	V.-Smith,
	Hurree Singh
ROOKWOOD .. 6	HIGHCLIFFE .. 3
Silver (2)	Courtenay (2)
Dodd (2)	De Courcy
Lovell (2)	
ST. FRANK'S .. 4	CONNISBURGH 0
Nipper (2)	
Pitt (2)	
ST. KIT'S .. 0	RYLCOMBE .. 1
	Gay
CLAREMONT .. 2	WALLDENE .. 1
Baxter (2)	Ronald
ST. JUDE'S .. 0	RIPPINGHAM .. 7
	Emmett (3)
	Griffith (2)
	Leigh (2)
REDCLYFFE .. 1	ABBOTSFORD .. 4
Judd	Fane (4)
BAGSHOT .. 2	GREYCROFT 0
Pankley (2)	
BANNINGTON .. 0	MELLTOR .. 5
	Owen (5)
Overcourt .. 5	Whitefriars .. 2
Vale Towers .. 0	St. Anselm's .. 6
Winton .. 14	Hillbury .. 0
Tressaleigh .. 2	Passington .. 0
Eastwold .. 0	Combermere .. 7
Greenbank .. 1	St. Jasper's .. 0
Doone Valley .. 3	Norbridge .. 3
St. Gail's .. 3	Highclere .. 2
Tressilgar .. 1	Barchester .. 1
Halchester .. 5	Merrymere .. 0
St. Caesar's .. 1	East Point .. 0
Sedgminster .. 12	Ponder's Green .. 1
Stapleford .. 5	Gordonleigh .. 3
St. Juniper's .. 10	Pindermerc .. 2
Valleybourne .. 1	Curlingham .. 6
Lynchester .. 0	Harringside .. 0
Marminster .. 4	St. Stephen's .. 2
Pepperwood .. 2	Westwold .. 0
St. Thomas' .. 1	Milchester .. 1
Low Beach .. 9	Leninbrook .. 2
St. Winnifred's .. 3	Burnford .. 0
Pinge Wood .. 2	Lexington .. 0

St. Jim's realised suddenly that they had a weak team against them, and in another three minutes a crashing drive from Talbot found the home goalkeeper hopelessly at sea. Two up!

"Are these the giddy giants you were telling us about, Kangy?" gasped Tom Merry at the line-up.

Kangaroo shook his head. A few moments later and he, too, was dribbling through, to finish with a shot that the goalkeeper never even saw. Number three! In spite of desperate shouts from the touch-lines, the Southwold men went from bad to worse, and St. Jim's did very much as they liked. Levison headed a fourth, and then Tom Merry snapped a brace of goals. Blake got one, and Figgins at back netted with a powerful long shot. D'Arcy headed the ninth goal just before half-time, and it was an amazed eleven that sucked lemons and discussed the Southwold footballers during the interval.

I questioned a Southwold man gently, and learned the truth.

"The Sixth Form eleven has been putting up all the records," explained this fellow obligingly. "You must have made a mistake, Hazelthorpe and his cripples couldn't beat a carpet!"

I hastened to enlighten the Saints, and there was a roar of laughter.

"So the giddy seniors are the giants, not the juniors!" grinned Lowther. "Luckily, we're not playing the seniors!"

The second half was a repetition of the first.

Tom Merry led off in brilliant fashion with a hat-trick—followed by Talbot, who scored twice in succession, then Blake, D'Arcy, and Monty Lowther.

With seventeen goals to their credit, the Saints were run almost to a standstill, and they were almost as glad as Hazelthorpe and his "cripples" when the final whistle put an end to the slaughter.

"You've got a good team, Merry!" gasped Hazelthorpe manfully.

Tom forbore to smile, but Monty Lowther's mouth twitched, and Hazelthorpe laughed outright.

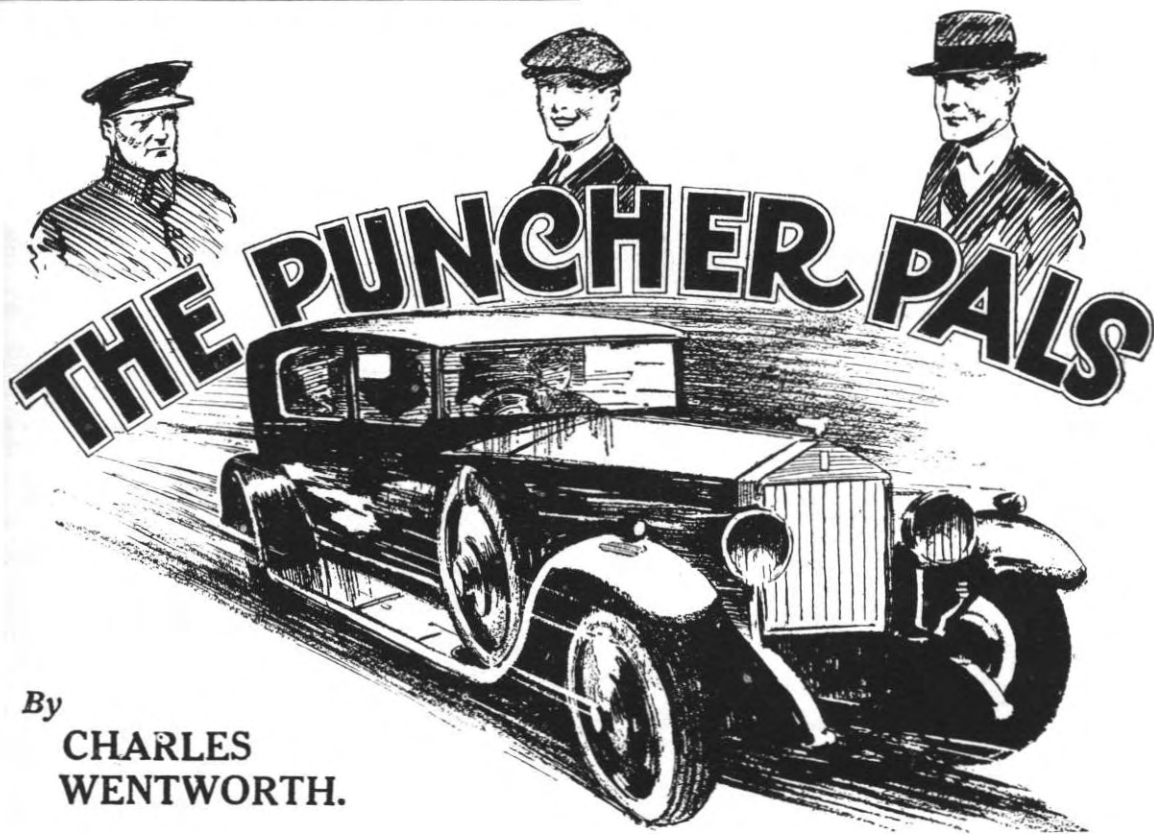
"We are rather at sixes and sevens," he admitted ruefully. "But you fellows ought to tackle our senior eleven—they would be just about your mark!"

"Thanks, we'll book the date," answered Tom Merry smilingly. "But we've got to win this cup first."

Sensations were not lacking over the phone.

Greyfriars had a fierce fight at Grandbury, and won 4—3 on the stroke of time. The team that can score three times against the Friars is worth watching. Grandbury are also a Lancashire team. Highcliffe visited Rookwood, and Jimmy Silver & Co. routed them in a high-scoring game, 6—3. A friend telephoning me later said it was a magnificent game, and showed "Uncle James" and his men one hundred per cent above their recent form. If they can keep it up, my friend says they should win the cup. I passed that opinion on to Tom Merry, in Gussy's hearing, and Gussy's monocle glimmered as he remarked:

"Wats!?"



By
**CHARLES
WENTWORTH.**

**CHAPTER 1.
The White House!**

AS the big black Rolls topped a rise, Percy Vere, who was lolling luxuriously back in the saloon, called upon his chauffeur, Sprouts Martin, to stop. He opened the door and climbed out. Skid Collins winked at Sprouts, tugged the peak of his cap over his ear the way he liked to wear it, and joined the guv'nor. Then, unable to withstand the lure of the beautiful views, Sprouts made the party three.

"This is the most beautiful view I know," said Percy, the millionaire. "The red-tiled village you see nestling in the valley is Fairlight. That far-spreading heath you see beyond is where some of the finest racehorses in England have been trained for over one hundred and fifty years. And you see that white house which lies right below us, with the smoke rising from the twisted chimneys, that—"

He broke off suddenly; they saw his lips tighten and his eyes blink. "Am I right?" he asked. "Can you see a sale board down there?"

Sprouts borrowed the field glasses and looked.

"Yus," he said.

"Skid," cried Percy Vere, looking pained, "when I was a kid your age I used to stay at that house. It belongs to Mr. Hall Dunnow, and he used to take me up on the heath to see the horses gallop. There's something wrong. Drive me there as quickly as you can, Sprouts!"

As the car passed the gates of the white house a gamekeeper, with a gun under his arm and a spaniel by his side, barred the way.

"Adam," said Percy Vere, "what is the matter here?"

The gamekeeper's lips trembled.

"Mr. Dunnow's gone abroad for his health, sir," he answered. "He lost everything he had in the Bawtry crash. The 'ouse and land's up for sale, and the race'orses are going to be auctioned in the stables to-morrow. Most of the big ones have already bin sold."

"Adam"—Percy Vere's eyes were moist—"that is bad!"

"And that skunk, Lee Gunnel, who's always sworn he'd

ruin the guv'nor and get his best horses for a song, is coming 'ere to-morrow to grab the lot, sir."

"Lee Gunnel? He's the Westwick House trainer, up near the heath, isn't he? The man with the triple chin and the beetroot face?"

"He's the man who ought to have been put in gaol years ago, who ought to be warned off Newmarket 'Eath!" almost shouted the gamekeeper, as he brandished his gun. "And if he goads me to-morrow, I'll fill him full of buck-shot!"

Percy Vere dropped a hand on his shoulder and shook his head.

"No," he said. "He's a bad lot. Leave him alone. And don't you worry about a new job. I'll get you something to do if you want it. Can I bring my car in here and stay overnight? I'd like to be present at the sale in the morning."

"You can do anything you like, sir," answered the grateful gamekeeper.

"I suppose we sleep in the 'ouse?" said Sprouts Martin.

"We shall not. We'll sleep in the open. Among the trees," answered Percy Vere. "Rustle some food, Sprouts."

Skid, you come with me, and I'll show you round the grounds I used to love when I was a boy."

As the millionaire and Skid wandered off among the beautiful garden walks Adam, the gamekeeper, turned to Sprouts with shining eyes.

"Mr. Percy Vere," he murmured, "is a man!"

"What did yah think 'e was," asked Sprouts truculently—a rhi-no-saur-ous?"

CHAPTER 2.

The Horse Sale.

THE sale of Mr. Hall Dunnow's horses took place in the stable-yard attached to the White House, and the moment he looked round at the faces of the horsey-looking crowd Percy Vere knew that the sale had been cooked.

All the men present were either agents or touts. There were no buyers of bloodstock, and Percy Vere knew why; Lee Gunnel, a racehorse owner who trained his own thoroughbreds and a man who hated Hall Dunmow, had come to buy the horses at give-away prices. For some reason there were no decent horse lovers present.

This gang of toughs, Percy decided, were in Gunnel's pay. Even the auctioneer looked uneasy when he caught Percy's eye.

Lee Gunnel, a man with a purple face and great, spreading shoulders, whose three chins pleted into his wide-open collar, came swinging forward, gripping a stout riding-crop in his hand.

"Let's git on with it!" he bawled. "What are we waiting for? Are you gonna sell those horses, or not?"

"I thought some more purchasers might be coming up from the town," explained the auctioneer.

"Nobody'll come!" laughed Gunnel. "All Dunmow's best horses 'ave bin sold. Who wants 'is washouts? Git on with it!"

It was a command, and the sale went on. The first horse sold was just about to be hammered down for fifty pounds, when Percy Vere, in a quiet voice, sprung sixty pounds; and when Lee Gunnel had recovered from his surprise and finished bidding, he discovered that he had lost the horse. Percy Vere had bought it for one hundred and fifty pounds.

After that it became a battle between them, the agents bidding first to try to stall off Percy Vere; then, as the bidding rose, Gunnel butted in. When the hammer fell Percy Vere had got the horse.

So it went on, Adam, the gamekeeper, looking on from the background with a grin on his face. Fifteen horses had been bought by Percy Vere, and they had cost him over four thousand pounds. The horsey-looking agents were looking pretty sick about it, for it meant that they'd get nothing out of Lee Gunnel except ugly words.

Crossing the middle of the yard Gunnel thrust his chin into Percy's face.

"What's the big idea?" he shouted. "Who told you to butt in? By thunder, I'll make you jump before this sale ends!"

The voice of the auctioneer cut in. "There is only one lot left, Mr. Gunnel," said the auctioneer, consulting his catalogue. "So far Mr. Vere has bought the lot."

"Well," howled Gunnel, "he won't buy the last! I'll beat him to it, if it costs me every bean I've got in the bag!"

"Lot 16," said the auctioneer—"the last lot, gentlemen! This is a two-year-old, with a magnificent pedigree. The colt is named Slap Bang, and is by Chastise out of Miss Dynamite, and it has the famous Snapdragon blood in its veins. Shall we start at one hundred guineas, gentlemen?"

Before a bid could be made a deafening peal of laughter echoed through the stable-yard. The horsey men all round the ring rocked with merriment. Gunnel stared unbelievably at the horse which had been walked into the sale ring, whilst Skid gave Sprouts Martin a pinch that made the boxing chaffeur jump.

"Coo!" he said. "It's a bearded 'orse, and it's got whiskers round its feet!"

"It's a freak!" yelled Sprouts. "The gov'nor won't bid for that. Gunnel can 'ave it!"

But Skid noticed how Percy Vere's eyes roamed over the horse, taking in its lines approvingly. Skid did the same. Long hair streaming down over its hoofs gave the two-year-old the appearance of a cart-horse. The curling beard marred the perfect lines of the fine head. But, with these blemishes removed, its lines were those of a perfect thoroughbred.

There were no bids. "Come, come!" snapped the auctioneer. "Let us start at five guineas then!"

"I will give ten," said Percy Vere.

"Let 'im 'ave it!" said Gunnel, savagely waving his crop at Percy Vere.

"For the third and last time, going at ten guineas—going—"

But Gunnel saw his last chance of stinging Percy Vere slipping away from him.

"Twenty!" snarled Gunnel. "Let 'im take it out of that!"

"Fifty guineas," drawled Percy Vere.

Gunnel glared at him, gulped, and bawled: "Make it seventy!"

"Why not one hundred?" sighed Percy.

As the bidding grew hotter, and the horsey crowd gaped unbelievably, Skid dug Sprouts in the ribs.

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"Sprouts," he chuckled, "the boss don't mean Gunnel to buy a thing!"

Gunnel seemed to have gone crazy. Maddened, because he had been beaten in bidding for every lot in the catalogue, he went all out now to prevent Percy Vere from purchasing this racehorse with the beard and hairy legs of a shire horse. Rocking in his seat with delight the auctioneer spurred them on, whilst the crowd grinned and made rough jokes.

After bidding four hundred guineas Gunnel faltered. "Five hundred!" said Percy Vere.

"Dang me, I'll make it six hundred!" shouted Gunnel.

"Let us make it seven!" purred Percy.

Gunnel strode up to him, shaking with rage, his eyes almost closed, his right hand quivering on the handle of the crop.

"You've given more for this hairy-legged, whiskered freak than you have for any of the other horses, and they were all better! Why?" he bawled.

As Skid and Sprouts drew near, for the toughs were closing in, and there was trouble brewing, Percy beamed at the infuriated owner-trainer.

"One has to pay for Snapdragon stock," he remarked.

The auctioneer was shouting, the hammer was raised, down it came with a crash, and, with a nod and a smile, the auctioneer said

"Sold to Mr. Percy Vere."

Lee Gunnel swung his crop, but the blow was caught by Sprouts, who, ducking under the rope, forced the red-faced man back.

"Who the deuce are you?" shouted Gunnel, swinging back the crop.

"I'm Sprouts Martin, boxin' shover to Mr. Percy Vere, ex-middle-weight champeen of England, champeen of—"

"A champion, are you!" snapped Gunnel. "Then take that!"

The crop swung on Sprouts' head. As he staggered, Gunnel hit him again, and Sprouts dropped.

"Has he 'urt yer, the brute?" asked Skid, bending over Sprouts.

"I can see a lotta pretty things moving ararnd," murmured Sprouts, as Skid helped him up. "Where is he, Skid, little pal?"

"Just over there," answered Skid, pointing. There was a moving blur just where Skid indicated, and the blob of red in it must be Gunnel's face, Sprouts decided. Gunnel was bawling at the auctioneer and preparing for more trouble when Sprouts spun him round on his heels, and, ducking under the descending crop, gave the beetroot chin a wallop with a right hook which punched his enemy right over the ropes and bang against the horse-box, where he crumpled and fell.

"That's like one I guv 'Barney Brown when I licked him in forty seconds," he informed. "An' I 'lope yer like it!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Race on the Heath.

THE Puncher Pals did not leave Fairlight for a week, and in that week much happened. First of all, Percy Vere, who showed that he possessed a great knowledge of horses, saw a dealer in the town, and arranged with him to sell the string for the best prices he could get, but to take his time. Meanwhile, Percy engaged a crowd of old stable-boys to ride the thoroughbreds up to the heath for exercise. He also borrowed hacks for himself and Sprouts, and they rode to the heath to watch the string at work. Skid, who had learnt to ride when he was a kid, although it was only on a greengrocer's pony, sat in a racing saddle on the back of Slap Bang.

It was a sight for the gods to see Skid, with his hat screwed sideways over his ear, hanging on to the long-striding, swift-galloping thoroughbred whenever it went all out in a race with the rest of the White House string. In the end Skid would shoot away like a rocket, and he always had a job to pull the horse up. It would come back with its beard blowing back and the long hair about its hoofs waving like feathers in a gale.

Skid's eyes would shine on these occasions.

"Lumme, Mr. Vere," he would say, "but you can't 'old this scared cat back!"

"That is why I paid so much more for him," remarked Percy Vere.

"What, you noo, gov'nor?" said Sprouts.

"At home I have some racehorses of my own. Cut that hair off this colt and there isn't one in the string could touch him for looks. I think I see Lee Gunnel on the skyline watching his string. I think it is time I baited the trap. Skid, ride Slap Bang over that way. The rest of the horses can go back to stables. Sprouts, you come with us in case of accidents."



At the distance Skid brought Slap Bang right away from the others, and the colt won by a clear four lengths. Gunnel raved and cursed, but he had to pay!

Sprouts rode beside Skid, casting critical glances at the big two-year-old as they went.

"Skid," he said, "now when I look closer at that 'orse and think what 'e'd be like if I was to take a pair of scissors and cut that 'air and beard orf, I can sorta imagine seein' 'im gallopin' at Noomarket or at Hepsom. 'E's class!"

"Sprouts," Skid breathed confidentially, "'e's bottled summer lightnin' let loose in a March hurricane with the lid orf when 'e goes, an', oh, don't I like to ride 'im!"

The three of them reached the mound from which Lee Gunnel, on horseback, was watching his string at work. When he caught sight of them the trainer nearly threw a fit.

"Get orf this heath!" he bellowed. "Clear out! What the blazes are you doing here?"

Percy Vere waved his hand at the whiskered thoroughbred, with Skid looking like a scarecrow on its back.

"I wanted to show you my horse," he said.

For five minutes Lee Gunnel spoke without repeating himself once, and his remarks were almost equally divided between Percy Vere and his horse.

"A horse like that," he choked in conclusion, "ought to be shot. It's a freak. It ought to be showed in a tent at a fair. It isn't worth a—"

"Gunnel," said Percy Vere, drawing out the words, "you are a nasty piece of work. When I was a boy, staying at White House, I happened to be walking in the road when you rode by, and you slashed me across the face with your whip. I was in danger of going blind, but the doctors saved me. Now, Adam, the gamekeeper, tells me that you were responsible for ruining my old friend, Mr. Hall Dunmow. The other day I prevented you from buying any of Dunmow's horses. Now I propose to milk you of a lot of that money you have hoarded up as the result of crooked racing. You are worth half a million, I believe."

"Make it a million, and then you'll be out!" sneered Gunnel.

"The amount is immaterial. What I propose to do is to match this long-haired freak horse of mine against the three best two-year-olds you have in training, and I'll bet you a level twenty thousand pounds Slap Bang wins. You know I am good for the money. I am Dumps—you know, I make the sweets with that name."

Gunnel laughed aloud, his eyes blazed in triumph.

"Yes, I know you, and I know what you're worth! It's a bet, and you'll be twenty thousand pounds poorer after the race. I'll match my three best—Greenways, Santa Monica,

and Pete's Paradise—against your—circus horse." He stuck out his under jaw. "We won't waste time, either. The distance: One mile. The time: To-morrow. The place: 'Ere. We start from that clump," pointing over the heath, "and we finish 'ere. The money to be paid into the hands of the Provincial Bank manager at nine in the mornin', pay over any time after the race. Suit you?"

"The conditions suit me perfectly," said Percy, making notes in his pocket-book. "Choose whatever jockey you like. Mine—is Skid!"

When the crowd who came to see the challenge race saw Skid in his cap and rough clothes seated on the whiskered horse, they never stopped laughing. Sprouts, risking the few pounds he had on him, took odds of five to one. Percy Vere went up to the clump with the horse to watch the start. And there, whilst the horses waited, he pulled a pair of clippers from his pocket and cut the hair from Slap Bang's hoofs and muzzle. And then the other three horses looked positively mean.

"'Ere they come!" yelled Sprouts, as four horses flashed into view out of the clump.

The four were bunched together, Skid on Slap Bang a little wide.

"Greenaway wins!" bellowed Gunnel. "The money's mine!"

Greenaway was leading, and Santa Monica was second. "Ride, Skid, ride!" bawled Sprouts through cupped hands.

Then, at the distance Skid came clean away, to win by four lengths, and Slap Bang was still running after the others had stopped.

Gunnel raved and cursed, swore it was another horse, but he had to pay.

Next day the Puncher Pals continued their journey in the Rolls. Percy Vere had sold all his horses—with the exception of Slap Bang, which he had sent home to his racing stables in a travelling horse-box—for £1,000 more than he had given for them. He had given Adam, the gamekeeper, a job and £100 for himself. Skid had £100 put away in the savings bank. And Sprouts had twice that amount invested for him because he was a man. Percy Vere had also sent a big cheque to his friend Hall Dunmow to help him over a bad time.

Only Leo Gunnel was dissatisfied.

(Another rip-snorting yarn of the Puncher Pals in next week's GEM!)

HANSOM DOES THE HANDSOME!

(Continued from page 23.)

yet, Hansom! This is more proof that you're guilty, you rotter!"

"What the dickens are you talking about, Lovell?" snapped Bulkeley. "Who made you in that fearful muck? Did Hansom and—"

"Yes, we jolly well did!" hooted Hansom. "Think we're having Fourth kids coming here calling us dashed thieves? Not likely!"

"What? What the deuce—" began Bulkeley. "It's true enough, Bulkeley!" said Talboys heatedly. "Lovell came here charging Hansom with having pinched that fiver from Greely's room."

"Great pip!" said Bulkeley, gazing at Lovell. "Lovell, you young idiot—"

"Well, facts are facts!" said Lovell thickly. "Ask Hansom what he's been doing hanging round Greely's study so much for? Ask him!"

"He'll jolly well not get to know if he asks," hooted Hansom furiously, blushing crimson as Talboys grinned. "It's nothing to grin at, Talboys, you idiot! It's my business—"

"Yes; but it happens to concern someone else also, I fancy," said Jimmy Silver grimly. "Lovell's off his horse, but he's not far off the right track. Bulkeley, can I speak just a minute, and I'll explain all this, and why we're here."

"Go ahead!" said Bulkeley, eyeing Hansom curiously.

"It's about that fiver," said Jimmy slowly. "We've got a theory as to what actually happened, and we'd like to ask Hansom about it."

"You cheeky young cad!" hooted Hansom. "Think I'm going to be cross-examined by—"

"Let Silver speak, Hansom!" rapped out Bulkeley. "Now, Silver—"

"Well, I'll soon explain," said Jimmy quietly. "Morny's to be expelled for destroying that banknote. It was never destroyed, Bulkeley. Morny claims that he hid it in an exercise book on Greely's desk. I believe that he did, and my theory is that after Morny had gone, someone else came in and took that exercise book, not knowing the fiver was in it. And I believe the chap—probably a Fifth-Former—still has it."

Hansom jumped.

"Oh!" he gasped blankly. "Oh, my sainted Sam!" "I'm asking Hansom now," went on Jimmy calmly, "if he hid that—if he went into Greely's room at about three this afternoon and took an exercise book from the desk. If he didn't, well and good; but if he did—"

"Oh, good gad!" stammered Hansom, going quite white. "I—I say, Silver, is that—that a fact? D-did Mornington say he shoved it in an exercise book?"

"Yes, of course! You must have heard about it, Hansom—all the school knows about it, I suppose."

"Oh, gad! I—I heard about Mornington, of course," mumbled Hansom dismally. "I didn't worry about him, though—I was too worried about my own affairs. I scarcely listened to the yarns! I—I— Oh, my hat! I heard he'd claimed to have hidden it in a book, but I never knew—never dreamed it was an exercise book. I—I say—"

"You're a decent chap, Hansom," said Jimmy quietly. "You'd be the last fellow to withhold information that might lead to saving Morny from the sack. If you can help us—"

"Oh, gad!" gasped Hansom. "Of—of course I wouldn't dream of withholding anythin', kid! I—I say, Bulkeley, I—I did take an exercise book from Greely's room this afternoon—about three it was. It was mine, of course—"

"What?" yelled Bulkeley.

"Y-ees. Here it is!" stammered Hansom, taking a folded exercise book from his inside jacket pocket. "I took it, and I've been trying to shove it back ever since. But Greely's been on the prowl. I—I say, that dashed banknote can't—"

"Give it to me, you idiot!" snapped Bulkeley breathlessly. He fairly ripped it from Hansom's fingers. He ran through the leaves swiftly—with no result. He went through the book again, more slowly this time, and suddenly a slip of paper fluttered to the floor. All eyes followed it, and there was a sudden gasp.

"The note!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Bulkeley picked up the banknote from the floor. It was spattered with dried ink, as were the open pages of the exercise book.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Bulkeley. "You were right, Silver! The wet ink must have made it stick the two pages together—that's why I missed it first time."

"And why I never found it!" gulped Hansom dizzily. "Oh crumbs! I—I say, I swear I never knew it was there, Bulkeley! I knew my letter was just in the cover, and so I never found the notes. I just whipped my letter out and stuffed the book back in my pocket."

"Your letter? What the dickens do you mean, Hansom? Why should you sneak into Mr. Greely's room and take this book—your exercise book—away at all?"

"Oh, gad! I—I—I—"

Hansom crimsoned again. Talboys and Lumsden chuckled loudly. Raby, Newcome, and then Jimmy Silver broke into a roar—they simply couldn't help it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling rotters!" roared Hansom furiously.

Bulkeley stared.

"Better own up, Hansom!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Better do the handsome now you've started, and clear things up. The beak will get it, anyway. And poor old Morny's got to be cleared."

Hansom gulped. The thought of owning up to the Head made beads of perspiration break out on him. But there was Mornington to be considered. And Hansom did not hesitate long.

"I—I'll explain it all, Bulkeley!" he gasped dismally. "You—you see, I wrote a letter in class and shoved it in my exercise book. Then Greely collected the dashed books, before I got the chance to shift the letter. It—it was a letter to a—a girl, Bulkeley!"

"It was out at last. Bulkeley stared—and then he grinned. "So that's it!" he said, with a grim chuckle. "I've heard about that girl, Hansom, you ass! Well, you'd better come along to the Head now and explain, my lad. You kids come also! No need, as far as I can see, to explain in detail, Hansom—I'll save you that if I can. Just say it was a private letter. The Head will be so bucked at clearing the matter up that he won't worry about that, I fancy. But just take my tip, old man, and leave girls to chaps with more years and—and sense! Chuck it! Now come along!"

Hansom went along—in rear and trembling. But Bulkeley proved to be right. The Head was bucked at the clearing up of the unpleasant mystery, and he did not ask Hansom for details, and accepted Hansom's statement that it was a private letter he was after. And after a severe wiggling Edward Hansom faded off the scene.

Morny was then fetched, and he got a slightly more severe wiggling. But that didn't trouble Morny. He agreed with the Head, however, that his was "an exceedingly foolish prank," and it was likely to be a lesson even to the hard and cynical Mornington.

(Morny sure had a narrow escape that time, chaps! Next week's ripping Rookwood yarn is full of laughs, and it's called "NEWCOME'S NEW IDEA!")

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