

MEET THE ONE AND ONLY GUSSY—IN THIS ISSUE!

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^d

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The **REBEL**
on the **ROOF!**

RIDING THE HIGH HORSE! Over a matter that affects his dignity and pride, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy can be very obstinate even to the extent of running counter to the express commands of his headmaster. And such a matter upsets the whole equanimity of the noble Gussy this week!



GUSSY THE REBEL!

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

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 1. A Serious Matter!

"WATS!"

"But look here, Gussy—"

"Wot!"

"But, you footling ass—"

"Wubbish!"

Arthur Augustus was calm and emphatic; Jack Blake was wrathful and excited.

A little squabble was taking place in Study No. 6 of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. That select circle known as Blake & Co. got on remarkably well together. They liked each other. They helped each other, overlooking each other's faults and failings, if any—in fact, they were quite a happy family.

But, as is the case in many happy families, they squabbled at times—usually over quite trivial matters.

It was quite a trivial matter now.

The little "breeze" was merely over a matter of space in the study cupboard.

Jack Blake claimed that Arthur Augustus had collared more than his share of space in the cupboard, whilst Arthur Augustus indignantly repudiated the suggestion.

How the trouble had started was also very simple. Blake had gone to get out his cricket-boots from the cupboard, but he had found the cupboard far from being like unto the state in which the celebrated Mother Hubbard found hers. It was crammed full of things, mostly—according to Blake—Gussy's "rubbish." And while attempting to get at his cricket-boots, Blake had very sarcastically and wrathfully mentioned to Arthur Augustus his views on the state of the cupboard.

A heated discussion had then followed, Arthur Augustus being at first angry and indignant, and then icily calm and emphatic, answering all his chum's arguments with brief exclamations like "Wats!" and "Wot!" and "Wubbish!"

"Wubbish!" he repeated coldly. "Allow me to point out, Jack Blake, that I have as much right to use this cupboard as you!"

"Use it? Yes!" snorted Blake. "But not to jolly well stack the dashed thing with all your rubbish like this!"

"If you call my belongings wubbish, Jack Blake—"

"I do! Rotten silly rubbish!" said Blake. "What the thump d'you want to keep silk hats and neckties in a study cupboard for, you footling ass? It's a wonder you don't want to keep clobber with the grub in the top cupboard!"

"Wats! Pway do not be wic!" said Arthur Augustus.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,012.

"I am scarcely likely to be so foolish as to keep my clobber in with the grub, Jack Blake."

"You're ass enough, anyway!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come and take some of the rubbish out!" snorted Blake. "If you don't I shall yank it out myself!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in great alarm. "You had better not, Blake! I uttally wufuse to allow you to touch my things, you careless wottah!"

"Then take 'em out yourself!" roared Blake. "Don't I want my thumping cricket-boots, ass?"

"Pway do not woah at me, Blake," said Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "You know vewy well that I stwongly object to bein' woahed at."

"You—you—"

"You know perfectly well that I am not in the habit of keepin' my neckties in that cupboard," said Arthur Augustus, eyeing his chums frigidly. "I have placed them there tempowawly until I have an opportunity of goin' through them. Afiah all, there are only a few—"

"Few!" stuttered Blake. "Why, there must be three dozen or so—"

"Two dozen at most," corrected Arthur Augustus. "I weckou no fellow who wishes to be considahed well dvesseed can manage without a couple of dozen neckties to choose fwom. And most of these, I feah, are scarcely fit to wear. I have worn most of them at least four times."

"Four times—and worn out!" said Blake faintly. "Oh, ye gods!"

"I placed them in the cupboard," explained Arthur Augustus, "to await an opportunity of sortin' out the weally hopeful ones and destwoyin' the west. I shall have to weplace them with a fwesh supply, of course, and I weally think I ought to twot ovah to Wayland this afternoon and select a few. Do you think Tom Mewwy would mind if I cut the wicket this afternoon and wan ovah, Blake?"

"Cut the cricket to go and buy silly neckties!" spluttered Blake. "You—you hopeless dunny, of course he'll mind!"

"Go and ask him," suggested Herries, with a grin. "See what he says—"

"And does?" added Digby. "I rather fancy—"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Blow your silly neckties!" hooted Blake, losing patience. "Are you going to shift 'em out of that cupboard or are you not, Gussy?"

"Certainly not, Blake. I have as much wight—"

"Then here goes!" said Blake grimly.

And with that Blake laid hands on the pile of articles in the lower cupboard. With one sweep he dragged out most of them on to the floor. The neckties were neatly folded in

smart cardboard boxes, and as they struck the floor the boxes opened, scattering neckties of varied and wonderful hues all over the carpet.

There was a fearful howl from Arthur Augustus.

"Gweat Scott! You—you feahful wuffian, Blake!" he shrieked.

"You asked for it," said Blake, reaching for his boots which were visible now. "You refused—Yarooooop!"

Blake roared as the hard knuckles of Arthur Augustus clumped on his nose.

"Take that!" roared Gussy, his frigid calmness gone now. "I will amintash a feahful thwashin' for that, you wuffian! Put your—"

Arthur Augustus stopped speaking and put his own hands up, for Blake was coming at him with a rush. That tap on the nose, though not hefty, had hurt, and Blake meant to hurt Arthur Augustus in return.

The next moment the two chums were "going it," struggling and punching, their feet trampling among the scattered neckties. Herries and Digby sat on the table and looked on, with cheerful gins.

Blake had quite forgotten, in his exasperation, that to lay sacrilegious hands to Gussy's clobber was the crime of all crimes which only a "feahful thwashin'" would suitably punish. But he had good reason to remember it now.

"Tramp, tramp, tramp!"

The neckties were getting badly trampled on now; but Gussy seemed to have forgotten the neckties in his wrath. The uproar was at its height when the door opened and Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners looked in at the doorway. They entered swiftly and closed the door when they saw what was going on.

"Trouble in the family, eh?" grinned Lowther. "Go it, Gussy! Hit him where it hurts, Blake! Don't stop for us!"

"Hold on!" snorted Tom Merry. "Stop, you awful asses! What about the cricket? I'm not jolly well having you pair of dummies crooked for the match this afternoon! Separate them!"

Tom rushed in. A punch intended for Blake caught him on the chin; but he growled and grabbed at the irate Arthur Augustus. Manners and Herries grabbed at Blake and held him.

"Leggo!" roared Blake. "He punched my nose, and I'm going to smash him!"

"Some other time, then," said Tom Merry. "We want cricketers not crooks for the match this afternoon. Chuck it, you fatheads!"

"Welease me!" shouted Arthur Augustus excitedly. "That feahful wuffian has upset all my neckties! I am goin'—"

"So that's how it started?" grinned Lowther, eyeing the trampled neckties. "Well, it looks as if you've done your whack of trampling, too, Gussy!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus gave a wail as he suddenly sighted the havoc. Those neckties were not likely ever to be used again by the fastidious swell of the Fourth; nor were the boxes likely to be used to hold neckties again. "Oh, gweat Scott! This is all your fault, Blake, you feahful wuffian!"

"My fault, he blowed!" gasped Blake wrathfully. "Didn't you dot me on the nose for nothing, you—you imbecile!"

"Bai Jove! If you dare to call me an imbecile, Jack Blake—"

"What else are you—making a fuss like this over a few rotten neckties?" howled Blake.

"They were not wotten neckties until you laid wuffianly hands on them, Blake!" shouted Arthur Augustus, struggling with Tom Merry. "Welease me, Mewwy, and I will—"

"No, you won't," chuckled Tom. "Peace, my infants! You'll come and get changed for the cricket, Gussy."

"I uttably welease—"

"My dear fathead—"

"Welease me! I am goin' to see to my neckties, and then I am goin' to give Blake a thwashin'."

Tom Merry chuckled and released him. If Arthur Augustus desired to see to his neckties first, then the "thwashin'" would be postponed indefinitely. The wrath of Arthur Augustus, great as it was undoubtedly, was likely soon to evaporate. The noble Gussy very soon forgot and forgave as a rule.

Breathing hard the swell of the Fourth started to pick up his scattered, twisted, and trampled neckties, placing them carefully in their respective boxes. In the view of Arthur Augustus it was very important and necessary to thrash Blake; but it was still more important to see to the neckties first in case they got damaged still more. His chums grinned at each other and left him to it to go down to the changing-room—only Blake going reluctantly. Blake's nose was aching, and he looked as if he would much rather have stayed to take the thrashing from Arthur Augustus.

But he obeyed Tom Merry. The School House were playing the New House that afternoon, and though it was not an important match, Blake realised the necessity of

keeping undamaged and saving energy for the match instead of wasting energy on scrapping.

So Blake manfully ignored his damaged nose and joined the rest in the changing-room. There the talk was all of the match, and, like Tom Merry, Blake soon forgot Arthur Augustus. It was not until they were making for the ground that Tom Merry suddenly remembered.

"Hallo, where's that ass, Gussy?" he demanded, stopping short. "He wasn't in the changing-room, Blake. If he's late I'll scrag him!"

"Oh, my hat!" Blake suddenly remembered Gussy's remarks concerning a visit to Wayland to purchase new neckties. "Oh, my hat!" he gasped. "I hope he hasn't gone to Wayland after all!"

"What?" yelled Tom Merry.

"The—the awful idiot!" stuttered Blake. "He said something about going over to Wayland to get some new neckties, Tommy. I bet he has gone, too, after what happened to the others in the study."

"You—you mean he's gone to Wayland to get neckties—cut a cricket match to go after fooling neckties?" roared Tom Merry.

"Looks like it! He said something about going, anyway."

"That's so," agreed Herries. "I bet he has, too, as his stock was mucked up. It doesn't matter, though, Jolly good thing!"

"Doesn't matter?" howled Tom Merry.

"Not a bit," said Herries, who wasn't down to play in the match. "Let the awful idiot rip, and put me in his place, Tommy."

"You—you ass!" Tom Merry spluttered with wrath. Herries was quite a mediocre player; certainly he was far from being up to Gussy's standard. "If—if Gussy has gone, I'll—I'll—"

"May not be gone yet," said Blake. "Come on!"

Tom followed Blake in a flash as he started back for the School House at top speed. New House were reputed to be in fine form, and Tom Merry & Co. could not afford to lose the services of Arthur Augustus.

But they were obliged to do so, as it happened.

As they entered the quad they sighted an elegant figure wheeling a bicycle towards the gates with a bag slung over the lamp-bracket. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and he was obviously going out of gates.

"Gussy!" roared Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus looked round. Then he quickened his pace as he sighted the juniors.

"Gussy!" shrieked Tom Merry. "Stop! What about the match?"

"Wats!"

"But—but—Stop!" roared Tom. "Where the thump are you going, you born idiot?"

"I am goin' to Wayland, Tom Mewwy! You will be able to play Hewwies in my place. I have vewy important business on, and I wegwet I shall be unable to play. It is all Blake's fault, and you must blame him, deah boy!"

"You—you—Stop!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus did not stop. As Tom Merry scudded towards him, he vaulted into the saddle and rode through the gates. When Tom rushed out into the roadway with Blake at his heels, Arthur Augustus was disappearing up Rylcombe Lane at great speed.

"Oh, the—the awful ass!" stuttered Tom Merry, breathing hard. "I'll smash him for this, you see if I don't! Cutting a blessed cricket match for silly neckties. Well—well—"

Words failed Tom Merry. And as there was nothing to be done, for the match was already almost due to start, Tom Merry and Blake went back to Little Side, vowing to give Arthur Augustus a warm time when he did turn up.

And meantime Arthur Augustus had left his machine at Rylcombe Station and boarded the local train for Wayland Junction. A House match was an important matter to Arthur Augustus; but to be entirely without a single decent necktie to wear was a far more important matter to the swell of the Fourth. The beautiful neckties that had bestrewn the field of battle—otherwise the carpet in Study No. 6—had been trampled and soiled beyond repair, and the matter was not only important but very serious. Even a House match paled into insignificance against the more serious matter of being entirely without neckties—in the view of Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 2. Unfortunate!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stepped gracefully out into Wayland High Street, and glanced carelessly up and down the dusty, sunny, old-fashioned street. The swell of the Fourth had forgotten his recent troubles, and he was now feeling quite cheery and happy.

In Mr. Trion's outfitter's establishment Arthur Augustus had spent quite a delightful hour or so among beautiful ties and gloves and collars and fancy waistcoats and gorgeous socks. And not only had he purchased a new supply of "natty" neckties, but socks and gloves and various other items as well.

Mr. Trion had wanted to send the things up to the school, but Gussy had gracefully insisted upon taking them himself, being eager to feast his eyes on his purchases at the earliest possible moment.

But now, as he glanced up and down the quaint old High Street, Arthur Augustus gave a sudden jump. His eyes had fallen suddenly on a clock higher up the street. It told him that he had only two minutes in which to catch his train.

"Oh, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I must wun—wun like anythin'!"

Tucking his parcels under one arm, and with his bag in his hand, Arthur Augustus took to his heels and scudded for the station. So absorbed had he been in Mr. Trion's establishment that he had quite overlooked the flight of time. Even Father Time refused to wait while Arthur Augustus selected neckties, socks, and gloves—important as that task was.

Arthur Augustus ran hard, and he came up to the station entrance with a rush, and he came up to the ticket-inspector at the barrier with a rush. He had his return-ticket fortunately.

Reaching the barrier, Arthur Augustus dropped his parcels and bag, and hurriedly felt in his waistcoat-pocket for his ticket. Just then an elderly gentleman, with a sour, irritable face, came hurrying up.

Lowering his handbag to the ground, the elderly gentleman pushed Arthur Augustus rudely aside, and shoved his ticket under the official's nose.

Just then the whistle of the local went, and the sound electrified both the elderly gentleman and Gussy into swift action.

The sour-faced gentleman stooped to grab his bag, and at the same moment, without waiting to get his ticket punched, Arthur Augustus grabbed up parcels and bag and made to rush through the barrier.

Unfortunately, the old gentleman, having just stepped aside, was in the way, and, unable to stop himself, Arthur Augustus and he collided violently, the elderly gentleman sprawling forwards on hands and knees, and Arthur Augustus sprawling over him headlong.

Crash!

"Oh cwumbs!"

"Ow!" gasped the elderly gentleman.

The two sprawled and gasped among parcels and bags.

"Ow!" panted the old gentleman. "You—you careless young rascal! You—D'Arcy, you young villain!"

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus suddenly recognised the sour, irritable features of the old gentleman. It was Mr. Selby, the master of the Third at St. Jim's.

"Oh cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, sitting up and blinking at him. "Weally, sir—"

"You clumsy young noodle!" gasped Mr. Selby angrily. "I—I am hurt very much, D'Arcy! I will punish you—"

Without stopping to finish, Mr. Selby scrambled up painfully, grabbed his bag, and hurried on to the platform. Though the whistle had gone some moments ago, the train had not started yet. But as Mr. Selby rushed on to the platform it began to move.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus glimpsed it, and, swiftly grabbing the other bag and his parcels he scudded for the train, passing the ambling Third Form master with a rush.

The train was fairly on the move now, but a carriage-door swung open, and, flinging in bag and parcels, Arthur Augustus scrambled into it.

But Mr. Selby was less lucky. As he jumped for the same compartment, a porter grabbed him and held him back.

The next moment the train rumbled out of the station. As Arthur Augustus blinked out of the window he glimpsed Mr. Selby on the platform, shaking his fist at him as the train swept round the bend.

"Oh cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Old Selby seems vewy watty! But it was weally his own fault, bai Jove! He should not have pushed me aside so wudely. Weally, I am wathah glad the wottah missed the twain. It served him wight, bai Jove!"

Perhaps it did; but Mr. Selby was scarcely likely to see that, and even Arthur Augustus felt rather uneasy as he thought about it. True, Mr. Selby was not his Form master. But he was a very unpleasant gentleman indeed, and he was bound to make things unpleasant for Arthur Augustus if he could.

Arthur Augustus thought of this during the return journey to St. Jim's. He had bowled Mr. Selby over, had hurt

him more or less, and had undoubtedly hurt his scholastic dignity still more. And he would be bound to blame Gussy for having lost his train.

But by the time Arthur Augustus reached St. Jim's he had quite dismissed the unpopular master from his mind. Gussy was not much given to looking ahead for possible troubles. After housing his bike, he hurried up to Study No. 6 with his purchases, eager to examine and feast his eyes on them.

Evidently the cricket match was not over yet, for the study was empty. Gussy felt glad, for it would give him time to try on a few ties and things before the study looking-glass.

Arthur Augustus was fairly longing to do that.

He opened the parcels first, and was just trying on a pair of gloves, when there came a tramp of feet in the passage. Next moment the door opened, and his chums marched into the study with the Terrible Three at their heels.

"Here he is!" snorted Blake.

"He's back, the footling fathead!" snapped Tom Merry.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"You burbling ass!"

"You silly cuckoo!"

"You frabjous owl!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus blinked at them. He had quite forgotten, if he hadn't forgiven, the little trouble earlier in the afternoon. He stared for a moment, and then he understood.

"Weally, you fellows—" he began, frowning.

"Now, you footling dummy!" said Tom Merry wrathfully. "What the thump do you mean by it?"

"By what?" asked Arthur Augustus coldly.

"By cutting the match!" howled Tom Merry. "We've been licked—licked by a dashed wicket! All through you, you crass ass!"

"You silly chump!" added Blake. "All through you! Serag the idiot!"

"Cutting a House match!" gasped Tom Merry, almost overcome with wrath. "Cutting a dashed match to go shopping—like a bargain-hunter! Letting us down to go and buy neckties! Oh, you—you tailor's dummy!"

"Bai Jove!"

Really, it had never occurred to Arthur Augustus that the fellows would take that view of it. Indeed, he had never reflected upon the possibility that the School House might be licked through his absence from the team. It was not an important fixture at all, and he had felt certain School House would win easily without his valuable aid.

But they had been licked!

"Bai Jove!" mumbled Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy, vewy sowwy indeed that my absence has lost us the match. Howevah, it weally could not have been avoided."

"What?"

"It was uttaly impossible for me to wait a nootah week to get a fwesh supply of neckties, Tom Mewwy."

"Another week!" hooted Tom. "Couldn't you have gone to Wayland to-morrow night?"

"Certainly not, deah boy; that would have been quite useless. I should have had scarcely an hour to examine and select them satisfactorily in an evenin'. I wewah a full aftahnnoon for such an important mattah, and it was uttaly impos to wait until Satahday or next Wednesday. Allow me to point out that the fault is entially Blake's."

"You—you—"

"If Blake had not uttaly destroyed my stock the mattah would not have been so vewy urgent!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It is entially Blake's fault that School House has lost the match," said Arthur Augustus, eying Blake frigidly. "I twust Blake is thowghly ashamed of himself!"

"Oh, you—"

It was too much for Jack Blake, and he rushed at Arthur Augustus ferociously.

"Bai Jove! Mind my gloves!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Mind my gloves! Blake, you wuffian— Yawwoocogh!"

Blake had returned the tap on the nose Arthur Augustus had given him earlier that afternoon. The next moment the swell of the Fourth was obliged to use his natty new kid gloves as boxing-gloves, for Blake was not in the mood to allow him time to take them off.

Nor were the others. They were justly—in their view—wrathful at losing the match, and they blamed Gussy for the licking, naturally enough. They joined Blake in the rush for Arthur Augustus, and that astonished youth went down on the carpet, with his chums swarming over him.

"Rag him!" gasped Tom Merry. "Teach the fathead a lesson! He won't let us down again in a hurry after this—we'll see to that."

"Yawwoocogh!"

Arthur Augustus howled fiendishly as his noble head was tapped on the fender.



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was rushing through the barrier when he collided with an elderly gentleman. Crash! The two sprawled and gasped among the parcels and bags. "Oh, cwumbs!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "Ow!" panted the old gentleman. "You—you careless young rascal! You—D'Arcy! You young villain!" "Oh, gweat Scott!" ejaculated D'Arcy, suddenly recognising the sour visage of Mr. Selby, the master of the Third Form. (See Chapter 2.)

"Rub his napper in some soot," suggested Herries.

"Stuff his giddy neckties down the back of his neck," said Lowther. "Where are they?"

It seemed a suitable punishment—one to fit the crime, as it were. Lowther looked over the things on the table. There were no neckties among them, but the handbag was on the table.

"Let my things alone, you wuffians!" bellowed Arthur Augustus, in great alarm. "Lowthah, if you dare to touch my neckties—"

Lowther did dare—at least, he dared to open the bag. Then he jumped.

There were certainly no neckties in the handbag. Lowther fairly blinked at the contents.

"What the—the dickens!" he gasped.

"Got 'em?" gasped Blake, who was seated on Gussy's chest. "Bring the dashed things here, Lowther! We'll give him neckties!"

"But there aren't any neckties here!" gasped Lowther, eyeing Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's furious face curiously.

"What's this mean, Gussy?"

"Lowthah, you wuffian, if you dare to touch my new neckties—" shrieked Gussy in horrified alarm.

"But there aren't any neckties here," stuttered Lowther. "Who the thump does this belong to, Gussy, you awful idiot?"

And plunging his hand into the opened bag Lowther brought to light a cheque-book and held it aloft.

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

Gussy's chums were just as astonished as he was—indeed, so astonished were they that they released Arthur Augustus and allowed him to scramble up, breathless and panting.

"Oh, gweat Scott!" articulated Arthur Augustus.

He stared blankly at the cheque-book in Lowther's hand; then he blinked into the bag. There certainly were no neckties there, nor were there any other articles of wearing apparel. Instead, there was a folded newspaper, a scholastic magazine, and a bank pass-book. On the front of the pass-book was a name—the name of Mr. Henry Selby.

Arthur Augustus understood then.

He had got the wrong bag; Mr. Henry Selby had also got the wrong bag. He had got Mr. Selby's bag and his folded newspaper and his scholastic magazine and his bank-book and pass-book; whilst Mr. Selby had Gussy's bag and new neckties and new socks and new handkerchiefs.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus blinked at them. He was feeling alarmed—exceedingly alarmed. Mr. Selby was a very bad-tempered gentleman, and it occurred to Arthur Augustus that when he found out his mistake he would possibly do damage to the new socks and neckties and handkerchiefs.

"Oh, bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "How feebly wotten! The old wottah's got my new neckties and socks and handkies! If he is wough with them—"

"But who," ejaculated Tom Merry in alarm—"who do these things belong to, Gussy?"

"Selby."

"What?"

"I met old Selby at Wayland," explained Arthur Augustus coldly. "I barged into him at the station and bowled him ovah, you know. He was vewy angwy, especially as it made him lose the twain."

"You—you bowled him over?" said Blake.

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"Yaas. It was entiahly his own fault, howevah. But it is weally wathah awkward," said Arthur Augustus, frowning in great annoyance. "The old idiot must have wushed off with the w'ong bag. I can see now that this is not mine, though I nevah noticed it befoah. I weally twust he will be careful with my neckties and socks and—"

"But these things, you awful idiot!" gasped Tom Merry, pointing to the cheque-book. "Great pip! Selby will rave, foam at the mouth, when he knows you've got these private things of his, Gussy."

"I cannot help that, deah boy. Selby is a careless old donkey—"

"Oh, indeed, D'Arcy!"

It was a rasping voice from the doorway. Mr. Selby stood there, glaring into the study. Apparently he did not think it necessary to knock before entering a junior study.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lowther.

"Oh, indeed!" repeated Mr. Selby, his eyes glinting as he eyed Arthur Augustus. "So I am a careless old donkey, D'Arcy!"

"Weally, sir—"

"I will deal with that later, D'Arcy," snapped the Third Form master. "It is one more piece of insolence for which you will answer to your Housemaster. I have come— Ah, there— Lowther, put that cheque-book down this instant!"

Mr. Selby had sighted the opened bag and the cheque-book. His face went crimson with anger. Lowther dropped the cheque-book like a hot brick. Mr. Selby almost jumped to the table, his face showing great relief, mixed with fury.

He snatched up the cheque-book, pocketed it, and snatched up the bag. He glared inside it. Then he took out the contents and looked through them, glancing almost feverishly through the pages of the pass-book. He stopped, at length, and turned a look of fury and suspicion on Arthur Augustus.

"D'Arcy!" he bellowed.

"Yaas, sir."

"Where is that ten-pound note, boy?"

"Wha-what?"

"The ten-pound note that was in this bag!" thundered Mr. Selby, his eyes fixed like gimlets on Gussy's astounded face. "I placed it with the cheque-book and my pass-book in this bag before leaving the bank in Wayland. It should be there now. It is not there!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Do you hear me?" bellowed Mr. Selby. "What have you done with my note, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus blinked at him. Then he carefully took his eyeglass from his waistcoat-pocket, carefully and steadily adjusted it in his noble eye, and blinked at Mr. Selby again. It was a look that was intended to wither the master, but it didn't.

"I do not understand you, Mr. Selby," he said, with icy calmness.

"You—you—you young rascal!" hooted Mr. Selby. "You know quite well what I mean. There was a ten-pound note in that bag. I remember quite distinctly placing it there before leaving the bank. If it has gone, then you are responsible."

"I know nothing whatevah about a ten-pound note, Mr. Selby," said Arthur Augustus haughtily.

"You dare to tell me you know nothing about it?"

"Yaas, sir."

"You are a young liar, then?"

"What?"

"And a young thief!" spluttered Mr. Selby.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 3.

Unpleasant for Gussy!

"THIEF!"

The Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could scarcely believe his own aristocratic ears.

Nor could his startled chums believe theirs.

They just stared at the spluttering Mr. Selby.

Arthur Augustus went crimson at first; then his face paled, only a spot of colour showing on both cheeks. But his voice was icily calm when he answered.

"Am I to undahstand, Mr. Selby," he exclaimed haughtily, "that you have just verferred to me as a liar?"

"Yes, you young rascal!"

"And a thief?"

"Yes!" bellowed Mr. Selby.

"Gweat Scott!"

"What else can I infer?" hooted the angry master. "I distinctly remember placing a ten-pound note in that hand-bag. It is not there now. I hold you responsible, D'Arcy."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Just a minute, sir," said Tom Merry, looking angrier if anything than Arthur Augustus himself. "Lowther has only just opened that bag. It's just as it was when he

opened it a moment ago. There was no note in it then. I don't believe D'Arcy has even opened it at all."

"Of course he didn't!" said Blake indignantly. "He thought it contained ties and things, and he was only just yelling at us because he thought we were going to muck them up."

"Rubbish! Have you boys seen the contents of this bag before?" demanded Mr. Selby furiously.

"No, we haven't!" snapped Tom Merry.

"Then I hold D'Arcy responsible! By intention, or by criminal carelessness, he took my bag at Wayland Junction, leaving his own bag, full of wretched rubbish, in my possession. I—"

"That is quite untwue, sir!"

"What?"

"It was entiahly your fault, Mr. Selby," said Arthur Augustus, with calm deliberation. "You were the first—you picked up my bag and wushed away, leaving your own behind—either by intention or criminal carelessness!"

"What!" hooted Mr. Selby.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Blake. "Gussy—"

"Pway leave this mattah to me, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, his noble eye gleaming. "Mr. Selby is allowin' his dislike of me to cause him to make untwue and extwagavant wemarks. The mistake ovah the bags is entiahly his fault. And if Mr. Selby persists in callin' me a thief—"

"I do!" gasped Mr. Selby.

"Then I have no othah wesome to call Mr. Selby a widiculous fabwicatah—"

"D'Arcy!" spluttered Mr. Selby.

"And," proceeded Arthur Augustus calmly, "an old donkey!"

"D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Selby.

"Gussy—" murmured Blake, horrified.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus had done it now.

Mr. Selby almost foamed at the mouth. To be called, in one breath as it were, a fabricator and an old donkey, by a Lower School boy, was worse than terrible.

"You—you insolent young villain!" he stuttered. "You—you dare— This is too much! You shall suffer dearly for this, D'Arcy. You have caused me grievous bodily harm by knocking me over at the station; you have caused me to lose my train, and you are responsible for the loss of a ten-pound note belonging to me, in addition to causing me anxiety and considerable annoyance over the other contents of my bag which are of an exceedingly private nature. And now you—you add to your other offences by scandalously insulting me."

"The mistake ovah the bags was your own fault, Mr. Selby," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "The unfortunate accident at the station bawwiah was as much your fault as mine; we both heard the whistle and wushed at the same moment. If there was a bauknote in that bag I have not seen it; I have not even opened that bag, nor was I aware that it was yours until a few moments ago. You complain that I have insulted you; but you appeal to ovahlook the fact that you have insulted me far worse by callin' me a liar and thief without the slightest justification. I twust," added Arthur Augustus loftily, "that this explanation will satisfy you, and cause you to withdwaw your wotten charges!"

But the trust of Arthur Augustus was misplaced—very much so! Mr. Selby glowered at him speechlessly for a moment. Then he exploded.

"I will do nothing of the kind, you impudent young rascal!" he rasped. "Instead, I will take you before Dr. Holmes, and the matter shall be thoroughly sifted."

"I am quite weady to go befoah Doctah Holmes," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I shall be quite certain of receivin' justice fwom him, bai Jove!"

"Enough! Come with me!" gasped Mr. Selby.

He hooked a bony hand in D'Arcy's collar. Arthur Augustus turned pink at that.

"Pway welease my collah, Mr. Selby," he said indignantly. "I have no intention of attemptin' to wun away fwom you!"

"Come!" thundered the master.

Arthur Augustus went—he had no choice in the matter. Mr. Selby fairly dragged him from the study and along the passage outside. Realising it was undignified to hang back, Arthur Augustus stepped out then, fairly seething with wrath.

Instead of making for the Head's study at once, however, Mr. Selby took him along to his own study. He shoved the junior roughly inside, and then he closed and locked the door and went off to the Head's study alone. Evidently Mr. Selby intended to get a few words in first with Dr. Holmes.

Inside Mr. Selby's study Arthur Augustus was trembling with indignation. To lock him up as if he were a prisoner who might attempt to run away was adding insult to injury.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"The—the frightful old wottah! Weally, if this widic affaih goes on I shall feel like punchin' old Selby's nose."

The swell of the Fourth seated himself gracefully in Mr. Selby's armchair; he saw no reason why he should remain standing. Though highly indignant and exceedingly wrathful, Arthur Augustus was in no wise alarmed at the charge; it was just a ridiculous affair—a bit of spiteful animosity one might expect from Mr. Henry Selby. Whether there really was a tenner missing, or whether Mr. Selby really believed he had taken one, Arthur Augustus did not trouble to wonder. It was all absurd and distinctly annoying and upsetting. Arthur Augustus was quite in a flutter now as to the fate of his own bag, and the neckties in it.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus in dismay. "I weally do hope that wottah has not vented his w'etched spite on my new neckties!"

It was a disturbing thought, and the swell of the Fourth was much more worried as to what had happened to his purchases than what was to happen to him.

Ten minutes had ticked by from the clock on the mantelpiece when a step came outside the study. Then the key grated in the lock, and as the door swung open Arthur Augustus rose from his chair. He intended to ask without further delay for news of what had happened to his bag—a very important matter!

But it proved to be Kildare, not Mr. Selby.

"Come along, kid!" he said, eyeing D'Arcy curiously. "Head's study; get a move on!"

"Vewy well, Kildare!"

Arthur Augustus followed Kildare. Now he had to face the charge his agitation left him, and his aristocratic face was quite calm and composed when he stood before the Head's desk a few seconds later.

The Head's look was not promising as he bent a stern eye on Arthur Augustus. As a matter of fact, Dr. Holmes did not see the matter in quite such a serious light as did Mr. Selby—at least, he did not seriously entertain the possibility of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy having purloined the note, as did Mr. Henry Selby. In his view Mr. Selby had been very careless in placing a banknote in an unlocked handbag—very careless indeed. And Dr. Holmes was feeling annoyed and irritated. In his view either the note had been lost or had been hidden by one of the juniors as a practical joke.

Yet the Head looked very sternly at Arthur Augustus. Mr. Selby had done his best to make things appear very black against the junior. According to Mr. Selby, Arthur Augustus had purposely knocked him down at the station, had thus caused him to lose his train, and had insulted him by calling him an old donkey and a liar—part of which was true and part untrue.

But it was no wonder Dr. Holmes looked very grimly and sternly at the junior. It wasn't usual for a junior member of St. Jim's to knock a master down, or to call him an old donkey and a liar; indeed, it was most unusual, and a terrific "crime."

"D'Arcy," he exclaimed, "I have sent for you to answer serious charges made against you by Mr. Selby."

"Oh, yaas, sir," said Arthur Augustus quite serenely. "I am quite weady to answah them, sir."

Dr. Holmes looked slightly taken aback. A stern glance from the august headmaster of St. Jim's was usually enough to make a Lower School boy quake and tremble. There was no sign of quaking or trembling about Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—despite the terrific nature of his "crimes."

"Very well!" said the Head, with a cough. "In the first place, Mr. Selby has reported to me that you wilfully caused him to fall on the station platform this afternoon."

"Uttahh untwue, sir!"

"What?"

"Mr. Selby is allowin' his dislike of me to cause him to ovahstate the case, sir," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I woud nevah be guiltay of bowlin' ovah a gentleman of his wibe yeas, even though I personally neithah like nor respect him, sir."

"D'Arcy!"

Dr. Holmes jumped. Mr. Selby went pink with wrath.

"Dr. Holmes—you heard that?" he gasped. "I—I—"

"D'Arcy," said the Head, "how—how dare you speak like that of a master of this school!"

"Because it is quite twue, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "Mr. Selby knows quite well that it was an accident, and I am quite suah the ticket collectah at Wayland Junction will agree with me. We both heard the engine whistle, and we both wushed at the same instant. I did not even know that it was Mr. Selby until affaih it had happened."

"Dr. Holmes, the wretched boy is—"

"Kindly allow me to deal with this matter now, Mr. Selby," said Dr. Holmes tartly. "D'Arcy, you will relate to me what happened at Wayland Junction."

"Oh, yaas, sir!"

Arthur Augustus did so, calmly and serenely.

"Then you claim you were not the first to pick up a bag, D'Arcy?"

"Oh, no, sir! I picked up the bag that Mr. Selby left and wushed off with it, believin' it was my own bag, sir."

The Head looked at Mr. Selby. That gentleman went pink. He had not chosen to make it clear that he had been the first to pick up one of the bags.

"Were you the first to pick up one of the bags, Mr. Selby?" asked the Head.

"I—I—I must confess that I am not quite clear as to what happened exactly, sir," stammered Mr. Selby. "Possibly I was the first."

"You did not make that point clear to me, Mr. Selby," said Dr. Holmes tartly, giving the master a peculiar look. "However, if you are quite certain that the ten-pound note was inside the bag—"

"I am quite sure, sir!" said Mr. Selby, his eyes glinting at Arthur Augustus. "As the note was not in the bag when I recovered it from this boy it is quite clear that he must know what has happened to it."

The Head frowned and looked at Arthur Augustus.

"You have heard what Mr. Selby has said, D'Arcy," he said quietly. "If you have any knowledge of the note in question—if you have removed such a note from the bag either from a mistaken sense of humour or for any other reason—I would advise you to speak before the matter becomes more serious than it is now."

Arthur Augustus held his noble head high.

"I assuah you, Dr. Holmes," he said, with great dignity. "that I know nothin' whatevah of any banknote. I did not even open the bag at all, nor have I handled a single article that was in it. I was not aware that the bag was not mine until Lowthah—"

Arthur Augustus paused; he did not wish to bring his friends into the unpleasant matter.

"I understand that Lowther of the Shell was handling the bag when Mr. Selby entered the room, D'Arcy," said the Head. "Do you mean to tell me that you had not discovered the change of bags until then?"

"Wathah not, sir!" said Arthur Augustus emphatically. "It was Lowthah who made the discovahwy. The wottah—"

Arthur Augustus paused again.

"I do not attach the slightest importance to that point," said Mr. Selby hastily. "D'Arcy would be scarcely likely to remove the note from the bag before the other juniors. The note was obviously removed long before Lowther handled the bag."

The Head turned to Kildare, who had remained in the room.

"Will you kindly bring the rest of the boys who were in the study at the time before me, Kildare?"

"Yes, sir."

Kildare went out; but he was back almost at once—having found Tom Merry & Co. haunting the passage outside. They came in, looking quite scared.

"Merry," exclaimed the Head, "you are aware, I presume, that Mr. Selby has made certain charges against D'Arcy?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom, with an indignant look at Mr. Selby.

"Very well. You will kindly relate to me all that took place in the study before the entrance of Mr. Selby," said the Head briefly.

Tom Merry did so. Arthur Augustus did not appear to think the matter very serious; but the other juniors did. And Tom felt it was not the time to keep anything back. After all, it had only been an innocent rag.

"It—it was only a little rag, sir," he concluded. "Gussy—I mean, D'Arcy, had cut the cricket in order to go and buy neckties and things from Wayland, and we were all waxy—I mean, angry, with him."

"You did not see him open the bag?"

"No, sir. He was just opening the parcels and trying on gloves. Then Lowther opened the bag, pretending he was going to play tricks with the neckties—"

"Neckties?"

"Yes, sir. You—you see, we thought D'Arcy's neckties were in the bag, and we thought it was D'Arcy's bag, of course. D'Arcy thought so, too. He hadn't the faintest idea it wasn't his own bag."

"How do you know that, Merry?"

Tom Merry coughed.

"He—he—well, because he yelled so when Lowther opened it," said Tom, half-smiling. "He thought we were going to harm his neckties. You—you see, sir, he—he's rather particular about his clobber—I mean, his clothes; awfully particular, sir!"

"Simply raves if anybody touches his clothes," added Blake eagerly, anxious to make that point clear. "He's rather a silly chump over clothes—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Silence, D'Arcy! I think I understand!" said the Head, eyeing Arthur Augustus' excited face grimly. "In the view of you boys, then, D'Arcy was totally ignorant of the fact that the bag was not his own?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

It was an eager chorus.

Mr. Selby spluttered.

"Absurd!" he articulated. "Dr. Holmes, I beg of you not to allow yourself to be misled by the untruthful trickery of these boys. They are attempting to shield their companion, and while I do not suggest that they know anything of the missing banknote, I am quite convinced that D'Arcy does."

"On the contrary, I am not at all convinced, Mr. Selby," said Dr. Holmes, raising his hand. "You may rest assured, however, that the matter will be thoroughly investigated. You are quite certain that you placed the note in the bag?"

"Most certainly, sir. I had paid a cheque into the bank withdrawing the banknote for certain immediate expenses. I remember placing the note in the bag quite well."

"It was an extraordinary place to put a loose banknote," said the Head tartly. "I am still more surprised that you did not lock the bag afterwards, Mr. Selby. I presume you have made the strictest inquiries at the bank concerning the loss?"

Mr. Selby blushed.

"I—I—er—I have not done so yet, Dr. Holmes. I did not feel such a course was necessary in the circumstances," stammered the master.

"You should have done so before bringing such a grave charge against any boy," said the Head coldly. "Will you kindly make strict inquiries without delay, and I think it will be advisable to search the bag again thoroughly. Until that has been done the matter must stand over."

"Dr. Holmes," gasped Mr. Selby, almost trembling with anger, "I trust you will not overlook this boy's offences! He has assaulted me, and has—has actually called me an old donkey and a fabricator! Such unexampled insolence and—"

"I have not forgotten, Mr. Selby!" snapped the Head, looking sternly at Arthur Augustus. "I will deal with that also in due course. If D'Arcy has referred to you in scandalous terms he will certainly be very severely punished, whatever the outcome of the other matter. You understand, D'Arcy?"

"Oh, yaas, sir," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I do not deny havin' called Mr. Selby an old donkey and a fabricatab, and I do not wegwet havin' done so. Wathah not!"

"D'Arcy!" thundered Dr. Holmes.

"I wegwet to have to use such expressions befoah you, sir," said Arthur Augustus gracefully, "but a fellow would be lackin' in spiwit and dignity if he failed—"

"Silence! That is enough!" gasped Dr. Holmes.

"Kildare, kindly escort D'Arcy to the punishment-room."

"Weally, sir—"

"Silence! Another word and I will cane you here and now, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus did not say another word. The tone of Dr. Holmes' voice deterred him. Kildare's hand fell on his arm, and he went out of the room, looking quite bewildered. His chums looked at him with deep sympathy as they followed him out a moment later and watched him locked in the punishment-room. It was very plain that Arthur Augustus had scarcely expected the interview to end like that. But it had ended like that, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was undoubtedly "for it!"

CHAPTER 4.

Wally Takes a Hand!

"THE—the awful ass!"

"The blithering dummy!"

"The—the sap-headed jabberwock!"

Tom Merry & Co. were referring to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Much as they sympathised with that luckless youth, they could not help saying what they thought of his attitude in the matter. A fellow who would call a master to his face a fabricator and an old donkey was certainly several sorts of an ass! And to repeat it in the presence of the august headmaster of St. Jim's was the act of a born idiot—according to Tom Merry & Co.

Certainly Arthur Augustus had a great deal of justification for having called Mr. Selby such uncomplimentary names. None the less, only a fellow like Arthur Augustus would have been "ass enough" to do it to Mr. Selby's face and repeat the offence before the Head.

But Arthur Augustus had done it, and now he was for it.

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Whatever the outcome of the missing tenner affair, his punishment could scarcely be less than a terrific licking. And being D'Arcy's chums, Tom Merry & Co. were much concerned—far more concerned than was Arthur Augustus himself, in fact.

Moreover, they could see the seriousness of the matter of the missing tenner, which obviously Arthur Augustus could not see, or refused to see. As yet Dr. Holmes, unlike Mr. Selby, refused to be convinced that Arthur Augustus knew anything of the note. But if, after thorough search and inquiry, the note failed to turn up, then it was quite likely matters might become exceedingly serious for the lofty and dignified swell of the Fourth.

"Oh, the awful ass!" groaned Blake, as they made their gloomy way back to Study No. 6. "He's fairly asking for trouble. This means a Head's licking for him at least!"

"More likely a flogging!" grunted Herries. "And if this rotten tenner affair gets serious—"

"It's serious enough already, I fancy," said Tom Merry, frowning. "If the silly banknote had been left on the bank counter by old Selby, the people at the bank would have sent word long ago. I don't like it."

"Nor do I," growled Blake, looking very worried. "You know how Selby hates Gussy, and his younger brother, too. He'll force the Head to take action if the note doesn't turn up. It's rotten!"

All agreed that it was rotten.

As the juniors were making for their study they met Wally D'Arcy, Curly Gibson, and Frank Levison of the Third Form. D'Arcy minor was looking grim, but his chums were grinning.

"Look here!" snorted Wally, stopping the juniors.

"What's this about old Gus?"

"You've heard something already, kid?" asked Tom Merry, in surprise.

"Yes, I jolly well have!" said Wally wrathfully. "And not so much of your kid, young Merry!"

"You cheeky young scamp—" began Tom, half-laughing, but the scamp of the Third interrupted him.

"What's it mean?" he demanded. "Trimble's putting it about that my major's just been yanked off to the punishment-room."

"That's so," agreed Tom.

"Trimble's told the truth for once," said Lowther. "Wonders will never cease! Yes, it's true, young child!"

"You cheese it, Lowther!" sniffed Wally, eyeing Tom Merry rather anxiously. "Look here, can't you tell a man? Trimble's spinning a yarn that Gussy's charged with pinching a tenner belonging to the Selby bird. I jolly well punched Trimble's nose for saying it. But—but something's wrong. Curly here saw Gussy being yanked off by Kildare."

"Well, Trimble's right as it happens," said Tom Merry, seeing Wally was genuinely upset. "It's all rot, of course, but facts are facts, Wally. Selby claims Gussy's done something with his tenner, and Gussy's just been taken to the punishment-room while the matter's being investigated. But—"

"Well!" ejaculated Wally, almost speechless with indignation. "You—you mean to say old Selby's charged my blessed major with theft?"

"It amounts to that, I suppose!" said Tom grimly. "But you've no need to worry overmuch, kid. The Head knows old Gussy couldn't—"

"Blow what the Head knows!" hooted Wally wrathfully. "I'm thinking about that old beast having the cheek to charge my major with a thing like that. Nice thing, ain't it? A blessed insult to our family. My hat! Won't I just make the old bird sit up for this!"

"I should!" agreed Lowther solemnly. "Challenge him to a duel to wipe out the insult, my little man! Pistols and coffee for two, you know."

"Rats! Look here, Tom Merry! What's it mean? Tell a man all about it."

Tom smiled, and told the excited fag. Young Wally breathed hard when he had finished the story.

"Well!" he gasped. "Well, of all the old beasts!"

"He's all that!" agreed Blake.

"If I'd been there," said Wally. "I'd have called him something worse than a thumping fibber and an old donkey! Fancy calling old Gus a liar and a thief! Well—well—"

Words failed the fag.

"Cheek!" remarked Curly Gibson. "Awful cheek of Selby! If he'd called me that I should have dotted him one on the nose."

"That—that's what I should have done!" gasped Wally, his eyes gleaming. "And, what's more, I've a jolly good mind to do it now!" he added belligerently. "You old fogies in the Fourth and Shell are awful funks!"

"You young ass!"

"Rats! You'll see!" said Wally darkly. "Old Gus is an awful ass—I've told him so : any times—but I'm not

standing him being called a thief! I'm going to make old Selby sit up for this, you see if I don't."

"Bow-wow!"

Tom Merry & Co. walked on, smiling. They were used to hearing the heroes of the Third make blood-curdling threats against their tyrannical Form master.

But, as it happened, Wally D'Arcy was in earnest this time—if his grinning chums weren't!

"Come on!" snapped Wally, as Tom Merry & Co. walked away. "We're going to look into this, you men!"

"No concern of ours," said Curly Gibson uneasily. "Your silly major can look after himself, I suppose?"

"Eh?" said Wally. "You're asking for a thick ear, young Gibson?"

"No; but—"

"Then don't call my major silly, or you'll jolly well get one!" snorted Wally.

"But you've called him worse than that many times, you ass!" said Curly independently. "Why shouldn't I—"

"Because I'm his brother, and can call him what I like!" snapped Wally. "Now, you chaps, come on! We're going to try to have a few words with old Gus, and then we're going to—"

My hat!"

Wally paused. The fags were standing at the moment at the head of the stairs, just about to go down them. But just at that instant a well-known voice came up to them from below.

"Ah! I was just about to come to your room, Mr. Selby. Have you discovered anything in regard to your banknote?"

"I have not, Mr. Railton," came Mr. Selby's rasping, irritable tones. "I have been on the telephone to the bank, and they state emphatically that no banknote had been left on the counter. I have also subjected my bag to a most thorough search, without avail."

"It is very strange and very disturbing," said Mr. Railton. "You are quite sure that you did not place the banknote somewhere else—in your pocket, for instance?"

"Oh, quite!" snapped Mr. Selby ungraciously. "I have already made it clear that I placed it in my bag, Mr. Railton."

"I sincerely trust that it will soon turn up, at all events, Mr. Selby."

Mr. Railton walked on, apparently not disposed to discuss the matter further whilst Mr. Selby was in such a mood. Wally grinned a trifle and peeped over the banisters. He was just in time to see Mr. Railton walking away. Then he saw Mr. Selby. The master of the Third, with a very sour face, was standing stock still in the passage immediately below Wally. He was staring after Mr. Railton in rather a startled manner, and then quite suddenly he plunged his hand into his inner coat-pocket, and withdrew a bundle of papers. As a matter of fact, so certain had Mr. Selby been that he had placed the banknote in his bag that he had never troubled to search his pockets thoroughly. But the Housemaster's remarks had brought a faint glimmer of recollection to him.

But Wally D'Arcy did not know that. He watched Mr. Selby fumbling with his wallet and papers almost feverishly, and then he turned to his chums with a reckless look on his mischievous face.

"Quiet!" he breathed. "And get ready to run for it, you men!"

"What the thump—"

Frank Levison stopped with a gasp as Wally swiftly unhooked one of the fire-buckets from the stand at the head of the stairs. It was half-full of water, and Wally's intention was only too obvious.

"Wally, you awful ass!" breathed Levison minor.

"Don't!" hissed Stanley Gibson, in alarm. "Wally—"

"Rats!"



Wally D'Arcy swiftly unhooked one of the fire-buckets and stepped to the banisters. He hesitated a brief second, and then—Swoosh! A stream of water shot outwards and downwards to fall directly on to Mr. Selby's bald head! (See this page.)

Wally stepped to the banisters, hesitated a brief second, and then—

Swoooooosh!

"Yaroooh!"

Bump!

Wally had done it!

As the young rascal tipped up the bucket recklessly a stream of water streamed out and shot downwards.

It fell directly on to Mr. Selby's bald head, and there followed a strangled howl that rang through the school, and this was followed by a bump as Mr. Selby sat down violently, water streaming from him in a cascade.

"Run for it!"

Wally hissed the words desperately, scared enough now at what he had done. He had acted thoughtlessly, impulsively, seething as he was at the moment with wrath and

indignation. But he had done it, and the only thing now was flight.

The fags turned to flee. But even as they did so footsteps sounded ahead and Wally swiftly grasped his chums.

"In here—quick!" he gasped. "Somebody's coming! Oh, my hat!"

He fairly dragged his alarmed chums through the open doorway of a room on the right, hoping devoutly that it would be unoccupied. It happened to be the board-room—a room seldom used, and out of bounds to the juniors. But it was empty now, and it was sanctuary to the young rascals.

They had scarcely vanished inside, and Wally had scarcely shoved the door to when Kildare came hurrying past, and ran down the stairs two at a time. He was followed instantly by Tom Merry & Co. They had stopped to speak to Kildare some way round the corner of the passage, and, like Kildare, they wanted to know what that terrific howl meant.

They soon knew. They found Mr. Selby seated on the passage floor, fairly wallowing in water—water streaming from his head and shoulders. Around him were scattered papers and documents, and a pocket-wallet that had burst open as it fell.

"Mr. Selby!" gasped Kildare.

He jumped to the gasping master and helped him to his feet. Mr. Selby gasped and panted and glowered.

"An—an outrage!" he gasped, his eyes glinting with rage. "A wicked, dastardly outrage! Some miscreant—some wicked young villain has—"

He paused, his eyes fixed on Tom Merry & Co. His look was alone enough to tell why he paused.

"It was not these boys, sir," said Kildare quickly. "They were standing talking to me when we heard you cry out. But—one moment, sir!"

Kildare remembered having seen the upturned bucket lying on the landing as he rushed downstairs, and his face was grim as he darted up again. The door of the board-room was now open, and Kildare rushed in and looked round.

It was empty. The "birds" had flown! Wally & Co. had made the most of that brief chance whilst Kildare was downstairs helping Mr. Selby to his feet, and they had made themselves scarce.

Kildare grunted and went downstairs again. As he did so Mr. Railton came rustling back along the lower corridor.

CHAPTER 5.

A Matter of Dignity!

"MR. SELBY! Bless my soul!"

Mr. Railton looked thunderstruck as his glance fell upon Mr. Selby's dripping form.

"What-whatever has happened to you, Mr. Selby?" he said, in great alarm. "Why, my dear sir, you are drenched! Water is streaming from you! Can it be that some—some wretched boy—"

"You—you may well ask that question, Mr. Railton," choked Mr. Selby, mopping water from his crimson, furious features. "Never, never in my whole scholastic career have I been subjected to such—such a scandalous outrage! I—I— Did you discover anyone, Kildare?" asked the master, glancing up at the banisters above.

Kildare shook his head as he met Mr. Railton's glance. "Somebody emptied one of the fire-buckets over the banisters, sir," he explained briefly. "I found the empty bucket lying on its side on the landing above. I rushed up and looked in the board-room. But if anyone had hidden there they've vanished now."

"Abominable!" said the Housemaster. "This is beyond all reason, Mr. Selby. Why, it is scarcely three minutes since I left you standing here. If discovered, the culprits shall suffer dearly for this disgraceful affair. You have no idea as to their identity, Mr. Selby?"

"I have not!" gasped the Third Form master. "Kildare states that he was standing talking to these boys in the corridor above, and I cannot understand how he escaped seeing whoever was responsible. I do not—"

Mr. Selby paused; his jaw dropped, and a strange and startling expression came over his wet features.

And no wonder! For just then Kildare, who had started to pick up the scattered documents, gave a sudden cry and held up a slip of rustling paper. It was a banknote—all saw that at a glance.

"K-Kildare!" stammered Mr. Selby.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Railton. "That—that is a banknote, Kildare!"

"Yes, sir," said Kildare, a trifle dryly. "It must have fallen from Mr. Selby's pocket. It is a banknote for ten pounds, sir."

He handed the banknote to the Housemaster, purposely ignoring Mr. Selby's trembling, outstretched hand.

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Mr. Railton took it and glanced at it.

"It is a ten-pound note, Mr. Selby!" he exclaimed. "Is it—can it be the note you have lost?"

One glance at Mr. Selby's crimson features was enough to tell them that.

"I—I—it certainly can be no other, Mr. Railton," he stammered. "I—I cannot understand—"

"We can very soon make quite sure," said Mr. Railton grimly. "I have the number of the missing note here with me."

He took a slip of paper from his pocket and compared the number of the note with a number on the paper. Then he nodded, his face showing great and deep relief.

"It is the same, Mr. Selby," he said, his lips setting. "I am thankful—exceedingly thankful—that it has come to light. If it had not a grave injustice might easily have been done to that boy who is at this moment incarcerated in the punishment-room."

He handed the note to Mr. Selby, who grabbed it hastily, his face still crimson and deeply agitated.

"It—it is certainly the—the missing note, Mr. Railton," he mumbled. "I—I was under the impression that I had placed it in my bag—I was convinced, in fact. It—it is very strange—the—the tricks one's memory is liable to play."

"It is most unfortunate that you made such an error, Mr. Selby," said the Housemaster quietly. "However, I think it would be wise of you to change your things without delay. I will go at once and explain matters to Dr. Holmes."

"One moment, Mr. Railton," said Mr. Selby, giving the youthful Housemaster a spiteful look. "I would much prefer that—that you allowed me to explain the matter myself to Dr. Holmes. I—I think—"

"As you wish, Mr. Selby," snapped Mr. Railton. "It is a matter that needs explaining without delay. I must point out, however. As regards this outrage, I will make the fullest inquiries, and you may rest assured that every effort will be made to find the culprit or culprits."

With that Mr. Railton strode away, his face showing quite clearly that he could have said much more to the inwardly raging Mr. Selby had he wished. Mr. Selby glowered after him, and then he glowered at the juniors. Kildare had already handed him his wallet and the rest of his scattered property; and, without a word of thanks for his aid, the master of the Third put his banknote carefully in the wallet, and tottered away, water still dripping from him, leaving a watery trail along the passage behind him.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other eloquently as he disappeared into his own study.

"Well," exclaimed Tom Merry, drawing a deep breath, "what a giddy go! The blessed, thumping banknote wasn't missing, at all. That old idiot—"

"That burbling old duffer had it in his pocket all the time!" said Blake in deep disgust. "After calling poor old Gussy a liar and a dashed thief, too! No wonder Railton looked as if he could have booted the old rotter!"

"I bet the Head'll fairly tick him off for this," grinned Lowther. "Oh crumbs! I bet the Selby bird isn't feeling happy now, even though he's found his blessed tenner! I say, what about the fire-bucket dodge, though? Someone's going to get it in the neck for that!"

"It was young Wally and his pals for a pension!" said Tom Merry, lowering his voice and looking scared. "My hat! The reckless young idiots! They must have been hiding in the board-room, or somewhere, when we rushed downstairs. We left the little scamps standing at the top of the stairs, you remember."

"And Wally was vowing to make Selby sit up," breathed Blake. "My hat! That's it! It was Wally!"

"Mum's the word, mind," said Tom warningly. "It'll be the high jump for the youngster if he's bowled out. I'm blessed if I can blame the young scamp, either. It was rather a dangerous trick, but—"

"But it serves the old rotter right!" said Blake. "Look here, let's go and give poor old Gussy the wink."

"Good egg!"

Anxious to tell Arthur Augustus the glad news that the "missing" tenner was found, the juniors hurried along to the punishment-room. It was breaking rules to attempt to communicate with a fellow in the punishment-room, but the juniors were heedless of that fact. The lonely passage leading to the room was empty, and after a careful glance round, Blake tapped on the door.

"Gussy, old chap!" he called.

"Yaas, deah boy."

There was a sound of movement within the room, and then came Gussy's voice, calm and collected as ever.

"Gussy," whispered Blake eagerly, "it's all serene about that rotten banknote. Selby's found it."

"I am glad to hear that, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, without any enthusiasm.

"He hadn't lost it at all," went on Blake. "The old

idiot had shoved it in his wallet, or somewhere in his pocket, and hadn't put it in the bag, after all!"

"I am not at all surprised to hear that, Blake. Mr. Selby has been vewy careless—cwmminally careless! However, I am vewy glad to hear it has been found, and thank you vewy much for comin' to tell me, Blake. You youngstahs, however, had better wun away at once."

"What?"

"I refuse to allow you to win any wisks on my behalf," said Arthur Augustus through the keyhole. "You have no need to wovwy about me, dear boys, as I am quite capable of dealin' with this mattah. There is one important mattah that I wish you would see to for me, Jack Blake, without a moment's delay."

"Give it a name, old man!" said Blake eagerly.

"I am vewy wovvied indeed about my neckties," explained Arthur Augustus. "I wonder if you would mind goin' to Mr. Selby and wequestin' him to state what he has done with my bag and its contents? If the feahful wottah has damaged them—"

The words of Arthur Augustus tailed off in his great emotion. The juniors could not help chuckling.

"Well, I'm dashed!" breathed Blake. "He's burbling about his thumping neckties! Oh, the—the—"

"The Head's bound to be waxy with Selby," whispered Blake. "You play up—"

"I shall most certainly refuse to play up, as you term it, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "And I shall most certainly refuse to apologise to Mr. Selby. The apology, allow me to remind you, is due to me from that old wottah! He has called me a liar and a thief, bai Jove! It is quite impos for me to evahlook that until the old wottah has apologised to me."

"But, Gussy—"

"My mind is quite made up, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus loftily and firmly. "You appeal to forget that I have my pwide and dignity to considah. I shall, of course, use great tact in the mattah; but I shall insist upon a suitable apology bein' wendahed by Mr. Selby, who has acted like a wuffian, and who has doubted my word and my honesty, bai Jove! I cannot ovahlook that! Wathah not!"

"Gussy, old man—" pleaded Blake.

"Pway do not waste your bweath, dear boy. My mind is quite made up, and nothin' shall altah my decision in the mattah! Kindly go and wequest Mr. Selby to state what he has done with my neckties without furthah delay, dear boys. If he has damaged them—"

Staying In!



I.
A MASTER caught me fighting
When I should have done my writing,
And he seemed to think it such a dreadful sin:
That he set an imposition,
Gave a whacking in addition.
So that's the reason why I'm Staying in!

III.
From the window where I'm sitting
I can see the batsmen hitting,
And watch the ball fly off with whirling spin;
The bowler's sadly lacking,
And they ought to send him packing:
The fellow that they need is Staying in!



II.
I can hear the others yellin',
As I try to master spelling,
Whilst they play around and make a frightful din;
They are piling in with cricket,
And I was down "first wicket,"
But I'm the happy chap who's Staying in!



IV.
But in spite of plans and scheming,
The rain has started teeming,
And the cricketers are soaked right to the skin:
And, thinking of the wetting
The other chaps are getting,
I'm rather glad than I am Staying in!

"I twust you quite undahstand my wequest, Jack Blake!"

"Oh, quite!" gasped Blake.

"You will see him, Blake?"

Blake winked at Tom Merry.

"Yes, I'll see him," said Blake. He felt he would not be going over the border of truth by promising that.

He would undoubtedly see Mr. Selby somewhere or some time; but he hadn't the faintest intention of asking him for information regarding the neckties, important as that information might be. He could imagine what Mr. Selby would answer in his present mood.

"You needn't worry about that, old chap. Look here, no acting the giddy goat again, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I fail to undahstand you, Blake!"

"You know what I mean, you ass!" said Blake earnestly.

"Don't start getting on the high horse, old chap."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Do chuck it!" pleaded Blake earnestly. "The teaner's found now; and if you'll work it nicely you'll get off with just a mere licking, perhaps. Tell the beak you're sorry for calling Selby an old donkey and all that, and perhaps you'll get off with a mere six. You can stand that!"

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy's voice became astonished and indignant through the keyhole. "Bai Jove! Do I undahstand that you suggest that I should actually apologise to Mr. Selby, Jack Blake?"

"That's it, old chap. Be sensible and play up to the Head, old man!"

"That's the ticket!" added Tom Merry. "Mind you don't act the goat, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Gussy, old man—" Blake was beginning again, when

Lowther gave a warning hiss.

"Cave! Here's Railton!"

The juniors scattered like chaff before the wind as a firm tread sounded at the far end of the passage.

Mr. Railton came striding along, and he gave the juniors a suspicious glance as they passed him in the corridor.

But he said nothing to them and walked on to the punishment-room.

There he inserted a key in the lock and opened the door.

The next moment he came out again, with Arthur Augustus at his heels, looking serene and calm.

He looked just his own elegant self again. He turned a glimmering eyeglass on the juniors as he passed and gave them a reassuring nod.

The juniors followed as Mr. Railton led D'Arcy to the Head's study. The door opened, and the juniors caught a glimpse of Mr. Selby, his face crimson, standing by the Head's desk, the Head himself looking exceedingly angry.

Then the door closed on Housemaster and junior.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Blake. "Now for it! Oh, the awful ass! If he starts his silly games with the Head—"

"He's for it!" said Tom Merry, looking grave. "He's fairly on his high horse, and that means—"

"Trouble!" agreed Herries grimly.

The juniors waited expectantly and dismally. They knew of old what to expect from the Honourable Arthur Augustus when he did get "on his high horse"—otherwise, on his dignity. There was no knowing what would happen now.

Arthur Augustus prided himself on his firmness; he called it the firmness of a rock himself, but his chums called it

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Arthur Augustus prided himself on his firmness; he called it the firmness of a rock himself, but his chums called it

the firmness or obstinacy of a mule. Arthur Augustus prided himself on his strength of will; his chums called it fatheadedness. But whatever it was there was likely to be trouble if he tried it on with the Head of St. Jim's. And, knowing Arthur Augustus as they did, his devoted chums trembled for him.

CHAPTER 6.

Gussy Burns His Boats!

IT was very clear that Mr. Selby had lost no time in changing his clothes and making Dr. Holmes acquainted with the new development.

Not that Mr. Selby was at all eager to do so, and thus clear Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—far from it! Mr. Selby, in his bitter rage against that aristocratic junior, almost felt disappointed. Moreover, he was dreading that interview with the Head—dreading having to admit that he had been excessively careless and forgetful. He had stated most emphatically again and again that he was quite, quite certain that he had placed the note in the bag. And now he had found the note in his pocket, after all!

Mr. Selby felt a fool, and he knew that he would look one to all the school. Moreover, he knew quite well that the Head would reprimand him severely for his carelessness. Mr. Selby certainly had not looked forward to breaking the news of his discovery—or, rather, Kildare's discovery—to Dr. Holmes.

Yet Mr. Selby lost no time in doing so—simply because he dreaded Mr. Railton, or anyone else, getting to the Head with the news before him.

So the Third Form master had changed in great haste and rushed off to the Head's sanctum.

His apprehensions regarding the Head's view of the matter were amply justified. Dr. Holmes had listened in icy silence, and in icy silence he had compared the numbers of the note as Mr. Railton had done. Then he had told Mr. Selby his views on his carelessness and forgetfulness. And, though he had not said very much, what he had said had made the Third Form master wriggle and writhe inwardly, and blush and tremble outwardly.

Then the Head had sent for Mr. Railton, and then for Arthur Augustus. Having "ticked off" Mr. Selby, the Head was feeling a little better. It was a great and deep relief to him to know the banknote was found, and he felt the matter was soon to be ended. He would explain to Arthur Augustus that the note was found, and an apology from the junior to Mr. Selby and a severe caning would close the matter.

The emptying of the fire-bucket over Mr. Selby—the master had not failed to report that outrage, of course—the Head had left in the capable hands of Mr. Railton to deal with.

But the Head was quite overlooking the fact that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not as other juniors—that Gussy's dignity was not to be wounded with impunity, even by a master; and that Arthur Augustus was a force to be reckoned with.

The august headmaster of St. Jim's was quite unaware of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's tender spot, and of his well-known weakness for "riding the high horse." Doubtless, had he been aware of it, the knowledge would have left him quite unmoved. Though the dignity of Arthur Augustus was a very serious matter to Arthur Augustus himself, it was scarcely likely to be considered important by Dr. Holmes.

He looked grimly at the junior as Arthur Augustus followed Mr. Railton into the room, his noble head held high, his aristocratic features calm and composed. Mr. Railton looked grim; but his mouth twitched slightly as the Housemaster noted the look of suppressed fury on the red face of Mr. Selby. And really Mr. Railton could scarcely be blamed in the circumstances. In the first place, Mr. Selby should have reported the whole matter first to Mr. Railton instead of to the Head direct. Doubtless enough, Mr. Selby himself was regretting that breach of etiquette now. He might have saved himself this bitter humiliation had he done so.

"D'Arcy," exclaimed the Head, when Arthur Augustus stood before him, "you will be very glad and relieved to hear that Mr. Selby's banknote has now been found."

"I am glad to hear it, sir," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"Mr. Selby had, after all, placed the note in his pocket and not in his bag as he had supposed," said the Head. "He has it now in his possession, and the matter, of course, ends here."

"Oh, indeed, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, indeed!" said the Head sharply. He frowned; to the Head Gussy's calm replies savoured of insolence, and he did not like it. "It was unfortunate that Mr. Selby should have made the charge against you without more thorough

search, D'Arcy. But though the matter of the banknote is now closed, there is still the matter of your insolence to a master of this school. For myself I am quite satisfied that what happened at Wayland Junction was an accident, and that the bags were taken in mistake. You have, however, admitted having used the most insolent terms to Mr. Selby, for which there can be no excuse, whatever the provocation. For that you will be suitably punished."

"Vewy good, sir," said Arthur Augustus quietly.

"You will, here and now, apologise to Mr. Selby for having called him an old donkey and a fabricator. I shall then give you a severe caning which should deter you from using such disgraceful expressions to a master of this school on future occasions!" said Dr. Holmes sternly.

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath. His eyes were glinting.

"I am quite weady to submit to a canin', sir," he answered steadily. "But I must wespectfully wefuse to apologise to Mr. Selby."

"What?"

"I am sowwy, sir—vewy sowwy! I do not dweam of meanin' any diswespert to you, Dr. Holmes. But I must wespectfully pwotest against bein' wequired to apologise to Mr. Selby. He has bwought an uttally unfounded charge against me, and has called me a liah and a thief. I have my dignity to considah, and I cannot ovahlook that. I considah that the apology is owin' to me by Mr. Selby, and I must insist upon Mr. Selby apologisein' for his wotten and unjustifiable conduct!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh, great pip!"

Out in the passage Tom Merry, Blake, and a crowd of scared juniors listened, thunderstruck. Every word reached their ears clearly, and their worst fears were realised. The noble Arthur Augustus was riding his high horse with a vengeance.

Blake groaned, and the rest of the juniors groaned.

"He's for it, now!" mumbled Herries dismally. "Oh, the awful chump!"

"The blithering idiot!" said Tom Merry. "Now for fireworks!"

The "fireworks" soon came.

"D'Arcy!" thundered the Head. "How dare you!"

"I am vewy sowwy, sir. I wepeat that I do not intend any diswespert to you, Dr. Holmes," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "If you considah I have deserved it, I am quite weady to submit to a canin'. But it is not consistent with my dignity or pwinciples that I should allow this mattah to end without insistin' upon a fwank apology fwom Mr. Selby. And I most emphatically wefuse to apologise to him until he has withdwawn his wotten wemarks! I must wepeat—"

"Silence!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

The Head's voice was terrific, and his brow thunderous. Arthur Augustus gasped and subsided. The Head fixed him with an angry, amazed glare.

"D'Arcy, how—how dare you speak before me in that insubordinate manner!" he gasped. "I order you—I command you to apologise to Mr. Selby without further delay!"

Arthur Augustus went paler; but he remained silent.

"You hear me, sir?" thundered the Head.

"In the unfortunate cires, sir," said Arthur Augustus, in a low voice, "I must wefuse!"

"D'Arcy!" It was Mr. Railton's turn to thunder out the name. The Housemaster knew Arthur Augustus a little better than did Dr. Holmes; but he was astonished and dumbfounded now. He was also exceedingly angry. "D'Arcy, obey your headmaster at once!"

"I wegwet, Mr. Waiton, that it is inconsistent with my dignity and self-wespect to do so!"

"Enough!" gasped the Head. "Mr. Railton, kindly order Taggles to come here at once. As this insubordinate boy refuses to obey me he shall be flogged instead of being caned. This—this is too much! A junior boy, defying my authority in this manner, is beyond my experience!"

Mr. Railton left the room. Fortunately the crowd outside had overheard the Head's order, and they had discreetly vanished when the Housemaster strode out of the study. But by the time Taggles had been found and taken to the study they were back in the passage again, scared and dismayed by the turn of events.

When Taggles came in behind the Housemaster, Arthur Augustus set his teeth, but he showed no signs of giving way.

"Now, D'Arcy!" snapped the Head, angry and disturbed beyond measure. "I can understand and appreciate your feelings at having such a charge brought against you by Mr. Selby. But discipline must and shall be maintained in this school. You have merited severe punishment by your insolence to Mr. Selby, and as a master of this school he is

entitled to an apology. I will give you one last chance. Apologise to Mr. Selby without delay."

The Head pursed his lips and waited. He was a just man, and he understood that Arthur Augustus had some justification for the position he had taken up. The way the Head looked at the fuming Mr. Selby was enough to show that. But he had said that Arthur Augustus must apologise, and as a headmaster he could not possibly withdraw the order now. To be dictated to by a Lower School boy was impossible, and he waited with growing anger and exasperation.

But Arthur Augustus did not speak. He was white and he was trembling slightly. But he did not open his mouth.

"Very well!" said the Head grimly, at length. "As you persist in this defiant attitude, D'Arcy, the flogging must take place. Taggles, kindly hoist this boy on your back for punishment."

"Oh, yessir!"

The Head rose and took his birch from a desk drawer. Taggles, looking none too happy at the task, advanced towards Arthur Augustus.

Then it happened—suddenly and utterly unexpectedly.

Dodging Taggles' outstretched hand, Arthur Augustus jumped for the door, dragged it open, and dashed headlong outside into the passage.

There was a startled yell, and the juniors gathered there scattered to right and left to make room for him.

"Gussy!" panted Blake, aghast.

"Gussy—stop, you awful idiot!"

Mr. Railton stepped swiftly into the corridor, with a frown on his brow.

"Stop! D'Arcy, come back this instant!" he shouted.

But Arthur Augustus was gone.

CHAPTER 7. Poor Old Gussy!

"**B**LESS my soul!"

The scandalised Housemaster stood and stared along the corridor as if thunderstruck.

Tom Merry & Co. and the rest of the crowd of scared juniors stood silent; they had scattered to left and right as D'Arcy rushed out, but they had had no chance to follow his example and make themselves scarce.

Mr. Railton's stern, angry glance fell upon Tom Merry.

"Merry, send Kildare to me at once!" he snapped. "The rest of you disperse.

How dare you hang about this passage in this manner? You will each do me fifty lines. Go!"

The juniors went, buzzing with the exciting affair. Tom Merry hurried away in search of Kildare. Kildare was very soon found, and he hurried to the Head's study. He came out again very quickly, and soon afterwards all the prefects were buzzing about in search of Arthur Augustus.

In a very short time the School House was humming with the sensational news of D'Arcy of the Fourth's startling outbreak and defiance of authority.

The general opinion was that Arthur Augustus was a born idiot, and that he was asking for serious trouble—which latter view was undoubtedly true. None the less, the general feeling was also one of sympathy for Arthur Augustus, and wrath and indignation against Mr. Selby. The tyrannical master of the Third was decidedly unpopular both in his own Form and in other Forms. There was general satisfaction when it became known how Mr. Selby had been drenched with the contents of the fire-bucket, and a general hope that the culprits would not be found out.

They were not, as it happened. Mr. Railton did his duty and made a thorough investigation into the matter. But it came to nothing; nobody had seen Wally & Co. near the spot excepting Tom Merry & Co., and they were not likely to mention the fact. And though Mr. Selby had very strong suspicions, it did not help him at all. Mr. Railton was not the man to act on suspicions; he wanted proof, and there was no proof.

So the fuming Mr. Selby was obliged to let it go at that, though the luckless members of the Third felt pretty certain he would take it out of them for it in due course.

And meanwhile the search for Arthur Augustus went on. But the absconding junior seemed to have vanished into thin air. Tom Merry and his chums joined in the search themselves; their intention not being to catch and give him up to justice, but to find him and try to persuade him to "chuck it" before the affair got more serious.

But they gave it up at last, and the Terrible Three joined Blake, Herries, and Digby into Study No. 6 for a belated tea; though none of them felt like much tea that afternoon.

They were just gloomily sitting down to the meal when a calm voice came from under the table.

"Blake, deah boy, will you kindly look the door?"

The juniors all jumped, all but upsetting the table in their astonishment. Blake lifted the cloth and glared beneath the table.

"My hat! He's here!" he yelled.

"Quiet!" hissed Tom Merry.

Grasping the situation Tom jumped to the door and turned the key in the lock. As he did so Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, dusty and dishevelled, crawled from beneath the table and stood up, blinking at the startled juniors.

"Gussy!" gasped Blake. "You—you awful idiot!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Have you been in here all the time?" said Tom Merry in great astonishment. "Why, the blessed prefects have been in here searching—"

"No, I have not been in heah all the time, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "It would be bettah if I did not tell you my pwesent hidin'-place, in case you happen to be asked by someone in authority. I have been hidin' not far ffrom heah, and I came and hid undah the table just before you fellows came in. I shall return to my hidin'-place when I have explained my intentions to you."

"Gussy," said Blake earnestly, "do chuck this rot, for goodness' sake, old man! If you go on like this it'll end in the high jump for you."

"Wubbish!"

"Blake's right, Gussy," said Tom Merry soberly. "Chuck it, old chap! Play up to the beak, and take your medicine like a man. A hidin's soon over, and then—"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

turning a frigid eyeglass on Tom Merry.

"Do you suggest, Tom Mewwy, that I am afraid of a hidin'?"

"Not at all," said Tom hastily. "But can't you see it's the best and only thing to be done, Gussy? You don't want to be sacked—"

"Wubbish! I shall not be sacked, deah boy. The Head will see weason and appreciate the justice of my demands when he has had time to reflect. I am not afraid of an ordinawy lickin', but I wufuse to submit to an undignified floggin' when I considah I am in the wright. I wufuse to apologise to old Selby, and I insist upon an apology ffrom him before I submit to be punished. It is a matter of pwinciple with me now, deah boys."

"Gussy, old man—"

"It is useless to argue with me, Blake," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "My mind is quite made up, and I can assuah you that I am not actin' without due reflection. I have given the mattah a gweat deal of thought, and I am quite satisfied that my only pwesent course of action is to leave St. Jim's."

"What!"

"Pway do not woah, deah boys. You will dwaw attention to this study which might be fatal to my plans."

"You—you say you're goin' to leave St. Jim's?" gasped Blake.

"Yaas!"

"To run away?" suttered Tom Merry.

"Certainly not, deah boy!"

"Then—then what—"

"I am goin' to wetiah ffrom the school for a short time, until the Head sees weason and agreees to concede to my just demands," said Arthur Augustus.

"But isn't that running away?" spluttered Blake.

"Not at all, Blake. It is a different thing entiahly, deah boy. I would not dream of doin' anythin' so feeble and undignified as to wun away ffrom school," explained Arthur Augustus. "I am just goin' to wetiah ffrom the scene until I am assuahed that Mr. Selby agreees to apologise. When he does that I am quite weady to submit to eithah a lickin' or a floggin'."

"Well, you—you awful ass!" choked Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You burbling jabberwock!" gasped Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"But what will you do?" ejaculated Digby.

"I have not weally decided what I shall do in the immediate futuah," said Arthur Augustus, frowning. "It is quite true that at the moment I am out of funds, the patah havin' failed to send my usual fivah to time. That is my weason chiefly for comin' heah to explain now. I shall wemain in the vicinity of St. Jim's until my fivah comes, and then I shall wetiah in weal earnest."

"But—but how will you get it, you ass?"

"Pway do not woah at me, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus

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calmly. "There is no weason whatever to get excited, deah boy. I do not wish you fellows to take any wisks on my account. But if you could make it convenient to keep a look-out for the postman in the morning—it is certain to come then—and bring me the patah's leittah, I shall be obliged. I shall then be at libahty to ventuah furthah afield."

"But supposing your pater doesn't send it?" said Tom Merry, eyeing the noble Gussy in wonderment. "The beak's bound to wire him, or telephone him, if you're still missing to-night, you awful fathead!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, frowning. "I weally nevah thought of that. However, I shall have to wisk it, of course, as it is uttably imposs for me to submit to indignity and humiliation by givin' myself up befoah I have accomplished my intentions. Can I wely on you fellows to do this for me, deah boys?"

The "deah boys" looked at him eloquently. His calm statement that he was about to run away—or "wetiah," as he preferred to call it—had all but taken their breath away. They felt they wanted badly to collar him and bump him soundly. But they knew it was sheer waste of time and energy. All the bumpings in the world would not move Arthur Augustus when he was riding his high horse, so to speak.

Yet his statement filled them with great alarm. Gussy might be an awful ass, but he was also a very good ass—as Lowther put it—and they were too fond of him to want to lose him. And unless something was done to stop him on his headlong career towards the "sack," they knew they would lose him.

It was really very serious.

D'Arcy's chums groaned and eyed each other hopelessly.

"Gussy," began Blake at last—"Gussy, old man, stop playing the giddy ox—"

"I am not aware that I am playin' the ox, Blake," said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "I am waitin' the answah to my request, Blake."

"But do listen to us, Gussy," said Tom Merry pleadingly. "This sort of thing can't go on, you know."

"It is goin' on, Tom Mewwy!"

"But it can only end in serious trouble for you, Gussy," said Tom quietly. "And the longer it goes on the more serious it'll be for you, old chap. Besides—"

"Wats! I uttably wefuse to argue the mattah, Tom Mewwy. I am quite aware," said Arthur Augustus, looking round at his chums, "that you fellows mean well. But as you are all uttably laekin' in judgment and even common sense, you cannot expect me to listen. You youngstahs need not wowwy about me at all. It is useless for you to attempt to persuade me to do what is not consistent with my self-respect and personal dignity, eithah. I am wresolved to be as firm as a wock in this mattah, and nothin' will turn me from my determination."

"Oh dear!"

"I shall wequest Doctah Holmes by lettah to let me know when he has weconsidared the mattah," said Arthur Augustus. "I wespert him vevy highly, and I am quite suah that when he has wected ova the wretched affair that he will see weason and come wound to my point of view."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But I am waitin', deah boys," said Arthur Augustus hastily. "It is dangewous for me to wemain heah long. Kindly tell me if you are willin' to aid me as I desiah."

"Hold—hold on a sec, Gussy," gasped Blake, anxious to gain time. "Why not have tea, and we'll talk it over, old chap?"

"I have already had all the food I need for the pwesent," said Arthur Augustus. "Kindly—"

"But—but look here, you ass—"

"I wefuse to be continually called an ass, Jack Blake. I am still waitin'—yaas or no?"

"But—"

"Yaas or no?" insisted Gussy.

"You awful ass—"

"That will do, Blake. I wegwet that I cannot wait any longer for your answer."

With that Arthur Augustus turned the key in the lock, and cautiously opened the door and peeped out. Then he gave a violent jump. At the same moment the door was crashed inwards from outside, and Knox darted in and his grasp closed on the shoulder of the startled Gussy.

"Got you!" he hissed, his face red with triumph. "Got you, you little sweep! I knew you'd come here, sooner or later."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus wriggled in the grasp of the prefect. Knox of the Sixth was the most unpopular prefect in St. Jim's, and the juniors could guess how he came to be outside the study just then. He had obviously been spying on them

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—a little failing that was one of the reasons why Knox of the Sixth was so justly unpopular.

But he had got Gussy now without a doubt.

"Welease me, you spyin' wottah!" said Arthur Augustus angrily. "Wescue, deah boys!"

With a sudden terrific wrench Arthur Augustus strove to release himself. Knox grinned and held on easily.

Arthur Augustus raised his fist and struck Knox full on his long nose.

Biff!

"Yarrooop!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake in alarm.

Knox staggered back, more startled than hurt, and unconsciously he released Arthur Augustus. That reckless junior sprang round and put the table between himself and the raging prefect.



"Taggles," said Dr. Holmes sternly, "kindly hoist this boy on your birch from a desk drawer. Then things happened, for D'Arcy, open, and dashed headlong!"

"You—you little fiend!" spluttered Knox, his eyes glinting with rage. "You—you've dared to attack a prefect! By gad! You'll be for it now, my lad! Hold him, Merry! I order you to hold him."

As he spoke Knox ceased hugging his nose and made a rush round the table. Blake's leg—accidentally or otherwise—came in between, and Knox lurched and fell headlong over it.

"Go it, Gussy!" breathed Blake.

"Stop him!" shouted Knox. "Blake—Merry—you dare!"

He jumped up just as D'Arcy rushed for the door. Knox rushed after him, raging, and as he did so Herries kicked the door to with a mighty slam. Knox only just pulling up in time to escape crashing into it.

"You little fiends!" he roared. "I'll make you sit up for this!"

He tore at the door-knob. The door flew open—D'Arcy's chums dared do no more—and Knox darted out into the passage. There was no sign of Arthur Augustus about. Knox sighted Kildare coming along just then, and he gave a yell.

"Quick! D'Arcy's been in here; he's just rushed out!" The next moment the two prefects were rushing about wildly, searching the studies. Tom Merry & Co., looking very serious indeed, returned to the table and went on with their tea. They had done their best for their chum, but really they could not help hoping that Gussy would be captured, for his own sake.

But they did not have long to continue their tea in peace. The door opened suddenly and Kildare appeared.

"You're wanted!" he snapped. "Housemaster's study. You're for it!"



for punishment." "Oh, yessir!" The Head rose and took Taggles' outstretched hand, jumped to the door, dragged it passage. (See Chapter 6.)

"What for?" asked Blake innocently.

"You know, and if you don't you'll thundering soon discover!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors did know. They had helped Gussy to escape, if he had escaped. And their fears were soon justified.

Mr. Railton was looking very angry indeed. He glowered at the juniors.

"Knox of the Sixth Form has just made a serious charge against you juniors," he snapped. "He informs me that you were hiding D'Arcy, and that when he tried to capture him you assaulted him and aided that wretched boy D'Arcy to escape."

"We—we weren't hiding him, sir," stammered Tom Merry. "We—we found him there when we went in to tea. Knox—"

"Knox happened to be sneaking round the doorway,"

said Blake bluntly. "We didn't assault him, as he calls it, either."

"That is enough, Blake!" thundered the Housemaster. "Do you deny that none of you attempted to prevent D'Arcy's capture?"

"Alum! You—you see, sir—"

"It—it was like this, sir—"

"Do you deny it?" snapped Mr. Railton.

"Nunno, sir! You—"

"Hand me my cane, Merry!"

"Oh, ye-es, sir!"

Tom handed the master the cane which was on the bookshelves. He did it very reluctantly.

"Hold out your hand, Merry!"

Tom Merry held out his hand, and then the other hand. Three on either hand was the punishment the Housemaster gave each of them, and when he had finished the hapless juniors were doubled up with anguish. Mr. Railton was not in a pleasant mood—which was no wonder—and he laid it on with a will.

"Let that be a lesson to you!" he snapped, throwing the cane on his desk. "You have dared to interfere with a prefect in the execution of his duty, and did I choose to take you before Dr. Holmes your punishment would have been far more severe. Now go!"

They went, feeling thankful Mr. Railton had not chosen to take them before Dr. Holmes. Their punishment had been quite severe enough—far too severe in their opinion. And as they trudged back to Study No. 6 the things they said concerning Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were both loud and very, very deep. Their one desire just then was to get within reach of the absconding junior and to punch his nose—hard!

CHAPTER 8.

The Walking Cupboard!

"OH deah!"

Arthur Augustus was beginning to feel the strain of his adventures. It was all very well to make mighty resolves, but the keeping of them was a different matter. And it wasn't very pleasant to feel that one was a fugitive, with a score or so of seniors hunting for him high and low. Arthur Augustus already felt like an outcast, with every man's hand against him—which wasn't actually so.

As yet the swell of the Fourth had not had many exciting adventures. Immediately after his hurried flight from the Head's study he had made for the Fourth Form passage. But he had not gone to his own study at once—Arthur Augustus had a little more sense than to do that. He knew that would be the very first place in which he would be sought for.

Only the day before Baggy Trimble had happened to purloin a cake from Study No. 6, and with Blake & Co. in full cry after him, the fat junior had taken refuge in a cupboard at the far end of the Fourth passage. Luckily—but unluckily for Baggy—Blake had spotted him dodge into the cupboard, and Baggy had been duly captured, the cake recovered—or what was left of it—and Baggy soundly bumped for his sins.

And, in his hurried flight from the Head's study, desperate and hunted, Arthur Augustus had remembered the incident, and he had followed Trimble's example by taking refuge in that cupboard.

It was an excellent hiding-place, for it stood in the dark alcove between the passage window and the wall, and possibly Baggy Trimble had used it more than once when pursued. At all events, Arthur Augustus used it now, and not until he knew Study No. 6 had been searched did he leave it. Then, with due caution, he had scudded back to Study No. 6 and hidged under the table to await his chums' arrival.

And now, on rushing away from Knox, Gussy made a bee-line for the cupboard. He had only just slipped inside and pulled the little door to when Kildare came along. It was then the hapless fugitive groaned "Oh deah!" as he realised what a narrow escape he had had.

But Kildare had obviously not seen him, and through a handy crack in the panelling of the cupboard Arthur Augustus watched Kildare and Knox searching the studies. Not until they had departed, defeated, did Arthur Augustus breathe freely again.

He did not breathe freely for long, however.

Through the crack in the panelling Arthur Augustus could see several of the Fourth study doors, and he had seen several fellows enter and leave their studies at various times. And as he peeped through now he saw a junior leave Study No. 2, which sheltered Kit Wildrake, Baggy Trimble, and Percy Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth.

It was Mellish who left the study now, and he came straight towards the cupboard. Arthur Augustus started

violently as he noted the stealthy manner of his approach and the look of malicious triumph on his face.

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "That mean little weptle is up to somethin'! I wathah feah— Oh, gweat Scott!"

Even as the momentary suspicion entered Arthur Augustus' mind it was justified.

Mellish reached the cupboard, his hand shot out, and next moment sounded a sharp, ominous click.

It was the key turning in the lock of the cupboard door!

The next instant a soft chuckle sounded, and Mellish flew back to Study No. 2.

"Oh, bai Jove!" panted Arthur Augustus.

He knew what had happened at once. Mellish must have spotted him race for the cupboard and enter it. When Gussy had first taken refuge in that cupboard he had taken out the key from the outside and had locked himself in, in case some over-zealous prefect chanced to take a peep inside. But on leaving the cupboard Arthur Augustus had replaced the key in the outside. And when he had rushed for shelter in the cupboard again he had had no time to touch the key. He had heard Kildare's approaching footsteps, and he had just slipped inside and pulled the door to.

Now he bitterly regretted his carelessness.

He remembered having kicked Mellish only that morning for having dared to mimic his well-known accent, and this, apparently, was the mean-spirited fellow's way of getting his own back.

"Oh, bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

He was fairly in an awkward corner now—an exceedingly awkward corner. Unless he could draw the attention of someone who would be willing to befriend him, he was booked either to stay in that cupboard for ever, or to attract attention and thereby court capture.

"Oh, the fwightful little wottah!" gasped Gussy.

In a great stew now, Arthur Augustus tried the door, hoping against hope. But it was locked—there was no doubt about that. He took out his pocket-knife in desperation and started to try to pick the lock.

But Arthur Augustus was no hand at picking locks. In any case, the keyhole was very small, and he could not get the smallest blade into it.

For several despairing minutes the trapped junior stood breathing hard, trying to think of some way out of his predicament. There had been no sight of Mellish since, and it was clear he intended to leave Gussy to his fate.

But it was none too comfortable in the cupboard, and very dusty and stuffy. It stood some five feet high, and it was only a trifle wider and deeper than was Gussy himself. Luckily it was empty and had no shelves in it—Trimble, possibly, having seen to that. Indeed, Gussy wondered how on earth the fat youth had managed to squeeze into it at all.

"Oh, bai Jove!" mumbled Arthur Augustus, beads of perspiration rolling down his dusty, crimson cheeks. "This is weally fwightful! I must get out somehow!"

He started to use force against the door, pushing with all his weight and might. But the door did not move. Something else gave way, however.

It was the floor of the cupboard, which was obviously worm-eaten and rotten. There was a sudden splintering, and next instant the bottom of the cupboard fell through and Arthur Augustus went with it for a couple of inches or more, his feet coming to rest partly on the broken floorboards, partly on the linoleum of the passage floor.

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus was dismayed at the accident at first. Then a brain-wave came to him. If he could only manage to shuffle along to the nearest study, taking the cupboard

with him, he might even yet get some kind Fourth-Former to rescue him in time.

The idea struck Gussy as sound, and immediately he started to shuffle his way along. To get out of the cupboard through the broken floor was impossible, without risking serious injury and making a fearful crash which would obviously bring masters or prefects on the scene. But with friendly aid it could be managed—he felt certain of that.

It was far from an easy task. The cupboard, though small, was fairly heavy. By raising his hands and lifting at the top Gussy could just manage to hold it up for a few seconds at a time the while he shuffled along, carrying it. But it was strenuous work, and decidedly difficult.

But he stuck it doggedly, perspiration fairly streaming down his crimson face. Leaving the broken pieces of the cupboard floor behind, Gussy struggled along, inch by inch, towards the nearest study, which happened to be Study No. 9—the study owned by Cardew & Co.

Cardew & Co. were friends, and would willingly help him in his dire extremity. But Gussy's luck was out. A heavy tread sounded suddenly, and round the bend appeared Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell. With him was Darrell of the Sixth—or, rather, walking just behind him.

Arthur Augustus gasped and stopped as he sighted the master through the crack, lowering the cupboard as he did so.

Mr. Linton seemed about to pass on, and then he stopped abruptly, his eyes fixed in surprise on the cupboard.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured. "Who has been moving this cupboard? It is in the way here, and should— Ah, Darrell! Do you happen to know why this cupboard has been moved and placed in this inconvenient position?"

"No, sir," said Darrell. "Looks to me as if somebody's been larking with it."

"Quite so. An absurd joke, doubtless!" said Mr. Linton, frowning. "You had better send for Taggles to take it back to its former position, Darrell."

"Very good, sir!"

Mr. Linton walked on, frowning. Had it happened on the Shell passage, he would, doubtless enough, have made further inquiries as to the identity of the jokers—if jokers they were! But as it was, apparently, a Fourth Form matter, Mr. Linton let it go at that. Darrell smiled, and went to look for Taggles.

"Oh, bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

There was need for great haste now. Taggles would very easily be found, and once he started to move the cupboard—

At the thought, Arthur Augustus resumed his efforts with desperate energy. The cupboard rocked and rolled like a lugger in a storm as he struggled along. Then he sighted the door of Study No. 9, and groaned as he noted that it was closed—its owners possibly being out.

"Oh, cwumbs!" groaned Gussy.

He resolved to make for his own study, and after a few more feet had been covered his heart leaped as he came in sight of the doorway. To his joy the door was slightly open.

At that moment the door of Study No. 7, across the passage, opened, and out rolled Baggy Trimble, wiping a jammy face with a fat, grubby hand.

He had taken three or four steps into the passage before he noticed the cupboard, and as Arthur Augustus was still going strong, Baggy Trimble got the shock of his life.

As he sighted the walking cupboard, bumping and banging towards him, Trimble stopped dead, his jaw dropped, and then from his opened mouth came one long, terrific shriek.

"Yaroooooooh!"

"Twimble!" panted Arthur Augustus, his voice faint inside the cupboard. "Twimble—"

"Yaroooooh! Help!" shrieked Trimble. "Murder! Oh crums! Help!"

Trimble turned and bolted for his life, his face white as chalk, frantic yells coming from him.

Really, it was, perhaps, no wonder. To a fat funk like Baggy, the sight of a cupboard bumping and lurching towards him was a little too much for his nerves and courage.

He fled, howling.

"Oh, ewikey!" gasped Gussy.

It was all up now—unless he could find sanctuary again in Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus risked life and limb in that mad, desperate dash for Study No. 6—possibly.

Bump, bump! Bang, bang, bang!

With a continuous succession of bumps and bangs, the cupboard lurched and rolled along the passage. Fellows came rushing out from their studies, and several of them were just in time to see the amazing sight of a cupboard walking—seemingly of its own accord—into Study No. 6.

—There was a yell of astonished alarm.

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But Gussy was inside now—the cupboard, fortunately, just scraping through the doorway comfortably.

There was another astonished yell as it entered the study—a yell from Tom Merry & Co. Those juniors were just finishing their belated tea, and they had just jumped up to rush out, having heard Baggy's shrieks and the bumps and bangs following them.

Their rush stopped with surprising suddenness as the cupboard entered the study.

"Oh, great pip!"

"What the—the—"

Bump, bump, bump! Bang, bang!

Tom Merry & Co. jumped back, thunderstruck, as the cupboard progressed into the study. Suddenly Tom Merry gave a yell:

"Look out! Oh, my hat!"

Crash! Cra-ash!

"Yawwooooooh!"

Just as Tom Merry shouted the warning it happened. Arthur Augustus, in his frantic haste, tripped over the edge of the study carpet, and the result was only to be expected.

Over went the cupboard with a terrific crash, and there followed another crash as it fell on the table, sending it hurtling over, with foodstuffs and crockery scattered everywhere, adding to the general noise.

And then there came that wild, terrific howl of pain and dismay from Arthur Augustus inside the cupboard.

All the juniors heard it, but it was Tom Merry who, once the shock of the startling happening was over, grasped the amazing situation.

"It's Gussy!" he panted. "Oh, my hat! Quick! The door!"

He jumped to the door, sent it crashing to, and the next moment the key had clicked in the lock.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh, my only hat!"

"Gussy—Gussy again!"

Tom Merry & Co. rushed to the fallen cupboard, from inside which gurgles and gasps and groans were proceeding.

"Gussy, you awful ass!"

"Help! Oh, bai Jove! Every bone in my body is broken, deah boys!" wailed Arthur Augustus, his voice coming faintly from the interior of the cupboard. "Pway welease me! Help me out, for goodness' sake! Ow, ow! Oh, gwat Scott! Gwooooooh!"

"Cupboard door's locked, or something!" gasped Tom Merry. "We'll have to drag the awful idiot out by the legs through the bottom. Well, this beats the band! Hold the cupboard, some of you!"

"Be careful!" wailed Arthur Augustus frantically. "Mind my twousahs; they are already neahly wuined! Oh deah!"

"Blow your dashed trousers!" snorted Blake. "Out with the awful dummy, chaps!"

"Yes, rather!"

But it was easier said than done. Arthur Augustus, slim as he was, seemed to fit the cupboard like a glove. Moreover, part of the bottom of the cupboard was still intact.

Blake grabbed the poker and made a desperate assault on the strip of wood. After catching Gussy several accidental whacks on the ankles with the knob of the poker, Blake managed to break the piece of boarding away. Then he and his chums grabbed Gussy's elegant legs and started to haul with more vigour than care.

Arthur Augustus howled—fortunately his voice was muffled by the cupboard.

But it was done at last. D'Arcy's legs were a comparatively easy matter, but it was not so easy to get his body and shoulders out—especially in the cramped quarters of the study. But it was done. Gussy's shoulders and head came out at last quite suddenly, like a cork from a bottle.

He sat up on the floor, panting and gasping as if for a wager. And he was a sight—clothes rumpled and torn and covered in dust, hair tousled, his crimson features dusty and perspiring.

"Ow!" he panted. "Oh, bai Jove! You wuff wuffians! Ow! Yow! Gwooooooh! That wottah Mellish locked me in the cupboard!"

"Ruffians, eh?" gasped Blake, eyeing Arthur Augustus almost wolfishly. "Calling us ruffians after all our trouble! J—I could scalp him!"

The others felt like that, too—only they knew the luckless Arthur Augustus was booked for trouble enough already. Moreover, he was, after all, their pal—awful as that he was! Loyalty and consideration for his plight only kept Gussy's pals from giving him a record ragging at that moment.

But with the enemy at the gates, as it were, it was not the time for internal dissension. Arthur Augustus had to be saved. And though Tom Merry & Co. inwardly felt that it would be wiser to give him up to justice, they simply could not do so. A pal had to be backed up even in his folly.

That was how Tom Merry & Co. looked at it. And time was precious. Already somebody was thumping

at the door, whilst excited voices were yelling out in the corridor.

Then came a sudden hush, followed by the deep, authoritative voice of Mr. Railton.

"What does this commotion mean? What ever is the matter, boys?"

A dozen voices were heard telling him—above them all was Trimble's excited, scared squeak.

"Oh, my hat! Your number's up now, Gussy!" said Blake. "You'd better chuck it and give yourself up, old chap!"

"Better!" agreed Tom Merry. "Chuck acting the goat, Gussy old man!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus staggered painfully to his feet. He was a wreck in body, but his noble, fiery spirit was unquenched. His eyes gleamed as he fumbled for his monocle and jammed it into place.

"Wats!" he said breathlessly. "I uttially wefuse to think of chuckin' it! I am not beaten yet, Tom Mewwy. Pway jam the table before the door in case the lock gives way, Blake!"

"But, you ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Blake. Howevah, possibly Tom Mewwy will aid me to escape—though I wegwet havin' to ask the aid of anyone in this mattah."

"But you can't escape!" gasped Blake. "You can't go up the chimney—"

"I shall escape through the window," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I uttially wefuse to be captuahed. I pwapose to get out on the ledge outside the window—"

"Jove! That's a good wheeze, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "Get a move on, then, if you mean it—"

He jumped to the window and raised the sash gently. Gussy's idea was clear to him now. Outside, just below the window, was a wide stone ledge running the full length of the building, and Arthur Augustus could easily hide there.

"Out you get!" hissed Tom, as a loud, firm knocking sounded on the door, accompanied by Mr. Railton's angry voice. "And, for goodness' sake, keep your silly napper down!"

"Wight-ho!"

Arthur Augustus slipped swiftly over the sill. His feet found the ledge below easily enough, and as he crouched down, his fingers holding on to the window-sill, Tom Merry gently pulled the window shut again.

"Better open the door!" groaned Tom. "We're for it again, I bet!"

"Oh dear!"

The cupboard would certainly take some explaining—even if nobody had suspected the truth. Full of dismal apprehensions, Tom Merry crossed to the door and unlocked it. It opened, and Mr. Railton strode in—behind him a score or more of startled, amazed juniors and seniors.

"Why did you not open the door earlier?" stormed the Housemaster. "You must have heard me demanding admittance! Ah!"

The Housemaster's eyes fell on the cupboard lying on the carpet.

CHAPTER 9.

Escaped Again!

"SO—so this is the meaning of the disturbance?" he exclaimed grimly. "I was informed that—"

Mr. Railton broke off suddenly, his eyes gleamed as though a sudden suspicion had occurred to him. Stooping down, he peered into the cupboard through the hole in the floor. Then he gave a disappointed grunt. His eyes were still suspicious as he looked at the juniors and looked round the study.

He hesitated a moment, and then he stepped to the couch and looked under and behind it. He also scanned every possible place of concealment in the room.

The juniors watched him in no little trepidation. It was obvious that he suspected Arthur Augustus was hidden in the study. They breathed in relief as he gave the search up at length, not even glancing at the window.

"Merry," he snapped, his eyes fixed sternly at that junior. "I desire to know what this—this extraordinary affair means. I strongly suspect that it has something to do with that wretched boy D'Arcy. What is this cupboard doing in here, to begin with?"

"It—it just came in," stammered Tom Merry feebly.

"It—it what?"

"It—it came in!" gasped Tom. "You—you see, it—it just came—came in, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a laugh—a laugh that ceased abruptly as the Housemaster looked around, his eyes ferocious.

"Silence!" he thundered. "This is no matter for merriment! Merry, I demand to know how this cupboard came to be in here! Trimble and several other boys have made the absurd statement to me that the cupboard walked into this study of its own accord—which is ridiculous! One of you must have been concealed inside it. I demand to know the culprit, and for what reason such an absurd trick was carried out?"

Tom Merry & Co. were silent. Then Tom Merry spoke. If Mr. Railton supposed—which he obviously did—that one of them had been inside the cupboard, then, for Gussy's sake, they had better allow him to go on thinking so—though it would mean trouble for them.

"It—it was only a joke, sir," said Tom feebly. "An utterly absurd joke!" snapped the Housemaster, eyeing Tom fixedly. "And I suspect there was some reason for it—a reason not unconnected with D'Arcy, who is missing. Were you yourself the culprit, Merry?"

"Ahem! You—you see, sir—" "I do not see!" said Mr. Railton angrily. "It is obvious to me, however, that it is useless to question you in regard to that. I shall judge you equally responsible. You have already been once caned this afternoon, and I shall not repeat the caning. Instead, you will do me three hundred lines each, to be handed in to me at nine to-morrow morning. That is for removing that cupboard from its rightful place. Kildare, kindly send for Taggles to remove this cupboard. The rest of you disperse at once!"

Mr. Railton strode out, looking exceedingly irritated and puzzled. It was very clear that he suspected—but only suspected. The crowd melted away as he strode out, and the next moment Taggles came along with Darrell. Kildare and Darrell helped the old porter to carry the damaged cupboard back to its rightful position at the end of the passage.

The crowd had returned with Mr. Railton's departure, and the doorway was full of grinning faces. But Blake soon slammed it shut.

Immediately after closing and locking the door Blake and Merry jumped to the window and looked out. Then they got a shock.

There was no sign of Arthur Augustus on the ledge outside—he had vanished!

"Oh, my hat!"

For the moment Blake's face paled, and he looked quickly and apprehensively downwards, fearing that the fugitive had lost his balance and fallen. But a glance showed him that the ground below was clear.

"Gone down by that water-pipe!" gasped Tom Merry, suddenly sighting a rain-pipe running down to the ground below. "Well, the daring fathead! He might have fallen and broken his neck!"

"He—he's the giddy outside edge!" breathed Blake, his face clearing again. "Oh, won't we just put him through the mill for this when it's all over! That's a licking and three hundred lines apiece in one afternoon—and all through him."

"The—the raving dummy!"

"The howling idiot!"

Tom Merry & Co. were exceedingly wrathful, and they certainly had a right to be wrathful. The remarks they made concerning Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were sulphurous in the extreme. And the sight of the havoc in the study was enough in itself to fill them with wrath. Most of the crockery was broken, and tea and milk, sugar, and bread and jam and cakes, were trampled over the carpet among the broken crockery.

"What a hopeless mess!" groaned Blake, shaking his fist in the air. "Oh, if only I had Gussy here now—"

"It was scarcely Gussy's fault, I fancy," grinned Tom Merry feebly. "Didn't he say something about that little worm, Mellish, having locked him in the cupboard?"

"Phew! That's it!" said Blake, his eyes glinting. "I think I can understand it now. Gussy couldn't and wouldn't have locked himself in the blessed cupboard. He was hiding there, and that sweep Mellish, must have known it and locked him in. The—the little worm!"

"Gussy booted Mellish this morning," said Digby. "The little cad was mimicking him, and the booting served him jolly well right. But this is how he's got his own back, the sneaking little toad!"

"Is it?" hissed Blake ferociously. "Then, as we can't take it out of Gussy, we'll see friend Mellish. Come on!"

"Good wheeze!"

The idea appealed to all. They understood the position now only too well—knowing as they did, what a mean, spiteful little cad was Percy Mellish.

They followed Blake willingly and eagerly as he strode to Study No. 2, and flung open the door. Mellish was there with Kit Wildrake and Trimble.

"It's Mellish we want," said Blake, making a jump and grasping that apprehensive junior.

"Hold on!" said Wildrake. "What's he done this time?"

Mellish is a toad and a worm of worms! But he's in this study and nobody touches him without my permission, I guess! Cough up the trouble?"

"I'll soon tell you that," said Blake angrily. "You heard what happened in the study just now—about the cupboard affair?"

"Yes! I guess you asses got out of that nicely," grinned Wildrake. "I guess—"

"I'll explain what it meant," said Blake, glaring at Mellish. "Gussy was hiding in that cupboard, Wildrake. And Mellish here locked him in—did it to get his own back for a licking he had this morning."

"So that was it," grinned Wildrake. "And Gussy was in that cupboard when it walked into the study? Gee! But where—"

"He hopped it through the window—got on the ledge outside," said Blake. "But the point is, Mellish played a rotten, dirty treacherous trick on Gussy, and he got it hot for us, besides causing a smash-up with our crocks and things. We're going to lick him for it, Wildrake."

"Go ahead, then," grinned Wildrake. "I guess I don't play the protective game in this case."

He stepped away, leaving Mellish to them. Mellish cringed, his face full of alarm.

"Look here—"

"Do you deny it?" roared Blake.

"It—it was only a lark," gasped Mellish. "I—I—"

"That's enough! Collar him!"

It was enough. Tom Merry & Co. collared the yelling Mellish, and the sneak of the Fourth descended to the floor—hard. He descended more than once, and when the avengers streamed from the study some moments later, they left the howling sneak sitting on the carpet, dishevelled and aching, and wishing he had left Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely alone.

Tom Merry & Co. returned to Study No. 6 feeling a trifle better; but not much! They had still to clear up the mess in the study. But this was done at last, the Terrible Three kindly remaining to help. Then they went to their own study to begin prep, leaving Blake & Co. to theirs.

But there was little prep done in either of the famous studies that evening. Indeed, there was little actually done in the entire School House. The juniors had something far more exciting and sensational than prep to think about and discuss.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth, the shining light of the school and ornament of St. Jim's—as Blake put it—had run away—actually bolted!

It was amazing news, and the juniors discussed it breathlessly—instead of doing their prep. Over in the New House the startling events of that afternoon and evening were likewise the chief topics of conversation. And in Study No. 6 Blake, Herries, and Digby discussed the affair in the deepest dejection, hoping against hope that every minute that passed would see the noble Arthur Augustus walking into the study—with his tail between his legs, as Herries put it.

But nothing of the kind happened—Arthur Augustus did not turn up. Where he was was certainly a mystery, for the whole school had been combed and searched thoroughly by prefects and seniors of the Sixth. It was all to no avail. Arthur Augustus had, so it seemed, really run away. He had "wetialed" from the school, as he had said he would. He was gone! Prep came and went and it was close on bed-time when the worried Blake—really worried now—was sent for by Mr. Railton.

The Housemaster looked very worried and very annoyed.

"Blake," he began sternly, "you are aware that D'Arcy is absent still?"

"Yes, sir!" muttered Blake.

"Do you know where he is, Blake?" demanded the Housemaster, eyeing the junior searchingly.

"No, sir!"

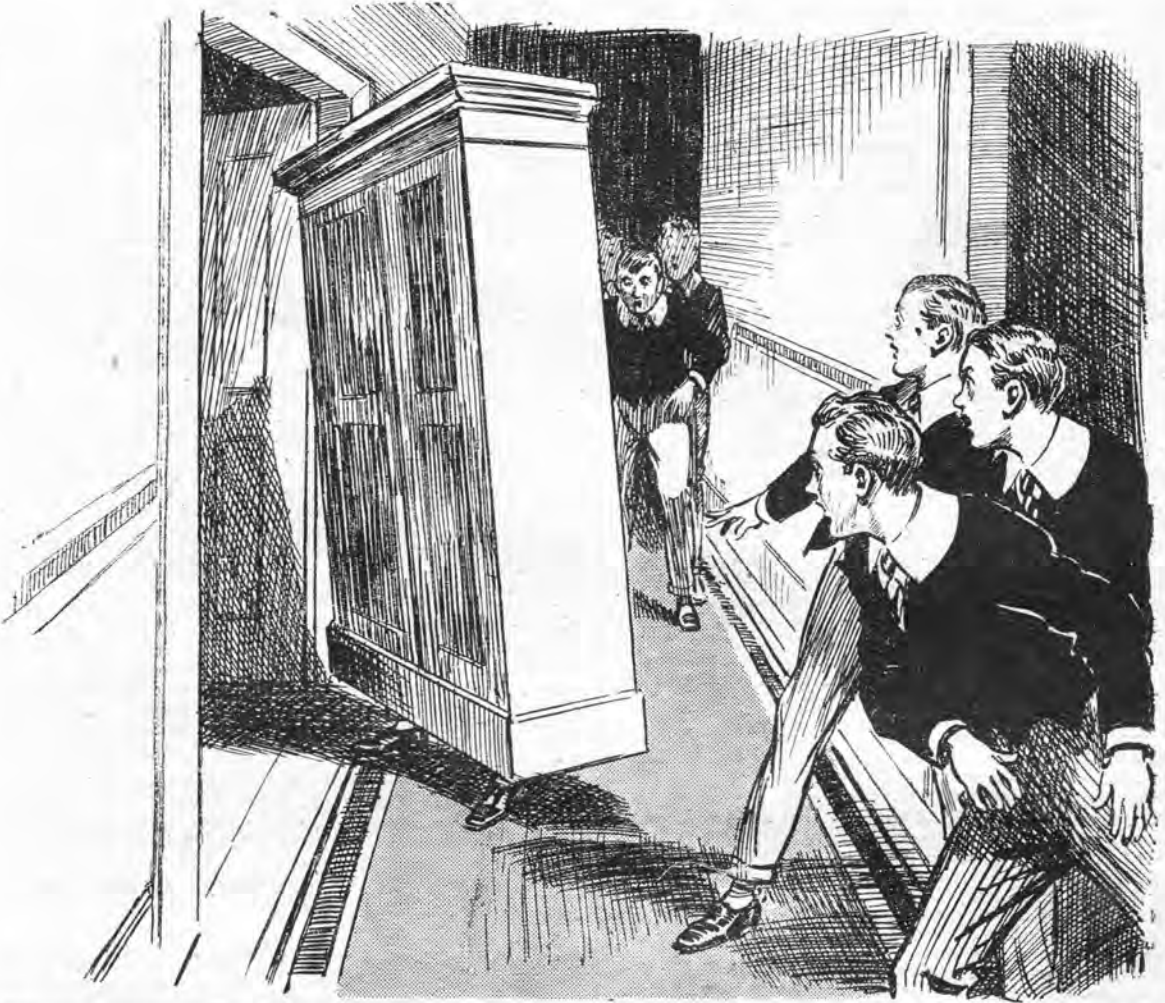
"Blake," said Mr. Railton quietly, "I have sent for you because you are D'Arcy's friend. It is in D'Arcy's best interests that he should be found and brought back. The matter has gone quite far enough—too far! Unless he is back this night his position will be very serious. If you are his friend and have his best interests at heart, you will be well advised to help the authorities to find him without delay."

"I've no idea where he is, sir," said Blake, truthfully enough.

"This afternoon, Blake," said Mr. Railton, "you aided him to escape from Knox, for which you were punished. I sent for you because I believed that you might, if you wished, be able to throw some light on his whereabouts. But if you do not know—"

"I don't, sir," said Blake quietly. "I—I wish I did!"

"Very well, Blake, I will accept your statement," said Mr. Railton. "The boy, however, must be found. Dr. Holmes does not wish to acquaint his father, Lord Eastwood,



Bump, bump! Bang, bang, bang! With a succession of bumps and bangs the cupboard—with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy inside it—lurched and rolled along the passage. Fellows came rushing out of their studies, and several of them were just in time to see the amazing sight of a cupboard walking—seemingly of its own accord—into Study No. 6.

(See Chapter 8.)

with the facts until we are quite certain he has left the school precincts. We have already been in communication with the railway people both at Rylcombe and Wayland, and he certainly has not attempted to board a train as yet—nor is it likely he will do so to-night. But I felt that you might be in a position to offer some helpful suggestions—”

He paused.

“I can't think of anything, sir,” said Blake, after a pause, “excepting that—that I don't think he's left the school yet.”

“That is also my belief,” said the Housemaster. “Very well, Blake! You may go!”

Blake went. He joined the rest of the Fourth going up to their dormitory. A chorus of questions greeted him.

“Is the awful idiot found?”

“Any news of your prize ass, Blake?”

“None!” grunted Blake. “Railton says he hasn't gone off by train, though. He thinks he's still hanging about here.”

“I always felt Gussy was a born idiot,” said Glyn.

“This proves it!” said Clive.

“We'll find him in his little cot when rising-bell goes in the morning,” said Lumley-Lumley, with a grin. “He's only keeping out of the way hoping when the sun goes down the giddy Head's wrath will disappear with it.”

“That's the game!”

It was the general view. But Blake, Herries, and Digby, and a few others who knew their Gussy did not share it. And they proved to be right. When rising-bell clanged out the next morning Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was still absent. And Blake & Co. went down to breakfast feeling that it was all up with that misguided junior.

CHAPTER 10.

Up in the World!

“ANY news?”

“No!”

“The frightful ass!”

“He's all that!”

“The silly chump!”

“And that also,” said Blake gloomily. “No need to remind us of that, Tommy! Calling him names doesn't do any good! What d'you think about it?”

Tom Merry frowned and shook his curly head.

The Terrible Three had just met Blake, Herries, and Digby, strolling in the quad. Dinner was just over, and the Terrible Three had hurriedly sought out their chums of the Fourth, eager to hear if there was any news of the missing Arthur Augustus.

But there was none.

Only a few minutes before Blake had ventured to ask Mr. Railton, and that worried and exasperated gentleman had briefly answered in the negative. Arthur Augustus had not gone home; the Head had soon discovered that on the telephone. He was, apparently, still in the district, but there was no means of knowing where.

“I'm blessed if I know what to think about it,” said Tom Merry. “It's rotten! He needs a jolly good licking for worrying everybody like this.”

“He does!” agreed Blake. “But—”

“But it's rotten,” said Tom. “Poor old Gussy! I badly want to punch his silly nose; but at the same time I'd be jolly glad to know he's safe somewhere.”

“That's just it,” said Blake gloomily. “If he had plenty of cash it wouldn't be so worrying. In any case, though,

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it's jolly serious. It'll mean a flogging when he's caught, if not the boot."

"Sure to!" said Herries dismally. "Poor old Gussy!"

Eager as they were to punch the aristocratic nose of the absent one, Tom Merry & Co. were very worried and concerned about him. The matter was certainly serious, and with every hour that passed it became more serious. Fellows couldn't be allowed to run away from school as they liked—or "wetiah," as Arthur Augustus himself preferred to call it. He was undoubtedly booked for drastic punishment when he did turn up.

"I feel like cutting lessons and going on the hunt for him!" exclaimed Blake, after a pause. "We ought to do something as his pals. Goodness knows what we can do, though! We might search—M-mum-my hat!"

"What's up?"

"Keep quiet and don't yell," said Blake in a thrilling whisper. "I can see Gussy!"

"What?"

"Just spotted him," breathed Blake. "He's on the giddy roof of the School House, trying to attract our attention. Don't look for a bit!"

"Phew! On the—the roof?"

"Yes; the flat roof of the old wing," muttered Blake, glancing about him cautiously. "I just happened to glance up that way and I spotted him. It must be him! He waved to us!"

"I see him," said Tom Merry eagerly. "Well, my only hat!"

A glance round had shown Blake that nobody was observing them so far as they knew, and he waved a hand in the air. Instantly the tiny figure on the roof vanished.

"All serene," breathed Blake. "He's spotted I've seen him, and he's gone. Look here! We're going to see the awful ass! It must be Gussy, of course, though it was too far to recognise him. Come on! We'll just stroll casually inside!"

"But how on earth—"

"Don't you see?" said Blake excitedly. "The beggar's got out through that trapdoor in the roof of the upper box-room in the old wing. I bet he slept in the box-room last night, and sneaked up there for the daytime."

It was a tremendous relief to know that Arthur Augustus was safe; they were quite certain the figure on the roof was Arthur Augustus. It could scarcely be anyone else, indeed. The juniors made their way indoors, taking it easy in case they aroused suspicion.

They reached the old staircase leading up to the deserted box-room at length, and they fairly pelted up the stairs now caution was no longer necessary.

Reaching the box-room in which was the skylight, they slipped inside and closed the door carefully behind them. The first thing they saw was a pile of boxes placed underneath the skylight.

"Phew! If anybody came up here they might spot the game easily," said Tom Merry grimly.

"My hat! Yes, rather!"

But evidently the hapless and desperate Arthur Augustus had been obliged to risk that when choosing the roof as a hiding-place. To get up to the skylight he had been obliged to pile empty boxes beneath it, and, having reached the roof, it was next to impossible for him to remove the tell-tale boxes. Moreover, he would require them in order to reach the box-room again.

Tom Merry climbed on the pile of boxes, and finding the skylight unbolted, as he expected, he clambered out on to the roof. A few seconds later his chums had joined him there.

They looked about them eagerly.

The roof hereabouts was quite flat; but there was nothing to be seen of the fugitive. But Tom Merry had more than once explored the ancient roofs, and he hurried across the flat leads, bending low and warning those behind to do likewise. He reached the inside parapet, and then he paused, thunderstruck at what he saw.

A yard below him, sheltered by higher parts of the roof on three sides, was another flat stretch of roof, hidden from view almost completely from anyone below by the parapets and sloping tiles around.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was there, large as life. He looked grubby and dishevelled, and his clothes were in a shocking state—for him! And he was very busy indeed, or he appeared to be very busy. He was seated on a camp-stool with his back leaning negligently against an ancient chimney. In his hand was a book—a book he seemed to be studying diligently.

But that was not all!

Close by was a small Scout's tent! It was fastened down to the roof in various ingenious ways—tied down to projecting rusted spikes of iron, or with guy-ropes tied to and held down by heavy stones.

On the leads were also a small spirit-stove, a kettle, some

crockery, and various other utensils and articles usually used in camping.

The juniors almost fell down as they sighted the extraordinary scene.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was camping out!

He was also working, by the look of things; for the book in his hand was undoubtedly a school book. Blake sighted the illuminating name of Cicero on the dingy cover.

"Well, I'm blowed!" ejaculated Blake.

The other juniors gave vent to similar expressions of astonishment when they got their breath back. Arthur Augustus, once again, had succeeded in astonishing them.

But the fugitive was aware of their presence now; he leaped up as if he had been shot as he heard Blake's expression. Then, as he sighted them and recognised them, he gave a deep breath of relief.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Weally, you fellows, you have put me in quite a fluttah, bai Jove! I was not expectin' you quite so soon as this, deah boys!"

"My giddy aunt!" said Herries faintly.

"Jolly old Robinson Crusoe!" chuckled Lowther.

"Gussy—" exclaimed Blake.

"Pway be careful, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, blinking up at them anxiously. "I believe it is possible for you to be seen from below up there. Pway come down heah, where it is quite safe."

The juniors dropped down and joined the swell of the Fourth. Arthur Augustus was not at all disturbed; he was quite calm and composed as if he had been in Study No. 6 instead of camping out on the roof of the School House, a fugitive from justice—or injustice.

"What the dickens—" began Blake, in amazement. "Gussy, have you been up here all night?"

"Wathah not, deah boy! I hid up heah on the woof until the coast was cleah, and then I went down and started makin' my pwepawations. The ideah of campin' out up heah came to me in a flash, you know," said Gussy modestly. "Wasn't it a wippin' ideah, deah boys?"

"H'm!"

"Ah!"

"I worked it all out in my mind," explained Arthur Augustus; "and then, when I knew eweryone would be asleep, I cwept downstairs and started work. I obtained some gwub from our studay, besides a lot of othah useful things, and then I wemembahed that some of the Scouts' things were stowed in one of the lowah box-wooms. I got this tent, a stwaw mattwess, and some blankets, and brought them up heah."

"Phew! You—you daring ass!"

"It was wathah a difficult mattah gettin' the stuff through the skylight," confessed Arthur Augustus. "But with wopes I managed to haul them up at last. But it was wathah too dark to put the tent up last night, and so I slept in the box-woom, and made camp vewy early this mornin'. You must admit that I have made wathah a good job of it—what?"

"Great Scott!" said Herries. "And you mean to stay up here?"

"Yaas—for a short time, at all events," said Gussy. "And that weminds me, deah boys—has a lettah come for me?"

Blake shook his head.

"Not unless the giddy beaks have it," said Blake. "We missed the giddy postman; but there wasn't a letter in the rack for you, Gussy."

Gussy's face lengthened.

"Howevah," he said, brightening up, "it cannot be much longah, Blake. I twust you will bring it up to me the moment it does come. It is wathah awkward bein' without cash in such circumstances. I hope to remain here until it does come."

"But—but that book you're reading," stammered Digby. "It's a school book."

"Giddy old Cicero!" chuckled Lowther.

Arthur Augustus looked at them, apparently surprised at the question.

"I twust you fellows do not suppose that I would neglect my lessons?" he remarked. "Though I have wetiahed from school, I have no intention of neglectin' my studies. It would not be quite the thing to neglect my work, you know. I am not a slackah, I hope. I pwopose to continue my studies, and to keep to school hours, just the same."

"Oh crumbs!"

It was just like the noble Arthur Augustus to do that.

"But you will wondah why I wished you to come up to me," said Gussy, blinking through his eyeglass at the juniors. "I was hopin' I should not be obliged to wequest help from you. Howevah, the mattah is vewy important."

"Run short of grub?" said Tom Merry sympathetically.

"Not exactly, deah boy, though I shall vewy soon wequiah more, I feah. But it is a mattah of clobbah."

"Oh! Oh, yes!"

"Look at me!" said Arthur Augustus, in a voice that trembled with emotion. "Pway look at my clobber, deah boys. You will see that it is quite imposs for me to wemain in such a state any longah. My self-wespect demands that I change my clobber and make myself respectable without delay. It was too wisky for me to visit the dormitow in the night, and I wealdy do hope that you fellows will back me up and obtain a fwesh suit of Etons and a hat fwom my wardwobe. I think you had bettah choose a stwaw, and not a toppah, in the cires."

"Well, you—you—"

Blake paused, realising the uselessness of telling Arthur Augustus what he thought of him. The juniors looked eloquently at each other.

"Gussy," said Tom Merry at last, "for goodness' sake listen to us, old man! For the love of Mike, chuck this game, before it goes any further. You're fairly asking for the sack."

"Begging and praying for it," said Manners. "Be sensible, and give yourself up, Gussy."

"We'll make Selby sit up afterwards, old chap!"

"That's it, Gussy, old man—"

Arthur Augustus held his eyeglass 'twixt finger and thumb, and subjected his agitated chums to a cold glance through it.

"Do I undahstand that you are twyin' to persuade me to be false to my principles—to forget self-wespect and disregard my dignity?" he asked sternly.

"But look here, old chap—"

"I uttaly refuse to considah such a suggestion for one moment, as I have already made it quite clear to you. Until Mr. Selby has apologised, or until the Head sees fit to withdwaw his ordah to me to apologise to Mr. Selby, I have no intention whatever of considahin' such a wretched and humiliatin' suggestion. My mind is quite made up, deah boys, and it is quite useless to twy to turn me fwom my decision."

"Oh dear!"

The chums of the fugitive groaned. Arthur Augustus was still on his high horse—very much so, in fact. The case looked hopeless.

"If," went on Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "you fellows would watah not aid me in any way, then this useess interview may just as well end heah and now. I await your answah, Blake."

The juniors exchanged hopeless glances. But, after a pause, they all nodded. They one and all had looked forward keenly to punching Gussy's noble nose when they did see him, but now that idea departed, inviting as it was. Gussy undoubtedly had quite enough pain and trouble coming to him in the near future, they felt, without their adding to it. Moreover, they felt very sympathetic towards him, knowing that Arthur Augustus was quite serious, and quite genuinely sincere in his belief that what he was doing was the "wight and pwopah thing to do." And, after all, they were his chums. They could not refuse to aid him, unwise or not.

"All right, Gussy," groaned Blake at last. "I do wish, though—"

"It is uttaly imposs, deah boy," said Gussy, raising his hand. "Pway do not bring up the suggestion again. If you refuse my wequest, I shall be obliged to wisk captuah, and go down myself."

"We'll do it," said Blake. "Who's coming, chaps? Better not all go at once. Herries, Dig, and I had better go, and you fellows remain with Gussy. You've got some water here, then, Gussy?"

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus, nodding to a bucket standing near which was full of clear water. "I got it fwom the bath-woom in the night."

"Then we'll bring you the clobber and some more grub," grunted Blake. "But—but it'll be jolly risky bringing it upstairs. Somebody's bound to spot us with the stuff, and they'll smell a rat at once, knowing we're your pals. Haven't you enough grub to last until dark to-night?"

"I wealdy have vevy little," said Gussy. "But it is a mattah of clobber. It is imposs for me to wemain in these howwid things any longah. If you don't feel disposed to go, Blake, then I shall be obliged to wisk it myself."

"I'll tell you what," said Digby. "Why not lower the stuff from the study window to the ground? Then we can cut downstairs, trot round to below the roof here, and you chaps can haul the stuff up."

"Yes, but—"

"You can haul it up on the side facing the chapel," said Digby eagerly. "Nobody's ever prowling about there at this time of day. If you've a rope, Gussy—"

"I have," said Arthur Augustus, brightening up. "I found a good one stowed with the tent, and I bwought it up, thinkin' I might escape by it if the worst came to the worst. Heah it is."

Arthur Augustus dived into the tent and brought to light a rope—a big coil of thin rope, little more than cord. If

Arthur Augustus proposed to trust his life to that rope, then he was seeking an early funeral—as Blake told him. It was good enough for the present purpose, however, and the plan settled now, Blake, Herries, and Digby left the rest and vanished over the roofs towards the skylight to carry out Gussy's "wequest." It seemed a comparatively easy task, and they did not anticipate any trouble. But they had not counted on the sharp eyes of Gerald Knox of the Sixth.

CHAPTER 11.

Cooling Knox's Ardour!

KNOX of the Sixth paused. He not only paused, but he stepped back suddenly behind the shelter of an old elm, his eyes suddenly glinting with suspicion and expectation.

"By gad!" he murmured. "I wonder—"

Gerald Knox had been across to the New House to see Monteith, the head prefect there, and he was just returning when his sharp eyes had caught sight of three juniors walking in rather a stealthy manner round by the school chapel.

Knox was a very nosy youth, with rather an exaggerated idea of the duties of a prefect. Knox considered that the duties of a prefect included spying on suspects and trailing them until he found them out in some unlawful act. Then Knox would pounce on them and haul them before the Housemaster—or, if the matter was small—which was very often—he dealt with them himself in the manner which had earned him the title of Bully Knox.

The affair of the bolting of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had interested Knox very much. Knox was very much "up against" the chums of the Fourth, and he particularly disliked Arthur Augustus—possibly because Gussy was just as straight as he was crooked. And since Gussy had bolted Knox had been very busy indeed—much more busy than any of the other prefects. Knox, as a general rule, neglected his duties as a prefect as much as he could—unless that duty was connected with the running down and reporting of juniors and fags. Knox was a slacker. Yet he was exceedingly zealous in the hunt for Arthur Augustus.

Knox's theory was that Arthur Augustus was still in hiding in St. Jim's, and that Blake, Herries, and Digby knew perfectly well where he was, and that they were aiding and abetting him in avoiding capture. Therefore, Knox, not being able to trace Arthur Augustus, concentrated his energies on watching Blake & Co.

But it was just by sheer chance that he happened to spot those three juniors now.

And it was only too clear to him that they were up to something. Had they gone round by the chapel quite openly and carelessly, Knox would have been just as suspicious, for it was unusual for fellows to wander that way at that hour.

So Knox's eyes glinted, and he followed, keeping in the shade of the old elms, his footsteps making no sound on the crisp grass. He had already noted that Blake, Herries, and Digby each carried a parcel—still more proof that they were "up to something."

"By gad!" breathed Knox. "That—that's it! They're taking grub and stuff to that young fool D'Arcy."

The thought gave Knox great pleasure. It would be a feather in his cap if he succeeded in tracking down the fugitive where everybody else had failed.

So he tracked Blake & Co., those juniors never dreaming that such a bloodhound was on their trail. Unfortunately for his hopes, however, Knox did not think of looking upwards. Had he done so he would possibly have seen that three pairs of sharp eyes had observed him.

Those eyes belonged to Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners, who had worked their way over the roofs to that spot to await Blake's arrival, and to haul the things up by the rope they held ready.

"It's that cad Knox!" gasped Tom Merry, recognising the prowling senior at a glance. "He's after Blake! Oh, my hat!"

"Better shout and warn Blake— Great Scott, we daren't though!" added Manners.

"Leave it to me!" grinned Lowther. "Knox's ardour needs cooling. I'm going to cool it."

He scudded back to where they had left Arthur Augustus by the patrol-tent. Without explaining, Lowther grabbed the bucket of water, and started back with it. It was a very easy matter to a fellow with steady nerves, for even where the roof sloped there was a fairly wide parapet to walk along. In a few seconds Lowther had reached his scared chums, water splashing over from the bucket he carried.

"Lowther, you awful ass!" gasped Tom Merry, grasping his game. "Don't—"

His protest came too late. Lowther came up, peered over the brink, moved swiftly along a few yards, and then—

Swoooosh!

Lowther's aim was remarkably true considering the distance—though undoubtedly luck favoured him. At the moment Knox was creeping along among the flower-beds exactly below them, and the stream of water shot downwards, clean as a whistle, and fell like a cloud-burst on Knox's bent head.

"Yaroooooooh!"

Knox's howl was enough to have wakened the celebrated Seven Sleepers of old. The sheer force of the water was enough to send the hapless prefect sprawling headlong, with his face in a prickly rose-bush. It was really no wonder Knox howled.

And he did howl—fiendishly!

It nearly startled Blake & Co. out of their wits, but as they wheeled swiftly they saw Knox and understood—at least, they understood when they glanced upward just in time to see Lowther dodge back on the roof.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Blake. "Oh crikey! Good man, Lowther!"

"What a pity it wasn't a chunk of masonry," grinned Digby gleefully. "The rotter was trailing us, of course! Run for it!"

All ideas of sending up the parcels now were off, of course. And Blake & Co. hugged the parcels to them and scudded away, taking shelter behind the wood-shed. From there they watched Knox stagger to his feet, water streaming from him. He held his head, and fairly danced with rage. Then he looked swiftly upwards.

As he did so, Blake, Herries, and Digby noted that a head had appeared at one of the windows above where Knox was standing. The window happened to be the window of Grundy's study—the juniors knew that because it was Grundy's head and shoulders that appeared there just then.

"What the thump!" cried Grundy.

He stared down at the raving, drenched Knox in amazement. Having heard that terrific yell, Grundy had looked out to see what the trouble was. The sight did not bring enlightenment.

But the sight of Grundy seemed to bring enlightenment to Knox. He shook a furious fist up at Grundy.

"You—you young hound!" he howled furiously. "I—I'll break your dashed neck for this, Grundy! I'll teach you to chuck water over a prefect! Why, you—you—"

Knox spluttered with rage and pain, and then he rushed off as hard as he could pelt—obviously intending to interview Grundy regarding the affair.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby roared—they could not help it. "Come on!" choked Blake. "Let's go and see what happens."

Hiding their parcels, the three Fourth-Formers rushed after Knox into the School House and up to the Shell passage. As they entered the passage they heard a terrific commotion coming from Grundy's study.

"I tell you," Grundy was bellowing. "I know nothing about it, you rotter! Why, if you lay that dashed cane about me again, you cad, I'll punch your nose, prefect or no prefect!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

In Grundy's study a cane was obviously going strong, whether it was Knox laying it about Grundy or not. Blake & Co. rushed up and peered over the shoulders of several other fellows attracted by the commotion.

Knox was using the cane, and he was using it on Grundy. And next moment Grundy, being a fellow of his word, kept his word.

He went for Knox, and the next moment a furious struggle was going on in the study, Grundy being a very hefty youth, with little regard for the authority of a prefect—at least, a prefect of Knox's kidney.

Possibly Knox had good reason during the next few moments to regret his hasty use of the cane, for Grundy was a terrific fighting man, whereas Knox was not. He was also a fearful funk.

"Oh, my hat! They're going it!"

"Here's Linton!" cried a voice. "Look out!"

It was the Shell master. He came hurrying along, his face alarmed and angry.

"Here's where we move," murmured Blake. "Come on, chaps!"

"But Grundy? We can't see him—"

"It's all right!" hissed Blake. "Gunny and Wilkins were there, and they'll soon prove Grundy innocent. Besides, a few licks of a cane will do dear old Grundy good, and a few good punches from Grundy were just what Knox needed. So everybody should be satisfied. Come on!"

And Blake led his chums cautiously back up the back staircase a few moments later, and so on up to the box-

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room. They gained the roof without incident, and there they found Tom Merry and the rest waiting in no little trepidation.

"All serene," grinned Blake. "Knoxy-woxy thought it was Grundy, and he rushed up to Grundy's study and laid into him with a cane. Then Grundy went for him. We left 'em at it with old Linton just turning up to see what the row was about. Wonder what's happened?"

Tom Merry & Co. stared, and then they chuckled explosively.

Only Arthur Augustus did not chuckle. He had noted that his chums were empty-handed.

"Then—then you have failed to do it?" he groaned. "Oh, deah! My clobber—"

"We've hidden it in the bushes," said Blake hastily. "All serene, Gussy. It isn't safe now, but we'll recover the things immediately after lessons and have another go. Rely on us, old chap! But I wish you'd jolly well be sensible and chuck this game up," he added, with a groan. "You'll bring down my grey hairs in sorrow to the giddy grave if this goes on much longer!"

"Wats! I have already told you my decision," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, I will agree to wait until aftah classes, and meanwhile I will get my dinnah, as I have had none yet."

"We'll leave you to it, then," grunted Blake. "I've had enough of this for a bit."

"Same here!"

And they left Arthur Augustus to it. He lit the stove and made preparations for his dinner—which consisted of sandwiches, with coffee to follow, while his chums made their way back through the skylight and out of the box-room. They had just vanished when a fat form crawled from behind a pile of trunks in a corner of the box-room.

It was Baggy Trimble, and Baggy's little inquisitive eyes were gleaming.

"M-mum-my hat!" he breathed, staring up at the skylight. "So—so that's the game, is it? That's where that silly ass, D'Arcy is! Oh, crikey! Fancy hiding on the roof! I'm on to this! Perhaps Gussy will make me a little loan. He refused yesterday—said he had no money, the mean fibber! Here goes!"

It seemed an excellent chance to raise a loan from Arthur Augustus to Baggy Trimble, who felt quite certain Gussy was, indeed, on the roof, else why were Tom Merry & Co. sneaking up there?

So Baggy Trimble started to clamber up the boxes towards the skylight.

CHAPTER 12.

"Fire!"

BAGGY TRIMBLE was feeling very cheerful about things. How he came to be in the box-room just then was very simple. Baggy had helped himself to some packets of chocolates he had "found" in Cardew's study, and fearing Wildrake would give him away if he spotted them, Trimble had deemed it safer to eat them in a more secret place than his own study. So he had repaired to the upper box-rooms—a place he had used often enough before for the same purpose.

He had scarcely started on the first packet, however, when Blake, Herries, and Digby had come hurrying upstairs, and, hearing their footsteps, Baggy had hidden in great apprehension, fearing Cardew had discovered his depredations, and was on his track.

Then Baggy, in great wonderment, had seen Blake, Herries, and Digby vanish through the skylight. But the truth had slowly dawned in on his fat intellect. He had waited breathless until they had returned through the skylight—this time accompanied by Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners.

When they had gone Baggy had emerged, grinning all over his fat, unwholesome face.

"He, he, he!" he murmured. "I think I see the little game!"

It was no easy matter for a fellow of Trimble's bulk to reach the skylight, but the thought of the loan he proposed to raise from Arthur Augustus spurred him on. At length he was standing on the flat roof, and after blinking about for a moment rather nervously, Baggy started to explore. Not for one moment did he doubt that Arthur Augustus would be found in hiding on the roof somewhere.

He very soon sighted the fugitive—the smell of the stove drew him to the spot instantly. And as he blinked down at Gussy's camp, Trimble fairly gaped in sheer amazement.

"Mum-my hat!" he gasped. "Gussy—well, you crafty ass!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Gussy jumped up from his camp-stool with a cry of utter dismay. Trimble's voice was not a voice Gussy was keen to



Scattering the grate and fire-irons to right and left as he rolled out on to the carpet amidst a torrent of soot and pieces of brick from the chimney, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy finished his descent. "What, what— Good gracious!" Mr. Lathom nearly jumped off the floor at the astonishing and totally unexpected advent of Arthur Augustus. "Oh deah!" gasped that luckless youth. (See Chapter 12.)

hear at any time. But just now it sounded especially unpleasant and unwelcome.

"Gussy!" said Trimble, with a fat grin. "Oh, Gussy! What a pleasant surprise! Fancy meeting you here!"

"You—you spyin' little wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Is that the way to greet a pal?" asked Trimble sorrowfully. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy! But, I say, I'm not going to give you away, old man!"

"Weally, Twimble—"

"Not me," said Trimble, his eyes glimmering as they rested on the tent and other things. "I say, this is prime, Gussy!" he added. "Ripping, in fact! Have you got plenty of grub?"

"No, I have not plenty of gwub, Twimble!"

"Well, we can soon get some," said Trimble. "Raid the studies at night—what? A ripping wheeze! No lessons, no cane, and no lines! No bully-ragging by prefects, and nothing to do but sleep and eat. I say, it's prime!"

"We!" repeated Gussy, with a start. "Pway explain what you mean, Twimble?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Trimble.

As a matter of fact, the sight of Gussy's cosy little camp had caused Trimble to change his mind suddenly. He had intended to ask Gussy for a little trifling loan—say a quid, or so—as the price of his silence, to put it with brutal bluntness. But now Baggy decided suddenly to improve on that idea. Why not join Gussy in his ripping stunt? No lessons, no work of any kind! And if a fellow wanted grub, all he had to do was to sneak downstairs in the small hours and help himself. It was a gorgeous prospect to Trimble. Trimble wasn't given to looking ahead. If D'Arcy was

risking it, then he wasn't going to funk it, especially as he inwardly decided to throw the blame on to Gussy if it came to the pinch. It should be easy dealing with an innocent "mug" like Arthur Augustus.

"He, he, he!" cackled Trimble. "I said 'we,' and I mean 'we.' I'm going to join you, Gussy; being an old pal, I'm going to stand by you, stick to you through thick and thin, fair weather or foul! That's me!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'll have that tent, I think," said Trimble. "I suppose you can easily get another one from the giddy store where you got that. Only mind, there's to be no question as to who's to do the foraging for the grub! I'll agree to do the cooking, and you see to going down for the grub at nights! That's fair enough, ain't it?"

"Bai Jove! You—you little worm!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "I shall not allow you to join me, Twimble! Wathah not, bai Jove!"

"Won't you?" grinned Trimble, making as if to move back to the skylight. "Oh, all right! After all, it's a fellow's duty to aid the authorities in a matter like this," he added, shaking his head seriously. "I can't allow it to go on, D'Arcy. It wouldn't be consistent with my sense of duty, you know, I'm sorry, Gussy, but I really must go to Mr. Railton without delay and— Here, keep off! Yarroooooop!"

But Arthur Augustus did not "keep off." On the contrary, he rushed wrathfully at the grinning Trimble and smote him hard. Trimble staggered back, tripped over the kettle, upsetting that and the lighted spirit-stove on which

it rested, and then sprawled backwards with a heavy bump full on the small tent, which sagged and collapsed on top of him.

"Yarroooogh!"

Once again Trimble howled, this time his voice being muffled by the tent which enveloped him.

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus jumped forward to help Trimble out, quite failing to note that the spirit-stove had not gone out. On the contrary, the wick, being loose, had come out, igniting the spirit which flowed from the reservoir.

Nor was that all. The lighted spirit licked along the straw mattress which Gussy had spread out to air in the sun, and the next instant it was blazing furiously.

It was only then that Gussy became aware of what had happened, and, leaving Trimble to it, Gussy gave a startled gasp, and, grabbing the other end of the mattress, he started to shake it frantically in an effort to put out the flames.

But it only made matters worse, and soon Gussy was obliged to release the mattress and jump back, for flames were leaping high from it as the dry straw got fairly going.

"Oh, Gweat Scott!"

In a desperate attempt to make matters better, Gussy tore at the tent, and, Trimble having released himself from it now, dragged it over the flames, hoping thereby to smother them. It was a forlorn hope. In a few seconds the tent also was on fire and blazing furiously.

Next Week's GEM Cover in Miniature!



"THEY'RE ALL AFTER GUSSY!"

"What for?"

"What's he done?"

"What's he doing in convict's clothes, anyway???"

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"GUSSY SEES IT THROUGH!"

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THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,012.

"Yarroooogh! Help!" roared Trimble, frightened out of his wits. "Yarroooogh! Fire! Help!"

Trimble turned tail and fled. Arthur Augustus, however, was made of sterner stuff. He grabbed the camp-stool and started to try to beat out the leaping flames. But it was useless—worse than useless.

D'Arcy gave it up at last, and just at that moment the fire-bell went.

Clang, clang, clang, clang!

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus groaned in utter dismay. The fire had obviously been seen from below, and some zealous individual was ringing the fire-alarm furiously.

It was all up with him now—Arthur Augustus knew that it was—unless he went while the going was good!

For several moments Arthur Augustus hung back, watching the leaping flames in dismayed indecision, and then as he heard the shouts and onerities from the quad below he decided swiftly and made his way hastily to the skylight.

But it was closed—and locked!

Whether by accident or design, the cowardly Baggy Trimble had bolted it on the inside before flying for his life downstairs. Trimble knew better than to be caught up on the roof just then.

"Oh deah!" groaned Gussy. "Twapped, bai Jove! That frightful little worm has bolted the skylight!"

The hapless fugitive wasted several precious minutes tugging and pulling at the closed skylight; and then, realising it was a waste of time at last, he hurried back to the roof—to his wrecked camp.

The flames were still leaping from the mattress and tent, and smoke was curling skywards. Arthur Augustus reflected a moment, and then he hurried to the edge of the roof and blinked over, having heard ominous sounds from the quad below.

A glance showed him that his worst fears were realised.

The school fire-engine was below, and already ladders were being placed against the ivy-clad wall. He caught a glimpse of Kildare just clambering up one of the ladders, dragging a hose behind him.

The quadrangle was crowded with excited fellows and gusters, and a sudden yell went up, telling Gussy that he had been seen.

"Oh ewwubs!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "This is weally too frightful for words! I weally think—"

Swish, swish, swish!

A stream of water hissed up into the air and splashed a few yards from him on the leads, spattering him with water. As he jumped in startled alarm another stream came much nearer this time—much too near for Arthur Augustus.

It fairly swamped him, drenching him from head to foot.

"Ow! Yow-ow! Gwoooogh! Oh, bai Jove!" wailed the unfortunate Gussy.

Arthur Augustus did not spend any time after that cogitating as to what he should do next; he just did it.

He made for the nearest chimney—one out of sight of the crowd below, however—and a second later he had clambered up, and another second later he was lowering himself gingerly but resolutely into its yawning blackness.

It was a horrible task. The chimney was ancient and wide—but none too wide for comfort. The soot got into D'Arcy's eyes and nose, making his eyes smart, and making him sneeze violently. But he stuck doggedly to his task.

Quite suddenly a brick gave way under his clawing foot, and he heard it thudding down the chimney below him—but not for more than a brief second.

Then it crashed on something with a hollow thud, and as it did so a startled cry reached D'Arcy's singing ears. But before he could hear anything more, or wonder even at the strange cry, he followed the brick.

While falling Gussy knew what it meant. He suddenly glimpsed daylight below, and then he fell crashing into a fireplace, scattering grate and fire-irons to right and left as he rolled out on to a carpet amidst a perfect torrent of soot and pieces of ancient brick.

"Yooooop!"

"What—what— Good heavens!"

Following instantly on D'Arcy's involuntary yell of pain came a startled cry from the room where Gussy found himself. Though feeling as if every bone in his luckless body was broken, Gussy scrambled up, shedding soot far and wide. Through smarting eyes he glimpsed a figure standing by an open window—the form of a master!

It was Mr. Lathom, his own Form master, and Mr. Lathom, astounded and scared as he was, recognised Gussy just as Gussy recognised him.

"What—what— Good gracious! D'Arcy—boy!"

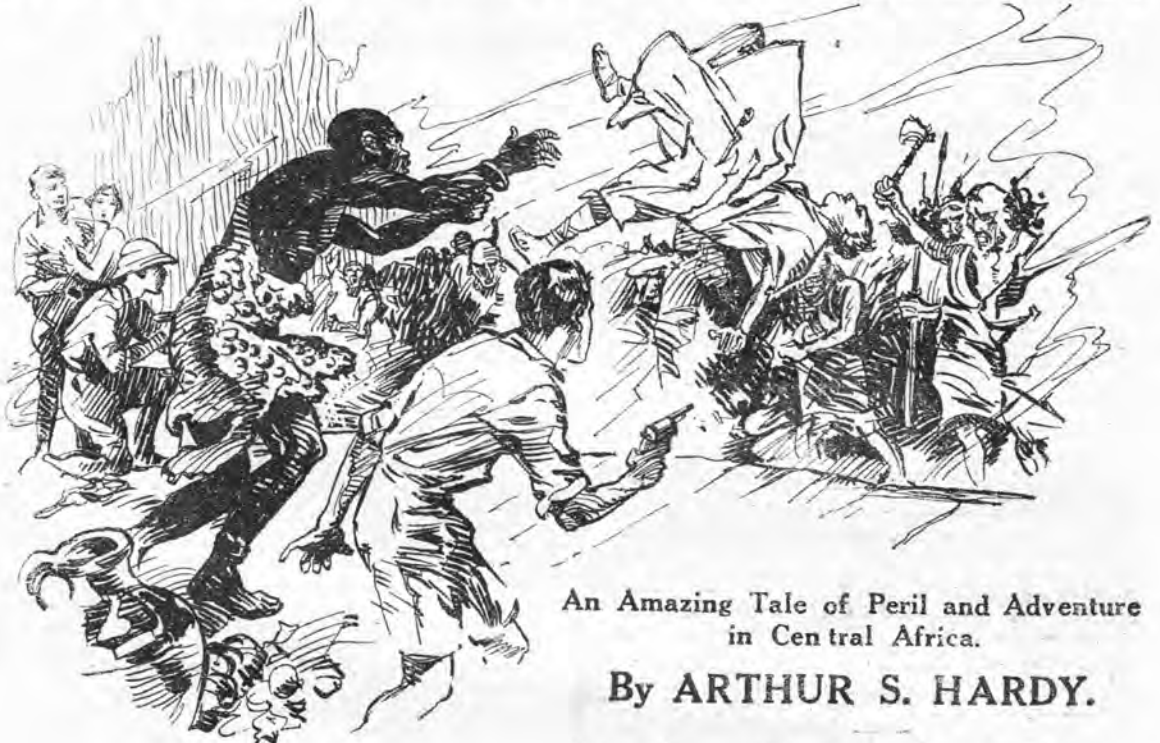
"Oh deah!"

Arthur Augustus stared at the master in horrified indecision for a brief moment, and then he made a wild jump for the door. He grasped the knob, tore at it and wrenched

(Continued on page 28.)

GRAND SERIAL STORY BY ARTHUR S. HARDY—START IT TO-DAY!

BEYOND THE SILVER GLACIER!



An Amazing Tale of Peril and Adventure
in Central Africa.

By ARTHUR S. HARDY.

The Silver Ship!

BID those men hold back the machine-gun fire until the last possible moment!"

No one who knew Professor George Willis Byrne, the famous explorer, in England, would have recognised the same man as he uttered those words, for England and civilisation were thousands of miles away.

There, in the secret city of Barcoomba, peopled by a strange race of brown and white skinned natives, who had worshipped the professor as a god, and made him their king, George Willis was an entirely different personage from the meek and mild professor his friends in England were accustomed to seeing.

For approximately four years he and his daughter Rosa had been tucked away in this mysterious city of Barcoomba, of which no up-to-date map of Africa gave record, hoping against hope that friends in England would ultimately discover him and his daughter, and take them back to civilisation.

The hope had not been in vain, for a rescue party under the leadership of Adam Byrne, his son, had, after an arduous and thrilling cross-country trek, been led to the hidden city of Barcoomba by Kyhte, a native loyal to the professor and his daughter.

"Hold your fire!" rapped Professor Byrne, turning to Sandy McTavish, a typical Scot, who, with Jimmy Brown, a Cockney, whose cheery spirits had kept the whole party alive with laughter, and Harry Franklin, completed the rescue party from England. "Hold it, until the very last moment."

"It'll be a deuce of a job to hold it moomch longer, mon," growled Sandy, "for these Hokahula swabs are more than a wee bit anxious to taste a bit o' real Scotch shootin'."

That seemed to be the case, for the swarms of the skewbald natives, urged on by the entreaties of their blood-thirsty priests, were perilously close to the small party of whites, whose power over them had waned ever since the professor had refused to give his consent to a marriage between his daughter Rosa and Beeda the native chief.

For a lengthy period now the professor had managed to stall off the unwelcome attentions of Beeda, on the grounds that Rosa was suffering from a serious illness, and was not to be disturbed. But Choitae, the high priest, had seen through the ruse. Cunningly had he played upon the emotions of Beeda, the chief, with the result that Beeda, summoning his warriors, had surrounded the palace in which

the professor and his party had been housed, having in the meantime kidnapped Rosa.

But Beeda had reckoned without Muta, a misshapen giant, who had thrown in his lot with the white men. And Muta hated Beeda, for, according to the former, his mother had been O-Kama, the witch—once queen of the Hokahulas, which, if it were true, meant that Muta and not Beeda should be chief of the tribe. Thus when Rosa had been brought forward, surrounded by native warriors, and Beeda had made afresh his proposal of marriage, Muta hurled himself upon the bodyguard, bowled them over like skittles, and rescued the professor's daughter.

It was the signal, however, for a general advance of Beeda's warriors. Yet even that did not dismay Muta, the black. Singling out Beeda, Muta seized hold of him and tossed him, as if he were as light as a child, full into the ranks of the warriors.

Choitae, the priest, fearful lest he should lose all authority over the people, worked himself into a frenzy.

"Kill!" he shrieked. "Kill, kill! Have no fear. These are not the white gods! Kill the dogs! Kill even the white princess!"

Very reluctantly Adam gave the order to fire.

"Use your revolvers—and shoot to wound, but not to kill," he yelled. "Do not use the machine-gun—yet."

They did not wait for the command, for the situation was too serious.

Harry shot one of the rushing warriors clean through the thick of the right shoulder, even as this order was given. Adam winged another, then shot a third through the thigh. Julian Del Rivo, the Portuguese, who had fallen in with the party on their way to Barcoomba, aimed anywhere, anyhow, emptying his weapon in a flash. Even the professor, though reluctantly, fired his revolver, but he raised the barrel so that it hurled its bullets far above the plumed heads of the onrushing warriors.

At the echoing reports of the weapons, and seeing their leaders fall stricken to the ground even as the white gods had foretold, the line of Hokahulas halted, wavered, then broke.

Leaving their wounded writhing where they had fallen, they rushed, crying out in terror, back into the square, the populace giving way before them.

Beeda, their chief, was in the way, and they trampled upon him as he lay prostrate upon the ground where Muta had hurled him.

Then the giant black, leaping upwards and flinging wide his arms, let forth cry upon cry, his loud and penetrating voice making itself heard above the din.

Muta seemed to have gone mad. His eyes glowed like coals.

Leaping down, he swept the prostrate and groaning chief from the ground, and held him aloft above his head in his powerful hands.

"Whow!" he shouted. "Behold the might of Beeda. And listen to the voice of Muta, the son of the Queen O-Kama. The high priest, Choitae, is a false priest. Even as the horned priests drove my queen mother from the land, so would they now slay the white gods, whose might is above the might of all the Hokahulas, and who can fly through the air like birds."

A slant of golden sunshine split the heavy fog cloud above, and beat down upon the platform. Then came a peculiar whining sound overhead. Muta, touched by the golden light, presented a terrible spectacle to the awed Hokahulas.

Adam, glancing upwards—blinked.

A thrill ran through him. Subconsciously he had known what that strange sound was that had come to them above the cloud of mist. He had not believed, because it had seemed so impossible.

But now, as the mist dispersed, driven away by a keen wind, he saw, dipping its nose towards the clearing and flying not more than a thousand feet above their heads, a great silver airship.

"Look—dad—look!" cried Adam, in a delirium of delight.

"God bless me!" ejaculated the professor, blinking up at the silver airship. "A liner of the air, Adam—and she is flying the British flag."

The natives heard and glanced upward in terror.

"Muta," cried Adam, leaping to the side of the black man, "do not be afraid—that is just another big flying boat—similar to one we left many miles away—with our white friends aboard it."

Muta, twisting Beeda that he might see, and glaring mockingly at the dismayed high priest Choitae, laughed aloud.

"Whow! Choitae, false priest of the Hokahulas," he cried, in triumph. "Dost thou say now that the white gods cannot fly?"

The Mirawala!

THE minutes that immediately followed the coming of the silver airship were the most tense and thrilling that Adam had ever known.

They were safe now, he knew that. Even Choitae, with all his scheming and cunning, would be powerless to harm them after this proof of the might and power of the white gods.

Uttering cries of terror, the great multitude of Hokahula men and women and children prostrated themselves in the dust. The warriors threw down their spears.

Muta, howling like a man demented, shook Beeda as he held him high above his head, and the chief turned his rolling, frightened eyes up to watch the silver ship.

"The ship of the white gods—the flyers, O Beeda!" Muta yelled. "Look—look!"

The airship soared gracefully overhead, the bright sunshine striking fire from her silver hull. Slowly she moved onward, half turned, and it struck Adam then that she might pass by and not see them or the great crowd that filled the huge square.

"Quick, quick, quick!" he called. "Fire the guns! They may not have seen us. Turn upward the nozzle of the machine-gun, Sandy, and set it popping. We must not lose the chance. She's British! Look at her flag!"

"Ay!" growled Sandy. "She's British right eno'. Built by the nation o' shopkeepers. Ma guidness, but she's a bonny wee craft!"

Turning the machine-gun so that it would direct its bullets upwards, but away from the airship and into the trees of the forest, Jimmy Brown set it rattling, whilst Sandy McTavish helped to support it firmly.

The purring reports served further to terrify the Hokahulas.

The other white men added to the din with rifle and revolver-fire. And in a moment they knew, as the airship altered her course and swung about, that their signals had been heard. Indeed, within less than a minute, those aboard the silver craft answered the firing by dipping the Union Jack which fluttered at the airship's tail.

"They've heard the signals; they've seen us!" laughed Adam, as he whipped his hat from his head and flourished it. "She's turning round. She's dipping. She's coming down. Dad, we may be able to escape from Barcoomba sooner than we thought! Look! Look! Look!"

Muta dropped Beeda upon his feet. All the fight had gone out of the ruler of the Hokahulas. He stared with goggling eyes at the silver airship, and then at his wounded warriors, who were being borne away.

Choitae, the high priest, came to him, looking much shaken.

"Pardon, chief," he murmured. "Remember that what I did was for the best. Thou didst covet the white princess for thy wife. I did but try to give her to you—"

"And you failed. Doubting the power of the white gods, you misled me," returned Beeda. "Thou didst say, Choitae, that the tubes of death the white men carry would not kill, but they do kill. Thou didst say that the white gods cannot fly—when, behold"—and he pointed at the slowly moving airship—"they can fly, and can bring other white gods through the air to aid them at the call of their barking death-tubes. See the emblem—the coloured flag—"

they have hoisted at the head of their mast, and note that the great ship of the air bears the same symbol.

"Thou didst say that the charm Oyorara, which the young white god wears always upon his breast, was not the real charm belonging to the lost Queen O-Kama. Yet it would seem that it is the real charm, and protects he who wears it from all harm."

Choitae bowed his head humbly.

"What I did, O chief, was for thy sake," he pleaded.

"True," answered Beeda, baring his teeth in a wolfish smile. "And for that reason thou shalt go unpunished. Choitae, if thou canst intercede with the white gods of the air and obtain pardon for the sins of the Hokahulas, so that peace and plenty may remain with my people for ever more."

Choitae bowed low, then raised himself, and stared in awe at the great silver ship which was sweeping lower over the trees and coming round in a wide circle.

He could see the propellers whirling, could see the heads of men thrust out of the windows of the airship's cabins.

The people also saw.

Professor Byrne, setting his crown of skin more firmly upon his head, advanced now, and, with both arms raised,

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addressed the prostrate and worshipping tribesmen, who were surrounding them on all sides.

"Be not afraid, O my people!" he cried. "The white gods, having revealed their power, will not harm the Hokahulas, whom they love as their brothers and sisters!"

The natives heard, and, raising their heads, uttered joyful cries.

Then, embracing his daughter, the professor kissed her fondly.

"Rosa, my child," he said, "you are looking wondrously beautiful. I trust you met with no harm?"

"They were most kind, though I was afraid of Choitac," the girl smiled. "But, father, what a shame to kill those poor men!"

"It is a pity indeed," said the professor, "but our need was desperate."

Now Adam uttered an exultant laugh.

"Father," he cried, "another miracle is explained—that message that came to us through the air in Morse! Look! Read the airship's name—you can see it plainly now—M-i-r-a-w-a-l-a. The signals must have been given out by those aboard."

The airship came dipping lower and lower, whilst the mist, now completely dispersed, had given place to glorious sunshine.

Seeing the great silver airship dropping down upon them, the Hokahulas, with one accord, took flight and ran.

Those aboard the airship dropped a rope, then another.

"We shall need the help of some of those black-and-tans," yelled Jimmy Brown, "to help make the airship safe!"

"Call them back Muta!" ordered Adam.

The great, misshapen black man, hands to mouth, let forth a mighty call.

"The white flyers are your friends!" he bellowed. "Stay and worship, O Hokahulas. It is their will."

Some of the natives halted. The warriors standing their ground watched in awestricken silence.

The professor, stepping down from the platform and advancing into the square, ran towards the rope which came coiling and dangling down at the head of the others.

The professor might be lean and hungry-looking, but his adventurous life out of doors had toughened him. He had the activity of a man half his age. After him sped Adam and Jimmy Brown, Sandy McTavish, and Harry Franklin. Muta and Kyhte, the man Symes in his rags, and Rosa. Only one man remained behind upon the raised platform, Julian Del Rivo, who stared wide-eyed at the magnificent airship as she moved, with the majesty of a liner coming into dock, into the great space between the trees.

Del Rivo did not intend to help. Let others do the work. He would remain with the guns. He did not intend taking a single chance.

If the airship was capable of resuming its flight they would take him with them; on the other hand, if it foundered here in the great square of Barcoomba, there would be so many white men the more to help them maintain the whip hand they had gained over the priests and the people.

So Julian Del Rivo watched whilst the professor and the others seized the dangling rope and held on. For a moment it seemed as if the silver ship would lift them bodily into the air; then it dipped again.

Men in the cars above shouted orders. Muta set his great hands upon the rope, and, exerting his giant's strength, was worth half a dozen ordinary men.

Under instructions, he called to the natives who held on to the rope in one long chain.

Seeing that the rope was securely held, Jimmy Brown let go and ran to the other rope. The professor, as befitted the dignity of a king, also broke away to watch, and Adam and the others, too.

The second rope was seized by more than fifty men.

The airship was now little more than fifty feet above the ground. She came lower still. A third rope was flung out, and this also was seized and held.

The great ship was pulled gently but slowly across the square, until at length the ropes were made fast to the great trees, and to the base of the flagstaff, upon the top of which fluttered the Union Jack.

Then the professor led the shouting of the multitude as the people came crowding in close to the ring of warriors who kept the ground clear beneath the great airship.

As they watched in awestricken silence, after the cheering had died down, the natives saw the cars, or cages, above them open, saw rope-ladders thrown out, saw the captain of the silver ship and half a dozen others descend to the ground.

The first to appear was a sun-tanned man in uniform, with shirt open at the neck, peaked cap set back upon a curly head, face the hue of a roasted coffee-bean, chin bearded, upper lip adorned with curling moustache.

One piercing glance he gave Professor Byrne, and then, as he gripped the fingers of the king of the Hokahulas, he

shifted his eyes to Adam Byrne and Rosa, Harry Franklin and Sandy McTavish, and he laughed.

"Professor George Willis Irvine, I believe," he greeted. "And the others will be Adam Byrne, Harry Franklin, and your daughter Rosa, I presume. I am proud to meet you. And as for you, Sandy McTavish—the devil fly away with you—what are you doing so far away from Glasgow?"

Sandy McTavish, leaping towards him, clasped his hand.

"Captain Skinner, as I'm a living Scotsman!" he roared.

"The last I heard o' you, John Skinner, you had been taken prisoner by the Riffs, and were gien up for deid. What am I doin' so far awa' fra' bonnie Glasgoy? Why, mon, dimma ye ken I have not been lame for over twenty years or mair, save for an odd few days here and there?"

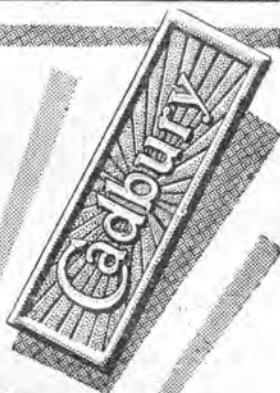
"At any rate, Sandy, I'm right down glad to see you," laughed the commander of the silver airship.

"And noo," said Sandy in a tone of challenge, "maybe you'll be tellin' me what you're doin' in the Mirawala?"

"I am her captain. I happened to be in mid-Africa when I heard the news of the loss of your parties' aeroplanes; and, as it was recognised that Professor Byrne and his daughter were alone and prisoners in an unknown country somewhere near a mountain whose top could never be seen, I thought I'd take a chance and try and find them!"

(Another full-of-thrills instalment next week, chums.)

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"GUSSY, THE REBEL!"

(Continued from page 24.)

the door open. Then he flew for his life, Mr. Lathom's angry voice following him.

A few seconds later the swell of St. Jim's was out in the quad. As he tore down the steps he heard somebody shouting. It was Mr. Lathom, shouting from his open study window.

"Stop that boy! It is D'Arcy! Stop the young rascal!"

The crowd saw Mr. Lathom's pointing finger, and as they turned to look they saw Arthur Augustus, though they would never have recognised him.

But Mr. Lathom's shout was quite enough.

In a flash a dozen seniors and as many juniors had grasped the situation, and they went full pelt after the speeding Arthur Augustus.

The fugitive—desperate now—tore for the gates.

"Oh, my sainted aunt!" groaned Blake, who was standing in the crowd watching. "That's done it! It's Gussy!"

"Let's go and see!" gasped Tom Merry.

They started off after the others with a rush. Gussy had reached the gates now and was out in the road. Leaning against the wall by the gates was a bicycle—a tradesman's machine with a basket slung on the bracket in front. A chubby-faced, cheery-looking youth was just about to grasp the bike as Gussy pelted up.

The youth was Grimes, the grocer's boy from Rylcombe. He got a shock as Arthur Augustus rushed at him, pushed him aside, and tore the bike from his grasp.

"Pway excuse me, Gwimey!" gasped Arthur Augustus, polite to the last. "I wegwet I must commandeah your bike; but I am in desparate touble, deah boy! I will return it to you latah, nevah feah!"

"Oh crikey!"

Grimes gasped as Arthur Augustus sprang into the saddle and kicked at the pedals. As he sped away there was a rush of fellows out of the gates.

"There he is!"

"Come back!" roared Darrell. "Come back, you young fool!"

"Wats?"

The voice of Arthur Augustus, hoarse with emotion, but defiant, floated back on the breeze. The next moment the machine and the fugitive vanished round the bend in Rylcombe Lane. Once again the runaway—a runaway in real earnest now—had escaped. And though Darrell and a whole crowd of prefects went in hot pursuit they did not catch him.

Grimes' machine was found in the hedge near the stile that gave admittance to the footpath, through Rylcombe Woods. It was, therefore, supposed that Arthur Augustus had taken refuge in the woods. But though all that afternoon a party of seniors searched the woods they did not find him.

In every Form lessons were very late in starting that afternoon—to the joy of pupils and the wrath of masters. And that wrath, naturally enough, was directed against the hapless St. Jim's runaway!

The fire had very quickly been put out; indeed, there was nothing scarcely left to put out when Kildare reached the roof with his gang of fire-fighters. None the less, there was enough evidence to give the authorities a fairly clear idea of how the fugitive had hidden there and what his intentions had been.

But the mystery was, how Arthur Augustus had managed to get himself and his camping materials up there when the skylight had been found bolted on the inside! That some treacherous individual had trapped him up there the authorities did not seem to think of. But Tom Merry & Co. did. Moreover, they had seen Baggy Trimble coming along from the direction of the back staircase, and they eyed the fat Fourth-Former very suspiciously indeed in the Form-room that afternoon.

Altogether the astounding affair was more than a bit of a mystery to the school in general. But it was not such a mystery to Tom Merry & Co., and as they thought of their absent chum they wondered dismally when and how it was going to end!

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss next week's topping yarn of St. Jim's: "GUSSY SEES IT THROUGH!" It's a thriller this, and the adventures that befall the swell of St. Jim's are as amazing as they are amusing.)

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