

The

GEM

2^d

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EVERY
WEDNESDAY.

LIBRARY



**A KNOCK-OUT FOR
THE NEW SKIPPER.**

(See the fine school story of Tom Merry & Co.,
inside.)

A STIRRING LONG COMPLETE YARN OF TOM MERRY & CO.—

CAPTAIN GUSSY!



The reign of the first of the six candidates for the position of Junior Captain of St. Jim's is over, and now Skipper No. 2 takes the stage! Undeterred by the fate of his predecessor, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sets out to prove that, as a fellow of great tact and judgment, and possessing an almost unlimited supply of really brilliant ideas, he is the only possible man for the job. How does he fare?

CHAPTER 1 The Advice Bureau!

JACK BLAKE, leader of the Fourth in the School House at St. Jim's, came along the Fourth Form passage, stopped before the door of No. 6 Study and turned the knob of the door.

To his surprise the door did not open—it was locked, apparently, from the inside.

"Well, I'm blown!" remarked Jack Blake, glancing round at Herries and Digby, who were at his heels. "What thumping idiot's had the nerve to lock our dashed door?"

"Ask me something easier?" suggested Herries.

"Easy enough!" said Digby, with a grin. "That ass, Gussy, must be inside. Like his cheek to lock us out!"

"Like his cheek!" repeated Blake grimly. "I should jolly well think so—locking chaps out of their own study! I'll show the dummy!"

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

Blake thumped at the door wrathfully.

It was annoying to come along and find one's study door locked; it was distinctly unusual and savoured of "cheek" on the part of someone. It was tea-time, too, and Blake was hungry.

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Having thumped on the panels, Blake rattled the door-knob violently and bawled through the keyhole.

"Open this door! Gussy, you burbling chump, is that you inside?"

"Yaas, deah boy!" came the calm voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy from within. "Pway wun away, deah boy, and stop that feahful din!"

"I told you so!" said Digby. "He's started already. I knew we'd have trouble with him now he's been made temporary junior captain. This is the start—locking his pals out of their own study."

"At tea-time, too!" snorted Herries, going red with indignation. "Cheek! Why, I'll—I'll give him skipper!"

"I knew he'd got some game on!" said Jack Blake, breathing hard and glaring at the closed door. "Lathom was down on him all through afternoon class for inattention; I could see that that thing he calls a mind was working on something. He says he's going to alter things now he's junior skipper. Well, if this is how he starts altering things, we'll jolly well alter him and his giddy features as well. Gussy," he called out through the keyhole again, "are you going to open this thumping door or not?"

IN WHICH A FREAK BECOMES JUNIOR SKIPPER OF ST. JIM'S!



Martin Clifford



"Not, deah boy! Pway wun away, you youngstahs—I am vewy busy!"

"Open this door, you born idiot!"

"Wats!"

"But we want our tea, fathead!" hooted Blake. "It's tea-time, Gussy!"

"I am well aware of that, deah boys! I am fah too busy to bothah about tea, howevah!"

"But what about us?" roared Herries, rattling the door-knob in his turn. "Why, you cheeky owl!"

"Pway do not waise your voice in that vulgah mannah. Hewwies!" came D'Arcy's voice severely. "I am surprised at you! If you want tea, howevah, you had bettah have tea in Hall to-day. In any case, pway wun away and don't bothah me! I am vewy, vewy busy!"

"You—you born idiot!"

"You blithering dummy!"

"You cheeky chump!"

To emphasise their opinions of Arthur Augustus, Blake thumped on the door, Digby kicked upon it, while Herries rattled the door-knob ferociously.

"Bai Jove!" came D'Arcy's voice during a lull in the uproar. "This is weally feahful! Though these wottahs are my fwiends I weally shall have to use my authowity as skippah to keep the thoughtless youngstahs in ordah. Yaas, wathah!"

Blake ceased his exertions and looked expressively at his wrathful chums.

"You heard that?" he said, breathing hard. "The cheeky owl's going to keep us in order—us, mind you! Calling us youngsters, too! Did you ever?"

"Bust the door down!" gasped Herries heatedly. "We'll show him!"

"No need to do that!" said Blake, his face suddenly brightening. "Key of Levison's study opens this door—you remember?"

"Phew! Of course!"

Having remembered that useful fact, Blake darted away to borrow the key of Levison's study. He came back with it in a few seconds. Fortunately, their own key was not in the lock, and slipping the borrowed key in quietly, Blake turned it and flung the door open.

"Bai Jove!"

With a startled exclamation, Arthur Augustus leaped up from the study table. So abruptly did he leap upwards, indeed, that the sudden jerk at the table sent the ink streaming over a sheet of cardboard upon which he had evidently been at work.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "How—what— Gweat Scott! Look what you have done, you feahful wottah! You have made me splash ink all ovah!"

"Never mind!" said Blake, with deadly calmness. "We'll mop it up right away—with your napper, you cheeky owl! We're going to teach you better than to lock us out of our own study."

"Tea-time, too!" said Herries.

"Just so—makes the crime much worse!" said Blake. "Collar the dummy!"

"Bai Jove! Pway do not— Oh, gweat Scott! What—welease me, you wuffians! Ow! Bai Jove! Blake, you wottah, allow me to explain—"

"Go on, then!" snapped Jack Blake. "What game's this, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus wrenched his arm free from Blake's grasp and eyed that youth frigidly through his celebrated monocle.

"It is not a game at all, Blake!" he returned coldly. "How dare you intwude in this mannah affah I have taken the pwecautioun of lockin' the door?"

"In—intrusion!" gasped Blake. "When it's our own study—"

"I am well aware that you have been shawin' this study, Jack Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "None the less I wished to be alone to cawwy through some vewy important work and you had no wight to barge in, in this wuffianly mannah!"

"Hadn't we?" choked Blake.

"Certainly not! You have uttably wuined this notice," said Gussy indignantly as he looked at the ink-spattered sheet of cardboard. "I must wequest you youngstahs to cleah out of my study at once to enable me to get to work—"

"Oh, bump the dummy, and let's get tea!" snorted Herries.

"I should wefuse to be bumped, Hewwies!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "Now you fellows are heah, howevah, I had bettah make the position quite cleah. The fact is that I have decided to have this studay, for the pwesent, as my own pwivate studay. I feah I must wequest you fellows to find some othah home for yourselves and your belongings, deah boys."

"Well, my hat!"

"I wegwet it vewy much," said Arthur Augustus. "But it is quite imposs for me to cawwy through my duties as skippah efficiently unless I have a pwivate studay of my own where I can meditate and plan without bein' bothahed with fwivolous and thoughtless youngstahs."

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Blake.

"When I was just an ordinawy fellow," explained Arthur Augustus, "it was quite all wight. It was not so necessary for me to have peace and quietness. Now I am junior skippah, howevah, it is different. All gweat geneawls and leadahs of men have insisted upon bein' left alone to concentrate and plan. That is why I wequiah this studay for my own personal use in futuah, deah boys. It is quite imposs for me to be badgahed and bothahed by iwvesponsible youngstahs. Wathah not!"

"Oh, you—you—"

"There is no need to get excited, Blake. As you are well awah, Mr. Wailton has made me junior captain of St. Jim's for one week on twial. If I acquit myself well—as I undoubtedly shall—he will make me permanent skippah. I am determined to pwove to all that I am the only fellow fit for the job, deah-boys. I have already had some bwiliant ideahs. In my view Tom Mewwy made a good skippah in many ways, but as wegars mattahs othah than sports he was vewy, vewy slack and indiffewent. I am goin' to intwouce gweat changes. For instance, I am goin' to start an Advice Buweau—"

"A whatter?"

"Advice Buweau," repeated Gussy. "Youngstahs in the

Lowah School can then come to me for advice on any mattah. My expewience, tact, and judgment will be at their entiah disposal, whethah the mattah is sports or clothes or anythin' else of importance."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake. "So—so that's the game?"

"It is one of my gweat ideas to impwove the conditions of the fellows in the Lowah School, Blake," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "So now you see why it is so vewy necessawy for me to have this studay for my own personal use."

"Quite so!" agreed Blake, with deadly politeness. "You want us to give our home up—to go out into the cold, hard world so that you can turn this study into a giddy Advice Bureau?"

"That is an absurd way of puttin' the mattah, Blake. Howevah, that is what I must insist upon, deah boys," said Gussy firmly. "I must have quietness and solitude in which to meditate, and I must have somewhere in which to interview the fellows who wequiah my advice. I am suah you must agree that it is a vewy good ideah."

Blake exchanged expressive glances with Herries and Digby.

"We do agree," said Blake. "It's a ripping idea, Gussy—I mean, Captain Gussy. Unfortunately, there is one point upon which we do not agree."

"Bai Jove! What is that, pway?"

"The idea of turning our study into a padded cell or a monkey-house for yourself, old chap. We strongly object to that. If you must have peace and quietness and solitude in which to meditate, you can find somewhere outside this study. Collar the ass, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

"Stop! Welsease me, you feahful wuffians!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Gweat Scott! How dare you treat your skipper— Oh ewikey! Stop! Ywooop!"

Bump!

Arthur Augustus landed in the passage in a heap, his monocle dangling free, his collar and tie adrift, and his aristocratic features crimson with outraged wrath. He sat and gasped. It was very clear to the new junior skipper of St. Jim's that his solitary meditations and his Advice Bureau would have to be held somewhere else than in Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 2.

Clients!

"WONDER where old Gussy is?"

Tea was over in Study No. 6, and Blake asked the question with a chuckle.

For once it had been tea without the sedate and graceful presence of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. None the less it had been quite a cheery meal and a satisfying one.

As a matter of fact, Blake, Herries, and Digby had had no desire or intention to debar Arthur Augustus from tea in Study No. 6—especially as their noble chum had provided most of the delicacies. They had locked Gussy out, just as Gussy had locked them out. But they had fully expected him to demand an entrance, which they were prepared to allow him on a promise to behave in a normal manner.

But to their surprise Arthur Augustus had not even knocked at the door. They had seen nothing and heard nothing of him since ejecting him from the apartment.

Now, with tea over, Blake began to feel a trifle remorseful and to wonder where Gussy was.

"Too bad!" he remarked. "Especially as he provided those tarts and cakes, besides the sardines. He'll be hungry, unless he's had tea in Hall. But we can't allow him to get top-heavy now he's skipper!"

FOOTBALL!

All you want to know about the new season's Football can be found in ALL SPORTS every week. The latest transfers, forecasts of results, form of the players, and stories of the clubs, etc. A special article on "Training," by Capt. George Latham, the trainer of Cardiff City, appears in the issue out on Thursday, September 20th. Make sure of your copy.

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"No fear!"

"Can't be did!" said Digby, shaking his head. "Cheek, you know, expecting us to hand our study over to him! But I knew we'd have trouble with him now he's made skipper. Luckily, it's only for a week, and may not last as long as that. Grundy got sacked from the job before his time was up, remember!"

"Well, that's one comfort," agreed Herries. "Fancy old Gussy as skipper! Looks as if there's going to be some fun this week, chaps!"

"He's started his week well already," grinned Blake. "Fancy a giddy Advice Bureau! My hat! Why he'll get his leg pulled unmercifully! I say, let's go and hunt for the ass! After all, I feel responsible for the duffer."

"Good wheeze!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby left the study in search of Arthur Augustus, the swell of St. Jim's. He was in none of the Fourth studies, however, so they went along to the Shell passage. They soon discovered where Arthur Augustus was.

And at the far end of the Shell passage a group of grinning Shell fellows were gathered round a door—the door of Nobody's Study—so-called because it was unoccupied and rarely used. They seemed to be staring at something pinned on the door of the disused study.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Herries. "What's up? Let's go and see, chaps."

They hurried along to see. They understood as they saw what the white sheet pinned to the door of Nobody's Study was. It was a sheet of cardboard, and on it was printed in red ink the following notice:

"ADVICE BUREAU!"

This is to give notice that from to-day this room will be opened by the Junior Captain of St. Jim's as an Advice Bureau. Any junior desiring advice or counsel on matters relating to Sports, Clothes, Discipline, Pets, Hobbies, Form work, etc., will be advised free of charge, and the experience and judgment of the Junior Captain will be placed unreservedly at his disposal.

(Signed) ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY,
Junior Captain."

Blake, Herries, and Digby blinked at that benevolent notice.

"Well, I'm blowed!" ejaculated Blake, at length. "So—so the born idiot means it! D-dud-did you ever?"

"No, never!" chuckled Digby. "But it's just what to expect from old Gussy."

"Rich, isn't it?" chuckled Dick Julian. "The fathead's inside there now—waiting for clients. He's lit a fire and collared a chair and table from somewhere. Some of the fellows have already been inside to consult him—at least, to pull his leg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, the—the duffer!" snorted Blake, quite failing to see any humour in the situation. "Making himself—and us—a blessed laughing-stock, eh? We'll see about that!"

Pushing open the door Blake marched inside with the grinning Herries and Digby at his heels. They found Arthur Augustus seated on the chair before the table. He appeared to be at work, for before him were several sheets of exercise paper, a Latin Grammar, and an ink-pot. Gussy himself was chewing a pen-holder, and on his brow was a deeply thoughtful frown.

"What's this silly game, Gussy?" snorted Blake. "Can't you see you're making an idiot of yourself?"

"Pway don't be widic, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, eyeing his chum frigidly. "And kindly do not call me Gussy; aftah what has happened I can no longah look upon you wough wottahs as fwiends."

"You silly chump—"

"I wefuse to be called a sillay chump, Blake. Have you called to ask for advice on any mattah?"

"No, I jolly well haven't, you—"

"Then kindly leave the woom!" said Gussy icily. "I am vewy busy, and have no time to waste in listenin' to your wude remarks."

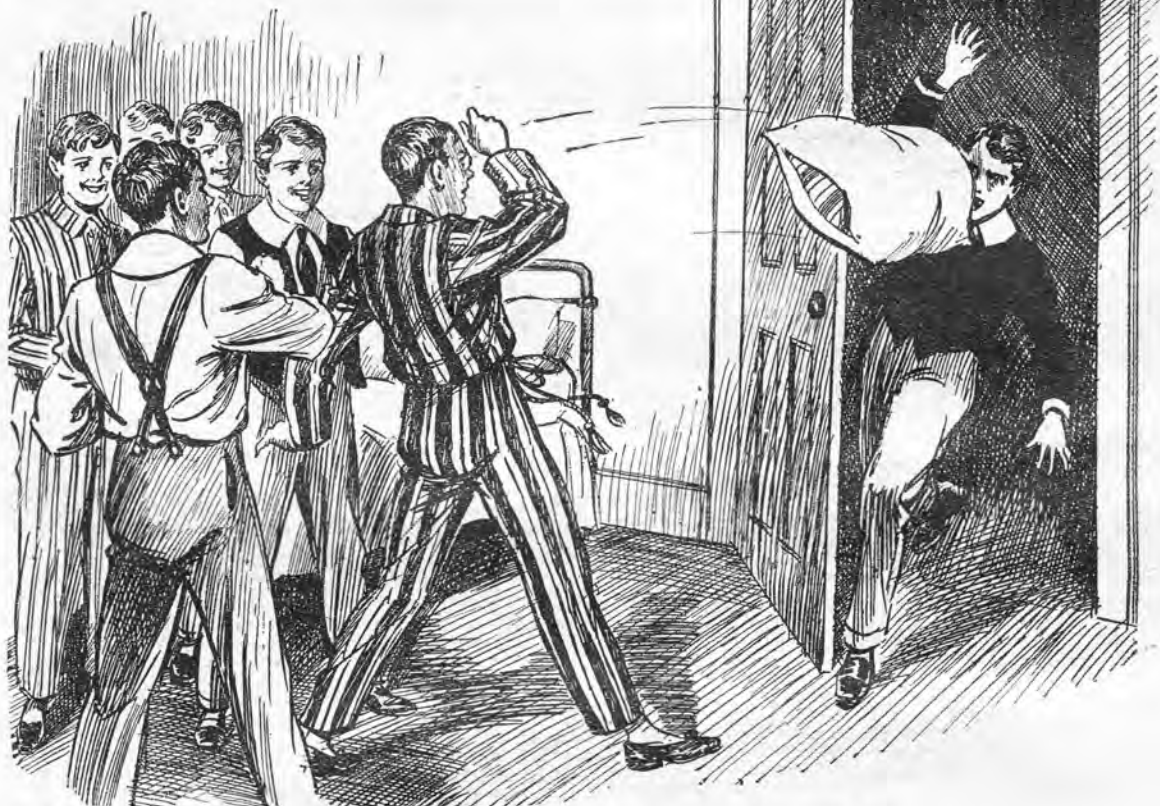
"But what's the game now?" said Blake, staring at the Latin in amazement. "What the thump are you mugging up Latin in here for, Gussy?"

"I fail to see how that concerns you, Blake. Howevah, if you wish to know, I am translatin' a Latin verse for Cardew—though weally I am beginning to believe it is not Latin at all," went on Arthur Augustus, with a frowning glance at some writing on the paper before him. "I have spent neahly an hour on it already, and—bai Jove! Heah is Cardew now!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew strolled into the room just then, a bland smile on his handsome face.

"Done it, Gussy?" he inquired. "Done that translation for me, old chap?"

"I say, you fellows," said Monty Lowther, looking anxiously round the Fourth Form dormitory, "are you sure Gussy's safe? He may get violent—!" Whizz! Flop! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy became violent quicker than Lowther anticipated. His pillow left his hand with the speed of a bullet, catching the humorist of the Shell full in the face. "Yaroooh!" (See Chapter 6.)



Arthur Augustus shook his head, his noble face quite concerned.

"I am vewy sowwy indeed, Cardew!" he exclaimed. "I am afwaid that I have failed you, deah boy. I have twied and twied, and though I flattah myself on my Latin constwue, I feah that this task beats me absolutely. The verse appeahs to be Latin, but this line at the end is not Latin I am quite suah. Wathah not! I am vewy sowwy—"

"Don't mench!" said Cardew genially. "It doesn't matter a scrap, old chap! In any case I know quite well what it means, Gussy."

"You—you do?" ejaculated Gussy.

"Exactly!"

"Then—then why did you bwing it for me to constwue? Why did you enlist my help, Cardew?" said Arthur Augustus with some warmth. "I have spent neahly an hour—"

"Just an experiment, old bean! I wanted to discover the extent of our new skipper's brain power!" said Cardew blandly. "Also, knowin' you were sittin' in here waitin' for work, I thought I'd bring you some. The Latin was to give you something to do, and that last line—which certainly isn't Latin—was just to make you admit what you really are."

"But—but—weally, Cardew—"

"I'm reading it aloud!" suggested Cardew. "That's the best way to constwue it, old bean!"

"Wead it aloud?"

"Exactly! Though I fear you wouldn't see it even then, Gussy," said Cardew, shaking his head. "Here, I'll construe it for you on paper."

Cardew took a pencil from his pocket, reached for the sheet of exercise paper, and scribbled upon it, underneath the original lines, which read as follows:

"Isab ille eres ago
Fortibus es in aro,
Thems notbus es
Themis trux—
Vaticinium—pes an dux."

Then came the cryptic line:

"Ha wa tan ah Siam."

And Cardew "construed" as follows:

"I say, Billy, here's a go,
Forty buses in a row,
Them's not buses, them is trucks,
What is in 'em? Peas and ducks!"

"Ha! What an ass I am!"

Arthur Augustus blinked at Cardew's construe as that youth handed the sheet to him; he blinked at it until his face went crimson and his eyeglass fell out in his agitation.

"Bai Jove!" he articulated. "Oh, bai Jove! You—you feahful wottah, Cardew! You have been pullin' my leg, you boundah!"

"Go hon!"

"I've been slavin' neahly an hour on that wubbish!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Sorry, old nut! I ought to have told you to read the Latin aloud, and to sing that last line to the first line of 'God Save the King!'—that's the best way of construing it all," said Cardew apologetically. "Still, it's kept you busy, and as I say, has made you admit the sort of fellow you are. Many thanks, old bean!"

With that Cardew strolled to the door—or, at least, he strolled half-way towards the door; the rest of the distance he accomplished in one wild leap as the raging Arthur Augustus made a blind rush at him round the table.

But Cardew was an easy first, and the door banged in the face of the captain of the Lower School. Cardew had gone.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake and the rest of the onlookers roared with laughter as Arthur Augustus returned to the table, his features

crimson with wrath. Blake had picked up the sheet which Gussy had dropped, and it had quickly passed from hand to hand. The juniors understood as they read it.

"Bai Jove! It is nothin' to laugh at, you wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in great indignation. "I will give that wottah a feahful thwashin' for this, bai Jove!"

"Oh, you—you burbling chump!" laughed Blake weakly. "Haven't you ever seen that Latin stunt before? Why, it's as old as the hills. As for that last line—a Third Form fag could have spotted it at once. Oh, you—you—"

"I had certainly nevah seen it befoah!" said Gussy laughingly. "I considah Cardew is a wibald wuffian, and a wotten twickstah! I spent nearly an hour—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cacklin' dummays!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hollo!" chuckled Blake. "Here's another applicant for advice and help!"

"Financial help, I bet!" grinned Herries. "It's Trimble!"

It was Trimble. The fat youth rolled into Nobody's Study, and blinked around him. He seemed not a little dismayed at finding so many fellows in the room. He hesitated just within the doorway.

"Come on, old chap!" called Blake cheerily. "Called to consult the oracle, old fat man? Good! Here he is! Advice free; Latin construes a speciality; loans to Fourth Form fat men—"

"It isn't a loan!" said Trimble, eyeing Blake quite crossly. "I just wanted some advice from my pal, Gussy—I mean, from our skipper—the best skipper we've ever had! But—but as it's private I'll call again."

"Do it now!" advised Blake gravely. "Don't put it off, Trimble! Gussy's disengaged at the moment and at your service."

"Besides, Mrs. Taggles will be closing the tuckshop soon!" warned Digby. "If it's a loan—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling rotters!" snorted Trimble. "It isn't a loan at all—just a bit of advice from my pal, Gussy—"

"Weally, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "I stwongly object to bein' addressed as your pal; you are not my pal. If you wish to consult me in my capacity as skippah—"

"I do, Gue—I mean, Captain D'Arcy!" said Trimble, glowering at the grinning juniors. "But I'll call again—it's very private, you know."

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus looked very hard at Trimble; Blake's reference to a "loan" and Trimble's obvious reluctance to speak before the rest, made even the usually unsuspicious Gussy suspicious. "You need not call again, Twimble. If it is somethin' you do not wish these fellows to heah, then it is obviously somethin' wotten. You can speak now, or not at all, Twimble."

"Oh, all—all right!" said Trimble, scowling at Blake.

"It—it's like this, Gussy—I mean, Captain D'Arcy. I'm in fearful trouble. I—I want your advice, old chap. I know what a kind-hearted and clever chap you are—always ready to help a lame dog over a stile, you know."

"Kindly come to the point, Twimble. What is the twouble? If I can suggest any wemedy I shall be pleased to do so, even for you, Twimble."

"It—it's like this," gasped Trimble, with another glare at the grinning spectators. "It—it's that old cat, Dame Taggles. She—she's threatening to report me to the Head, you know. Just because of a mresly bill I owe her. Fancy that!"

"Oh! Bai Jove, that is wathah sewious, Twimble!"

"Isn't it?" said Trimble eagerly, his hopes rising. "I knew you'd think so, Gussy—being such a clever chap! Well, that's my trouble; it's awfully serious, you know. Unless I can raise ten bob before tuckshop closes to-night, she's goin' to report me to the Head! Fact! It's awful, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling rotters!" hooted Trimble, glaring again at the laughing juniors. "But I know I shall get sympathy and advice from D'Arcy, anyway. He's the best skipper we've ever had—always ready to help with advice. That's why I've come now, Gussy. I thought you might be able to suggest some way out of my fearful trouble."

"Lend you the ten bob!" suggested Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Twimble—"

"Take no notice of those rotters, Gussy!" said Trimble, in deep indignation. "They've no heart at all. I know I can rely upon you, old chap, to—to help me out!"

"Is that all you really want?" asked Blake. "To be helped out, Trimble?"

"Y-yes. But I know you won't, Blake—you're such a mean beast—"

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"Won't I?" said Blake. "I'm just the fellow who will help you out, Baggy, old man. Here you are—"

"Look here— What—here—leggo, you beast! Yarrooooo!" roared Baggy Trimble, as Blake grabbed him by the collar and rushed him to the door. "Leggo! Gussy, old man! Help! Oh, you— Yooooooo!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Blake reached the doorway, and planted a heavy boot behind Baggy's fat person. With a fiendish yell, Trimble landed in the passage outside, where he rolled over with sundry bumps.

Blake closed the door, and returned to Arthur Augustus.

"That's helped Trimble out for you, Gussy!" he chuckled. "It's saved you ten bob, too. If we hadn't been here that fat rotter would have twisted ten bob out of you right enough. Hadn't you better appoint me your official chucker-out, old chap?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

D'Arcy's remarks were interrupted. The door opened and several juniors filed into the room. They were Tom Merry, ex-junior skipper of St. Jim's, his chums, Monty Lowther, and Manners, and Wilkins, and Gunn, also of the Shell.

"Hollo!" chuckled Blake. "More clients, Gussy!"

CHAPTER 3.

A Harmless Joke!

WHETHER Tom Merry and his friends had come for free advice or not, they certainly looked very serious—very serious indeed. Their faces were, in fact, gravity itself. Even the humorous Monty Lowther's features wore an expression of owl-like gravity.

They filed up solemnly before the desk of the new junior captain.

"Come to visit the oracle?" asked Blake. "He's doing a roaring trade, so far. If it's sport, or if it's clobber—advice regarding a new tie, or the cut of a waistcoat—Gussy's the man!"

"Weally, Blake, you wottah—"

"I'm the official chucker-out!" explained Blake. "You saw Trimble go out just now? I helped him out of fearful trouble. But if it's anything of a serious nature like clobber, you'd better consult Gussy—Captain Gussy!"

"Well," said Tom Merry frowning. "It is something serious—very serious indeed. It's something only D'Arcy, in his official capacity as junior captain, can deal with. It's a matter for his tact and judgment—a very delicate matter indeed."

"Bai Jove!"

"It ought really to be put before Captain Gussy in private, not with all this crowd here," suggested Tom Merry, giving the rest of the deputation—if it was that—a questioning look.

"Well, yes; perhaps so!" said Wilkins, nodding solemnly. "Still, it scarcely matters—so long as the chap's name is kept secret."

"That's it!" agreed Tom, nodding. "It must be kept secret, of course, for the chap's own sake. Really, I suppose I ought to have dealt with the matter myself when I was junior skipper—before the poor fellow's condition got so serious. But now the climax has come—"

And Tom Merry sighed deeply and sorrowfully.

Arthur Augustus slowly fixed his eyeglass in his eye and regarded the deputation of Shell fellows in no little alarm.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Weally, Tom Mewwy, watevah is the mattah? Has somethin' gone w'ong wegardin' the sports? Is one of our men cwocked—"

"Not at all, Gussy—more serious than that! It—it—the fact is, it's so delicate a matter that I scarcely like even to mention it to you, our skipper. But you ought to know—it's for you to deal with before the poor fellow gets to the violent stage."

"Bai Jove! Violent stage!" ejaculated Gussy in great alarm. "Watevah do you mean, deah boy? I weally do twust—"

"Better come to the point, Tom!" said Lowther gravely. "No beating about the bush in a matter like this! Speak quite frankly, and let Captain Gussy deal with it without further delay, which may be dangerous."

"Much better!" said Wilkins.

"Very well," said Tom Merry, drawing a deep breath. "It's like this, captain. There's a fellow in the Lower School—you know him quite well yourself—who's not quite—well, not as strong mentally as he ought to be."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Everybody's noticed it more or less for a long time," said Tom Merry, touching his forehead significantly. "But it seems that only we few fellows—who know him so well—have noticed that he's been gradually getting worse and worse. If he goes on as he is going on it won't be long before it develops into the dangerous stage."

"Oh, gweat Scott! Weally, Tom Mewwy—" "I know I ought to have dealt with it before things got so serious," admitted Tom Merry remorsefully. "But—well, I can see now that after all it is for the best. You're the chap who can deal with this delicate matter better than I could—with your tact and judgment—"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "This is vewy sewious indeed, Tom Mewwy. I am vewy glad you have brought the mattah to my notice. Is it—is it that poor chap Skimpole, or— Bai Jove, is it Gwunday—"

"I'd rather not mention any names," said Tom, with a significant look at the other fellows. "But I've brought the matter to your notice in your official capacity of junior skipper, Gussy, and it's for you to deal with. We think you'd better bring it before the notice of Kildare or someone, and let him report it to Railton."

"Bai Jove! But how can I do so when I am not certain of the poor fellow's name?" gasped Arthur Augustus, in some agitation. "I stwongly suspect, of course, but until I weally know the name for certain—"

"Well, that's awkward!" said Tom Merry, glancing again at his companions. "We'll have to give you that in private

—no, I've got it! I'll just dot his name down and seal it up in an envelope. Then all you need do is to hand the envelope to Kildare and explain everything. You'll know the poor chap's name then, of course."

"That's the idea!" said Wilkins, in great relief. "Good!" Tom Merry drew an envelope from his pocket, also a sheet of notepaper. He scribbled a name on the paper, carefully hiding what he had written. Then he folded the paper and placed it in the envelope, which he handed to Gussy.

"There you are!" he said gravely. "By just handing that to Kildare and explaining the sad facts we'll avoid unpleasant publicity. The fellow can be taken away quietly to Colney Hatch or Hanwell, and the rest of the fellows need never know the sad truth. We must save the poor fellow from unpleasant publicity, of course."

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!" agreed the agitated Arthur Augustus, taking the envelope. "How vewy, vewy sad! I had no ideah that his condition was so vewy sewious."

"You—you suspect whom we mean, then?" asked Manners.

"Yaas, wathah—I fear so!" stammered Arthur Augustus, (Continued on next page.)



The knowledge of our Cheery Old Oracle is only equalled by the luxuriance of his whiskers!

Q. What is a banderole?

A. Really, Meggs minor of St. Helens, I think some of you youngsters must have walked through the dictionary to find questions to ask me! However, it happens I've got the answer to this question "out of my own head," and without having to go to the British Museum to look it up like I had to for a question asked by a reader last week. A banderole is a long narrow flag with cleft end that is flown at the masthead of ships, and also the name applies to the ornamental streamer that was used for decoration on the knightly lance of long ago.

Q. What is tintinnabulation?

A. A long word this, chums—but it simply means the tinkling of bells.

Q. Why are there grooves in the edge of a shilling?

A. But why Duncan McCulloch of Stirlingshire, who sent in this question, wanted to state in his letter, "I've got ye this time!" I can't quite make out. You may have "stumped" half a dozen school teachers, Duncan, but remember I am not called the Oracle for nothing. The reason that there are grooves in a shilling is that long ago when the edges



A banderole, used by the knights of old on their lances—also this long narrow flag can be seen at the masthead of steamships.

of silver and gold coins were smooth, a lot of canny folk used to pare them and sell the precious metal. This was a form of stealing, and it was found that the best way to stop it was to "mill," or "groove," the edges of coins so that if they were pared it would be quickly apparent.

Q. What is a tonsure?

A. The shaven part of the head of a monk or priest.

Q. Which ought to be the richest country in the world?

A. Ireland, for its capital is always Dublin.

Q. What are Golden Lilies?

A. In China this is the poetical name given to the feet of girls and women which have been deformed by tight binding. In olden days it was the general thing for little girls to have their feet bound up with the idea of making them small. Three inches was considered the correct length of the fashionable shoes in which Chinese ladies should toddle along, and many suffered agonies for fashion's sake. So dreadful was this custom that many wealthy Chinese ladies could hardly limp from one room to another on these Golden Lilies which were supposed to look so beautiful. Referring to these tiny feet, a Chinese poet once wrote, "Their movements are as the waving of the willows." This custom has no connection whatever with religion and for some time it has been dying out—and a jolly good thing, too, you'll agree.



The shaven part of the head of a monk is called a tonsure.

Q. What is a gecko?

A. I should have thought, Rex Pelling of Liverpool, that your uncle who has just returned from the Orient could have told you this. A gecko is a type of wall-lizard with overlapping scales and fanlike feet. In all there are nearly three hundred species of this reptile, and they inhabit places as distant as India, Africa, West Indies, and New Zealand. The kind known as the house-gecko can often be seen running about the walls of dwellings in India and Arabia. It is seldom harmed, for it is a living fly-trap and therefore useful. It will keep absolutely still for some time and then shoot like a rocket up a wall and bag an insect in a twinkling.

Q. Where is the Great Barrier Reef?

A. To the north of Australia. It is 1,250 miles long, and is composed of living and dead coral in all its wondrous forms.

Q. What is a mahalla?

A. A type of great open wooden boat with a high stern used by the Arabs, who are very clever at sailing them in the heaviest weather. There is a theory that the Ark made by Noah was a great boat of the mahalla type that was roofed over to give shelter.

(Our tame Oracle is open to answer any interesting queries sent in by GEM readers. He hasn't been caught napping yet—but one never knows!)



In China the poetic name given to the small feet of the girls is "Golden Lilies."

with a sympathetic glance at Wilkins—who was Grundy's chum! "Howevah, you are quite wight—the mattah must be dealt with without delay. I think I had better report diwect to Waitton—"

"My hat! Nunno! Don't do that, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, with a sudden alarm that might have made a less unsuspecting chap than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy very suspicious. "Better do it in the proper way—through the official channels. As junior skipper, it's your job to report to Kildare, the school captain."

"Much better!" agreed the deputation, in a chorus.

"Wight! Bai Jove! How tewwible! I will wush off at once!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

And he hurried out with the envelope—the envelope containing the name of the unfortunate applicant for Colney Hatch, or Hanwell.

Fortunately—or unfortunately—he quite failed to hear the chorus of explosive chuckles that followed him. He was also too agitated and distressed to notice that a grinning crowd had followed him to Kildare's study. He was also too upset to knock at the door, or to close it after him, so that the grinning crowd got a good view of what happened in the study.

Kildare was at home, and he looked astonished as Arthur Augustus rushed in to him, features flushed and grave, and in a state of great excitement.

"Hallo, kid!" he exclaimed staring. "What's the matter? Anything happened?"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah! Somethin' vewy sewious has happened, Kildare," said Gussy breathlessly. "I am vewy sowwy to have to make a vewy gwaive weport to you, Kildare. It is weally too dweadful—"

"Here, keep cool, you young ass!" said Kildare, taking the distressed Arthur Augustus by the arm. "What the dickens is the matter now?"

Arthur Augustus gabbled out his report, and Kildare listened in growing amazement.

"You—you young ass!" he stuttered at last. "You mean to tell me there's a chap in the Lower School gone off his chump? Well, that's nothing new; most of the young rascals are more or less that way."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Kildare, but this is vewy sewious indeed—it is no jokin' mattah, I assuah you! The fellows have all noticed it for a long time, but I am told that he has wecently gone much worse—it is feahed he will go clean off his wockah and become weally dangevous!"

"Well, my hat!"

"You must act at once, Kildare!" gasped Gussy earnestly. "It is vewy, vewy sewious. The fellow always was vewy stwange at times, and I undahstand he is now weally in a sewious state. As junior skipper I have been asked to bwing the mattah befoah you without delay."

"But who the thump is he?" ejaculated Kildare.

"His name is witten down in that envelope, Kildare! We decided to keep his name a secwet as much as possible to avoid publicity. We think he should be taken quietly away and put undah westwaint without the genewal public bein' awah of what has happened to him."

"And the name of the chap's in here?" stuttered Kildare, as Gussy handed him the envelope.

"Yaas, deah boy! Pway open it without delay, Kildare!"

"Phew!"

Kildare opened the envelope and read the scribbled name on the sheet of paper. He fairly jumped as he did so. He looked at Arthur Augustus.

"You—you young idiot!" he gasped.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Kildare—"

"Don't you know what name's written here—the name of your giddy candidate for Colney Hatch?" hooted Kildare.

"Bai Jove! Weally—nunno! I only suspect—"

"Take a look at it, then!" snapped Kildare.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From the crowd round the open doorway came a howl of hilarious laughter.

Arthur Augustus almost collapsed as he blinked at the writing on the notepaper dazedly. Staring him in the face was the name of the dangerous lunatic—the fellow who was a candidate for Colney Hatch. It was "Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" he faltered. "Oh deah! M-mum-my leg's been pulled! Oh, the—the feahful wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you footling young idiot!" gasped Kildare wrathfully. "Of course your leg's been pulled, you silly young chump! But you deserve a thundering good licking for allowing it to be pulled like that! And you're going to get now—wasting my time with your footling rot!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Gussy.

"Wait while I get my ashplant!" snapped Kildare, in great wrath. "I'll teach you to use your silly brains before coming here wasting my time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Arthur Augustus did not wait. For one thing, he was anxious—ferociously anxious—to discuss matters with

Tom Merry & Co; and, for another, he did not want Kildare's ashplant.

He made a sudden furious rush at the hilarious crowd round the doorway, and when Kildare turned round, with his ashplant in his hand, the room was empty, likewise the passage outside. Arthur Augustus, seething with great wrath and indignation, was after the crowd, which had scattered before his dire wrath like chaff before the wind. They went, roaring with laughter. But Arthur Augustus did not catch any of them, so he returned to Nobody's Study to nurse his wrath there in deep indignation—and to wait for other "clients." For Arthur Augustus was a stickler, and, though his ardour was somewhat damped, his determination to act as protector and adviser to the Lower School was as strong as ever.

CHAPTER 4.

Much Too Bad!

"H A, ha, ha!"

"What a scream!" gasped Tom Merry, wiping his eyes. "It's too bad, though—pulling old Gussy's leg like that! After all, he means well."

"He does, right enough," admitted Jack Blake. "But—well, if ever any fellow asked to have his leg pulled, Gussy did—and does! And he deserves it for posing as a chap who's entitled to give giddy advice! Cheeky ass! He calls us youngsters, mind you!"

"Well, nothing wrong about that!" said Tom, shaking his head. "After all, you Fourth kids are only youngsters—"

"Eh? Why, you cheeky Shell cad, you're only three months older than I am!" hooted Blake.

"Well, three months is a lot!" said Tom Merry sagely. "Why, our superiority in sports and Form work, and brains and general ability, proves—"

"Why, you—you—"

"Oh, don't squabble about that now!" grinned Digby pacifically. "The question is, what's to be done about that born idiot Gussy? He means well, right enough, but we can't allow him to go on making an ass of himself like this! As his studymates and keepers, it's rather showing us up, too—makes us look asses!"

"Well, you looked that before Gussy set out to make you look bigger ones!" observed Lowther. "Still—"

"Why, you—"

"Look here—"

"Peace, my infants!" implored Tom Merry, in his turn.

"Look here, though I agree that old Gussy's got a swelled head, and wants putting in his rightful place in the scheme of things, it's rather too bad to let this go on. Why, every fellow in the Lower School is out to pull his leg! I believe several fellows have got him to undertake lines for them already—taking advantage of his giddy benevolence, you know! It won't do!"

"My hat!" said Blake. "Why, it was you who pulled his leg just now!"

"I know!" admitted Tom, with a chuckle. "That was only a harmless joke, though. I thought it would put an end to his silly rot. But it hasn't; the dummy's still on the job in Nobody's Study. I believe several fellows are plotting japes on him. Now, I vote we go along and talk to the duffer—try to make him see sense."

"Impossible!" said Lowther. "Quite! Let him run on, I say. He'll soon get fed-up with getting his leg pulled. I believe he's talking of taking up the job of teaching singing, too. Let him rip, I vote!"

"No, I think we'll have another go!" said Blake, rising. "We'll go and talk to the ass in Nobody's Study! Come on!"

"Right!" said Tom Merry.

When the juniors had fled before Gussy's wrath they had taken refuge in Study No. 10 behind a locked door. Tom Merry unlocked it now, and the six went along to Nobody's Study, prepared to turn the tables on Arthur Augustus and offer him good advice.

Blake, Herries, and Digby felt very dubious about his taking good advice, however.

Arthur Augustus eyed them icily as they marched into Nobody's Study and took stand before his desk.

"Cheerio, Gussy!" began Blake genially. "Still at it, I see."

Blake's soft words failed to turn away Gussy's wrath. "I must ask you not to address me, Jack Blake!" he said frigidly. "As I have already told you, I no longer look upon you wibald wuffians as fwends of mine!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"Oh, how could you!"

"Does this mean," asked Digby sadly, "that we are cut off from your list of acquaintances, or merely friends, Gussy?"

"I wefuse to answah that futile wemark, Dig—I mean, Digbay! I wefuse to speak to you at all! As for Tom Mewwy and his fwends, I uttahly wefuse to address them

There was a sound in the passage outside the Shell dormitory. Then—swoooooosh! "Yawwooooh!" There was no doubt as to who had "got" the booby-trap! A yell loud enough to wake the Seven Sleepers came from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as a hatful of icy-cold water swooped down upon him. It was followed by a howl from Tom Merry & Co. "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 6.)



at all, and I shall administrah a fearful thwashin' to them all when I have closed my office!" said Arthur Augustus, eyeing Tom Merry & Co. with great disfavour. "They have taken advantage of my offah of help and advice in ordah to pull my leg and make me look wedie! I intend to thwash them at the earliest opportunity!"

"After business hours?" asked Lowther meekly.

"Yaas; aftah I have closed my Advice Buweau for the day!" said Arthur Augustus coldly.

"Then we'd better insure our lives at once!" said Lowther gravely. "You—you're quite sure you won't be merciful and spare us this once, Gussy?"

"Cheese it, Lowther!" said Blake, giving Lowther a warning look. "Take no notice of that ass, Gussy! I say, you've had no tea yet, have you, old chap?"

"I do not wequiah any tea, Jack Blake! And kindly wefwain fwom callin' me 'Gussy,' Jack Blake! I am only Gussy to my fwends!"

"Now, do listen to us, old chap—"

"I wefuse to listen to you, Jack Blake! If you do not wequiah advice or information fwom me in my capacity as skippah, then kindly leave this woom! Othahwise I shall thwow you out, you wottahs!"

"Now, do be reasonable, Gussy, old man—"

"Wats!"

"But look here—"

"Wot! I wefuse to have anythin' more to do with you wibald wottahs!"

"But this is really awful!" said Blake, in pretended dismay. "No longer friends of yours! I can't bear the thought of it, Gussy! No more feeds in Study No. 6 with you—"

"At your expense!" murmured Lowther.

"You dry up, Lowther!" said Blake warmly. "This is very serious for us. Does this mean that you refuse to speak to us in Study No. 6, Gussy?"

"It means more than that, Jack Blake. It means that I have decided nevah to entah that studay except to wemove my pwoperty," said Arthur Augustus, with deadly deliberation. "It means that I wefuse to stay in a studay where I am subjected to insults and wuffianly assaults. This vevy evenin' I pwopose to wemove all my pwoperty fwom Studay No. 6. I have obtained Mr. Wailton's permission to use this woom as my pwivate studay and office."

"Oh, my hat!" said Blake, aghast. "You mean that, Gussy?"

"Yaas. My decision is final."

"Oh crumbs! But nearly every stick of furniture in the study belongs to you, Gussy!"

"I am well awah of that fact, Jack Blake. To be quite fwank, I was alweady considahwin' the ideah of movin' in heah, as I considah a junior captain should have a woom to himself where he can meditate and plan without bein' intewwupted and badgahed by iwresponsible youngstahs."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Now, howevah," said Gussy cuttingly, "your wascally behaviour this evenin' has quite settled my decision finally. I shall move into heah this vevy evenin', with all my belongings."

"Oh, Gussy!"

"How could you desert your pals like this?" said Digby almost tearfully. "How shall we manage without you?"

"The study will be like a prison cell, cold and cheerless, without your presence!" said Herries.

"That's just it," said Blake, catching Digby's idea. "It will be too awful! How on earth can you leave us to manage by ourselves, without advice or help from you?"

"In fact, we need advice and help badly now," went on Digby, exchanging winks with Blake. "We're here now just as humble members of the Fourth who have come to our captain for advice in our hour of trouble."

"Our hour of need," said Blake sadly. "Can you advise us, Captain Gussy? The position is this. We had in our study a fellow named D'Arcy—a fine, generous, and brainy fellow, always ready to help us, either with cash or advice on dress or sports. Now he threatens to leave us in the lurch—to leave us unprotected and helpless."

"That's the word," agreed Digby gravely—"helpless. As skipper of the Lower School we're here for your advice in the matter. This chap D'Arcy is a very generous and good-natured fellow, and we know he'll forgive us when he understands how terribly we shall miss him. Now, what would you advise us to do? We're asking you in your official position as skipper, of course."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus blinked at them. They manfully preserved grave and anxious faces. Even the Terrible Three looked very solemn and anxious. Arthur Augustus felt quite taken aback and at a loss.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Weally, I—I—"

"If you suggest a humble apology, we're quite prepared to make one," said Blake meekly. "If we've wronged this chap D'Arcy, then we're fully prepared to confess our fault and beg his humble pardon."

"Quite prepared," said Herries.

"We're very sorry!" said Digby.

"Fearfully sorry!" said Blake and Herries together.

"Do you advise us to tell him so?" asked Digby.

"Bai Jove! Weally, you know—" Arthur Augustus paused. He was a very forgiving and generous youth indeed, and he felt quite touched by the thought of his old chums being left alone without his advice and guidance.

"Weally you know," he murmured innocently, "you are onlay youngstahs, aftah all. I quite understand that, and pewwaps—yaas, pewwaps if you weally mean it—"

"We do!"

"We does!"

"Then—then perhaps this—this fellow you speak of will become fwends again if you do apologise," said Gussy, still dealing with the matter officially. "If you would care to apologise to me now in my official position as D'Arcy of the Fourth, I—I think I can pwomise—"

At that point, unfortunately, Arthur Augustus was interrupted. Had he not been interrupted, then all might have been merry and bright again. An apology rarely failed to bring Gussy down from his high horse. But the unofficial apology was interrupted by three youths who arrived in the doorway just then.

They were Glyn, Dane, and Noble of the Shell. They appeared to be having rather a heated argument in regard to a square box that Glyn carried in his hands.

"I tell you D'Arcy's the man for the job," Glyn was saying warmly. "Isn't he our skipper now, and isn't he always ready to give us chaps advice and help? I tell you—"

"Rot!" said Clifton Dane. "Why go to a blessed Fourth-Former for advice and help? Heaps of Shell chaps capable of opening that box, if it is a difficult matter."

"That's my view," said Noble, his voice sounding rather husky. "Ask Tommy Merry or some other Shell chap to try his hand at the job. Why give the job to a Fourth chap—confess ourselves lacking in brains and strength, you ass?"

"I don't care," said Glyn doggedly. "I tell you I'm going to ask D'Arcy to open it for me. It needs a chap with unusual skill and experience to open a box like this without damaging it. I'm going to ask his advice in the matter, anyway."

With that Bernard Glyn, the schoolboy inventor of St. Jim's, marched boldly into Nobody's Study, carrying the box in question rather gingerly. He placed it carefully on the desk before Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's blinked at it. It was quite a well-made box, and looked as if it had once been a receptacle for wireless apparatus. He blinked curiously at the box, and then he looked in some doubt at Bernard Glyn's serious face. Unsuspicious as he usually was, Gussy could not help feeling surprise at the fact that Bernard Glyn had insisted upon coming to him for aid in such a matter—surprised also at Glyn's enthusiastic praise of his powers.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "Weally, Glyn—"

"I'm sorry to trouble you, old chap," said Glyn humbly

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and apologetically, "but I must get this box open somehow, and it struck me you were just the fellow for such a job—a job that requires unusual skill and judgment."

"Let a Shell chap try his hand!" said Noble doggedly.

"Gussy can't do it, I bet!" said Dane, with a sniff.

"I bet Gussy can!" said Glyn firmly. "And as he's here to give us Lower School fellows the benefit of his advice and help, I don't see why I shouldn't take advantage of it. I'm jolly anxious to get that box opened at once, and it's no good showing jealousy of a Fourth chap in a matter like this. If Gussy can do it—"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, flushing with pleasure now. "I am quite certain that I can manage it, deah boys. I do not suggest that I have any more mechanical skill than you have, Glyn, but I am quite certain that in bwains I have the advantage, you know."

"Just what I thought!" said Glyn triumphantly.

"Gussy will do it! I knew it!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Gussy, quite eager now to try his "skill and judgment." "I wathah fancy I can manage it, deah boys. Is it nailed, do you think, or is there a catch somewah? I think— Bai Jove! Whatevah is the mattach, Dane? Have you a cold, deah boy?"

Dane hadn't a cold. But he had nearly exploded at Gussy's innocent mention of "a catch somewehere." There certainly was a "catch"—but not the sort Gussy expected.

"I—I think there is a catch, Gussy!" admitted Glyn, in a choking sort of voice. "You—you see, it's a sort of mystery box with a secret opening. That's the trouble—we've got to find the catch that opens it. If you'll have a go, old chap—"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway stand back, deah boys!"

The "deah boys" stood back—especially Glyn, Dane and Noble. Curiously enough they all stood back in the same direction—near the door! Tom Merry and the rest looked on, very much interested, very much puzzled; but quite certain that there really was a "catch" somewhere about the business.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, running his hands over the mystery-box. "It is a vewy nicely-made box, Glyn. Did you make it yourself, deah boy?"

"Nunno! That is, I only improved it," said Glyn, his eyes fixed expectantly on D'Arcy's hands. "You see, I— Hallo, found the catch?"

"Bai Jove! I believe I have, deah boy!" gasped Gussy, his voice suddenly excited. "There is wathah a knob in the wood heah; I will pwess it, and—"

Arthur Augustus got no further in his remarks—in his remarks that were intelligible, at all events. For just then he did press the projecting knob he had discovered. And as he pressed it a startling thing happened.

The lid of the box flew up suddenly, and a boxing-glove, fixed to the end of a strong, spiral spring, shot from the box with the force of a battering-ram.

At the moment Gussy happened to be leaning over the box, with the sad result that the boxing-glove took him neatly beneath the chin. It lifted him up, and sent him crashing backwards over the back of the chair.

"Yooooooooooooop!"

Crash! Clatter, clatter! Crash!

The unfortunate experimenter crashed into the fireplace, mixed up in the chair, with a fearful yell and a terrific crash and clatter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A howl of laughter went up from Glyn, Noble, and Dane—a howl in which Tom Merry & Co. joined the next moment as they grasped the situation—and glimpsed Gussy's hapless features. For that boxing-glove had not only been very hard, but it had also been soaked in red ink.

As he sat on the floor, dazed, gasping, and bewildered, Arthur Augustus looked a sight. Red ink smothered his features and trickled down his collar and fancy waistcoat.

"Ow! Gwoooooogh!" he groaned. "Oh, bai Jove! Ow—yow! What has—gwoooooh!—happened? Ow—ow! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Glyn & Co.

"You—you wibald, cracklin' wotahs!" groaned Arthur Augustus, mopping his face frantically, and glaring upwards dazedly. "I am vewy much hurt—it is not a mattach for hilawity. Whatevah has happen— Oh, gweat Scott!"

Just then Gussy understood what had happened as he saw the boxing-glove, still bobbing at the end of the spiral spring, the other end of which seemed to be fastened to the bottom of the strange "jack-in-the-box."

"Oh, gweat Scott!" he shrieked, leaping abruptly to his feet. "Oh, you—you feahful wascals! You have twicked me into openin' that feahful box. Glyn, you—you wuffian—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you uttah wuffians!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, mopping away frantically at his features with a handkerchief now soaked in red ink. "I believe you were all in the wotten twick! I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Too bad!" said Tom Merry, nearly choking with laughter himself. "Never mind, Gussy— Oh, crumbs! Look out!"

Tom Merry fairly yelled the warning—a warning that was very necessary. For just then, forsaking words for deeds, Arthur Augustus made one wild charge at the laughing juniors. They scattered, still howling with delirious laughter. Glyn, Noble, and Dane were the first through the open doorway; but Tom Merry, Blake, and the rest were scarcely a second behind them. Just at that moment Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked much too dangerous to argue with. And though they wanted to show their sympathy for him, Tom and his chums decided to leave it until a more convenient time—they flew.

Arthur Augustus followed them to the end of the passage. Then he gave it up and retraced his footsteps wearily to Nobody's Study. As he reached the doorway, Trimble came rolling along the passage.

He blinked hopefully at Arthur Augustus—quite failing at the moment to note his strange appearance.

"Oh, here you are, Gussy!" he began affectionately. "Just the fellow I was coming to see. Shall we go inside? I want the benefit of your advice, old chap. Those beasts interfered before, or I know a kind-hearted chap like you would have backed me up in my fearful troubles. It's about that old cat, Dame Taggles, you know. If you can advise—Here, wharrer you at? Here—Yarrooooo!"

Arthur Augustus soon showed quite clearly—and forcibly—what he was "at." He grabbed the startled Trimble by the collar, and ran him along the passage, kicking the fat youth vigorously as he proceeded.

Trimble fairly roared in astonishment and pain.

"There, you fat wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, giving Baggy Trimble a final kick that landed him on all fours. "That is all the advice I am able to give you, Twimble. I am pwepared, howevah, to wepeat it whenevah you desiah it."

With that, leaving Trimble bellowing in wrath and anguish, the irate Arthur Augustus tramped back to the door of Nobody's Study. With a vicious snatch he tore down his "ADVICE BUREAU" notice, and tore it into little pieces. He strawed these about the passage, and then he went in search of the nearest bath-room.

Evidently the Advice Bureau was a thing of the past—which was certainly just as well for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy! The new captain of the Lower School had discovered the sad truth that free advice is not always wanted in this ungrateful and heedless world.

CHAPTER 5.

A Matter of Discipline!

"IT ought to be stopped!"

Monty Lowther spoke emphatically.

The humorist of the Shell was standing just outside the door of Nobody's Study. Lowther and Glyn—the two biggest and most notorious practical jokers in the Lower School, had been strolling along the passage deep in conversation. Then, for some reason best known to themselves, they had stopped to continue their discussion just outside the door of Nobody's Study—which happened to be slightly ajar.

"Yes, it ought to be stopped, Glyn," said Lowther, his voice somewhat indignant. "It's a disgrace to the school. Fancy a fellow out of the Shell—a Lower School fellow—breaking bounds at night—just fancy!"

"Too thick!" agreed Bernard Glyn, shaking his head seriously and trying to get a glimpse into Nobody's Study, at the same time. "But, after all, the real fellow to blame is the skipper—or both skippers, for that matter, the senior and junior skipper. They're supposed to look after disciplinary matters, aren't they?"

"Well, yes," agreed Lowther thoughtfully. "I suppose you're right. If Racke chooses to go out at night it's his own look-out, of course. But it's a disgrace, and it ought to be stopped."

"I feel like telling D'Arcy about it!" said Glyn. "Tom Merry, of course, should have stopped it long ago. Still,

I fancy D'Arcy's more efficient at matters like this. Oughtn't we to tell him if Racke breaks bounds after lights out to-night?"

"Better not, perhaps!" said Lowther, after a pause. "It seems like sneaking, doesn't it? We'll just let things rip, I think, old chap. Let's hope, for the good of the Lower School, that D'Arcy does tumble to the game and stop it. It's up to him, anyway, both to find it out and put his foot down. Anyway, I don't mean to split and tell him that Racke is going out to-night."

"No, nor I!" said Glyn. "Yes, you're right, old chap! As I say—"

Lowther and Glyn wandered on then, still—seemingly—discussing their little bit of "gossip."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

As they drifted away a startled gasp sounded from inside Nobody's Study. It came from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was seated at his table, doing his prep. After what had happened recently—though it was scarcely the fault of Blake & Co.—Arthur Augustus had made no efforts to re-open peace negotiations with his former study-mates. Nor had Blake, Herries and Digby for that matter. They had wisely decided to let matters stay as they were for a bit.

So Arthur Augustus was now, solitary in his new quarters, doing his prep. Until then, the new skipper had not even been aware that the door was slightly open—in fact, he was certain that he had closed it. So the sound of the voices of Lowther and Glyn had quite startled him; not so much, however, as the subject of their conversation!

Arthur Augustus was, to put it mildly, shocked!

Had he had any choice in the matter, he would, of course, have tried not to hear that bit of gossip. But he could not help overhearing it. And, being blissfully unaware that the mischievous Lowther and Glyn had concocted the bit of choice "gossip" for his special benefit, Arthur Augustus was, in his innocence, quite startled and shocked.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "How feahfully wotten! I know that that wottah Wacke, of the Shell, is a shady boundah. But I did not dweam he would dare to bweak bounds at night. Whatevah shall I do?"

And Arthur Augustus frowned, quite worried. In that moment, like most great men at times, who kept aloof from the common herd, Arthur Augustus felt lonely and deserted. He really felt he would have listened to advice even from Blake just then.

"Bai Jove," he went on, after a few moments' thought, "I weally do not like acting upon information I have unwittingly overheard. Yet it is my bounden duty to act! As junior skippah it is, as Lowthah wemarked, my job to

(Continued on next page.)

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deal with disciplinary mattahs. Yaas, wathah! But if I go to Kildare—"

After thinking things out, Arthur Augustus decided not to report his startling discovery to Kildare. In the kindness of his heart, Arthur Augustus decided to give the law-breaking Racke another chance.

"But I will see the wottah and lectuah him vewy severely," said Arthur Augustus. "I will warn him that futuah twangswessions will be weported to Kildare. That will stop his wotten games. Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus went along to Racke's study, which that worthy shared with Crooke, his chum. The two black sheep of the Shell stared as Arthur Augustus knocked and gracefully entered.

"Well," snapped Racke, giving Arthur Augustus a far from welcome look. "What d'you want, D'Arcy?"

"He's come to give us some free advice!" grinned Crooke. "A little sermon, I bet. I can see it in his giddy optics."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, his features very grave. "As it happens you are quite wight, Cwooke—in one respect at all events. I have come to give you advice—and also a warnin'! Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, have you?" said Racke staring. "Look here," he added uneasily, "if you're going to report us just because you happened to spot us smokin' yesterday—"

"I am not goin' to weport you for that, Wacke," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "I onlay started my duties as junior captain to-day, and what happened yesterday is not my concern."

"Glad to hear it!" sneered Racke. "You're such a fellow, though, for pokin' your nose into other people's business. I thought—"

"Bai Jove! If you say I poke my nose into othah people's business, Wacke—"

"Oh, sheer off!" snapped Racke. "We're busy with our prep, and you ought to be doing the same, D'Arcy. Buzz off! Your face worries us."

"That's right!" said Crooke, with a chuckle. "Buzz off, Captain Gussy—when we're in need of advice regardin' neckties, or spats, we'll come along to Nobody's Study."

"Or if we want you to open a box for us!" grinned Racke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You gwinnin' wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, controlling his wrath with an effort. "If you are lookin' for a thwashin', Wacke—"

"Listen to him—listen to our noble skipper!" said Crooke. "This is the chap put over us to keep us good and peaceful. He comes bargin' into peaceful chaps' studies, quarrellin' and wantin' to fight!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Cwooke—"

"Underminin' discipline—that's what it is!" said Crooke, quite enjoying the dismayed expression on D'Arcy's noble features. "Settin' a shockin' example to good little Georgies like us, you know! Naughty, naughty, Gussy—I mean, Captain Gussy! Quarrelsome fellow! I don't think D'Arcy's fit to be skipper because of his quarrelsome nature—do you Racke, old man?"

Racke grinned.

"No, I don't!" he agreed. "By the way, Captain Gussy, there's one question I'd like you to answer now you're here—or rather, two questions."

"Bai Jove! If it is in wegard to school mattahs or mattahs that affect me as junior captain, Wacke, I shall be pleased to try to answah them, deah boy," said Gussy stiffly. "What are the questions?"

"Whether they're takin' you to Colney Hatch or to Hanwell, and when?" asked Racke. "I hope, for your own sake, it will be soon, and I'm glad to know you've realised your danger sufficiently at last to report your condition yourself to the authorities."

"Bai Jove! You—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Crooke.

"You—you feahful wottah, Wacke!" gasped Arthur Augustus, crimson with wrath. "So—so you have heard about that wotten affair already—"

"Heard about it!" chortled Racke. "My dear man it's all over the giddy school—everybody's screamin' about it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you cheeky wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, I have not come heah to discuss my own affairs with you, Wacke. I have come to give you a vewy gwave warnin'. I have heard that you are, appawntly, in the habit of bweakin' bounds at night, Wacke?"

"I am?" ejaculated Racke.

"Yaas! I wegwet to heah the news vewy much, Wacke. I have long known you to be a shady wascal—"

"Oh, have you?" snapped Racke, his face changing suddenly. "Look here, you insolent cad—"

"I wefuse to be called an insolent cad by you, Wacke!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "Howevah, I have come to warn you that it will be my duty, as junior captain,

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to weport any furthah twangswessions by you in respect to bweakin' bounds at night. It is a vewy sewious mattah, Wacke!"

"You cheeky owl!" hooted Racke. "Who the dickens told you that yarn, D'Arcy? I don't go out at night—"

"I have heard on good authority that you do, Wacke!" said Arthur Augustus haughtily. "I have also heard that you intend to bweak bounds this vewy evenin'!"

"Me?" ejaculated Racke, staring. "You silly chump—"

"If you call me a sillay chump, Wacke—"

"I do—a ravin' maniac, a footlin' idiot, and a rotten liar!" hooted Racke, getting to his feet in his excited wrath. "Why, if you start settin' a lyin' yarn like that about you'll get me the sack, you cad!"

"I have good weason to believe that it is twue, Wacke, nevahtheless!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Knowin' what a shady, smoky wottah you are I do not doubt it. And I have come to warn you—"

"Get out!" shouted Racke, his sallow face flushed with anger. "You cheeky idiot! Get out of my study or I'll pitch you out, you pantomime skipper!"

"I wefuse to be called a pantomime skippah, Wacke!" said Gussy heatedly. "And I wefuse to get out until you have apologised for your insolent wemarks. Put your fists up—"

"Kick the silly chump out!" said Crooke. "We'll teach him to come here makin' trouble, the silly—"

"I'm goin' to!" snapped Racke. "Lend a hand!"

"What-ho!"

Crooke was ready enough to lend a hand—having more than one score to settle with Arthur Augustus.

With the odds two to one in their favour there was not much danger of getting hurt, so the two black sheep went for Arthur Augustus quickly enough.

The swell of St. Jim's put up a gallant struggle, but it was useless—they were a trifle too much for him.

There was a brief, whirling struggle in the study for some minutes, and then the new skipper went through the doorway like a stone from a catapult. He collapsed in the passage like a sack of coke.

"There, you interferin', cheeky cad!" panted Racke.

"That'll teach you to come makin' unfounded charges against us just because you don't like us, you rotter! Now clear off!"

"Ow! Oh, ewikey!"

Slam! Click!

The door slammed in Gussy's face, and the key clicked home in the lock. Arthur Augustus, with his collar dusty and damaged, glared at the door a moment and then he tramped away, breathing hard and deep.

He had visited Racke and Crooke to convey a warning—really a friendly warning; but he wished he had not done so now. Not that Arthur Augustus dreamed of reporting Racke to Kildare—not, at least, until all other means had failed. None the less he was determined not to allow such a serious matter to drop. It was his duty, as junior skipper, to deal with it, and Gussy intended to deal with it—in his own way.

As it happened his way was just the way Lowther and Glyn wanted him to deal with it. But Arthur Augustus was blissfully ignorant of that.

CHAPTER 6.

Only Lowther!

"QUIET there, deah boys!"

"Eh?"

"Not so much wow!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I am sowwy to have to wepwimand you fellows," said Arthur Augustus apologetically, "but Kildare has been wathah gwousin' about the feahful wow in the Common-room this evenin'. I pwomised him I would keep better ordah in futuah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I see no weason for hilawity."

But the others did, if the junior skipper did not!

It was just the misfortune of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that he was not "born to command"—though he certainly imagined he was!

In no way was Arthur Augustus autocratic or self-assertive—far from it. He dreaded the thought of the fellows imagining he wanted to "boss" them.

Yet he was the junior skipper, and in a position of authority and responsibility. He realised it was up to him to do his job and assert his authority. And in his desperate attempts to do this, Arthur Augustus, sadly enough, rather overdid things. He came perilously near to being over-officious.

Had it been anyone else but the noble and easy-going Arthur Augustus, the fellows would certainly have resented

this—strongly. Grundy, in his brief week of office as temporary skipper had been very officious indeed—and he had suffered for it.

But in Gussy's case it was different. The juniors understood the lamentable weakness of Arthur Augustus, and they just laughed—and pulled his noble and aristocratic leg. In fact, the young gentlemen of the Lower School looked upon Gussy's appointment as junior captain as a screaming joke—a fact Arthur Augustus himself was, of course, blissfully ignorant.

Yet it made Arthur Augustus' work very difficult. Only a few minutes ago Kildare had "rated" him for not keeping better order in the Common-room. It made no difference when he had explained that he had not been near the Common-room that evening. Kildare held him responsible for the "rag."

So now Gussy was determined to be more dutiful.

The juniors were rather inclined to be noisy at bedtime, and on the way up to the dormitories, there was often no little horseplay.

It was this Arthur Augustus was frowning upon now.

"I see no reason for hilawity!" he repeated severely. "I am afraid I shall have to insist upon my remarks bein' taken more seriously."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway, what is the joke, Mellish?"

"You are, old chap!" said Mellish. "A screaming joke!"

"Oh, indeed! Vewy well! The next time you laugh at my remarks I shall punch your nose, Mellish. Pewwaps you will see the point of the joke bettah then."

Mellish did not laugh again—not before Arthur Augustus, at all events. For once, Arthur Augustus had asserted himself successfully. The Fourth Form entered their dormitory amid a chorus of chuckles, however, and the swell of St. Jim's did not like it.

As the juniors were disrobing, the dormitory door opened, and Lowther looked in.

"Has he gone?" he asked the dormitory in general, in a breathless whisper.

"Bai Jove! Has who gone, Lowthah?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"Oh!" exclaimed Lowther, as if quite startled at the sight of the swell of St. Jim's.

"You—you're still here, Gussy?"

"Heah—of course, Lowther. Why—"

"I thought you'd have been taken away to-night!" said Lowther seriously. "I understood you might have been taken to Colney Hatch to-night."

"Bai Jove!"

"As it was your own request that you should be placed under restraint without delay, I imagined you'd have been taken away by this time, Gussy," said Lowther, anxiously looking round at the grinning faces. "I say, you fellows, are you sure he's safe? He may get violent—"

Whizz! Flop!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus became violent quicker than Lowther had anticipated. His pillow left his hand with the speed of a bullet. It was a beautiful aim, and the pillow caught the humorous Lowther full in the face.

Lowther vanished from the half-open doorway. From the dark passage beyond sounded a bump and a howl.

"Yaroooh!"

"Good for you, Gussy!"

"The—the cheeky, impudent wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He went to retrieve his pillow. It was lying on the linoleum, but Lowther had gone. Once again Arthur Augustus had asserted himself successfully. With a determined look upon his features, Arthur Augustus, instead of returning immediately, went along to the Shell dormitory and looked in.

Lowther was just undressing, and the rest of the fellows were laughing.

"Lowthah, you wottah!"

"Yes, captin?"

"If you wefer in any way to that wotten joke again I shall feel obliged to punch your nose, you wottah!"

"Please I won't do it again, captin!" said Lowther meekly.

"If you also dare to leave your dormitoway again without permission, Lowthah, I shall be obliged to deal with you in my official capacity as skippah!" said Gussy sternly.

"I won't do it again, captin! Please overlook it this once, captin!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cacklin' wottahs!" snorted Arthur Augustus, going red with wrath. "Stop this wot at once! I wefuse to have my authority tweated with contempt like this!"

"Go hon! Oh, captin!"

"As junior skippah, it is my dutay to keep some measuah of ordah in the dorms!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "I intend to do so, and I warn you that I shall stand no nonsense!"

"Bow-wow-wow!"

"There is anothah mattah I desiah to mention now I am on the subject!" proceeded Arthur Augustus, feeling it the right time to speak a "word in season" to Aubrey Racke. "I have weason to believe that a certain membah of this dormitoway pwoposes to bweack bounds this evenin'.

I wish to warn him heah and now that I shall be on the look-out, and that if I catch him bweakin' wules in that weekless man-nah, I shall be obliged to do my dutay and weport him! Understand that!"

Having spoken his word in season, Arthur Augustus left the dormitory, answering the chorus of chuckles by banging the door after him.

He returned to his bed in the Fourth. But Arthur Augustus had no intention of going to sleep yet. He lay awake, in a very worried frame of mind. The new captain felt his great responsibilities deeply, and he was determined to do his duty. To have to report Racke would be a very unpleasant necessity; he did not want to do that. None the less, he had no intention of neglecting his duty. He had learned that Racke intended to leave his bed after "lights out," and it was his duty to put a stop to such a reckless and lawless proceeding.

Therefore, Arthur Augustus resolved to keep awake, and to slip along to the Shell dormitory later on to test his

grave suspicions. But, as it happened, there was no necessity for him to keep awake. Scarcely had the Fourth settled down finally to slumber when a loud bump sounded on the dormitory door.

It just sounded like a prowler blundering into the door in the darkness.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "The wottah is goin' out already!"

In great haste the junior skipper slipped out of bed and donned slippers and coat. Blake sat up in bed and called to him, but he ignored Blake. He hastened out, and blinked about the dark, deserted corridor.

Then his eyes gleamed as he sighted a white-clad form a few yards away from him, moving slowly towards the stairs.

"Bai Jove! Captuahed, you wottah, Wacke!" murmured the new skipper excitedly.

But Arthur Augustus had spoken a trifle too soon. As he jumped forward to overtake the prowler he tripped over something on the floor and went headlong.

Crash!

Just in time Arthur Augustus prevented a howl from escaping him. But, though hurt, he manfully repressed it and staggered to his feet. The obstacle appeared to be a coat or blanket stretched across the passage, but Arthur Augustus did not stop to investigate it. Had he done so, he might have suspected something.

He hurried on, eager to make his capture. It was his haste again that caused his downfall. Scarcely a couple of

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yards farther on he again tripped over an unseen obstacle and came a fearful cropper.

"Ow!"

This time a half-stifed yelp did escape the new skipper. But he scrambled on again, determined not to lose his quarry. He rushed on, only stopping when he reached the head of the staircase.

But precious time had been lost, and the white form had vanished. He had glimpsed him at the head of the stairs, however, and Arthur Augustus did not hesitate. He hurried down the stairs breathlessly.

His elegant form had just vanished along the passage below when a white form emerged from an alcove at the head of the stairs and a deep chuckle sounded.

It was Monty Lowther, and, with another chuckle, that practical joker hurried back. Reaching the two blankets on the floor, he grabbed them and hurried back into the Shell dormitory with them.

A candle was burning there, and most of the Shell fellows were sitting up in bed, grinning.

"Did he swallow the giddy bait?" asked Bernard Glyn.

"Like a giddy fish!" chuckled Lowther. "Now for the little surprise! Dear old Gussy must learn not to believe all he overhears!"

"You burbling chump, Lowther!" said Tom Merry, sitting up in bed. "For goodness' sake, cheese it, and let poor old Gussy alone! It isn't worth it, anyway!"

"My dear man, we're doing a public duty!" said Lowther. "Gussy must be taught, for his own sake, not to take his duties as skipper quite so seriously. If we don't teach him, somebody else will! This is for his own good! Now, where's that topper?"

From underneath his bed, Monty Lowther drew a shining silk hat.

"It's Gussy's own hat!" said Lowther. "As the lesson is for Gussy, it's only right he should provide the necessary apparatus. Now for the job!"

Going to a washstand, Lowther grabbed a jug and filled the silk hat almost to the brim with cold water. Then, as Glyn came to his aid and held the dormitory door slightly ajar, Lowther stood on a chair and balanced the hat of water neatly on the edge of the door, with the hat brim just resting gently against the door-jamb.

"There!" murmured Lowther. "Nothing like cold water for damping anyone's ardour! Now put that light out, Glyn!"

"Yes, rather!"

Glyn put the light out. As it happened, he was only just in time to do so and scramble into bed. Scarcely a moment later a sound came from the passage outside. Then—

Swoooooosh!

"Yawoooooooooh!"

There was no doubt as to who had "got" the booby-trap. The yell was enough to waken the famous Seven Sleepers, and the voice was the unmistakable voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Naturally he was startled, to say the least of it, when a hatful of icy-cold water swooped down upon him. It drenched him from head to foot, and he sat down with a terrific bump and another howl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

His second howl was followed by yet another—the howl of laughter which came from the expectant fellows in the Shell dormitory.

A candle flared up, and as he sat in the doorway and blinked dazedly round him, Arthur Augustus' startled eyes beheld rows of grinning faces.

"Hallo! That sounds like old Gussy, our new skipper!" said Lowther.

"It looks like him, too!" said Glyn. "What the thump is he having a cold bath in our dormitory for? I ask you!"

"Thinks he can do just as he likes now he's junior captain," said Lowther. "Well, there's no accounting for tastes. Personally, I prefer a cold bath in the daytime, and without any clothes. Well, I always thought Gussy a bit queer, but this puts the top hat on it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet, panting and gasping. Water streamed from him. That howl of laughter had already told him much—all he needed to know, in fact. He was in a towering rage.

"Oh, you—you feahful wascals! You—you wuffianly wottabs!" he choked. "You have been pullin' my leg—this is all a pweawwanged outrage! I believe it was you, Lowthah! Oh, you—you—"

Gussy choked. But sighting the soaked "topper" lying on the floor just at that point, he gave vent to his overpowering wrath by jumping on the offending silk hat.

Crunch!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

This was too much for the Shell dormitory. The fellows

fell back in bed almost helpless with laughter. Lowther was very serious, however.

"Now, what on earth did you do that for, Gussy?" he asked blankly. "If you didn't want the hat, why didn't you give it away or sell it? I hate to see waste and reckless extravagance like that! Oh, Gussy!"

"Oh, bai Jove! Is—is—is—"

"Exactly! You could have dried the hat and made use of it again—turned it into a flower-pot or something useful," said Lowther. "But such reckless waste—"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus grabbed up the hat and glanced inside



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face was a sight as he scanned the line of fags. They all wore shining silk hats, elegant Etons, beautiful ties and fancy waist-coats. The only thing that spoiled the picture was the fact that the clothes were several sizes too large for their youthful wearers. "You feahful young wuffians!" shrieked the swell of St. Jim's, when he had regained his breath. "You are weavin' my clobberah!"

(See Chapter 9.)

it. One glance at the soaked lining was enough—his own name was in it. He gave a roar.

"Oh, you—you feahful wascal, Lowthah!" he choked. "I knew it was you, you wuffian! I do not believe Wacke intended to bweak bounds at all!" he shrieked, as his eyes fell on the grinning face of Aubrey Racke. "It was all a twick; that wotten conversation outside my door this evenin' was all awwanged—a twick!"

"Go hon!"

"You—you—you—"

Words failed Arthur Augustus. He fell back upon action. He made a rush at Lowther's bed, caught that humorous youth by the leg and pulled.

Bump!

"Yooooop!"

It was Lowther's turn to howl—and he howled fiendishly as the back of his head connected with the floor with a crack. Lowther had not quite anticipated that sudden rush on the part of the raging Arthur Augustus.

Nor did he anticipate what followed.

Grabbing up a hairbrush, Arthur Augustus started to lay it about Lowther's pyjama-clad form with hearty good will.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Lowther roared and roared, but Arthur Augustus had no mercy to spare just then. The hard back of the brush cracked and smacked, and Lowther's yells were only equalled by the yells of laughter from the almost delirious onlookers.

In sheer desperation, Lowther managed to scramble up

at last, and his fist smote Gussy's nose. The swell of St. Jim's immediately dropped the hairbrush, and next moment he and Lowther were smiting each other often and hard.

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Let him have it strong, Lowther!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry had already had the good sense to rush to the door and close it, but the uproar had been heard. The juniors had forgotten caution in their excitement, but they remembered the danger abruptly as the door flew open, and Kildare strode in, a candle in his hand.

"What the thump— Stop that row, you young rascals!"



he shouted angrily. "D'Arcy—Lowther—stop! Are you potty, you young idiots! Stop!"

He ran between the combatants. He had already shoved his candle on a washstand, and now he sent Arthur Augustus staggering one way and Lowther another.

"You—you utter young rascals!" gasped Kildare. "What on earth does this mean? And what's all this water doing on the floor? And what are you doing in this dormitory, D'Arcy?"

There was no immediate answer to Kildare's running fire of questions. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Monty Lowther stood and panted. Kildare looked them over grimly.

"I'm waiting!" he reminded them icily. "When I ask a question I usually expect an answer. Well?"

"Ahem! You—you see, Kildare—"

"Only a joke, Kildare—" mumbled Lowther, with a groan; from the sound of his voice, Lowther certainly did not see the joke now.

"Only a joke, is it?" snapped Kildare. "You won't find it a joke! D'Arcy, you're the junior captain, aren't you? Is this how you keep order?"

"Oh, deah! Weally, Kildare—"

"What are you doing out of your own dormitory at this time of the night?" snapped Kildare.

"Oh, cwikey! It—it was like this, Kildare. I was undah the impresson that a certain fellow—I wefuse to give names—intended to bweak bounds this evenin', so I came along to stop him. But—but—but—"

The hapless Arthur Augustus halted, blushing crimson.

It was not pleasant to confess how he had been "spoofed"—not before the grinning dormitory, at all events.

"Go on!" snapped Kildare, taking in the water and the squashed hat with another keen glance. "I notice you are wet through, D'Arcy. I think I can guess the rest. Go on, though."

"I—I—I—" Gussy stammered and stopped. Not for worlds, raging as he was, would he give Lowther and Glyn away.

There was no need, however.

"It—it was all my fault, Kildare!" groaned Lowther. "Just a little joke on our new skipper, you know. No harm in it! We— That is, I tricked Gussy into believing a fellow was going to break bounds. Then I led him downstairs, purposely gave him the slip, and came back and rigged up that booby-trap."

"And I helped him!" murmured Glyn contritely. "We're equally to blame. Anyway, it wasn't Gussy's fault—only his folly!"

"Silence!" gasped Kildare, his mouth twitching. "I—I think I understand. D'Arcy, you're a young idiot!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Kildare, I stwongly object—"

"It doesn't interest me what you object to, D'Arcy!" snapped Kildare. "As you don't appear to be at fault—except for being a born idiot—I won't punish you!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Get back to bed at once, and in future try not to be taken in so easily."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Kildare—"

"Get off to bed!" roared Kildare. "You hear? There's been enough of this! If you're not out of this dormitory in two seconds—"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus went. Kildare was never the fellow to argue with—safely. Kildare turned to Lowther and Glyn.

"You're a very funny fellow, I know, Lowther!" he said sarcastically. "But even fun has to be paid for. You'll do me three hundred lines, and you'll come to me for a licking in the morning. Glyn will do the same, and every fellow in this dorm will do me fifty lines. That's all. Now get back to bed, sharp."

"But—but look here, Kildare—" gasped Glyn.

"If you've any protests to make," said Kildare, "we'll take the matter before the Head. Perhaps you'd prefer that?"

"Oh, my hat! Nunno. It's all right, Kildare!"

"Good! Any more noise from this room to-night and I'll double all punishments."

And Kildare went out, closing the door after him. He left the whole dormitory seething with dismay and wrath. But their feelings were as nothing to the towering indignation and anger of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he rubbed himself down, changed his pyjamas, and clambered into bed that night.

His first day as junior captain of St. Jim's had ended, and even Arthur Augustus had to admit to himself that it could hardly be called a success!

CHAPTER 7.

Dress and Deportment!

"NOW, look here, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

"But do listen, old chap—"

"Wot!"

"You're only making a silly ass of yourself—"

"Wubbish!"

Arthur Augustus was not to be moved. Blake gave it up with a groan.

It was the following day just after dinner. That morning, finding Arthur Augustus in a better mood—it did not take long for the generous and forgiving swell of St. Jim's to "come round"—Blake, Herries, and Digby had visited him in Nobody's Study and had made an ample and humble apology for past offences. And like the good-hearted fellow he was, Arthur Augustus had come down from his "high horse" and had gracefully accepted the apologies. Since then—until now, in fact—all had been merry and bright again with the chums of No. 6 Study. Though he still retained Nobody's Study as his official office, Gussy had also graciously condescended to spend a certain amount of his time with his chums in No. 6.

Unfortunately, however, since dinner, trouble had started again—at least, what looked like developing into trouble. The fact was that Arthur Augustus had now got a fresh idea—a new scheme which he proposed to put into operation without delay.

Briefly, his idea was in regard to the dress and personal cleanliness of the members of the Lower School at St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus had never been at all satisfied

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with the general standard in that respect. Juniors as well as Third Form fags, were inclined to be careless where their dress and general appearance were concerned. And as the glass of form and mould of fashion in the Lower School, the elegant and fastidious Arthur Augustus was very anxious indeed to bring about a much-needed—in his view—change.

All the morning, in fact, Arthur Augustus had been thinking the matter over very seriously indeed. As the junior skipper he now felt it incumbent upon him to take prompt action in the matter. And at dinner-time he had not only announced his intention to carry out an intensive and vigorous campaign for better dress and cleanliness, but he had called a meeting to hear his views on the subjects.

Being a trifle more normal than Arthur Augustus, Blake, Herries, and Digby had scorned the idea; hence the present rather heated argument.

But Arthur Augustus, like most enthusiastic reformers, was not to be moved by argument.

"Wubbish!" he repeated. "I absolutely wefuse to be turned frowm what I considah to be my dutay, Blake! I have long thought that the standard of dwess and cleanliness in the Lowah School is vewy low—in fact, disgwaceful. I am determined to alter it."

"You're going to do a jolly lot in a week, Gussy!" grinned Digby.

"I am well awah, Dig, that I am on twial as junior skippah for a week," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "But I intend to make such a success of my tempoway captaincy that Mr. Wailton will be obliged to wecognise my abilities and give me the job permanently."

"What hopes!" murmured Herries.

"I have gweat hopes!" said Arthur Augustus serenely. "I twust you understand the position fully, deah boys."

Tom Mewwy, as you know, wesigned the captaincy, and wefused flatly to weconsidah his decision. And as pwactically all the capable chaps—includin' you thwee fellows—wefused to put up for the job because you felt Tom Mewwy had been badly tweated, Mr. Wailton was obliged to accept as candidates five fellows who were hopeless duds in neahly ewevy wsect."

"Six!" corrected Blake.

"I said five and I mean five!" said Arthur Augustus, with some heat. "The sixth fellow who put up was myself—the onlay fellow capable of makin' a weal success of the job."

"Modesty, thy name is Gussy!" said Digby.

"Kindly dwy up, Dig, and allow me to pwocceed!" said Arthur Augustus coldly. "Those five duds were, as you know, Gwunday, Skimpole, Fatty Wynn, Tompkins, and Mellish. Fatty Wynn, certainly, is a vewy good footballah, but he weally is no good as skippah! The wost are weally hopeless duffahs. You must admit that!"

"We do—we do!" grinned Blake. "But go on, old chap! If you go on wagging your chin like this your giddy meeting will have to be postponed. None too much time before afternoon classes, old chap."

"Bai Jove! I was forgettin' that, Blake. Howevah, the point is that Gwunday has had his week as skippah, and has made a feaful mess of things. He was sacked frowm his job even before his week was up. The vewy same thing will happen to the othah duds. What will happen then, deah boys?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"Don't be wedic. You know what Wailton's awwangement was? He gave each of the six candidates a week's twial as skippah, and the one who acquitted himself best in the position was to be permanent junior captain. Therefore, it goes without sayin' that if I make a weal success of the job I shall get the job permanently."

"Splendid! But you aren't makin' a success of it, old chap," said Blake pleasantly. "You're only making an awful ass of yourself."

"Bai Jove!"

"Take my tip, old man, and chuck this silly rot about clothes and cleanliness!" said Blake kindly. "Let things run on as they are for the rest of the week—your giddy captaincy will soon run out, and then your troubles will be ended."

"Bai Jove! I uttably wefuse to slack and let things wun on as they are!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Wathah not! I have a gweat many plans to put into opewation before my week of office closes. I intend to wewitalize the sportin' spiwit in the Lowah School, and I have othah gweat schemes. There is the question of the Gwammawians, deah boys."

"What about 'em?" asked Blake, winking at Herries and Digby.

"Bai Jove! You know that vewy well. Tom Mewwy has quite failed to keep them in their pwopah place; he has failed uttably as our leadah against them. They are

gettin' more cheekay ewevy day, and I have decided to put the kybosh on them once and for all."

"Good!"

"It is a half-holiday to-morrow," proceeded Arthur Augustus. "There is no match on, and I think we cannot do bettah than call a gweat meetin' of the fellows, when I shall address them on the subject. I have a numbah of plans alweady, and I hope to put these before the fellows, and in the vewy neah futuah, to lead my men to victowy against the common enemy."

"But supposing the fellows won't follow you, old chap?"

"Bai Jove! Pway do not be wedic, Blake. They are bound to follow me, deah boy. Howevah, the mattah most pwessin' at the moment is the meetin'. The fellows will be gettin' impatient, I feah. I weally ought to have asked permission to hold the meetin' in Big Hall, as I am afwaid it will be wathah a cwush in the Common-woom. Howevah, come along, deah boys. I shall expect you to back me up like anythin', you know."

With that the enthusiastic reformer grabbed up some notes he had scribbled for his speech and rushed from the room. Blake, Herries, and Digby stayed where they were, laughing.

In his eager excitement, Arthur Augustus failed to notice that they were not "backing him up," however. He rushed along to the junior Common-room. At the door, which was closed, he stopped a moment to glance at the notice he had pinned there—the notice calling the meeting.

He jumped as he did so. Somebody—some irresponsible individual—had added some writing underneath Gussy's own neat handwriting. The notice Arthur Augustus had placed there was as follows:

"DRESS AND CLEANLINESS!"

"As the present Junior Captain of St. Jim's is far from satisfied with the general standard regarding Dress and Cleanliness in the Lower School, he hereby calls a meeting in the Common-room immediately after dinner to-day, Tuesday, when he will address the juniors of both Houses on these important and vital subjects. Third Form boys are especia'ly ordered to attend, and seniors will be welcomed."

"(Signed) ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY."

And underneath this notice another had been written in an unknown hand:

"IMPORTANT NOTICE!"

"Owing to the lecturer having been taken away to be placed under restraint in Colney Hatch, the above meeting has been abandoned, and will therefore not take place."

Arthur Augustus blinked at that addition to his notice. Then he tore it down, his face pink with wrath.

"The—the feaful wascal!" he stuttered. "It is not signed, but I suspect that jokin' wottah Lowthah is the culpwit. Howevah, I twust the fellows will have the good sense to ignore the insultin' statement."

With that Arthur Augustus crushed up the notice and flung open the door of the Common-room. Then he jumped again—a more startled jump than before. For instead of the Common-room being crammed with enthusiastic fags, it was empty. Not a soul was in the room.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "This is weally too bad! I can scarcely believe that the fellows have taken that insultin' statement below my notice sewiously. And—Bai Jove! Where are Blake, Hewwies, and Dig? The—the wottahs!"

Really, it was too bad! For the junior captain of St. Jim's to be treated in this fashion was scandalous, in fact! His notice had been an order—nothing less—and it had been ignored by everybody. Even the fags, who needed information on the subject of dress and cleanliness most, had ignored it.

Breathing hard, Arthur Augustus was turning away when four ink-faced fags came along arm-in-arm. They smiled as they sighted Arthur Augustus. They were Wally D'Arcy & Co.

"Cheerio, Gus!" said Wally affably. "How's the meeting going, old chap?"

"Any chance of getting inside?" asked Curly Gibson innocently.

"We do hope we're in time, Captain Gussy!" added Jameson seriously.

Arthur Augustus eyed them a trifle suspiciously. From long experience he had learned to distrust Wally & Co. when they were polite and affable.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed frowning. "If you cheekay youngstahs are attemptin' to pull my leg—"

"Not at all!" said Wally warmly. "At least, not just attempting."

"Perish the thought!" said Curly Gibson. "Why," he

added, looking inside the Common-room, "there's nobody here. Is the great meeting off, Gussy?"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus; and he was walking away when Wally caught his major's arm.

"Hold on, Gus!" he said. "Is the meeting really off? How fearfully rotten! What a bitter disappointment for us!"

"Awful!" said Jameson. "And we were longing to hear you jaw about clobber. I was hoping to get a tip as to how to keep a crease in footer bags."

"And spats," added Levison minor gravely. "And whether it's the thing to wear a pink tie with a blue-spotted fancy waistcoat and purple socks."

"Wats! You cheeky young wascals—"

"Oh, really, now, Gussy!" said Wally reproachfully. "No need to squash our thirst for knowledge. I say, is the meeting really off?"

"Yaas, it is!" said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "The cheeky wottahs have not turned up. I cannot understand it. How-evah—"

"You ought to have stood a feed," said Wally.

"A—a feed? Bai Jove!"

"Yes; that would have fetched 'em! They'd have listened to you jawing them—until the feed was gone," said Wally frankly. "You made a big mistake in not making it a feed to-night, and our men are frightfully keen to hear you spout on dress."

"And cleanliness," said Curly Gibson. "Just look at Wally's chivvy and collar now—smothered in ink! You'd do—"

"You dry up, Gibby!" snorted Wally. "Your own chivvy and collar's a jolly sight worse than mine. Still, it's a good idea to ask Gussy to lecture us to-night—a lecture on Dress and Deportment, you know. You'd do no end of good, Gus."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, looking quite pleased. "If you weally are in earnest, Wally—"

"Of course," said Wally solemnly. "We're dead keen, in fact. You see, Gus, we're hoping to have a great feed in—in the woodshed to-night. It would be a splendid opportunity for you to lecture us on Dress and Deportment and Cleanliness."

"The fellows would be delighted!" said Curly Gibson.

"Bai Jove! Then why do they not come to my meetin' now?" asked Arthur Augustus a trifle suspiciously.

"Akem! You—you see, they're shy—shy of showing the older chaps that they feel they need enlightenment on such matters," explained Wally ingenuously. "Besides, we thought there'd be such a—a fearful crush. We're hoping you'll give us a meeting all to ourselves, Gus. Now, don't say no!"

"Bai Jove! I certainly will not say no," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I am vewy glad indeed that you untidy, weckless, and inky wapsallions have realised your need of improvovement at last!"

"Why, you— Oh! Ah! Ye-e-es, Gus!"

"Vewy glad indeed!" said Gussy, quite keen on the idea. "There is weally not time for me to address you now, howevah. I think it would be bettah, as you suggest, to address you at your spweed to-night, Wally."

"That's it!" agreed Wally. "There's only one trouble, though, Gus. It's only a little matter, but it's rather awkward. As it happens, we're all stony broke—broke to

the wide. If you wouldn't mind lending us the money for the fees—say a fiver—just to go towards expenses, you know—"

"Bai Jove!"

Once again Gussy's suspicions returned, but the innocent, anxious faces of the fags dismissed those suspicions.

"Bai Jove! Vewy well, deah boys!" he said, after a pause. "Fortunately I have a fivah in hand, and I will certainly lend you some money to help towards the feed. In fact," said Gussy generously, "undah the circumstances I will stand that feed myself, Wally. Heah are three pounds—I wegwet that I do not feel I ought to make it more for you youngstahs. Howevah, that should pwovide a vewy good spweed. There is one important point I must insist upon, howevah!"

"What's that, old chap?" asked Wally, winking at his solemn-faced chums.

"I insist upon you all turnin' up clean and tidy," said Gussy firmly. "Clean collars and the best clobber you can find for the occasion. The sight of inky faces and untidy clobber would quite put me off my stwoke, and pwevent my doin' justice to my lectuah!"

"Right-ho! We'll turn up spick and span, old chap!" said Wally, holding out an eager hand for the three pounds. "Good man, Gussy! You make a splendid skipper, I must say, and we're looking forward no end to the feed—I mean, to the lecture. Aren't we, chaps?"

"Yes, rather!"

"We must run away now to get the grub ordered!" said Wally briskly. "Cheerio, Gussy! Thanks no end! Rely on us to back you up! We'll get everything ready, and you can turn up at the woodshed at four-thirty. That suit you, old chap?"

"Yaas. Vewy well, Wally!"

Wally & Co. scudded away—Wally cramming the three pound notes into his pocket. They seemed anxious to get away. Arthur Augustus went back to Study No. 6, looking rather thoughtful. Possibly a doubt was still in his mind as to whether the young rascals of the Third were really serious and in earnest as they pretended to be. He found Blake, Herries, and Digby still in the study.

They looked up at him in rather a guilty way.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Blake, rather awkwardly. "Meeting over, old chap?"

"Wats! I wefuse to discuss the mattah with you wottahs!" said Gussy indignantly. "As it happened nobody turned up—why, I weally do not know. But scme feahful wascal w'ote a wotten notice undah my own notice. It stated that owing to the lectuwah havin' been taken away to Colney Hatch, the meeting would be abandoned. I can onlay suppose that that is the weason nobody turned up."

"Oh, my hat! You—you don't say!" said Blake apparently choking with emotion. "How fearfully rotten, old man!"

"But that is no weason why my own fwiends should not have backed me up!" said Gussy icily. "You are threee disloyal wottahs!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"As it happens, howevah," proceeded the swell of St. Jim's cuttingly. "My services are requiired elsewhere. I am glad to say that the youngstahs in the Third are vewy anxious indeed to hear me lectuah on Dwess and Cleanliness, THE GEM LIBRARY,—No. 1,075.



Two minutes to go, and the match between Sparsdale Athletic and the Arsenal looks like ending in a draw. Looks like it, until Harold Wentworth, the speedy Sparsdale winger, races along the touchline, beating the half-backs with ease. Spectators are clamouring for the goal that will give the Athletic victory; cheers of encouragement echo across the ground . . . and then the unexpected happens! Just what that is and how Ferrers Locke, the celebrated detective, and Jack Drake, his boy assistant, become involved in one of the greatest mysteries of modern times is vividly described in the opening chapters of a grand new serial of football and detective adventure, which starts in this week's bumper issue of

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and I am to address them on those subjects this evenin'."

"Wha-at?" almost yelled Blake. "The fags—those scrubby, inky little bounders?"

"Yaas! I am vewy glad to learn that they are vewy enthusiastic indeed! I am to attend their feed this evenin' in the woodshed, and I am to address them aftah the meal."

"Oh!" said Blake, sudden light breaking in on him. "So there's to be a feed?"

"I knew there was a giddy catch in it somewhere!" grinned Digby.

"Yaas, there is to be a feed, of course!" said Arthur Augustus stiffly, ignoring Digby's remark.

"And who's providing it?" asked Blake, with terrific sarcasm. "You, of course!"

"That is not a matter which should concern you, Jack Blake!" said Gussy coldly. "Howevah, if you weally want to know, I see no weason why I should not explain. The fags themselves intended to pprovide it, of course, onlay they happened, unfortunately, to be stonay bwoke. So I offahed to pprovide the funds under the circumstances—in fact, I have already handed thwee pounds to Wally. I was so vewy, vewy pleased to discovah that they were so keen to learn how to impwove themselves."

"Oh, you—you—idiot!" choked Blake. "You—you born idiot! Can't you see—"

"Wats! I wefuse to be called a born idiot, Blake!"

"But can't you see—" shrieked Blake.

"I do not wish to see, Blake. And kindly do not woah at me—you know well enough that I stwongly object to bein' woahed at! And as I do not wish to quawvel with you again, I will wetiah fwom this studay where I am not tweated with the wespsect that is my due as junior captain of St. Jim's."

With that crushing remark, Gussy retired from Study No. 6, slamming the door behind him with quite unnecessary vigour.

CHAPTER 8

Carrying Out Orders!

"THAT—that ass!"

"That—that awful dummy!"

"That born idiot!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby were quite eloquent in expressing their opinions of their noble study-mate.

Afternoon classes were just over, and Blake, Herries, and Digby had met Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther just outside the door of the Shell Form-room.

"Well, he's all that certainly," said Tom Merry, nodding. "In fact, he's much more. I should add a blithering donkey, and footling tailor's dummy with less brains than an ordinary tailor's dummy. Still, what can be done? If the dummy wants to stand those cheeky young rascals a feed—"

"Yes, but what about us?" almost hooted Blake. "We're absolutely stony—all three of us."

"So are we!" added Tom Merry dolefully. "So it's no good expecting us to ask you to tea."

"We know that!" snorted Blake. "But I mean, what about it? What about us going short while that—that blithering jabberwock feeds the faces of a swarm of inky fags who're only pulling his leg for all they're worth."

"Gussy asks to have his leg pulled—you can't blame them!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"But what about us? Think we're going to go hungry while those scrubby little fags are feeding their faces at our expense?"

"But I thought you said Gussy was standing the giddy feed!"

"Well, isn't it the same thing—it amounts to the same thing, anyway. We were relying upon Gussy to provide tea. He had that fiver this morning, and we expected a really slap-up feed all round. Now," ended Blake, his voice fairly shaking with emotion, "now he's left us in the lurch to provide tea for a score or more of inky, hungry fags!"

"Very serious!" admitted Lowther.

"It is serious!" said Tom Merry laughing. "But what can you do? Gussy can do what he likes with his money, I suppose! And after all, you fellows refused to attend his meeting. If we had suggested the same idea to Gussy—about providing a feed—he would have jumped at the chance and done it—instead of doing it for the fags."

It was logic that Blake could not help seeing. None the less he was neither comforted nor satisfied.

"We're not allowing it to go on!" he snapped. "Look here, Tom Merry, we're going to jolly well raid that feed!"

"Phew! Not a bad idea!" said Lowther. "Good man, Blake!"

"The very idea!" said Herries, with great enthusiasm. "We'll do it!"

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"I'm going to have a go at it, if nobody else does!" snapped Blake.

"Well, it's not a bad idea!" agreed Tom Merry, shaking his head thoughtfully. "After all, those fags have got the feed by trickery—no doubt about that. It's all spoo! about their wanting to listen to Gussy wagging his chin. They just worked the thing to get a whacking feed out of old Gussy."

"Yes, rather!"

"That's the idea, of course."

"Come on!" said Blake excitedly. "Let's cut off at once, chaps! Why should we go short? We're more entitled to a free feed than those cheeky young imps! In any case, they should be taught better than to play dodges on a Fourth Form man—especially the junior skipper!"

"Awful cheek! An insult to the Fourth and Shell!" agreed Tom Merry, frowning. "And especially a shocking example of insubordination to the junior skipper! Yes, we really must step in and show them that it doesn't pay to treat Fourth and Shell chaps with contempt! They must be put in their little places!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Let's get one or two chaps together, then, and we'll raid 'em!" snapped Blake. "It's our duty to collar that grub and prevent old Gussy being spooed!"

"Hear, hear!"

All being agreed upon that important point, Blake and Tom Merry called upon Levison, Talbot, and a few more fellows out of the Fourth and Shell, and a start was made for the woodshed behind the chapel.

Scarcely had they taken a dozen steps, however, when Blake gave a gasp and pointed towards the School House steps.

"L-look!" he gasped faintly. "Do my aged eyes deceive me, or are those fellows really fags? Look at them! Talk about Solomon in all his glory! Oh, m-mum-my hat!"

"Phew!"

"Great pip!"

"What the merry dickens—"

The Terrible Three and Blake & Co. fairly blinked towards the School House steps. A lot of other fellows were looking that way also.

And no wonder, for quite an imposing procession was just emerging from the hall doorway. And they were all Third Form fags—more than a dozen of them. They came in single file, and they were all dressed most elegantly—at least, their clothes were elegant clothes. Unfortunately, they only fitted where they touched, so to speak.

They all wore shining silk hats—really shining ones that fairly glimmered in the afternoon sunshine. Unfortunately, all the hats were much too big for them, and in some cases came down very low indeed, almost completely hiding the wearers' faces.

And the Etons were the same—elegant and beautifully cut and clean, but, unfortunately, several sizes too large for the figures they adorned. The sleeves of the jackets came down over their wrists, and the jackets themselves bulged out in folds fore and aft, and port and starboard, to use nautical terms.

Nor was that all that spoiled the beautiful picture.

Their collars were likewise much too large, and in some cases looked like lifebelts round the necks of their youthful wearers. The ties—well, there was nothing much wrong with the ties; in fact, they were beautiful ties. They were unlike the waistcoats, however, which, while being certainly beautiful fancy waistcoats, fitted their wearers like sacks.

Their shoes also appeared to be much too big for them, for most of them were obliged, apparently, to shuffle along to prevent them falling off.

Their socks could not be seen, because the trousers they wore came down and hung in folds over them, hiding them completely and nearly hiding their shoes.

"Oh, mum-my hat!"

The startled juniors blinked at the queer procession.

They soon recognised the leader as Wally D'Arcy, and next came Curly Gibson, Jameson, Levison minor, and the rest of the shining lights of the St. Jim's faggery.

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Tom Merry. "This—is a jape, I suppose. But whose clobber are they wearing? I—I—I'm sure I've seen those ties and waistcoats before somewhere."

"And the toppers!" said Lowther, staring hard. "My hat! They wouldn't dare to collar our clobber—"

"Our clobber!" gasped Blake, almost choking. "Can't you see the cheeky young imps are wearing old Gussy's clobber? They must have raided his blessed wardrobe wholesale! Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From all round the quad came roars of laughter as the fellows took in the strange scene. Tom Merry managed to call out to Wally D'Arcy, and that solemn-faced youth called a halt. The procession stopped and marked time.

"What's the matter, Merry?" asked Wally laughingly. "We have an important appointment. We are due to dine with the junior captain of St. Jim's at four-thirty. If you

have any communication to make to me, kindly be brief and to the point!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you young ass!" laughed Tom Merry. "What's this game mean? Isn't that all Gussy's clobber, you young imp?"

"Eh—Gussy's? Oh, yes! But it's all right," said Wally airily. "Gussy won't mind, I'm sure. You see, he was very anxious indeed for us to turn up clean and tidy. He said we were to be sure to turn up for his meeting in clean collars and the best clobber we could find for the occasion. Well, we've carried out his orders. We're very keen on

It did. He almost fell down as he got a nearer view of the clothes the juniors in the strange procession wore.

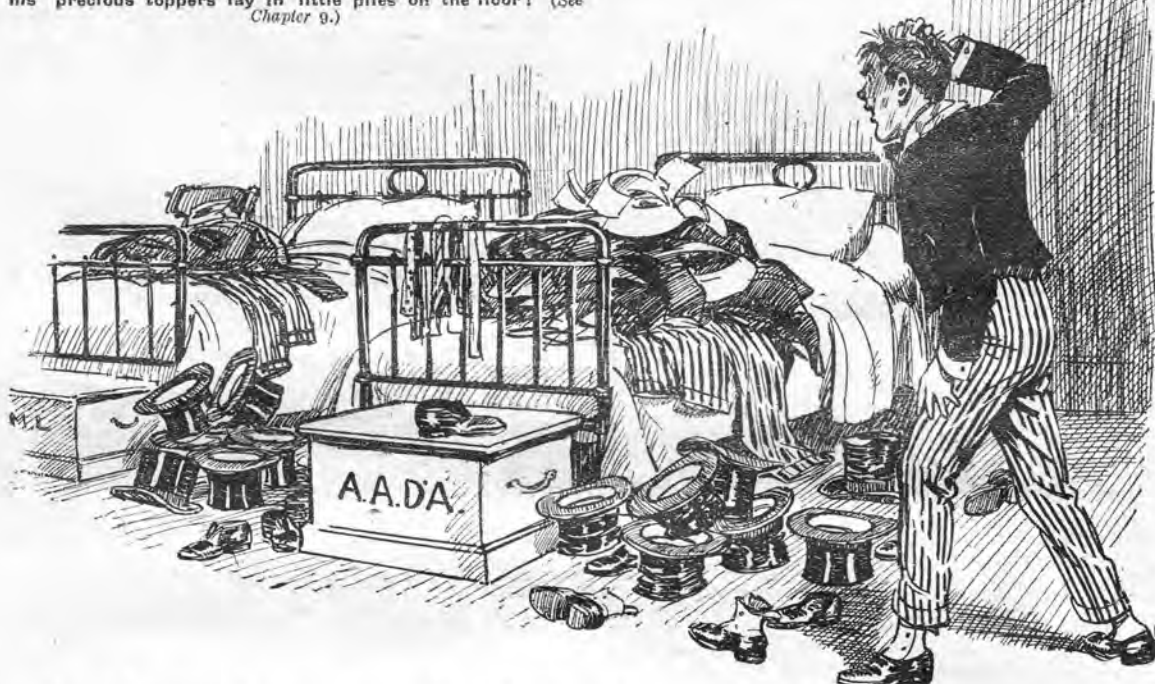
"Stop!" he shrieked, in horror. "Stop, you feahful young wuffians! Oh, gweat Scott! Oh, bai Jove! Stop!"

The procession stopped, though most of the fags appeared to be more anxious to go on—at top speed! But they stopped—perhaps because the iron-nerved Wally came to a halt.

Arthur Augustus rushed up.

His face was a sight as he scanned the line of fags, all wearing clothes purloined from his extensive wardrobe. He blinked and blinked, his very worst fears realised.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy nearly wept when he entered the dormitory. All his suits, his shoes, his spats, his ties, and numerous other articles of attire were piled up high in tumbled heaps on his bed, and on neighbouring beds, while his precious toppers lay in little piles on the floor! (See Chapter 9.)



carrying out the orders of our new skipper. If you Fourth and Shell chaps would only do the same, Gussy would be much happier!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do we look?" asked Wally anxiously. "I'm not quite sure whether I'm walking forwards or backwards in this suit—it's rather too big for me, and sort of slips round. But what could we do but obey old Gussy? He told us to find the best clobber, and we've done so. Everybody knows that old Gussy sports the best clobber in St. Jim's. I do hope he'll be pleased!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is his best suit I'm wearing," explained Wally. "It's slightly soiled and damaged, as that ass Gibson and me had a scrap just after we dressed; the cheeky owl wanted to wear Gussy's best topper! But I licked him, and this is it! Isn't it lucky for us that Gussy has such an extensive wardrobe? We've got every single suit of his, every single topper, every single pair of shoes and boots, nearly all his best ties and collars, and all his gloves and spats! There weren't enough walking-canes, worse luck, to go round. Well, we'd better be getting on!" added Wally, glancing up at the school clock tower. "There goes four-thirty!"

"And here comes Gussy!" said Lowther.

"Oh, my hat!"

The Third Form fags looked round, just a trifle anxious, apparently. It almost looked as if Wally D'Arcy had a slight fear that it would not be quite "all right" for Arthur Augustus.

"Come on, chaps!" he said hurriedly. "We don't want old Gussy—I mean, Captain D'Arcy—to start lecturing us here!"

But it was too late. Even as the procession was starting to move on again like a gigantic centipede, Arthur Augustus came rushing up, a horrible look on his aristocratic countenance. He had apparently guessed that the procession would interest him.

It was some moments before the swell of St. Jim's could find breath to speak. Then he exploded.

CHAPTER 9.

Another Meeting Abandoned!

"YOU—you feahful wuffians!" he shrieked, waving his arms wildly. "You wascally young villains! You have waided my clobber! You are all weawin' my clobber! Gweat Scott! That is my best suit you are weawin', Wally! You—you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Only Wally appeared to keep a solemn face.

"Eh? What's the matter now, Gus?" he inquired in surprise. "Wearing your clobber, did you say? Of course we are! Didn't you tell us to?"

"Tell you to?" shrieked Gussy.

"Yes, of course! These fellows will tell you that! You must have forgotten, Gussy. The heavy weight of responsibilities resting on your shoulders as junior captain causes you to forget these trifling details, I suppose. Still, you did say it—you told us!"

"I didn't!" yelled Gussy frantically, dancing up and down in his excitement. "Oh, you—you feahful vandals! My best clobber—all my clobber! My waistcoats and ties and my toppahs! All the toppahs I possess! Oh, you feahful young wuffians!"

"Oh, but this is rather thick!" said Curly Gibson, shaking his head. "If this is what your brother's word amounts to, Wally—"

"Scandalous!" said Jameson. "Telling us to wear his clobber, and now trying to back out and say he didn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co. and the rest of the highly entertained onlookers.

"It's nothing to laugh at, you fellows!" chided Wally.

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turning round severely. "I'm surprised at you! This appears to be an unfortunate misunderstanding on Gussy's part. He told us distinctly to find the best clobber we could for this special occasion. Well, everybody knows—or should know—that Gussy's clobber is second to none at St. Jim's!"

"But I didn't mean that, you young idiots!" shrieked Gussy, almost beside himself with grief and rage. "You know quite well I meant you to find the best clobber of your own—not to come to the meetin' in wagged clobber and dirtay collars! I meant your own—not mine, you little wascals!"

"Oh!" said Wally. "I say, you chaps, we appear to have made a mistake! Let's apologise and put it right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah young wuffians!" shouted Arthur Augustus, almost tearing his hair in rage. "You knew perfectly well what I meant! This is a wag—an insolent, impudent wag! I—I—I—"

Whatever Arthur Augustus intended to say next he left unsaid. At that moment his feelings quite mastered him, and, with a howl of wrath, he made a rush at the procession.

"Look out!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Run for it!"

Even the risk of his precious "clobber" being damaged did not deter Gussy in that moment of intense emotion—indeed, he never thought of that possibility. All his thoughts were of vengeance.

The next moment at least half a dozen of the fags were rolling over and over in the quad, while toppers rattled to right and left.

"Back up!" yelled Wally. "Back up, the Third!"

The Third-Formers backed up with a will, and the swell of St. Jim's was collared by many hands, and he descended, struggling manfully, to the gravel with nearly a dozen fags swarming over him.

"Here, we're not standing this!" said Blake, his laughter ceasing abruptly as he grasped Gussy's danger. "We can't allow these fags to handle a Fourth Form man—not even an ass like Gussy!"

"Rather not!"

"Especially not the junior skipper!" grinned Tom Merry. "It's rather hard on old Gussy, anyway. Boot the little imps away—only mind Gussy's clobber!"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

But it was really impossible to "mind" Gussy's clobber. Wally D'Arcy & Co. were not the fellows to give in without a struggle, and it required a considerable amount of "booting" to convince them that the fight was hopeless.

At a word from Wally, however, they gave up the struggle at last and took to their heels, vanishing round behind the chapel.

They left behind them a sea of damaged toppers, derelict collars and ties, much the worse for wear, and several elegant pairs of gloves and numerous other articles of attire—all the property of Arthur Augustus.

That hapless youth gasped and panted as he reclined among the ruins. The juniors, at a sudden word from Tom Merry, rushed away after the vanishing Third-Formers.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "Oh deah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Like the solitary warrior left on the stricken battlefield, Arthur Augustus sat among his scattered attire and groaned. Though feeling quite sympathetic, the onlookers could not help laughing. But Darrell of the Sixth came along and gave him a helping hand to his feet.

"What on earth's happened here, D'Arcy?" he gasped. "What the dickens—"

"Gwoooogh! I—I— Oh, bai Jove!"

"Only a little misunderstanding with some fags!" said Wilkins of the Shell. "Nothing to make a fuss about, Darrell. It wasn't Gussy's fault, anyway. Here, let's give you a hand, Gussy."

Wilkins, Gunn, and several other good Samaritans gave the hapless swell of St. Jim's a helping hand, picking up the scattered articles of attire and helping him to carry them indoors. They also kindly helped Gussy to put them away. Then, having seen his precious clobber—or as much as he had recovered—put away safely, Arthur Augustus hurried out of doors again and made for the woodshed.

His aristocratic features were pale with overpowering wrath. He had been wounded in his tenderest spot. Sacrilegious hands had been placed upon his clobber—even his precious supply of silk hats. Never had such a terrible thing occurred before on such a scale to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's precious wardrobe. He trembled for his best suits as he ran round to the woodshed. Obviously, the fags had rushed round there for the feed—the feed they had "spoofed" him into providing.

Arthur Augustus saw it all now. He had been spoofed.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "The little wuffians! Blake

was wight, after all. They were pullin' my leg all along. They did not want to heah my lectuah, only to have the feed I have pwovided! Bai Jove, I will give them all a most feahful thwashin', young and iwvesponsible as they are! This is weally a tewwible happenin'!"

Arthur Augustus soon reached the woodshed. To his amazement, though the fags were certainly there, they were not inside. They appeared to be dancing around the woodshed in a state of towering wrath and indignation. From inside the woodshed came sounds of laughter. Gussy recognised Blake's voice inside as he rushed up.

"Look out! Here's old Gus again!"

"Never mind Gus!" yelled Wally D'Arcy furiously. "We want our feed! Those—those cads—"

"Those rotters—"

"Bai Jove!"

What had taken place was more or less clear to Arthur Augustus. Evidently Blake & Co., aided by the Terrible Three and others, had raided the woodshed, and ejected the fags without ceremony. Naturally, being robbed of their "feed" at the winning-post, so to speak, made the Third-Formers fairly rave.

"Bai Jove! Now I have caught you, you feahful young wascals!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I ordah you to go indoors and wemove my clobber this vewy instant!"

"Bow-wow! You shove off, Gus—we've had enough of you!" snapped Wally belligerently. "We're fed-up with you and your silly chinwag! Now, you fellows, what about making another charge—"

"What's the good?" panted Curly Gibson, who looked as if he had been through a rusty coffee-mill. "I've had enough! Blow the feed! What's the good—they're too much for us, the rotters! We shall only get thrown out again!"

"That's it!" gasped Jameson, in sulky agreement. "No good ramming our giddy heads against a brick wall like this. We've been dishd and done, and all through that silly major of yours. He's let us down. If he hadn't barged into us in the quad, we'd have been having the feed in comfort now. As it is—"

"Bai Jove! Weally, you—you young wapsallions—"

"Oh, you cheese it, Gus!" said Wally. "You get off the map! You—"

"Let's take it out of your major!" bawled Hobbs excitedly. "It's all his fault! He got us knocked about, and he's lost us the feed! Let's take it out of the silly tailor's dummy!"

"Good wheeze!"

"Bowl him over!"

"Smash him!"

"Roll him in the cinders, and biff his thumping topper in!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus jumped back in alarm. But he was too late to prevent what happened next. The angry fags swarmed over the hapless, unfortunate Arthur Augustus, and he went to earth with a crash and a howl. His struggles were unavailing, and he was bumped and rolled in the cinders, and his silk hat was sent down over his eyes. He roared and roared. Then, feeling a trifle better, the angry and hungry fags scudded away at top speed—for Tom Merry, with several other grinning Fourth and Shell chaps, had hurried out of the woodshed to see what the trouble was about.

They stared at the sight of Arthur Augustus grovelling on the cinders. He looked a perfect wreck.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Blake. "What's this game, Gussy? Have you been holding your meeting, after all?"

"That's it!" grinned Lowther. "He's been telling them some home-truths, and they've turned on him. Poor old Gussy! Such are the troubles of a reformer! But you wouldn't listen to us. We told you so!"

"Ow! Gwoooogh! Wotters! It is no—gwooooh!—gwinning mattah!" panted Gussy, staggering to his feet. "I have been attacked and assaulted by those feahful young wuffians of the Third! I shall uttaly wefuse to twouble my head about the young wapsallions aftah this! They can go their own way and be as inky and untidy as they like!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is nothin'—gwoooogh!—to laugh at!" shouted Arthur Augustus, in great wrath. "My clobber has been wuined and I have been tweated with wuffianly insolence by those young wapsallions! And now they have wushed off with all my clobber, and I do not know what will happen to it. Oh deah! Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus groaned in deep bitterness of spirit.

"Hard cheese, old chap!" said Tom Merry sympathetically. "Excuse these smiles, but I really can't help it! You really should have left those young scamps alone. Look here," he added generously, "we'll allow you to come in and join us in the feed—won't we, chaps? You'll feel better after a good feed. There's quite a lot of ripping grub left yet."

"Do come!" urged Blake kindly. "We'll forgive and forget past differences, old chap, and you're welcome to the feed!"

"Very welcome!" said Manners. "Come along and pile in, old man! Never mind your clobber!"

"Bai Jove!"

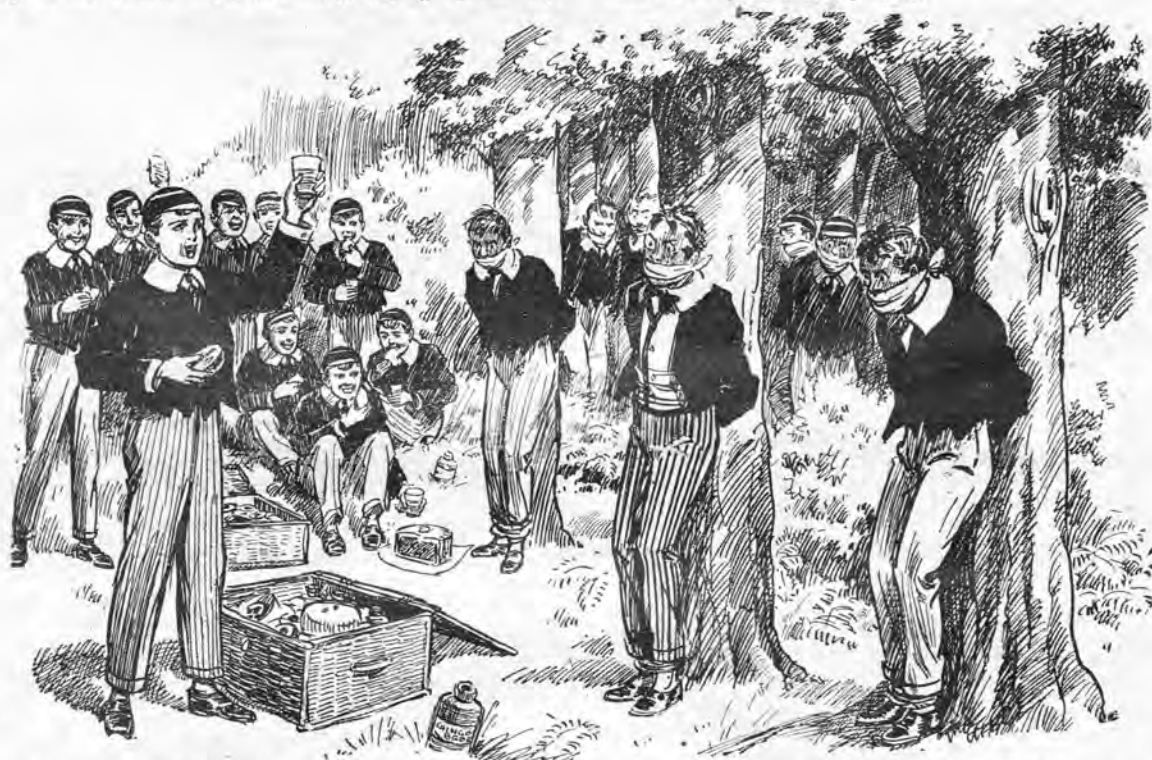
Arthur Augustus fairly glowered at the grinning faces in the woodshed doorway. To be told that he was welcome to come in and join in the feed—the feed he himself had provided and paid for—was the last straw!

But he was too overcome to express his feelings in the matter. He turned and tottered away towards the School House. He certainly was quite hungry, but there was his "clobber" to think about. He went indoors, and hurried up to the Fourth Form dormitory, hoping against hope

Blake, Herries, and Digby had been very contrite and sympathetic. They had even offered to help in the good work, but Arthur Augustus, kindly enough, but firmly, had refused their kind offers of help in a matter that required expert skill and experience—according to Gussy.

Arthur Augustus allowed disciplinary matters to slide that night. Even when certain would-be humorists asked why he hadn't gone to Colney Hatch yet, and when he was really going, Arthur Augustus did not "rise" to the bait. His noble leg was not to be pulled that evening—simply because Gussy was much too tired and fed-up to allow himself to be drawn.

But in the morning, when the rising bell clanged out, Arthur Augustus rose, his old self again. He greeted Blake with quite a cheery smile.



In overwhelming wrath and dismay, the seven bound and gagged "Saints" looked on as Gordon Gay & Co. cheerily disposed of the captured feed. Cakes, meat-pies, chocolates, jam tarts, and sandwiches vanished at express speed into the mouths of the victorious Grammarians. "This is where we score!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "Many thanks to Captain Gussy—the founder of the feast!" "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 11.)

that his clothes would be safe there, and that he would not be obliged to visit the fags' quarters in search of them.

But he need not have feared. All his suits, his shoes, his spats, and ties, and numerous other articles of attire, were piled up high in tumbled heaps on his bed and on neighbouring beds, while his precious toppers lay in little piles on the floor.

The sight nearly made Arthur Augustus weep, and he set to work to do what he could to them and to put them safely away, with feelings far too deep for words.

It had really been a most unfortunate afternoon, and Arthur Augustus could not help admitting to himself with a deep, deep groan, that a skipper's job was neither easy nor happy—to a fellow who took his duties seriously!

CHAPTER 10. Great Plans!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS was scarcely seen at all for the rest of that day. Not that he was afraid of being seen, or was hiding his diminished head, as Lowther suggested, or was getting out fresh schemes of reforming the fellows under his control. The simple fact was that he spent the whole of that evening—even to the extent of cutting "prep"—in brushing, smoothing, folding, and groaning over his damaged, rumpled, and muddy clothing.

But the job was done at last, and when Arthur Augustus retired that night it was with the comfortable reflection that, after all, his precious wardrobe had not suffered over-much—not as much as he had feared, at all events.

"My third day as junior skippah, Blake!" he confided while they dressed. "I've been lyin' awake doin' quite a lot of thinkin' before wisin'-bell, and I see I shall have to get weally busy if I'm to get through my pwogamme satisfactorily before my week is up. Weally, I seem to have done nothin', you know."

"You've done quite a lot already, old chap!" said Blake, winking at Herries. "The fellows are saying how much they're enjoying your captaincy, old chap!"

"They say it's as good, if not better, than a Charlie Chaplin film!" put in Digby, affably.

"Weally, Dig!" said Arthur Augustus, frowning somewhat. "Pway what do you mean by that wemark?"

"Think it over!" said Digby solemnly. "If in a thousand years you still can't discover the meaning, give it up—or ask me again."

"Pway do not be wedie, Dig!" said Arthur Augustus, still frowning. "Howevah, I have been makin' gweat plans for the west of the week, you fellows! I shall call a meetin' this aftahnoon to discuss this mattah of those w'etched Gwammawians, you know."

"Better leave them alone, Gussy!" said Blake, in a friendly way. "I'm afraid Gordon Gay's a bit too much for you to tackle, old chap. Cut that idea right out!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Blake—"

"As for the meeting," said Blake, with a chuckle, "I should cut that right out, too! I should think you'd had enough of meetings to last you for a bit. The chaps won't turn up just to hear you wagging your chin."

"I feah you are wight, Blake!" said Gussy, shaking his head regretfully. "They are such thoughtless youngstabs, and I have realised that they are like a gweat many

othah persons of limited intelligence; you can only weach them through their appetite for good things. I have come to the conclusion that the onlay way to gain their attention and win their enthusiasm is to stand the fellows a big feed."

"Well, that's a jolly good idea!" said Herries approvingly. "Now I'll back you up in that, Gussy—right from the word go!"

"Hear, hear!" said Digby. "That's a ripping wheeze!"

"Well, it is!" said Blake. "You'll get all the support you want at your meetings if you'll stand a feed every time, Gussy. But where's the cash coming from? You blued three quid yesterday, and to feed the Shell and Fourth you'll need a good bit, old chap!"

"Of course, we'll back you up!" said Digby gravely. "As regards cash, I mean. I've got just fourpence in the wide, wide, world; and I owe threepence of that to Tom Merry. Still, you're welcome—"

"Pway do not be wedic, Dig!" said Gussy severely. "This is wathah a sewious mattah. It is high time that those Gwammawian wottahs were put in their places. Up to now, Tom Mewwy has tweated the mattah vewy lightly. He is a vewy good footah skipper, I must admit, but he makes a vewy bad leadah."

"H'm!" said Blake.

"Now, howevah, things are goin' to be vewy diffewent!" said Arthur Augustus confidentially. "The leadership of the juniors of St. Jim's is now in vewy capable hands."

"Oh!"

"I twust I am not a fellow to bwag or to put myself forward in any way," went on Gussy modestly. "But you must admit that now I am leadah of the Lowah School we stand a vewy good chance of puttin' the kybosh on those cheekay Gwammah School chaps."

"Ahem!"

"You cannot deny that what has been wanted is a fellow of firmness of chawactah with plenty of tact and judgment of high ordah. Well, now we have one!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But I can see I shall have to set to work in weal earnest," said Gussy, shaking his head. "And I shall wequiah backin' up by you fellows, of course."

"We'll back you up, old chap!" said Herries generously. "Especially in regard to the feed. When and where is it coming off? And what about cash, old chap?"

"I have already thought that out, deah boy. As it is almost impossible to find a woom big enough to hold all the fellows I have decided to hold an alfresco feed."

"A—a whatter?"

"Alfresco feed!" repeated Gussy, rather loftily. "That's Fwench, you know, and means an open-air feed. I think the wuins in Wylcombe Wood is just the vewy place. With wegard to the cash, I have already two pounds odd in hand, and I shall purchase that amount of gwub fwom Mrs. Murphy in the village, and the west I shall obtain on tick at Blankley's Stores. They will willingly twust me up to a few pounds, you know."

"Good man! Splendid!"

"I shall give Blankley's man carte blanche, and—"

"What the dickens do you want a cart for—to carry the grub? And why—"

"Bai Jove! You are vewy ignowant, Dig. Carte blanche is also Fwench, you know. Howevah, I cannot stop to explain that, deah boys. I think I shall insist upon givin' my speech first before the feed."

"I should!" said Blake gravely. "Otherwise the chaps will go when the grub's gone. You can bank on that, old chap!"

"I'm afwaid they would, deah boy! Howevah, I must wush down now as I wish to do a lot before bwakfast."

And, having finished dressing, Arthur Augustus hurried downstairs. He left his chums chuckling explosively.

Arthur Augustus was very busy indeed all that morning—even in class he concentrated his mind on his programme for the afternoon. And even the crop of lines he managed to get before classes ended, for inattention, did not damp his enthusiastic ardour. And, to his joy—not but to the surprise of Blake, Herries, and Digby—he got the promise of nearly every fellow in the Shell and Fourth to attend his great meeting in Rylcombe Wood.

That it was the prospect of the feed which attracted them did not even trouble Gussy, even if he thought about that. All he wanted was to get the fellows together to hear his speech, which he intended should be a rousing call to arms. After hearing his speech he felt quite certain that there would be no further question regarding the fellows' eagerness to follow his leadership in his campaign against the Grammarians.

It was soon very clear that both the Shell and Fourth were looking forward very keenly indeed to the proposed alfresco feed—if not to the speech.

Immediately after dinner, Arthur Augustus got his bike

out and fairly whizzed to Rylcombe. He went into Mrs. Murphy's bunshop, gave his order there, and then hurried across the village street to Blankley's Stores, which had a confectionery department.

As he reached the opposite pavement he almost bumped into four youths who wore Grammar School caps and cheery grins.

Arthur Augustus stopped short as he recognised them. They were Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, Carboy, and Harry Wootton, the four leaders of the Grammar School juniors—the very fellows whose downfall Gussy was planning to bring about.

They immediately surrounded the new junior skipper. "All hail!" cried Gordon Gay, bowing down almost to the pavement. "All hail, mighty chief!"

"All hail!" repeated Gay's chums solemnly in chorus, and bowing as their leader had done.

"This is, indeed, a great honour!" said Gordon Gay. "We have heard of your promotion to the position of junior captain of St. Jim's, Gussy—I mean, Captain D'Arcy! Allow us to congratulate you! Captain Gussy—the one and only!"

And Gordon Gay tapped Gussy's hat playfully over his eyes. It was just the beginning of innocent ragging—as the alarmed Arthur Augustus well knew.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, surveying the cheery Grammarians doubtfully. "Pway allow me to pwoceed, Gay. I am in a vewy great huwwy, as I have urgent business to awwange. I weally twust that you do not pwopose to attempt to wag me in a public street, Gay."

"What a trusting nature!" remarked Gordon Gay, sweetly. "I hear, Captain Gussy, that—Here, hold on!"

But Arthur Augustus had dodged beneath Gay's arm and made a leap for the door of Blankley's shop. He passed inside and the door closed.

"Rather smart that!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "Gussy's getting quite bright. Still, we'll collar him as he comes out. I say, wonder what his urgent business is in there? Wonder if he's ordering grub?"

"Must be," said Frank Monk.

Gordon Gay stepped to the closed door of the little stores and gently opened the door, leaving it slightly ajar.

From inside came the aristocratic voice of Arthur Augustus.

"And thwee dozen of those twopenny tarts, Mr. Wiggins."

"Very good, Master D'Arcy!"

"And a few cheeseakes and two dozen mewingues, two dozen eweam buns, and—bai Jove, yes!—a good supply of ham sandwiches."

"Very good, Master D'Arcy! Anything more, sir?"

"I think that is all, Mr. Wiggins. You have the list I have already given you, and you can make the west up with cakes and chocolate to the value of four pounds. You won't forget the potted tongue and bloatah paste?"

"I will remember those, Master D'Arcy. And you wish these sent up to the school at once, Master D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove! Wathah not. I was forgettin', Mr. Wiggins. These things are for an alfresco feast—"

"A—a what? Ah! Yes, of course! A picnic, Master D'Arcy. It is rather late in the year for picnics, but doubtless—"

"It is weally vewy mild still," said Arthur Augustus. "It is also a vewy pleasant atfahnoon, and it should be vewy nice in the open air. We are holdin' the picnic in the wuins in Wylcombe Wood—by the wuined Monk's Cell, you know. Will you kindly send the goods there before four, Mr. Wiggins?"

"Very good, Master D'Arcy," said Mr. Wiggins, making a hurried note. "I quite understand. Thank you very much, sir! Before four o'clock! The boy can take them on the truck, sir. Shall I put them down to your account, Master D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah! I was forgettin' to mention that. Pway do so, Mr. Wiggins, as I am without weady money at the moment. If that is quite all wight—"

"Quite, sir!" said the manager of the stores cordially, for Arthur Augustus was a good customer. "Most certainly I will put them to your account. That is quite all right. I hope your picnic will be a great success. A birthday celebration, I presume?" he added chattily.

"Bai Jove! Wathah not! It is somethin' far more important. Pewwaps you have not heard the news that I have been appointed junior captain of St. Jim's, Mr. Wiggins?" said Gussy proudly.

"You don't say so, sir! No, I had not heard the news, but I am very glad to learn it, and I congratulate you, Master D'Arcy. I trust you will be a great success in your new and important position."

"I intend to be, deah boy. As a mattah of fact, this meetin' is called to discuss my plans of puttin' the kybosh on the Gwammah School, you know," added Gussy confidentially. "The feed is weally just to wally the slackahs

togethah and wouse their patwiotism to fevah pitch. Well, good-afthnoon, Mr. Wiggins!"

"Good-afternoon, Master D'Arcy! I will send the goods along well to time, sir. The boy will be at the stile before four o'clock."

"Thank you vewy much!"

Arthur Augustus left the shop. As he did so four pairs of heels vanished one after the other into Grimes', the grocer's shop next door. But Arthur Augustus did not see them; indeed, it was only as he glanced up and down the village street that he remembered Gordon Gay & Co.

He gave a sudden jump, but on seeing nobody about he gave a sigh of deep relief, and then he smiled.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "The wottahs have gone! They wealise that I am not an ordinawy membah of the Lower School at St. Jim's now, and they are weally afwaid of waggin' me. Bai Jove! How feahfully lucky!"

And, feeling that it was a very good augury for the future success of his campaign against the Grammar School, Gussy mounted his bike and rode back to St. Jim's in quite a satisfied mood.

CHAPTER 11.

Not a Success!

"YOU'VE ordered the grub, Gussy?"

"Yaas, deah boy. That is quite all wight!"

"Good! And you haven't mentioned the feed to a soul outside St. Jim's?"

"Not a soul, deah boy," said Gussy, quite forgetting that he had innocently mentioned the matter to Mr. Wiggins. "That also is quite all wight. You can wely upon me not to allow the enemy to get a hint of our plans. Twust me for that!"

"Well, you know what you are for making a muck of things, Gussy," said Blake severely. "However, if you haven't been gassing—"

"Bai Jove! I wepudiate the suggestion, Jack Blake. I see no weason why you should dweam that I had been so weckless and unwise as to jaw about our plans. You careless and iwresponsible youngstahs are far more likely to allow the secwet to leak out to the enemy than I am. Howevah, it is weally time we made a start, deah boys."

"Come on, then!"

Blake & Co. left the School House and made cheerily for the gates. The prospect of a picnic was a pleasing one to Blake, Herries, and Digby—if the prospect of hearing Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's rousing call to arms was not so pleasing.

As the chums and chief supporters of the founder of the feast, Blake, Herries and Digby had agreed to start out before the rest in order to help him get the feast ready. Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners had also promised to help. The Terrible Three, indeed, were already waiting at the gates when Blake & Co. came up.

"Here you are!" exclaimed Tom Merry cheerily.

"Cheerio, Gussy, old man! Got your speech prepared?"

"Yaas. I have just squibbled a few notes in weadiness, deah boy, though I weally do not need notes. I am never at a loss for suitable words in which to fwame my wemarks. I have planned for an houah's speech, but doubtless I shall think of othah important mattahs to mention as I get goin'. Don't you think so?"

"Oh crumbs! Ye-e-es, old chap. But why not leave a lot to the fellows' imaginations, Gussy? I'm sure they'd prefer that."

"Quite sure!" agreed Blake, with a cough. "In fact, I should keep your speech down to ten minutes at most, old chap. The fellows will have had enough—I mean, they'll only be able to digest a certain amount at a time. Keep the rest for the next feed, old chap."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Blake—"

"I suppose this is just the first of a series of feeds?" said Lowther hopefully. "The fellows are all hoping so. They'll insist upon you being appointed permanent skipper if they know you mean to make the feeds permanent."

"That's a certain thing!" agreed Tom Merry. "In fact, I see now that that's just where I failed to make myself popular and really useful, Gussy. Take my tip and keep this up!"

"Yes, rather!"

Arthur Augustus eyed his companions a trifle suspiciously. But their solemn faces refuted the bare possibility of their pulling his august leg. He frowned slightly.

"Weally, deah boys, I do not desiah to purchase popularity on those sordid terms," he protested. "Howevah, a feed now and again would be vewy useful in keepin' the ignowant and bwainless slackahs up to the mark, you know."

"Oh! Sorry, old chap!"

"Not that I look upon you fellows as ignowant and bwainless, of course," Gussy hastened to explain. "You are

certainly above the awevage in that wespect. You are wathah weckless and thoughtless youngstahs, but you are certainly bettah than the west."

"Thank you for those kind words, Gussy!" said Lowther gravely. "But—but how about the grub? Who's seeing to it, old chap?"

"That is quite all wight, deah boys. I have awwanged for it all to be bwought weady for instant use. We are goin' to meet Mrs. Murphy's boy, and the boy fwom the stores at the stile in the woods. It is wathah impossible for a tuck to be wheeled through the undergrowth, and so I awwanged to take ovah the stuff there."

"Oh, good!"

"Splendid!"

The seven juniors tramped on cheerily. They were very early yet, and the spot round the stile that gave admittance to the woods seemed to be deserted. But they had not long to wait. Mrs. Murphy's boy came first with a loaded basket. He left the goods and basket with them, cheerfully accepted a shilling from the swell of St. Jim's, and departed whistling shrilly.

Ten minutes later there was a rumble of truck wheels, and the boy from Blankley's hove in sight. He handed over a big, tightly-packed hamper, and also went away with a shilling—taking his truck with him.

"Good!" said Tom Merry, eyeing the two baskets in no little satisfaction. "This looks like being no end of a good thing."

"Even worth hearing Gussy spout!" said Lowther thoughtlessly. "I mean—"

"Bai Jove! That is wathah a wude wemark, Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I twust you do not pwopose to begin your wotten jokes again, as I do not wish to spoil the harmony of the occasion by punchin' your nose."

"Oh, crumbs! Sorry, old chap—fearfully, horribly sorry! I meant that— Oh, great Scott! Look out! Back up!"

Lowther's words ended in a wild yell of warning. But the warning came much too late—and was futile in any case. For the next moment the little patch of grass bordering the brown, autumn woods seemed to be alive with youths—youths who wore the well-known cap of the Rylcombe Grammar School.

It was Gordon Gay & Co., backed up by their men in force!

They swarmed over the seven Saints like a tidal wave, and Tom Merry & Co. vanished from sight for a few whirling moments. They were far too startled even to struggle at first, but as they recognised their attackers they gave gasps of wrath and hit out with a will.

It was useless, however. The attackers were three to one, and soon all seven were on their backs on the grass and ferns, glaring up helplessly at the victorious Grammarians.

"Oh, you—you rotters!" panted Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay, laughing down at the prostrate and glowering Saints. "What price the Grammar School now! Dear old Gussy! Never mind, you'll be able to watch us scoff the grub, and you can make your speech afterwards—your rousing call to arms! But I'm afraid it'll have to be when we're gone, for it's necessary to gag you now. Bring 'em along, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

Hurriedly the seven St. Jim's juniors were gagged—with their own handkerchiefs. Then they were hauled, struggling furiously, deep into the woods where the brown leaves were falling thickly. When well away from the woodland path, Gay called a halt, and the seven prisoners were secured by cords to the nearest tree-trunks.

Then the two baskets were opened, and the Grammarians' mouths watered at sight of the good things they contained.

"Phew!" gasped Gordon Gay. "Why, it—it's going to be a feast of the gods! Splendid! This is where we score and no giddy mistake! Many thanks to Captain Gussy, the one and only, and the founder of the feast—the feast we are now about to partake of. Those in favour of a vote of thanks to Captain D'Arcy, the Napoleon of war and the provider of free feeds, signify in the usual manner."

Amid a chorus of deep chuckles the Grammarians held up their hands in the usual way. The Saints, having their hands bound, did not—they were not likely to have done so had they been able. The looks they gave the hapless Gussy were eloquent. Obviously, as usual, Arthur Augustus had made a muck of things!

"Dear old Gussy!" remarked Gordon Gay, as he bit into a juicy meat pie. "What a lad he is for giving the giddy game away! If he hadn't gassed, his giddy plans to old Wiggins in the tuckshop, and if we hadn't been listening at the door, we should have missed all this!"

A queer sort of gurgle came from Blake. Another came from Gussy's hapless gagged mouth also. The looks that were turned upon Arthur Augustus from the figures bound to the neighbouring trees were most eloquent. If looks

could have killed, indeed, Arthur Augustus would have expired on the spot.

In overwhelming wrath and dismay, the seven bound Saints looked on—or, rather glared on—as the Grammarians squatted in the ferns and dead leaves and waded into the contents of the two baskets. Cakes, meat-pies, chocolates, jam-tarts, and sandwiches, vanished at express speed into the hungry mouths of the victorious Grammarians.

In the distance footsteps could be heard every now and again—the numerous footsteps of the St. Jim's fellows making their way to the ruins for the feed—the feed and speech that they were not fated to enjoy now.

But the footsteps died away at last. And after the Grammarians had eaten their fill, they rose one by one, all of them breathing rather heavily.

"Kipping!" murmured Gordon Gay. "One of the best feeds I've ever enjoyed, Gussy—I mean, Captain Gussy! Now where's that parcel, chaps."

The parcel was produced. It proved to contain a pot of green paint and a brush. The pot was opened, and Gordon Gay dipped the brush in and made an artistic design on the crimson face of Arthur Augustus. He made green rings round the eyes and nose, and a vivid green spot on his nose. Then he allowed the soaked brush to drip liberally on to the swell of St. Jim's neatly-parted hair.

Having decorated Gussy to his satisfaction, Gordon Gay then treated the other six prisoners in the same manner, despite their wriggles and eloquent glares.

"That's to remind you that the Grammar School is top dog," said Gay pleasantly. "We're also taking your giddy caps as scalps, won in warfare! And before we go, I'll give you a bit of advice, Blake, and you others. Either sack your new skipper or keep him on a chain in future!"

"Gurrrrh! Ugghgh!" came from behind D'Arcy's gag, and the Grammarians roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we must be going now—and I expect your chaps will be getting impatient at the giddy ruins," smiled Gordon Gay. "Give them our love, won't you? Hallo, I see there's three tarts still left. Let them have 'em."

The three tarts that were left—all that remained of the feed—were solemnly crammed down the backs of Tom Merry, Blake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Then the Grammarians kindly removed the gags from their prisoners' mouths, and departed, howling with laughter.

Seven miserable juniors worked aching jaws, and spluttered. But six of them recovered speech at last, and then they turned their heads towards the seventh, and they gave him their views of the situation in voices that were necessarily husky and strained, but in words that were eloquent and deep with emotion.

CHAPTER 12.

Not According to Programme!

"MY hat! I'm getting fed-up with this!"

"Same here!"

"Where is that born idiot?"

"And where's the feed? Blessed if I can see any signs of a feed at all!"

"Nor can I!"

It was an impatient chorus.

In the grassy glade, shaded by the brown-leaved trees and moss-grown masonry of the ruined Monk's Cell, the swarm of Shell and Fourth Form fellows from St. Jim's waited. And they were getting more than impatient—they were getting angry and exasperated.

Four-thirty had gone long ago—it was after five now. And there was still no sign of Arthur Augustus or the feed.

"Where is the duffer?" snorted Grundy.

"Echo answers where!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Perhaps they've taken him off to Colney Hatch at last."

There was a chuckle, but it was a very feeble chuckle. And it was just then that Talbot gave a warning hist.

"Quiet!" he said. "I'm sure I heard someone yelling just then."

"I thought so, too!" grunted Trimble. "I say, you fellows, supposing that beast Gussy has kept the grub just for himself and his pals! I bet—"

"Shurrup, you fat worm!" snapped Levison. "My hat! Yes, someone is yelling, Talbot, and it sounds like Blake's voice. Come on!"

There was an immediate stampede after Levison as he started off at a run out of the glade. Through the woods Levison plunged recklessly, Blake's voice and other well-known voices clear in his ears now.

"Help! Rescue, St. Jim's!"

There was no mistaking it. The crowd tore through the brown woods, and very soon they reached the spot where the hapless prisoners were bound to the trees.

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"Well, my only hat!" gasped Levison, as his eyes took in the scene. "What's this mean, Tom Merry?"

"Cut us loose!" choked Blake. "Never mind asking questions, you silly owl! Can't you see we're about whacked!"

"Oh! Oh, all right!"

Levison jumped forward, and in a moment he was cutting through the cords that held Tom Merry to the tree. A moment later Talbot and several other chaps had cut the other six free. They staggered about, rubbing their cramped limbs.

"What—what's happened?" asked Talbot blankly.

"Can't you see?" howled Blake furiously. "Look at the baskets—empty! Look at us—look at our chivvies! The dashed Grammarians captured us, scooped the grub, and did this to us!"

"What?" bellowed Gore furiously. "And we've wasted the whole afternoon waiting for it!"

"And I'm jolly well famished!" wailed Trimble, almost weeping with disappointment. "I say, you fellows, let's take it out of the rotter!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, you fellows—Ow-yow! Leggo! I shall make my speech just the same, and— Yawwoop!"

"Smash him!"

"Pulverise him!"

"Bump some sense into the burbling idiot!"

"Yoooop! Oh, bai Jove! Help!"

Arthur Augustus managed to reach his feet—how, he never knew. Then, as he saw the angry threatening faces swarming about him, he decided quite abruptly not to wait to deliver his speech.

With amazing agility—born of sheer desperation—he dodged a score of grabbing hands, and tore back to the school.

He had vowed to rouse his followers to vigorous action, and he had succeeded—a little too well!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not seen by anyone for the rest of that evening. He vanished most mysteriously, and it was only at bed-time that he turned up again. By that time the vials of his schoolfellows' wrath had evaporated somewhat. Grim looks and uncomplimentary remarks were thrown at him, but they did not attempt to resort to assault and battery.

As they trooped up to bed Blake took his chum quietly on one side and gave him a bit of advice.

"If you'll take my tip, Gussy," he said grimly, "you'll go slow for the rest of the week. The fellows are more than a bit fed-up with you as skipper, and you'll be wise if you take your job a little less seriously."

"Thank you for your advice, Jack Blake!" said Arthur Augustus icily, and with lofty dignity. "But I do not wequiah it! I have already decided upon my futuuh awwagements. In the mornin' I am goin' to tendah Mr. Waitton my wesignation!"

"What?"

"Yaas, wathah! Not because I do not considah that I make a good skippah, but," added Gussy crushingly, "because I considah I am too good a skippah to wepwe-sent such a cewold of w'etched duffahs and wuffianly hooligans! I uttahly wefuse to waste any furtuhah time upon them! I uttahly despise them all! If they had onlay allowed me to make my speech, even though the Gwammawians had gone, I should have outlined a bwiliant plan to turn the tables and wecovah our lost prestige!"

"But would it have recovered the feed?" asked Blake.

Arthur Augustus did not answer that frivolous question. He went upstairs with his noble nose in the air.

The reign of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as junior captain of St. Jim's had come to a sudden, inglorious end. And the chief topic of conversation in the school now was just how his successors would fare.

Grundy had made a hopeless mess of the job, and now Arthur Augustus had not done much better. Certainly, on the Saturday afternoon, when he played for the St. Jim's team against Lookwood, Arthur Augustus scored the winning goal and covered himself with glory thereby. But there was no talk of asking Arthur Augustus to put up as junior captain again. In that position Arthur Augustus was a failure, just as Grundy had been. But Herbert Skimpole, Fatty Wynn, Clarence York Tompkins, and Percy Mellish had still to take their turn, and the whole Lower School was eagerly looking forward to more entertainment in consequence.

THE END.

(Next week Herbert Skimpole of the Shell tries his hand in the all-important position of skipper of the Lower School. How he fares, and of the extraordinary situations which arise, will be told in: "CAPTAIN AND FREAK!" next Wednesday's rattling fine yarn of St. Jim's.)

WE'RE AT BROOKLANDS THIS WEEK, BOYS! Like a rocket, Skid's Saxon speed-iron hurtles round the Brooklands track. A mile a minute. . . a mile and a half . . . two miles a minute! Then—Bang! He's burst a tyre!



'SKID' KENNEDY-SPEED KING!

A BRILLIANT NEW SERIAL OF
MOTOR-RACING ADVENTURE,
STARRING JACK KENNEDY, A
YOUNG SPEED MERCHANT.

WRITTEN SPECIALLY
FOR THE "GEM" BY

ALFRED EDGAR.

(The Motor-Racing Author.)

INTRODUCTION!

JACK KENNEDY is a dashing, iron-nerved boy Speed King, who earns himself the nickname of "Skid" by his daring driving. With his clum—

FRED BISHOP—and his brother, Ben Kennedy, he is sacked from the Falcon-Six Motor Works owing to the jealousy and cunning of—

PHILIP SLADE, the Falcon star speedman. The two boys get jobs selling cars in the show-rooms of the Saxon Motor Company—deadly rivals to the Falcon people who have premises opposite; Ben goes into the Saxon racing stable. The boys do well, and just before a big race at Brooklands they are asked to help tune up a motor-cycle for a British crack dirt-track rider. This man is riding against—

RED FRASER, a dare-devil American, whose speed-iron is being tuned by Slade's firm. If the British rider wins the Saxon works will get a big contract from the dirt-track authorities. At the last moment, the British rider crashes, and the crowd goes mad with delight when it is announced that "Skid" Kennedy will ride in his place against Red Fraser. The race starts at terrific speed. At the end of the first lap, the American forces Jack into a furious skid and he comes off. He goes slithering madly along the track, his bike leaping into the air, wheels spinning furiously as it smashes down towards him!

(Now read on.)

Real Grit!

SLIDING wildly on his back, cinders rasping against his leather suit, Jack saw his bike buck high, and come crashing down on him.

Back behind the white, wire safety-fence the crowd gasped. It seemed that only by a miracle could "Skid" Kennedy avoid being crushed by the falling machine.

Jack heard the roar of its engine and the thresh of the driving-chain as he kicked madly against the dirt track with his steel-shod left foot, and flung himself sideways. He went rolling over; the ground seemed to shake beneath him as the machine struck within bare inches of his head and went slithering on.

Jack scrambled to his feet. He had a glimpse of ambulance-men starting to run towards him, and ahead he saw Red Fraser slashing out of the bend, half-hidden in the mighty fount of dust and dirt sprayed by his back wheel.

In two jumps Jack was at his own speed-iron. He yanked it upright. The engine was still running, and the back wheel was threshing round so that the machine seemed to try to leap away from him. Careless of what damage it might have suffered, satisfied that it was still in running order, Jack flung himself into the saddle.

He was off and away again before the dust raised by his crash had started to sink back to the ground. Through the thunder of his blaring twin exhausts, as he slammed the throttle wide, he heard a vibrant cheer from the crowd.

Out of the bend he stormed, to see the American crack nearly half a lap ahead of him.

Half a lap ahead, and less than three laps to go! It seemed impossible that Jack could ever catch his rival.

Over by the judge's box Ben and Fred stood, crouched and tense as they watched. Jack came down the short

straight at the far side of the oval like a blue-clad streak. At the turn he flung his machine into a tearing, calculated skid which sent the dirt ploughing from his rear wheel, skating to the faces of the awed spectators beyond the safety-fence.

Round he came, bike juddering furiously on the bumps, front wheel kicking, handlebars jerking and wrenching against the grip of his steely hands as he mastered the machine and forced it on.

He cleared the turn and hurtled past the watching pair in a tornado of sound. Engine screaming, exhausts slamming with crackling thunder, he took the next bend, gaining on Red Fraser!

Jack was riding his speed-iron to the limit. He had the throttle jammed wide, and he trusted to his clever skidding to get the bike round the deadly turns, clipping yards off the crack's lead with each bend.

The crowd rose at the sight of it. Above the smashing roar of the duelling machines the cheering of the spectators rose in a background of tumultuous sound, and Jack was a bare ten yards behind his rival when the yellow flag slashed on the air as a signal that the machines were entering their last lap.

"He'll never do it!" gasped Ben.

"He blinkin' well will!" Fred yelled. "Lay her over, Jack! Hold her! Hold—Wow!"

Jack's machine leaped sheer into the air from a bump, front wheel lifting high as the bike bucked like some iron mustang. They saw him fling his weight forward, force the machine down, wrestle it out of a terrific skid, and wrench it straight again.

He was only a yard behind Red Fraser when they entered the last bend. He felt the threshing wheels of the American's machine slashing cinders and dirt to his face and chest, thudding against the leather and scoring his skin.

The crack showed only as a red-clad shape above a screeching machine, riding all he knew to hold his lead. Jack pulled wide of him, and he took the turn in one long, broadside skid. Round he slid, spinning rear wheel forcing the machine on as he held it to its course, his left foot kicking and slithering on the track as he steadied the bike and plucked it straight for one last effort.

He could see the starter, with the checkered winner's flag uplifted. He was dead level with Red Fraser—and going ahead!

An inch—a foot in front! Flat on the tank, willing the machine on with nerve and muscle, Jack gave the speed-iron all it would take.

The bikes seemed locked together as they stormed at the flag, two weaving, rocking, bellowing, daringly-ridden shapes, with Jack's mount making a final spurt in the instant that the black-and-white flag whipped down.

The gasping crowd, silenced in the last tense seconds, loosed a vibrant roar—because Jack had won by half a wheel!

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Out to Win!

JACK straightened in the saddle as he eased the speed of his machine. On around the track he went, and he saw the other dirt-track riders hanging over the paddock fence as he passed, cheering their heads off. But one little group was not cheering. Jack saw Philip Slade, with Carnaby and a bunch of the American's mechanics, glowering as he passed. They had thought it impossible that Jack could beat Red Fraser, and so had the American rider himself.

Jack, as he neared the paddock, saw an official waving for him to make a triumphal circuit of the track, and it was as he turned his machine to obey the order that Red Fraser brought his own speed-iron level. To Jack's astonishment, the American crack was holding out his hand.

"Skid, you're one good little rider!" he yelled, above the roar of their engines. "Proud to shake with you!"

The crowd saw the action, and they cheered at the American's sportsmanship. Jack's heart thumped as he shook his rival's hand. It was a surprise to him to find that Red Fraser could take his beating like a sportsman; it didn't mean that the man was altogether a rotter, even if he was associated with Slade.

Jack realised that the skid with which Red Fraser had unseated him might have been an accident, and not intentional. After the quick handshake he sent his bike on, touring round the track with a forest of waving arms showing beyond the safety-fence and his hearing shaken by the applause that greeted him.

Ben and Fred were at the paddock gate when he came round once more. Every British dirt-track rider in the speedway was there to help drag Jack off his machine and shoulder him into the paddock.

"Skid can stop, fall down, get up, an' then win!" Fred bawled at them. "Think yourselves lucky he ain't in this game for good!"

The crack riders grinned at his words, and one of them spoke for the rest:

"If your firm can tune bikes like they tuned Skid's, then the sooner they get busy shoving a bit more power into my speed-iron the better I'll like it!"

Presently Mr. Lloyd came into the paddock to shake Jack's hand, and to tell him that the Saxon firm had secured the big contract promised to the victor of the dirt-track duel.

At the first chance he got Jack slipped away from the crowd. The race had not lasted long, but it had taken a lot out of him. Ben, too, was anxious to make certain that Jack had suffered no harm from his fall. He had nothing to show but a bunch of bruises on one shoulder.

"Might have been worse," Ben commented. "We don't want you laid up, young 'un, with the big race at Brooklands coming off."

"Are you going to drive in it?" Fred asked. "I'm not sure yet," Ben answered; and he glanced down at the left arm he had broken in a smash just before the big race over in Ireland. A heavy leather strap now encased his wrist. "If my damaged fin's strong enough I'll drive all right."

Back of his words both boys could read his anxiousness. They knew that Ben was burning with eagerness to get on the race track again, but they knew that he could not drive with an arm that was at all weak. The British Grand Prix at Brooklands was certain to be run off at a fierce speed, and a man needed to be fit in every muscle to stand the strain of it.

The newspapers had a lot to say about Jack's victory over the American dirt-track expert, and the fact that Skid Kennedy would be seen in action again at a Brooklands motor-car race appeared to arouse a lot of interest. Some of the papers said that the Boy Speed King was a phenomenon.

He wasn't. He just had a natural aptitude for high-speed work and plenty of nerve; also, he had made the most of his opportunities, and he had been working amongst motors ever since he had left school. Scores of other fellows, given the same chances, would have been doing much the same sort of thing.

Jack himself knew this, and it stopped him getting a swelled head. At the Saxon show-rooms the attendants and the salesmen there seemed inclined to speak his name with bated breath, and every customer who came into the place felt honoured if it was Skid Kennedy who showed them round the highly polished cars which were exhibited there.

It was on the Monday morning after Jack's victory at the New Palace Dirt Track that Mr. Lloyd sent for Jack and Fred.

"You've seen our racing-cars for Brooklands, haven't you?" he asked, and they nodded. He went on: "You'll

be driving one of them, Jack. Ben, I hope, will be able to take another, and the third car will be handled by Mr. West, one of the finest amateur drivers in the country. We ought to make a good show."

The two said nothing. They could tell that Mr. Lloyd had something important on his mind. After a bit he said: "I had some news this morning about the race. Some last-minute entries have come along. An Italian team have entered, a German team, and three American cars—all just before the entry-list closed. They are all going to make special efforts to win, and so are we—for the same reason!"

Still the boys said nothing. Again Mr. Lloyd was silent for a space. Presently he went on:

"A number of cars are required for mail-carrying across the Sahara Desert. They must be exceedingly fast and absolutely reliable. We have tendered for the contract; so have Falcon's and the three late entry firms. It is certain that the Brooklands race will be watched very closely by the authorities, and the team which does best will probably get the order. That's why these other people have suddenly decided to run. They're all after the Sahara contract."

"I'll do my best, sir," Jack said.

"I know you will, my boy. I don't want to dictate to you how to drive in the race, or anything like that; but I do want you to make a very special effort to get the winner's flag. Ben and Mr. West will do their utmost to finish second and third; but Ben is giving your own car very special tuning to enable you to set a hard pace against Slade and the Continental cars. In short, Jack, when you go to the starting-line, I want you to slam the throttle wide in the first minute of the race, and keep it wide until you finish."

The Intruder!

AT the far side of Brooklands are a number of dilapidated-looking sheds, which were once used for hangars. One of these the Saxon mechanics claimed as their racing-camp, and to it came the three Saxon machines to make finally ready for the great race.

When Jack's car was wheeled out of the old shed for its first practice run, he and Fred stood and gaped. The body was exceedingly narrow, and the radiator sloped backwards. The whole of the steering-gear was encased in stream-lined sheeting, and the short, fat tail ended in a wedge.

The car looked to be endowed with terrific strength and speed as it stood shimmering in the sunlight, and when Jack slipped into the tiny padded cockpit he seemed to become part of the machine. He handled the car gently at first, but when he put his foot down and stamped the throttle wide, the surging power of the engine sent the machine on at a speed which made him gasp.

Once he had got used to the feel of the car he handed it back to Ben, then began learning the course at the wheel of a hack machine. There were two deadly corners on the Brooklands circuit, formed by sandbanks, and Jack practised taking them until he could almost do it with his eyes shut.

Down to Brooklands came the three German machines. They were Reich cars, extraordinarily powerful, and painted white from their narrow radiators to their pointed tails. The Italian Romas turned up, their low bodies a blazing red, and their dark-eyed drivers looking grimly determined.

The three American racers appeared for practice, painted blue and white, and piloted by tight-lipped, narrow-eyed men who seemed to do nothing else but practise or tend their machines.

Slade came with the three Falcon cars, garaging them in a shed on the opposite side of the track. The Falcon mechanics kept to themselves, working behind closed doors, except when their machines were practising.

"We're up against something this trip," Ben told Jack on the morning of the last day of practice. "You'd better take out your racing-machine now and put in half a dozen final laps with it. Only don't let her all out, because there's no need to let the Falcons and the others know what we can do."

Jack obeyed orders. At no time did he give the car full throttle, but he travelled at a speed which made watching men open their eyes in surprise. And Slade, timing the Saxon from the paddock, closed his stop-watch with something like a curse, then hurried to the Falcon racing-camp.

That afternoon Jack and Fred cleaned the car down and made it ready for the big event.

"Wish I was riding with you!" Fred grunted, when the work was done.

"They don't allow mechanics to be carried in this race," Jack told him. "You'll have to stop at the pit, ready to help me change wheels and fill up with petrol, and all that."

"I've been practising pit-work," Fred told him. "I can change a wheel in forty-three seconds, so I'm not going to let you down if I can help it. By the way, Carnaby was hangin' round here this morning, tryin' to look into the shed. One of the mechanics chucked a spanner at him, an' he sheered off."

Jack glanced at his chron quickly. He knew that Carnaby still owed them a grudge, and the ex-salesman had joined forces with Philip Slade.

"Did you tell Ben?" Jack asked.

"Yes" and he said he'd put three mechanics on the shed as watchmen to-night," Fred answered.

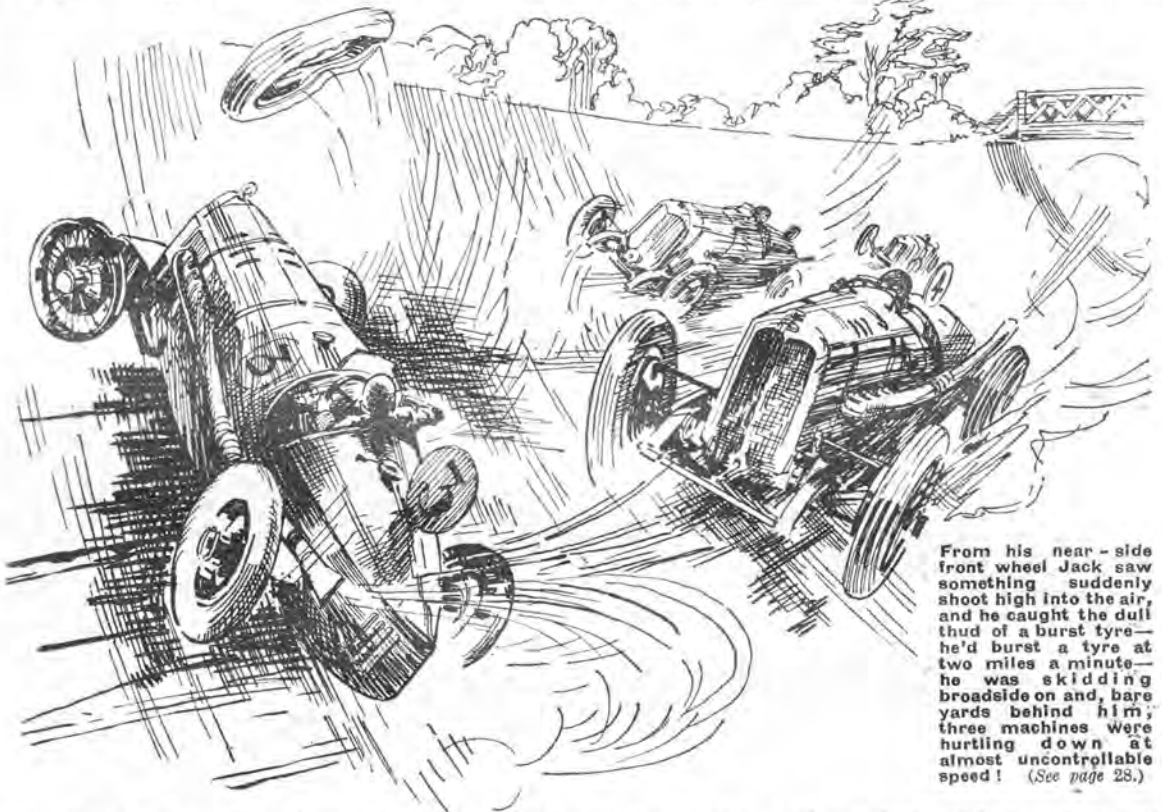
It was the mechanic who had been left to guard the place. His face was deathly pale, and blood was down one side, running from a wound in his head. He reeled forward, and Jack caught him in time to stop him pitching on to his face.

"Carnaby's laid him out!" he gasped.

"I'll look after this chap. Chase Carnaby, you two!" Ben exclaimed; and he caught at the wounded man as he spoke.

The boys went leaping away. Carnaby was half-way up the banking now, and long before they cleared the grass and jumped to the concrete he had scrambled over the edge of the track and had gone plunging into the darkness beyond.

"The swab's got away, all right!" Fred growled. "He



From his near-side front wheel Jack saw something suddenly shoot high into the air, and he caught the dull thud of a burst tyre—he'd burst a tyre at two miles a minute—he was skidding broadside on and, bare yards behind him, three machines were hurtling down at almost uncontrollable speed! (See page 28.)

They covered the Saxon speedster with a big waterproof sheet, and then strolled down to the paddock to watch other cars preparing for the race. Ben joined them a little later on, and it was almost dark when they began to walk back along the narrow road which led to the Saxon racing-camp.

"I'll dig out those three mechanics who volunteered to keep watch at the shed all night," Ben said, as they strolled along. "I left only one man on duty this evening, but I don't suppose anyone would have the nerve to start tampering with the machines while it's daylight."

They walked on in silence. Soon they picked out the dark bulk of the old sheds, silhouetted against the grey slope of the Byfleet banking behind. That part of the track was high and steep, and looked like a wall through the gathering shadows.

The big doors which gave entry to the Saxon racing-camp were locked on the inside, and Ben hammered on them as he called to the watchman. They waited for half a minute, but they got no answer. The three glanced at one another. Then Ben thundered on the doors again as Jack exclaimed:

"There's another door round the back. Perhaps he's gone out there."

They slipped round the side of the shed, half running. It was as they turned the corner that they glimpsed a dimly seen figure streaking through the lank grass making for the steep banking of the track where it ran beyond.

"Who's that?" Fred gasped. They saw the man jump to the concrete and they glimpsed that the door at the back of the shed was standing ajar. "That's not the watchman!"

There was something familiar about the running shape, and suddenly Jack recognised him.

"It's Carnaby!" he gasped. "He's been in here!" And he jumped forward to follow the man, only to stop dead as a form came staggering out of the shed.

got too much start of us. Let's get back and see what happened in the shed."

The place was full of mechanics when they returned. The injured man had been carried to a near-by bungalow, but Ben had heard his story, which didn't give them much information; he had been knocked on the head from behind, he didn't know who had struck him, and he didn't know how long he had been knocked out.

"We must have come up as soon as Carnaby attacked him," Ben said. "We've looked all round the shed, and we can't see anything wrong. All the machines are covered up just as we left them; they haven't been touched!"

Jack did not answer. He went to his own machine and examined it with the utmost possible care; at the end of two hours he was convinced that there was nothing wrong with it—but even that did not satisfy him that Carnaby's visit had been harmless.

Speed Kings!

JACK smoothed down the cord-bound rim of the big steering wheel, and stared through his tiny, wire-meshed windscreen to where the track showed wide and straight before him. He could feel the vibrant pulsing of the great engine under the long cover, and all around him rival cars roared and thundered as their drivers waited for the starter's flag to fall.

The start of the Grand Prix was bare seconds away.

The cars were lined up in four rows, eight in a line. To Jack's right was Ben, with Mr. West beyond him.

On Jack's left showed the bulk of the rival Falcons, with Slade next to him. The man's short, square chin was set and his lips were tightened to a bloodless line. He sat with the gaze of his dark eyes riveted on the flag.

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Behind Jack the red Roma cracked impatiently, and near them he could hear the deep-throated voice of the German cars.

Beyond the starter, Jack could see the line of replenishment pits. He made out Fred's slim figure standing there, on his toes as he waited and waited.

The starter's flag moved slightly on the air. Instantly Jack roared up his engine. The crashing of engines all around him lifted to crescendo and, abruptly, the flag came down!

The great Saxon shot forward with a challenging roar, Slade's Falcon coming beside it. The two leaped in advance of every other machine, streaking down the straight, changing gear together as they hurtled to where the turn on to the banking showed at the far end.

Ben dropped behind, and in his place appeared the white nose of one of the German cars, surging level, with a blazing red Italian machine on its other side.

Almost in line, the four leaders swept around the curve, and Jack saw the broad expanse of the Railway Straight open up in front of him. The German car slid past him. He could see the driver's bent head and the dials on his instrument board.

Jack slammed the throttle full open and the Saxon shot level, the Falcon with it, and the Italian car riding wide as the driver took it on to the beginning of the Byfleet Banking. There was a curve here; Jack should have eased his car's speed to take it safely, but he did not slow.

He hurtled into the turn at a mad pace, and he felt the car fighting against him as he forced it round. He could hear the scrawling, protesting drone of the threshing tyres on the concrete, and his very daring gave him the lead.

He shot ahead. Back of him came the other three machines in a close-packed group, and behind them streaked the rest of the cars. Along the banking they went, while the watching crowd gasped at their fierce speed.

The bright sunlight picked out the colours of the shifting cars, showed the sliding shape of Jack's Saxon as he hurtled round the banking.

He could not spare a glance to read the speed at which he was travelling. He knew only that he was doing better than a hundred and twenty miles an hour. The car was jerking to the inequalities of the track, and when he passed the line of old sheds the roar of the machine echoed at him with deafening sound.

Through his little rear-view mirror he could see the three machines behind him—speed-hounds riding him down! The white German racer looked like a vengeful ghost, the red Roma was a fiery demon with a goggled devil at its wheel. Slade was holding his place only by the demonic fury of his driving. Without slackening speed the bunched cars took the bend from the end of the bank to the flat which led back to the start and the end of the first lap.

Jack felt his car leap clear of the track as it came off the slope. He heard the mad whirr of threshing wheels and the sudden, smashing roar of the over-running engine, then the machine dropped back to the track—and skidded!

From his near-side front wheel he saw something suddenly shoot high into the air, and he caught the dull thud of a burst tyre! He'd burst a tyre at two miles a minute—

he was skidding broadside on and, bare yards behind him, three machines were hurtling down at almost uncontrollable speed.

In that moment, Jack realised that if they struck him, nothing could save them all from terrible disaster. If he tried to correct the skid he would slow, and they would smash into him—so he let the machine skid on!

Round went the tail, round in a tearing sweep until he was facing the machines crashing down at him. He saw the Falcon already pulling wide. He glimpsed the Italian and the German drivers straining as they flung over their steering wheels, then the Saxon turned again, slithering across the track, with a rear tyre stripping from the rim under the strain.

Jack saw the corrugated iron fence at the side of the track whip up. If he hit that he would be done! He stamped on the brake-pedal and tried to skid the car away from the death that threatened him. The wheel-hubs seemed to shave the fence, then the car slid from it, just as his rivals hurtled past him.

Twice more the Saxon tried to hurl itself to utter disaster, then Jack mastered the machine, and the appalled, watching crowd let up a gasp of relief. He got the car straight, and it trundled on. He found that a third tyre had burst and, even as he rolled, the fourth collapsed.

With two punctured tyres, with the remnants of a third flapping around the stub axle, and the fourth wheel running on a bare rim, the Saxon pulled to the side of the course and clattered towards the replenishment pits.

As he neared them, Jack saw that Fred was waiting there, a big jack ready to hand. "Skid," Kennedy heard the crowd applauding his skilful skidding as he brought the car to a stop, and instantly Fred raised the front axle ready to slam on spare wheels.

It was as Jack scrambled from the narrow cockpit to aid him that he saw Ben pulling his car in towards the pits, both rear tyres flat on the ground—and behind him the third Saxon machine in the race was coming in! One tyre burst, and two others flat!

"Look at that!" Fred straightened up as he saw the other cars. "There's another one o' Ben's tyres goin' now! There's something wrong with 'em!"

Jack's face hardened as he eyed the other Saxons, while cars in the race went thundering past, showering them with grit and dust from the track.

"Carnaby got at 'em," he gasped. "He tampered with the tyres in the shed last night. Squirted acid through the valves, or something like that—look!" He grabbed at the remnants of the burst tyre near him and pointed to discoloured, perished rubber near the valves. "You can bet anything you like that all our spares have been treated the same way!"

"Then we're done for!" Fred stared at him blankly. "We can't race on without tyres!"

(It certainly looks as if this slice of ill-luck has put paid to Jack's chances in the Grand Prix, doesn't it, chums? But the clever young speedman's motto is: "Never Say Die!" Meet him again in next week's grand instalment.)

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