

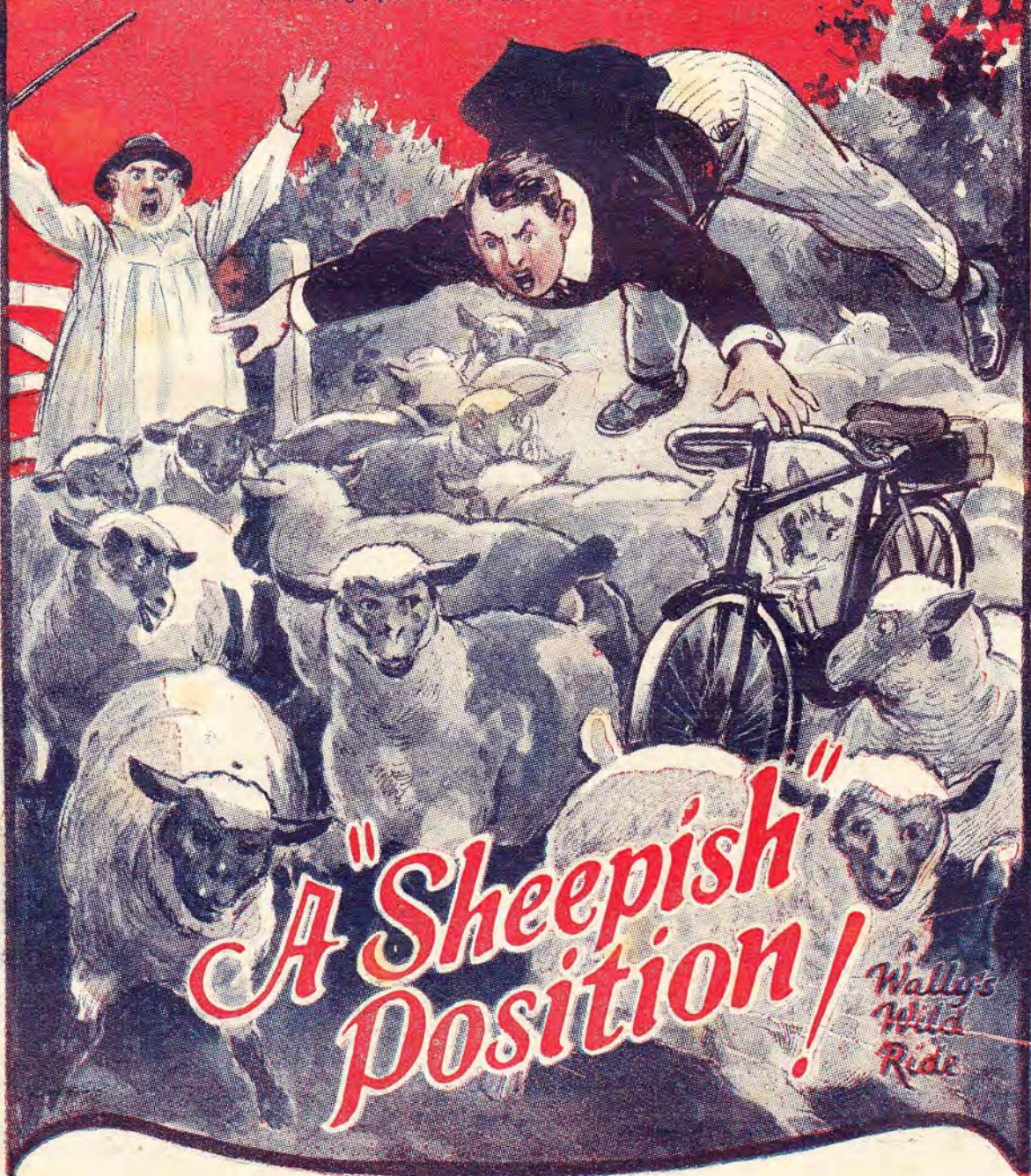
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"GUSSY'S NOBLE SACRIFICE /" *This Week's Extra
Special School Story*

THE GEM 2^d

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*"A Sheepish
Position!"*

*Wally's
Wild
Ride*

FUN, THRILLS AND DRAMA ARE ALL CONTAINED IN THIS FINE—

GUSSY'S NOBLE SACRIFICE!

by Martin Clifford



How many fellows could bring themselves to face the risk of the "sack" for another's sake? Not many, yet that is the quixotic, self sacrificing act to the credit of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, proving once more that beneath his dandified exterior beats a heart of gold!

Sefton breathed hard. Sefton, besides being an unpopular fellow, was one of the least important members of the Sixth. He was no good at games or sports, and he had little personality. At one time, it was true, he had held office as a prefect; as a result, however, of several of the shady pursuits in which he indulged coming to the notice of the authorities, he had been speedily disgraced. Sefton, the prefect, had never commanded over-much respect, and as a common or garden Sixth-Former, so to speak, he received still less.

Even so, it was coming to something, he felt, when a Third Form fag checked him like this!

But he restrained the impulse to rush at the cheeky fag and cuff him hard. He had his dignity to think of, for one thing; for another, he wanted to make use of Wally. On a Wednesday "half" fags were difficult to get hold of, being usually conspicuous only by their absence.

"Look here, kid," said the Sixth-Former, trying to speak affably, "I just want you to cut down to the village for me!"

"Rats!"

"What?"

"Think you're a prefect, or what?" jeered Wally. "Catch me fagging on a half for you, Sefton!"

Sefton glared. He wasn't a prefect, or ever likely to be one. But he was a Sixth Form man, and therefore entitled to respect, if not obedience.

Certainly few of the seniors—the decent ones, at all events—interfered with their fags on a half if they could help it. None the less, a Sixth-Former's word was law—or should have been.

"You—you cheeky little sweep!" he snapped. "Who the thump d'you think you're talking to?"

"Nobody!" said Wally cheerfully. "A mere nobody out of the Sixth! Where's your own fag, Sefton?"

"He—he's missing!" gasped Sefton. "Why—"

"So shall I be in two minutes!" chuckled Wally. "Run your own errands, old sport, and go and eat coke!"

With that the scapegrace of the Third walked away, with his hands in his pockets and whistling.

For a brief second Sefton glared after him in amazement and wrath; then he gave a growl and made a rush after him.

It was just what Wally had anticipated, and he bolted, knowing that Sefton was unlikely to chase him far.

"Come back!" roared Sefton.

"Bow-wow!"

Wally scudded on.

The fag had no fear of capture. He knew what would happen. Sefton would follow a few yards, and then he would suddenly remember his lofty dignity as a Sixth-Former, and he would give up the chase.

That was the usual programme—Wally had been there before, so to speak.

Unfortunately, however, the leader of the Third had not counted on accidents.

An accident happened now—swiftly and unexpectedly.

From a study higher up the passage a senior suddenly

CHAPTER 1. Fagging for Sefton!

"FAG!"

Wally D'Arcy of the Third looked round.

He saw Sefton of the Sixth standing in the doorway of his study. As Wally was the only fag in the passage, it was clear that Sefton was calling to him.

Wally suddenly wished that, instead of looking round, he had taken to his heels. But it was too late now. He had seen the lofty Sefton, and Sefton knew he had seen him.

"Hallo, old bean!" said Wally.

Sefton scowled. Sixth-Formers were not accustomed to being called "old bean" by fags in the Third.

"You cheeky young sweep!" he snapped.

"Cheeky old sweep!" retorted Wally independently. Sefton was not a prefect, and, with ten yards of passage separating them, Wally of the Third felt quite safe in being independent. "What d'you want, anyway?"

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—STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!



emerged, and Wally's headlong flight came to an abrupt termination.

Crash!

It was a terrific collision. Wally yelled, staggered a few paces backwards, and then sat down with a bump. From the senior came an extraordinary sound—a combined gasp and roar. He was only prevented from staggering backwards, as Wally had done, by the doorpost behind him.

His head struck it with a crack that brought him up suddenly and painfully.

"Yow!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Seated on the floor, Wally D'Arcy gasped in dismay as he caught a glimpse of the senior's agonised features. It was Gerald Knox—the last prefect at St. Jim's to look upon such a collision as an accident.

The recognition was enough for Wally. He leaped up like a Jack-in-the-box and made a jump to escape.

But Knox was too quick for him.

The cad of the Sixth was hurt, and he was raging. His one thought at that moment was to get his hands on the fag who had nearly bowled him over and give him the licking of his life.

His hand shot out and fastened in a grip of iron on the luckless Wally's collar.

"No, you—ow—don't!" he gurgled. "Grooogh! You young fiend! You've nearly—yow—winded me! You've nearly split my dashed head open! I—I'll flay you alive! Take that!"

Smack!

"Yoooop!"

Wally D'Arcy took it—there was no escaping it. And that first cuff was followed by many more as the furious prefect proceeded to take his vengeance for his injuries.

"Yoooop! Stop it! Yarroooooogh!" roared Wally.

"And that!" gasped Knox, giving the luckless fag a final hefty cuff. "Perhaps that'll teach you not to rush about the passages like a madman or to barge into a prefect!"

"Yow-ow! Oh, my hat! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Here, don't let the cheeky little sweep go!" snorted Sefton, who was on the scene now. "Hold him, Knox!"

"What's the young rotter been up to?" snapped Knox, giving Wally a shake. "He was running away from you, Sefton—"

"Impudent little sweep!" snorted Sefton, who was one of Knox's cronies. "I asked him to go to the village for me. He refused and cheeked me! I wanted him to call for a small parcel at Meeker's," added Sefton, with a significant wink at Knox.

"Oh, I see!" said Knox, smiling unpleasantly. "So you refused to take an order from a Sixth-Former, D'Arcy?"

"Ow! Oh crumbs!" panted the luckless Wally, rubbing his head ruefully. "Yes, I jolly well did, Knox! I'm not his fag, and decent chaps like Kildare or Darrell never fag us on a half!"

"Don't care for Sixth-Formers—what?" asked Knox, giving the fag another shake. "Well, we'll see if you'll disobey a prefect! You'll cut off at once to Meeker's for that parcel, D'Arcy. If you're not back with it in half an hour you can report to me for a licking! Got that?"

"Ow! Look here, Knox, it isn't fair! I don't see—"

"Going to argue the point, eh?" snapped Knox. "Then you can argue in my study—and with my ashplant! Come on! Here, what—Collar him, Seffy!"

But Wally gave Sefton no chance to collar him. He had no intention of being dragged into Knox's study to taste

the bullying prefect's ready ashplant. He suddenly wrenched himself free, and made a dive for liberty.

Knox grabbed at him just too late. Sefton grabbed at him, and Wally ducked desperately, and more by accident than design the fag's head rammed Sefton's waistcoat.

Bump!

Sefton gave a gasp like a punctured balloon and sat down hard on the linoleum.

Wally regained his balance and fairly flew.

"Come back!" roared Knox furiously. "You little rotter! Come back!"

But the fag did not heed the voice of the charmer. He scudded on desperately. He had not meant to ram Sefton, but he had done it, and he knew the folly of waiting to explain. He flew. In this case, he felt Sefton might forget his dignity.

Along the Sixth Form passage and up the stairs went Wally at top speed. He turned on to the Shell passage, and then—

It was another accident!

Rushing about the corridors of St. Jim's was strictly forbidden. It was looked upon as a crime, and it was dangerous. One never knew who was just round the corner.

Wally didn't know now—until after he had cannoned into the unfortunate individual.

Crash!

"Ow!"

"Yawoooooop!"

As on the first occasion that afternoon, there was no time for Wally to stop or to avoid the collision. Two yells went up as the collider and collided, so to speak, met with crashing impact. Both staggered backwards and sat down.

CHAPTER 2.

Gussy is Annoyed.

"YAWOOOOOP!"

It was a case of history repeating itself, only in this case the other party to the accident was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, instead of Gerald Knox.

This was lucky for Wally, but very unlucky for Arthur Augustus.

The two brothers, major and minor, sat and gasped and glared at each other.

"Ow!" panted Wally. "Ow—ow! You—you howling cookoo, Gus! What d'you want to get in the way like that for? Ow—ow!"

"Ow! Grooogh! Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You—you careless young wuffian!"

"And you're a careless old ruffian!" hooted the irate fag somewhat unreasonably. "What did you get in my way for?"

"Get in your way?" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "How dare you wush about in that mannah, Wally! I am vewy much hurt!"

"Good!" said Wally, scrambling up. "Serve you right for not side-stepping, you thumping dummy! Just like you to shove yourself in a fellow's way! You're as bad as that rotter Knox!"

"Ow—ow! Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet in a state of great wrath and breathlessness. He eyed his dishevelled and dusty attire dismally.

"You weckless young wascal!" he spluttered. "How many times have you been told about wushin' about like a madman, Wally?"

"Rats! How many times have you been told not to be a silly owl?" demanded Wally, brushing himself down and breathing hard. "Like your cheek to blame it on me! You can go and eat coke!"

With that the fag started to walk away. His major hastily called him back.

"One moment, Wally!" he called. "I wish you to do something for me, deah boy!"

Wally halted. Gussy's tone was almost affable now. Like Sefton of the Sixth, Arthur Augustus was restraining his desire to rush after the fag and wreak vengeance upon him. Possibly, like Sefton, Gussy had an axe to grind.

Wally knew what it was the next moment.

"I was just lookin' for you, Wally," said Arthur Augustus. "I wish you to wush ovah to Wylcombe on your jiggah for me, deah boy. I am meetin' some friends this aftahnoon, and I have no time."

Wally glowered.

"Oh, do you?" he gasped. "Well, of all the cheek!"

"Think you're a thumping prefect, too?"

"I am not ordewin' you to go, of course," said Gussy stiffly. "I will tip you a shilling for doin' me the favah, Wally."

Wally's wrath faded, and he grinned. After all, he had

to go to Mecker's for the parcel for Sefton. Wally knew better than to disobey Knox. And it would be a shilling easily earned.

"Oh, that's a different matter, Gus!" he said, quite amiably. "Make it two bob and it's a go."

"I do wish you would not use such vulgar expressions as a 'bob,'" said Gussy severely. "Howevah, I must wefuse to pay you more than a shilling, Wally. Any othah fag would be glad to go for sixpence. If you do not wish—"

"Oh, make it a bob, then!" said Wally hastily. "What is it—some new neckties from Wiggs?"

"Wathah not. I wish you to call for a box of chocolates from Rider's, deah boy," said Gussy, colouring a little. "I have an account there, so you need not pay, Wally."

"Oh, my hat!" said Wally with a chuckle, as he noted Gussy's blush. "Chocolates—what? Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no reason for cacklin', Wally," said Arthur Augustus, colouring still more.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wally. "I see the idea! You're meeting some of the girls from Spalding Hall School—what?"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, crimsoning. "I wefuse to answer that wedic question, Wally. It is no concern—"

"Which is it this time, Gus—the girl with ginger hair?"

"I wefuse to discuss the mattah with you, you uttah young wascal!" snorted Arthur Augustus. "Here is the shilling. Bwing me a nice box of assorted chocolates—about ten shillings, I should think."

"Ten bob? Oh, my hat!" gurgled Wally. "If she turns up at school with a ten-bob box of chocs under her arm—"

"Bai Jove! On weflection, perhaps you had bettah get a five-shilling box!" gasped Gussy. "Yaas, wathah! Now wush off, you young wapsallion!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wally, quite entertained by the expression on his major's crimson features. "Won't the chaps cackle when I tell 'em this!"

"Bai Jove! If you dare to—"

"Oh, Gussy!" said Wally, shaking his head and gurgling. "How could you? You horrid flirt! What about your other girls? What about the one in the bunshop at Wayland? She'll have you up for breach of promise! Oh, crumbs!"

The scapegrace of the Third scuttled away, roaring with laughter, as his major made a furious rush at him. Evidently Wally found the matter very entertaining indeed.

Arthur Augustus halted and made his way back to Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage, seething with wrath, and covered with blushes. How his minor had guessed who the chocolates were for was beyond him. He found the Terrible Three with Blake, Herries, and Digby, and apparently they were waiting for him.

"Oh, here's the dummy!" said Blake, with a grunt.

"Keeping us back again, Gussy? Get a move on!"

"What the thump are you blushing for, Gussy?" demanded Tom Merry. "Anything happened?"

"Wats!"

"He's not even changed yet!" groaned Herries. "Been sweeping the passage floor with your bage, Gussy!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "I must request you fellows to wait for me while I changi my clobber. I have already changed once, but that young wuffian, Wally, bowled me ovah in the passagio!"

"Never mind young Wally!" snorted Blake. "We've waited for you long enough, Gussy. We'll miss those girls—at this rate, you ass! Anyway, you've got just five minutes to change."

"Bai Jove! I must ask you fellows to wait longah than that!" said Arthur Augustus, in alarm. "Wally cannot possibly get back from the village in that time, deah boys."

"Eh? What's Wally got to do with it?"

"He's bwinging me something from the village—something I happen to wequiah this aftahnoon, Blakc."

"What's that? A new necktie?"

"No, wathah not!" said Gussy, blushing furiously. "The—the fact is—"

He paused. His chums eyed his blushing features furiously. Suddenly Blake chuckled.

"My hat!" he gurgled. "I've got it! Gussy's getting a little present for the girls—a box of chocs, I bet! Look how he's blushing!"

"That's it!" grinned Herries. "Is that it, Gussy?"

"Ahem! Well, I see no reason why I shouldn't explain to you fellows," said Arthur Augustus, going quite crimson. "It is nothing to sniggah about, howevah! The—the fact is—"

Again he paused.

"Is it a box of chocs for Cousin Ethel?" grinned Tom Merry.

"Ahem! Not exactly, deah boy! I weally thought of making a change this time," stammered Gussy. "I have

vey often given Ethel chocs, you know. So—so I thought this time I would pwesent—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "I knew it! It's for Miss Curzon—Freda, her name is; that giddy new girl who was with Cousin Ethel last time we went a walk. Ha, ha, ha! I knew Gussy was smitten!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—" gasped Gussy, his noble face scarlet.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "Old Gussy falls in love as easily as other fellows fall off forms! Oh, Gussy! That fatal beauty and love of yours! But what about Hilda, from the bunshop? Oh, Gussy! False lover! Fickle jade!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cacklin' asses!"

"Alas!" resumed the humorous Lowther. "Alas and alack! What will Gussy's pater say when Gussy's had up for breach of promise?"

"You cacklin' wuffian!" shrieked Gussy.

"Oh, Gussy!"

"False swain!"

"Fickle flirt!"

"Heartless breaker of innocent, trusting hearts!"

"Bai Jove! You—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you wibald wuffians!" shouted Arthur Augustus, pink with indignation and wrath. "Wats! Wats, you cackling wottahs!"

And the swell of the Fourth stalked out of the study in a state of towering wrath, and banged the door after him with terrific vigour.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Blake. "What a scream! I suspected he was smitten with Miss Freda at the time! But now he's started buying her chocs. Ha, ha, ha! Well, we'll give him five minutes, as promised, and then we'll get off."

"Ha, ha, ha! Right-ho!"

And Tom Merry & Co. gave the wrathful Arthur Augustus five minutes, as promised. But it was really too short a time to give the swell of the Fourth for such an important matter as changing. At the end of the five minutes Arthur Augustus had not returned, and his faithless chums got their caps and started out, leaving him to follow if he wanted to. They had promised to meet Cousin Ethel and her chums at three o'clock, and they had no intention of being late.

CHAPTER 3.

A Startling Discovery!

"HALLO, here's young Wally!"

"With Gussy's chocs!"

"For dear Freda!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Six juniors sat in a row on the fence just by the stile that gave admittance to the fieldpath off Rylcombe Lane. They were Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners, Blake, Herries, and Digby, and they were waiting, once again, for Arthur Augustus.

Gussy's chums, by the time they had reached the stile, had relented somewhat, and were giving the noble Arthur Augustus a chance of catching them up. After all, if Gussy turned up in the next few minutes, there was still time for the appointment with the girls from Spalding Hall.

In the distance, racing from the direction of Rylcombe, came three cyclists whom they recognised as Wally D'Arcy, Curly Gibson, and Hobbs, of the Third.

Blake dropped down from the fence with a chuckle.

"I'll ask Wally to buck that silly ass, Gussy, up a bit! Hold on, Wally!" he bawled, stepping out into the lane.

Wally sighted the juniors, and slowed down a little. Then he swerved in towards Blake, a mischievous grin on his face.

Blake felt quite gratified for the moment. It was quite on the cards—more likely than not, in fact—that the cheeky fag would have made some cheeky reply and rode on. But he was slowing down. Wally was improving, and was beginning to show a little of the respect that was due to a fellow in a higher Form.

Wally did slow down—just sufficiently to allow him to snatch Blake's cap off, and then he put on speed again, roaring with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake stared after him blankly. Then he gave a roar.

"My cap! Come back! Bring my cap back, you young monkey!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Spluttering with wrath, Jack Blake gave chase. Curly Gibson and Hobbs were already far ahead, and Wally was



As Wally D'Arcy scudded along the Sixth Form passage a senior suddenly emerged from one of the studies. Crash! It was a terrific collision. Wally yelled, staggered backwards and then sat down with a bump. (See Chapter 1.)

racing to catch up with them. He was steering with one hand and waving the cap triumphantly in the other.

"Good-bye-e-e!" he called, looking round. "Go it, old sport! You'll catch me up if— Oh, my hat!"

A sudden hoarse shout came from the hedge, and it was followed by a yell from Blake, pounding along behind.

"Hi! Look out!"

Wally turned his head swiftly, and as he glimpsed the lane ahead he gave a howl and clapped on both brakes, dropping the cap to do so.

Before him the lane was full of sheep—sheep that had just surged out from a gateway on his right.

They already blocked the lane completely, and more were pouring from the field, leaping and crowding before the sheepdog that drove them out.

The shepherd himself stood holding the gate open, and he yelled again angrily:

"Look hout! Look hout, you young fool!"

But the warning came too late to be of use.

Wally's brakes acted efficiently and pulled him up short—too short, in fact. Like a stone from a catapult, he shot out of the saddle and over the handlebars.

Crash!

He sprawled in the roadway, his machine falling with a terrific crash and clatter.

The next moment, crowded on from behind, the sheep surged over him like an incoming tide.

Terrified by the crash, unable to stop themselves, sheep and lambs pranced and leaped over the Third-Former's prostrate form.

Wally howled frantically, his howls terrifying the animals still more, and adding to the confusion. The dog barked, the shepherd yelled, and for some moments the uproar and confusion was terrific.

But the tidal wave of livestock passed over him at last, leaving the luckless fag stranded, so to speak, in the dusty lane.

Then he sat up, and gasped and panted as if for a wager.

His cap was gone, his hair was wild and dishevelled, his collar and tie were adrift, and he was covered with dust from head to foot. It was a case of pride before a fall, indeed.

"Grooogh!" he gurgled. "Oh, m-mum-my hat! Grooogh! Ooooh! Oh crikey! Grooogh!"

Tom Merry & Co. ran up, and when they saw the fag was not seriously damaged they roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Serves you right!" laughed Jack Blake heartlessly, as they crowded round the Third-Former. "Teach you a lesson, you cheeky young rascal! Hallo! There's my cap!"

The cap was covered with dust, and Blake bent down and wiped the dust off it—on Wally's crimson face.

"Yarrooogh! Mum-mum-m-m-m!" gurgled Wally. "Oh, you awful rotter, Blake! Grooogh! Why, I'll—I'll smash you!"

He scrambled to his feet dazedly, mopping his dusty, heated features with a somewhat dingy-looking handkerchief. But he did not attempt to carry out his threat. He contented himself with glowering at Jack Blake.

"Ow—ow! Oh, you rotters!" he gasped. "It's nothing to laugh at! Ow—yow! I'm nearly trodden to a jelly! Ow—ow—ow! Those beastly—ow—sheep—"

"You do look sheepish now, kid!" gurgled Lowther, wiping his eyes. "Ha, ha, ha! Talk about a goat among the sheep! Baa-baa!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's your bike, Wally!" laughed Tom Merry, feeling quite sorry for the hapless fag. "It's not damaged, excepting for a few dents! Hallo! Here's your giddy parcel, too! Gussy's chocolates—what?"

He picked up a dusty package from the lane. The string had come off, and the brown paper was undone. As he stared at it Tom Merry jumped.

"Chocolates!" he ejaculated. "These aren't chocolates! They're cigarettes, you young rascal!"

He opened out the paper, disclosing a sealed and gold-coloured cardboard box. On it, in black lettering, were the words: "Gold Seal Cigarettes!"

To make quite sure, Tom Merry smelled the box. The smell was unmistakably of tobacco.

"Cigarettes!" gasped Tom, staring hard at the dumb-founded Wally. "What are you doing with these rotten things? Is this a joke on Gussy, you young idiot?"

"M-mum-my hat!" stuttered Wally. "I—I say, that's a bit thick, Tom Merry! That rotter Sefton asked me to call at Meeker's for that parcel! I imagined it was a box of writing-paper and envelopes—something like that. I didn't dream—"

"So that's it!" said Tom Merry grimly. "And you really didn't know what they were, Wally?"

"Of course not!" snorted the Third-Former. "Think I'd have gone if I'd known! In fact, I wouldn't have gone at all if that rotter Knox hadn't ordered me to go. Knox must have known what they were, too. He's tea-ing with Sefton. Oh, the rotter!"

"He is a rotter!" said Blake warmly. "Fancy sending a fag for cigarettes! Chuck the beastly things away, Wally!"

"Better not do that," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "It would serve Sefton right, of course. But he would only take it out of Wally's hide later, and so would Knox. Wrap 'em up again, kid!"

Breathing hard with wrath, Wally wrapped the parcel up again, tied it, and slung it on the bracket of his bike with the box of chocolates for Arthur Augustus. Tom Merry and his chums, looking rather serious now, went back to the stile, while Wally mounted and rejoined his chums a few yards along the lane. Curly and Hobbs were grinning; their alarm had vanished on hearing the laughter.

"Hurt, old chap?" asked Curly Gibson.

"Rats!"

"You did come a cropper!" chuckled Hobbs. "Got Blake's cap yet?"

"Think you're funny, don't you?" growled Wally, in sulphurous accents. "Mention this again, either of you, and I'll bust your bokes!"

Curly Gibson and Hobbs did not mention it again. But they grinned as they rode on to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4. A Little Exchange!

"MY hat!" Wally D'Arcy grinned as he gave that exclamation.

His two chums stared at him. Only a few moments before Wally had been seething with fury, and had been threatening to punish them for laughing. Now he was seeing the funny side of the affair, apparently.

"Hold on!" said Wally, with a chuckle. "Jump off, you chaps!"

He put on his brakes and dismounted. His two chums, not a little surprised, followed his example. They were still a few hundred yards from the gates of St. Jim's.

"What's the game, Wally?" demanded Curly.

He dismounted, as did Hobbs, and both stared at their leader as he ran his bike on to the grass at the side of the road and lowered it. Then he unslung both parcels from the bracket.

"I've thought of an awful lark!" chuckled the scapegrace of the Third. "D'you fellows know what's in this parcel—I mean, the one for Sefton?"

"Stationery, I suppose?" said Curly Gibson.

"Stationery be blowed!" grinned Wally. "It's a box of cigarettes—a box of a hundred fags, my lads! What d'you think of that, you men?"

He explained how he had made the discovery.

"My hat!" exclaimed Hobbs, frowning. "That's rather thick! Sefton's no right to send you on errands like that! Why, it might easily get us into a frightful row, Wally."

"Just so," assented Wally. "It's a dirty trick, and Sefton needs a lesson. He must have ordered 'em from Meeker's by phone, saying he was sending for 'em, the awful rotter! I've thought of an idea. Wouldn't it be a lark to take the chocolates to Sefton and the fags to dear old Gus?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently Curly and Hobbs thought it a great lark.

"We'll do it," said Wally, glancing up and down the lane. "Keep cave, you men. Why should we be at the beck and call of everybody like this, and forced to run errands? We'll teach Sefton better than to send us on errands—and old Gussy, too!"

"Well, Gussy paid you a bob," chuckled Curly. "We've had a tart and a ginger-pop each out of that!"

"Blow the bob!" snorted Wally. "Anyway, it will be a lark. Fancy dear old Gussy's chivvy when he finds cigarettes instead of chocs! Help me make the exchange, you chaps!"

"Why not scoff the chocs instead?" said the more practical Hobbs.

"Can't do that!" said Wally, shaking his head. "Spoil the jape, too. Don't argue—help me change 'em, you asses!"

They grinned, and started to help him. The job was soon done. The chocolates were taken from the chocolate-box, and the cigarettes substituted, and vice versa. Fancy paper from the chocolate-box was used to fill up the space the cigarettes did not fill.

It was done to Wally's satisfaction at last, and then both parcels were wrapped and tied up again.

"See the wheeze?" grinned the young scapegrace. "Sefton

will get the chocs, and I'd like to see his chivvy when he opens the box. Let's hope Gussy doesn't open the box. It's that red-haired girl he's spoons on, I believe. What price her face when she opens the chocolate-box and finds fags inside. Won't she be pleased with dear old love-lorn Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally's chums howled at the thought.

They were still laughing when they arrived at St. Jim's and housed their bikes.

"You men can go and get old Pongo now," ordered Wally. "We'll take him out for a run to be out of the way. I'll just trot up with these now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Leaving his laughing chums, Wally of the Third hurried indoors. He found Sefton's study empty, and he left the parcel on the table. Then he hurried along to Study No. 6.

There he found Arthur Augustus just putting the final polish on a silk hat with a velvet pad.

"Bai Jove. You have been wathah a long time, Wally," said Gussy, looking up from his task severely. "Howevah, place them on the table there. What are you laughing at, you young wascal?"

"Only you, old bean!" said Wally cheerfully. "I say, which way are you taking Miss Freda this afternoon?"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Wally—" began Gussy, going red.

"You've always told me to take you as a model and guide," explained Wally. "I'm thinking of falling in love myself, and I want to see you spooning, you know! If you can give me a few tips, I'd be— Oh crumbs!"

Wally fled, the velvet pad just missing him as he went.

Arthur Augustus, breathing hard and covered in blushes, retrieved his velvet pad and closed the door again. Then, apparently satisfied with his glimmering topper, he placed it on the table and got out pen, ink, and paper.

For a few moments he sat cogitating, a deep wrinkle of thought on his brow. Then he wrote as follows:

"To Miss Freda Curzon, from a great admirer."

Several times Arthur Augustus wrote out that sentence on neat strips of paper, until he was satisfied with one at last. Then he started to undo the parcel to place his message inside.

It was just what Wally hadn't wanted him to do, but Arthur Augustus did not know that. He opened the parcel and frowned as he saw the seal of the chocolate-box had been broken.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "That is wathah too bad! Those young wascals must have opened it. I hope they have not taken any chocs out and spoiled the box!"

He opened the lid, frowning deeply. But he fairly jumped as he removed the paper shavings and saw the rows of cigarettes.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh, gweat Scott!"

The swell of the Fourth adjusted his monocle and stared at the peculiar contents of the chocolate-box in growing wrath.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, his noble face red with indignation. "This is a wotten joke of Wally's. He did not think I would open the box, and he hoped I would pwsent these wotten cigawettes to Miss Fweda. Bai Jove! What an exceedingly nawwow escape!"

The thought of his narrow escape from offending Miss Freda almost made Arthur Augustus turn cold.

He hurriedly wrapped up the parcel again, and then he rushed out in search of his minor. He remembered that Wally had gone to the village on his bike, and he made for the cycle-shed, thinking it possible that the fag would be housing his bike.

But the bike-shed was empty, save for sundry machines.

"The—the young villain!" gasped Arthur Augustus, blinking at the box in his hands. "What evah am I to do with these w'etched things? I suppose the young wascals have scoffed the chocs—if they got any! Gweat Scott! What a wotten pwedic to be in!"

Arthur Augustus thought of taking them to Taggles, the porter—until he remembered that Taggles did not smoke cigarettes, but a pipe.

"Waiton sometimes smokes cigawettes!" murmured Arthur Augustus reflectively. "But he might jump to a w'ong conclusion if I took them to him as a pwsent! Bai Jove! This is wathah awkward!"

Wisely, Gussy decided not to offer the unwanted cigarettes to Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House. Second thoughts were certainly best in this case! And then, as he blinked reflectively round him, Arthur Augustus sighted a big dustbin in the corner at the rear of the cycle-shed.

"Bai Jove! The vewy thing!" murmured Gussy.

He was anxious to get rid of such dangerous articles as soon as he could. Obviously the chocolates were "off" so far as Wally was concerned, and the only thing for him to do was to rush over to Rylcombe for some himself.

Still seething with wrath at the jape, Arthur Augustus gave a cautious blink round, and approached the dustbin. The next moment the parcel had been thrust inside, safely hidden from the view of any casual passer-by. Arthur Augustus was just turning away in relief, when he halted.

Round the corner of the chapel two fags had just emerged, and they were both eyeing him curiously. Arthur Augustus flushed rather guiltily, hoping that the fags had not witnessed his rather stealthy action.

"Bai Jove! You kids wathah startled me!" said Gussy, with a gasp. "I—I was just lookin' for my minah, Piggott. Have you seen the young wascal anywhere?"

Piggott grinned.

"Yes, we spotted him go indoors a minute or two ago," he answered. "Why, what's he been up to?"

"If you have not seen him since then—"

"His pals have just taken Pongo out!" volunteered Watson. "I expect Wally's gone off with them, D'Arcy."

"Thank you very much, Watson!"

Watson was not a very attractive youngster, but he was far from being such an "unpleasant little beast" as Arthur Augustus deemed Piggott. Giving him a gracious nod, the swell of St. Jim's got out his cycle from the shed and hurried off with it en route for Rylcombe.

Piggott watched him go with a crafty grin on his pasty face.

"Now, what was he up to?" he muttered, his glance lingering on the dustbin. "He's shoved something in there—"

"Only some paper or rubbish," said Watson. "Still, he looked rather—"

"He looked as though he had shoved a bomb in it," said Piggott. "He went quite red when he spotted us. I say, I'm going to have a squirt!"

As a matter of fact, Gussy's stealthy caution had aroused the curiosity of both fags. Had he just dropped the parcel in and walked away, they would not have dreamed of investigating. But, as usual, Arthur Augustus had overdone his caution and aroused suspicion.

Reaching the dustbin, Piggott raked among the paper and rubbish with a piece of stick, and very soon he brought to light the small box wrapped in paper.

"Phew!" grinned Piggott, his eyes lighting up as he sighted the chocolate-box on removing the paper. "By gum! Chocs!"

"And what the thump did he chuck 'em in the dustbin for?" said Watson. "Must be bad, or something. Chuck the thing back."

"Hold on!" said Piggott, who wasn't a particular youth in any way. "I'm looking into this. He had some game on in shoving this thing in so— M-mum—my hat!"

"Phew! Cigarettes!" gasped Watson.

Both fags stared blankly at the cigarettes as Piggott opened the box and disclosed them to view.

Reuben Piggott's small, crafty eyes gleamed, and he glanced round as he hurriedly closed the box again, and wrapped it up.

"He's chucked 'em away, the fool!" he said, with a grin. "I say, what a find! Look here, I know a jolly good place where we can hide the things, and go there to smoke just when we want. Come on!"

"Eh? I—I say, I daren't, Piggy! I've never smoked! And—"

"What rot!" said Piggott, who was a regular young rascal in his way. "I've smoked before! Don't be a rotten funk!"

"But—but— Oh, all right! It would be rather a lark!" said Watson, who was a very easily-led youngster. "I've often thought I'd like to try it!"

"Come on, then!" grinned Piggott, hiding the box under his jacket. "I'm jolly sure I'm not wasting all these— Why, there must be a hundred fags, at least, in this box! I've got some matches, Watty."

"Oh, all right!"

And, though he looked rather doubtful and afraid, Oliver Watson accompanied his evil genius out of gates. But for all that he could not help wishing that their find had been chocolates—a wish that was to return to the tempted fag with redoubled earnestness before that day was out!

CHAPTER 5.

The Fatal Cigarette!

"RIPPING, isn't it?"

Reuben Piggott passed the remark in rather shaky tones.

"Y-e-es!" gasped Oliver Watson.

Possibly it was ripping, but the voices of the two shady Third-Formers were anything but convincing.

Piggott was rather a shady young scamp. He was detested by Wally & Co., and all the decent fellows in the Third. He disliked sports and games, and prided himself on being a bit of a "goer," and a blade. It was more likely than not that he had smoked before—though, if so, his expression now did not prove that he enjoyed it.

His face was even more pasty than usual, and he looked far from comfortable.

But Watson was in a far worse plight.

Watson had admitted that he had never smoked, and now his looks bore him out. His face had taken on a curious greenish hue.

It was some twenty minutes since Piggott had found the box of cigarettes in the dustbin, and for the last ten minutes the young scamps had been reclining at ease in the shelter of a haystack on Farmer Thake's land, about a mile from St. Jim's. The spot was well known to Piggott. He had been there, as a hanger-on, with Racke and Crooke. Racke & Co.'s ways of spending a "half" were not healthy ways.

It was an ideal place for a surreptitious smoke—from their point of view, at all events. It was not far from the road, and in a corner of the field. Between the stack and the hedge was a space of a couple of yards, and they could only be "spotted" by anyone passing close to one end of the stack, as another hedge screened the other end.

With their backs to the stack, seated on warm, comfortable hay, the young rascals had opened the box and started on the great experiment.

But Watson, at least, was heartily wishing he had never started on it now. His curiosity was satisfied—more than satisfied. He did not, most emphatically, like smoking. But he dared not tell a bold man-of-the-world like Piggott that he was feeling seedy—very seedy! Piggott was a gay blade, and he would laugh and sneer, Watson knew.

So he stuck it manfully, though he had a horrid feeling that Nemesis was overtaking him rapidly. But now he felt he could stick it no longer—he would have to risk Piggott's jeers.

"Y-e-es!" he gasped. "Awfully rip-ripping! We—we'll come here again, Piggott, old man. But—but I think I'll chuck it now. Er—better not overdo it at first!"

And Watson took the plunge and threw his half-smoked cigarette into the hedge.

Piggott was secretly more than glad. He was not enjoying himself anything like so much as he had expected to.

But he grinned at his chum's haggard features.

"Well, you frightful booby!" he chuckled, though it was a hollow chuckle. "Had enough already? Why, you've only smoked one and a half; I've smoked two, and this is my third! My hat! I do believe you're dashed ill—going to be sick!"

Watson gave his chum a sharp, suspicious look.

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"THE GEM"

IS THE PAPER TO ASK FOR.



"You needn't laugh, Piggott!" he gasped. "You don't look so jolly fresh yourself. My hat! It's making you ill, too!"

"Rot!" Piggott laughed feebly. "Still, I think I'll chuck up after this fog. I want to make 'em last, see!"

"I—I've had enough!" gurgled Watson, with a shudder. "Oh, dear! Oh-er! I do feel bad! I wish I hadn't touched the rotten things! Groooh! I—I say, I think I'll get—oh-er!—back to school!"

He staggered to his feet and almost staggered to the gap in the hedge.

"I'm finishing this fag first," said Piggott, anxious to show his superiority. "You're a funk and a booby, Watty! My hat, you should just see me when I'm with Racke, and— Why, what's the matter?"

"Someone coming!" panted Watson, who had just given a startled exclamation. "Oh dear! It's Farmer Thake and his brute of a son! And there's a farm-hand behind them with a cart! Quick!"

Like Watson, Piggott abruptly forgot his qualms and seediness. Farmer Thake was a crusty, unpleasant individual by no means amiably disposed to St. Jim's fellows. If they were caught—

Forgetting the box of cigarettes in his lap, Piggott leaped to his feet, dropping the cigarette he was smoking as he did so.

The cigarettes were scattered from the chocolate-box, but Piggott ignored them and joined his chum.

A single glance showed him that the danger was only too real. Two burly figures were approaching the stack along a cart-track in the next field, and both carried hayforks. Behind them came a horse and cart led by a farm-hand.

It was enough for Piggott.

"Bunk!" he hissed. "Oh, great pip! This way, you awful ass!"

He dashed alongside the stack and dived through a gap in the far hedge, and Watson staggered after him almost drunkenly. Piggott did not give the cigarettes another glance—indeed, he had forgotten them; and, in any case, he was feeling that he never wanted another smoke as long as he lived.

Both guilty fags vanished.

They had hardly gone when an elegant form appeared suddenly in the gap in the other hedge facing the field path across the meadows.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, spotless as usual, his silk hat gleaming in the sunshine, and he was panting.

He looked round him rather blankly.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured, adjusting his eyeglass more firmly. "I felt quite certain I spotted two fags just heah a moment ago! This is vewy remarkable!"

And Arthur Augustus walked round the stack to the other side, quite failing to see the scattered cigarettes, or the thin trail of smoke rising from the half-burnt cigarette Piggott had dropped.

Had he only seen that, Gussy would probably have been able to prevent the trouble that followed.

But he didn't—it was not those fags he was looking for! While hurrying along the field path Arthur Augustus had, quite by chance, happened to get a glimpse of the pair of scamps in the gap of the hedge.

It was just like Gussy to chip in. In his usual good-natured—and somewhat high-handed—way, he had rushed to the spot to order the fags away. And St. Jim's fellows trespassing on Farmer Thake's land would be booked for very serious trouble.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, still breathing hard from his run across the field. "I was quite suah I spotted two weckless youngstahs— Bai Jove! There they are! The young wascals must have seen me comin'! Yaas, wathah!"

But Arthur Augustus was wrong there—as he was to discover soon enough. He had reached the farther hedge, and now he could see the forms of the two fags hurrying across the next field towards the field path.

He recognised them easily enough. Piggott was running steadily, but his companion was yards behind him, and staggering as he ran.

"Bai Jove!" went on Arthur Augustus. "I wondah what the young scamps have been up to? Young Piggott is wathah an unpleasant little beast, and I shouldn't be surprised if— Oh cwumbs!"

It was just then Arthur Augustus sighted Farmer Thake and his son.

He heard a gate creak, and the next moment the farmer and his burly son tramped into the field scarcely half a dozen yards away from where he stood.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Gussy.

He turned to fly—too late!

In a couple of bounds Thake junior had left the gate, and the next moment his heavy grasp closed on the startled junior.

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"Got you!" he grinned. "No use struggling, kid—I got you! It's one of them blamed skool kids agen, feyther!"

Thake senior frowned as he came up. He regarded the hapless and unfortunate Arthur Augustus grimly.

"Trespassing agen, you young rascal!" he snorted. "I'm gettin' tired of this sort of thing! Ain't I 'ad enough trouble with your 'eadmaster about trespassing—hey?"

"Weally, sir—"

Arthur Augustus was interrupted—suddenly and in a startling manner.

The farm-hand, leaving the horse and cart in the next field, came through the gate just then. As he did so, he stopped dead in his tracks, with a startled yell.

"Hi! By hokey, Mister Thake, the bloomin' stack's afire!"

"What? What's that, Heely? What— By James!"

The farmer saw it then—or, rather, heard it—a smothered, crackling sound from beyond the stack. The next moment a billow of smoke shot above the stack amid a smother of sparks.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"By jingo!"

Father and son rushed round the stack, and they both yelled furiously as they did so. In great alarm, Arthur Augustus, instead of taking the opportunity to escape, followed them hastily.

What he saw made him jump.

The stack was on fire, indeed—that fatal half-burnt cigarette of Piggott's had done it.

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

"By James!" roared Farmer Thake. "Look lively, Jim! Look lively, Heely, darn you!" He turned furiously on Arthur Augustus. "This is your doin', you young scoundrel!" he bellowed, his red face redder than ever with rage. "Look at it!"

"Bai Jove! You are makin' a gweat mistake, my dear sir!"

"Am I?" roared the excited and justly angry farmer.

"What about them cigarettes? Look at 'em, blame you! By James, you'll suffer for this, you little 'ound!"

He made a savage rush at the junior. Whether he intended to brain him with the hayfork or just to capture him, the scared Arthur Augustus did not stay to discover.

He flew.

Unfortunately, he did not look where he was going.

In a desperate hurry, Gussy rushed to escape, heedless of direction. He made a dive for the hedge beyond which the fags had fled. But whereas the fags had crossed the ditch beyond it by a small plank bridge, Arthur Augustus was not so lucky.

Quite missing the narrow gap in his haste, the swell of the Fourth tore himself desperately through the sparse hedge. Too late, he realised that there was a ditch beyond, and too late he strove to pull up.

For a brief second he hovered on the brink, and in that second Farmer Thake caught him a hefty clump in the rear with the butt-end of his hayfork.

Whack!

Splash!

The ditch was wide and deep, and the water was horribly muddy and smelly. Arthur Augustus plunged into it with a muffled sort of howl.

The farmer left him alone then. He had already wasted enough time on Gussy—too much time, in Gussy's opinion!

He rushed back to help his son and his man—and his help was needed. The crackling was brisk now, and the whole stack was blazing, sending up clouds of flame-riven smoke skywards.

But Arthur Augustus did not even look back. He floundered about in the murky ditch for a moment, and then he got foothold and clambered out, panting and gasping.

Then he bolted for his life, with his drenched trousers flapping about his legs, and his soaked shoes squelching dismally.

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

Not until he had reached the safety of the field path did Arthur Augustus stop running. Then he dropped to a walk, and glanced behind him.

His startled eyes beheld smoke above the hedge in the distance—thick, billowy smoke, mingled with flying sparks.

"Oh, gweat Scott!" panted Gussy, in horror. "Those—those feahful young wuffians! They must have been smokin' there, and— Bai Jove! I am in a feahful state!"

The swell of St. Jim's almost wept as he surveyed the clothes that but a short time before had been the last word in elegance. He had left his hat behind him in the ditch, but his clothes were drenched and covered with mud. Mud had also splashed up into his aristocratic features, and, altogether, he looked—and felt—a sight.

It was just as he was looking himself over that Tom Merry & Co. came along. With them were four girls from

Spalding Hall School—Cousin Ethel, Doris Levison, Lady Peggy Brooke, and Miss Freda Curzon.

Arthur Augustus stood in utter dismay and blinked at them, his dearest wish just then was to sink through the earth and disappear.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he groaned.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry, as he caught sight of the apparition. "What tho—Why, it's Gussy!"

"It is Gussy!" almost yelled Blake. "I knew it was when I spotted him rushing across that field. Gussy, you awful ass, what have you been doing?"

"What's happened?" gasped Tom Merry.

But Arthur Augustus did not stay to explain—he turned tail, with a horrified gasp, and bolted through a hedge, with the titters of the girls and the yells of laughter from his chums ringing in his burning ears.

In his present horrid state Arthur Augustus did not feel equal to explaining—not with the girls there, at all events.

The hedge was thir and sparse, but Arthur Augustus did not stay to hide himself there. He rushed along on the inside until he found another gap, and then he emerged on the field path again and dashed on in the direction of St. Jim's.

It was the most awful bad luck to have barged into the girls just then, and he guessed his chums had brought them along to meet him. It was quite a thoughtful thing for Tom Merry and the rest to do, but Gussy wished from the bottom of his heart that they had not been quite so considerate.

But before he had reached St. Jim's Arthur Augustus had remembered something else of much greater seriousness than that humiliating experience.

What was going to happen now—to him? That he had been caught trespassing was bad enough. But, very obviously, the fire had been caused by someone smoking there, and that someone was undoubtedly Piggott or Watson, or both. But would the farmer believe him—Arthur Augustus—innocent of the crime? Would the authorities at St. Jim's believe him innocent? To clear himself Gussy would be obliged to give the shady, reckless fags away—a thing he shrunk from doing.

Small wonder that, as he hurried back to St. Jim's, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble face showed the worry and uneasiness he felt!

CHAPTER 6.

Settling Sefton!

"D'ARCY!"

Arthur Augustus halted and frowned. The swell of the Fourth had washed and changed, but he was far from being in his right state of mind as yet. He was still wratly, and his worry had increased rather than otherwise. He wondered how the fire had gone on, and he wondered what the outcome of it all would be. That there was trouble in store for someone, he was assured, for he was well aware that setting fire to a haystack was a very serious matter indeed. And as the haystack belonged to the unfriendly Farmer Thake, the matter was likely to end seriously for someone.

Certainly it was through no fault of his—at least, not directly. Still, the cigarettes were undoubtedly his. He had recognised the chocolate-box at once. And he had remembered that Piggott and Watson had suddenly appeared



"Hold up, Wally!" bawled Jack Blake, stepping out into the lane. Wally D'Arcy sighted the juniors, and slowed down a little. With a mischievous grin on his face he swerved in towards Blake, snatched the Fourth-Former's cap off, and then put on speed again, roaring with laughter. (See Chapter 2).

just as he was shoving the unwanted box into the dustbin.

Obviously, the two Third-Formers had seen him and recovered the cigarettes from the dustbin.

That he had been rather careless in the matter, Arthur Augustus could not help feeling. None the less, Piggott and Watson were responsible, and Arthur Augustus was more worried on their behalf than on his own.

In the beginning, it was all Wally's fault, of course. But for that young scapegrace's foolish trick, it wouldn't have happened at all. And where had young Wally got the cigarettes from?

Gussy was soon to know that.

It was Sefton of the Sixth who called to him as he came down from the dormitory.

Sefton was not popular with the juniors, and the noble Arthur Augustus disliked him intensely—hence his frown now.

"Well, Sefton?" he said coldly, as he halted.

"I want your confounded minor!" snapped the Sixth-Former. "Have you seen him anywhere?"

"I have not seen him since earlier on this afternoon!" said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "If you wish to see my minah—"

"I'm going to smash him!" said Sefton, who appeared to be in a terrific rage. "He's played a rotten trick on me! I'm going to flay him alive! I'll teach the young sweep to play his silly jokes on a Sixth-Form man! I sent him to the village for some cig—for something!" Sefton hurriedly corrected himself. "I'll give the little beast chocolates! I'll smash him!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Go and look for him!" snapped Sefton. "Tell him Knox wants him in my study at once. You hear?"

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Chocolates, you say? Gweat Scott! Has the young wascal taken you my chocolates, Sefton? Then those wotten cigawettes were for you."

"Eh? What cigarettes?" snapped Sefton, with a hasty glance about him. "Shut up, you young ass!"

"I uttably wefuse to be called a young ass by you, Sefton!" said Arthur Augustus haughtily. "Bai Jove! I see it all now! You sent my minah for cigawettes, you wottah!"

"Shut up!" hissed Sefton. "Mind—"

"I can see it is the twuth!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "How dare you send a fag for beastly cigawettes, Sefton? It is all your fault fowm beginnin' to end, you feafuhl wottah! I shoved the beastlay cigs in the dustbin, and—"

"What?" hissed Sefton, grabbing Arthur Augustus savagely by the coat collar. "You've thrown away my—my property, you little sweep?"

"I was not awaah they were your pwopahty, Sefton," said Gussy, with dignity. "My minah, eithah for a joke or by accident, took you my chocolates and bwrought your wretched cigs to me. I thwew them in the dustbin, and—"

"Oh, you did, did you?" gasped Sefton furiously. "Why, you—you—"

Smack, smack, smack, smack!

In a sudden burst of fury the Sixth-Former cuffed the astonished Arthur Augustus right and left with terrific vim. "Yawooooop!" roared Gussy.

He staggered back against the passage wall. Sefton stamped away, his eyes glittering with rage.

"Ow!" gasped the hapless Gussy. "Ow, ow! Yow! Oh, the frightful wuffian! The howwid bwute! Ow, ow!"

He tottered away to his own study, boiling over with wrath and indignation. It was not proving a happy afternoon for Arthur Augustus.

He had scarcely reached the study when the tramp of feet sounded, and Blake, followed by the rest of his chums, crowded into the study.

They were looking red and warm from exertion, and appeared to be blackened with smoke, whilst more than one of them had their clothes singed.

They gave their aristocratic chum grim looks.

"Well," snapped Blake, "what have you got to say for yourself, Gussy, you feafuhl idiot?"

"What's it all mean?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Smoking!" said Lowther, in a shocked voice. "Oh, Gussy! Never did I dream you could descend to this! Oh, Gussy!"

"Naughty boy!" said Digby severely. "Who would have thought it? And what a disgrace for this study!"

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"Chuck it, you fellows!" said Tom Merry. "This is no joking matter—not for Gussy, anyway. Gussy, you ass—"

"It's a jolly serious matter," said Blake, eying Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's crimson features wonderingly. "Gussy, you awful idiot! What's the meaning of it? D'you know that stack's burnt down—practically the whole lot! We spotted the fire just after you'd gone, and we left the girls and rushed to help. It's only just been put out."

"And the farmer knows it was you," said Tom Merry gravely. "He found the cigs, and he knows your name, Gussy. You're booked for trouble—heaps of it."

All the juniors were serious now, and they eyed the hapless Arthur Augustus fixedly and curiously. They could scarcely believe that Arthur Augustus had been smoking. None the less the evidence was there. The farmer had caught Gussy on the spot just as the fire broke out, and they themselves had seen some of the cigarettes.

"Old Thake's raving!" said Blake. "He's keeping the box that held the fags, and he's going to the Head to report your name, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus spoke then.

"I cannot help that," he said frigidly. "If you fellows hadn't gone without me, this would nevah have happened, you wottahs."

"Well, my hat!"

"Where did you get the cigs from, Gussy?" demanded Blake. "We saw Wally with some—"

"I wefuse to answah that question, Blake!" snorted Gussy. "I wefuse to discuss the wotten affair with you fellows at all. In any case, I have no time now to do so. I am just going to thwash that uttah wuffian, Sefton!"

"You—you're whatter?" yelled Blake.

"I'm going to thwash Sefton, I said!" almost shouted Arthur Augustus in great wrath. "I have had my head cuffed—I have been subjected to the indignity of having my yabs boxed by that howwid bwute. I wefuse to submit to such a wotten insult."

And Arthur Augustus started for the door, his noble eye gleaming with the light of battle.

Blake jumped forward and grabbed him.

"You silly owl!" he hooted. "Sefton's a Sixth-Form man! Are you off your nut, Gussy?"

"I am goin' to thwash Sefton! I wefuse—"

"But you couldn't thrash one of his cars!" hooted Blake. "You'll get slaughtered! You'll get smashed to mince-meat, you footling dummy!"

"I wefuse to be called a footling dummay, Jack Blake!"

"But—but—"

"Wats!"

"Here, come back, you born idiot!"

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"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus marched out, with his aristocratic nose in the air, and turning back his cuffs as he went. Obviously the swell of the Fourth meant business.

Blake fairly stuttered.

"The awful ass!" he gasped. "That brute Sefton will put him through it if Gussy starts cheeking him. What on earth—"

"There's something behind this business!" snapped Tom Merry. "I bet Sefton's got something to do with it. I say! We can't let old Gussy get slaughtered, ass as he is!"

"Rather not!" said Herries. "Let's go after the idiot!"

"Yes, rather!"

Blake had already flung open the door, which Gussy had banged after him, and the next moment Tom Merry & Co. were hurrying after Arthur Augustus. Sefton of the Sixth was a bully of the first water, and it was no joke to get "up against" him. Certainly the noble and warlike Gussy was booked for a rough time if he attempted to put his threat to "thwash" the Sixth-Former into execution.

CHAPTER 7.

Rescued!

SEFTON went back to his study after leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, feeling, like the prophet of old, that he did well to be angry. To be played such a trick by a snivelling fag made the lofty senior seethe. Moreover, he felt humiliated.

Sefton was giving a little party in his study that afternoon. Knox of the Sixth was there, and so were Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger of the Fifth. It was a nice little party, and they were all birds of a feather.

They were regarded as shady outsiders among the juniors at St. Jim's. But Sefton & Co. looked upon themselves as fellows who knew their way about, and who were great "bloods." Over tea, certain matters were discussed by the little party that were not taught at St. Jim's either on the playing-fields or in the Form-rooms. The Head of St. Jim's would have been very surprised—and very shocked—could he have heard that little discussion. Dr. Holmes did not dream that certain seniors under his guardianship had such a remarkable knowledge of "gee-gees" and starting-prices.

But Dr. Holmes did not know everything—fortunately for the shady black sheep.

The discussion still went on when tea ended, and then Sefton brought out the parcel—and discovered the trick Wally had played.

Naturally, he was enraged and humiliated. The grins of his companions did not improve his temper at all. To offer his fellow-bloods chocolates when they expected cigarettes was not to be thought of. Unfortunately, Knox & Co. had seen him open the box, and they had not tried to hide their grins.

In a towering rage, Sefton had flung the box of chocolates into the fireplace and gone off in search of the practical joker.

Knox and the others eyed him smilingly as he returned to the study.

"Well, did you find the kid?" asked Knox, with a grin.

"No, I didn't!" snapped Sefton. "I'll smash him when I do! I'll teach the little sweep to play tricks like this on me!"

"You were a fool to trust him," said Knox. "Look well if the young sweep let the cat out of the bag!"

"How did I know the cheeky young cad would open the box?" snarled Sefton. "I told Meeker to wrap it up and not mention what was in it. I've just heard what happened to the dashed fags, though!"

"Well?" said Knox, in some anxiety.

"That young sweep was sent for some chocolates by his major, it seems," gritted Sefton. "He changed the things—sent his major the cigs and us the chocolates! And his confounded major chuckled the fags in the dustbin!"

"Phew! It might have been worse, though. Does his major know whom they belonged to?"

"He does now!" snapped Sefton. "I—I'm a bit worried about it, you men! If either of them should split—"

He paused as a knock came to the door. It opened to reveal Arthur Augustus.

The swell of the Fourth had marched into the study before he became aware that Sefton was not alone. But it was not like the noble Gussy to back out when once he had put his hand to the plough. He hesitated a moment, and then he slammed the door behind him.

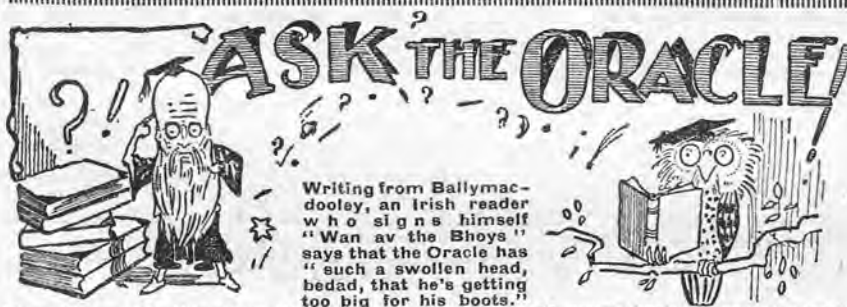
"Well, you cheeky young sweep!" gasped Sefton. "Here, get out of this! Why, I'll—"

"I uttably wefuse to go out until I have done what I came to do, Sefton," said Arthur Augustus, calmly and icily. "I have come to thwash you as you deserve, you wottah!"

"Wha-what?" stuttered Sefton.
 "Oh gad!" gasped Knox.
 "Must be potty!" remarked Cutts, with a chuckle.
 "You—you've come to thrash me?" gurgled Sefton.
 "Good gad! Am I dreaming this?"
 "I repeat that I have come here to thrash you, Sefton," said Arthur Augustus sternly. "Not onlay have you twicked my minah into bweaking the wules of this school by sending him for wotten cigawettes, but you have boxed my yahs! I am awah that you are a Sixth Form man. Nevahtheless, I am wpreared to do my level best to thrash some measure of deceny into you, you howwid wottah!"
 "Oh gad!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger roared with laughter. Knox was eyeing Gussy somewhat uneasily. The cad of the Sixth was afraid of trouble—afraid that trouble might bring to light too much regarding the cigarettes. Sefton himself was looking thunderstruck.
 "You—you frightful little cad!" he stuttered at last.
 "Are you potty, or what? If you're not out of this study in two ticks I'll fling you out neck and crop!"
 "Get out, D'Arcy, you young fool!" snapped Knox angrily. "Get out while you're safe!"

"I uttally wefuse to get out until I have accomplished my purpose, which is to thrash Sefton," said Arthur Augustus, putting the finishing touches to his cuffs and carefully pocketing his monocle. "If Sefton is afraid of me—"
 "Afraid?" yelled Sefton. "Oh, you—you—Why, I'll—I'll tan your hide until you can't stand, you born idiot!"
 And he made a rush at the determined Arthur Augustus, who promptly hit him full on the nose.
 It was a totally unexpected blow, and Sefton bellowed and staggered back. Then he rushed again upon the warlike junior, and this time Gussy got no chance to do any more hitting.
 In the senior's powerful grasp he was whirled over on to a chair with a crash. Then Sefton, his eyes glittering with fury, pinned him down, despite his waving fists and kicking legs.
 "Hand me that fives bat, one of you!" spluttered the Sixth-Former.
 Knox made no move, but Gerald Cutts did. The Fifth-Former had a few scores to settle with Arthur Augustus. He grinned, and handed Sefton the fives bat.
 "Let him have it—hot and strong!" he advised.

(Continued on next page.)



Writing from Ballymac-doooley, an Irish reader who signs himself "Wan av the Bhoys" says that the Oracle has "such a swollen head, bebad, that he's getting too big for his boots."

The editor warns this chum that his cheek has got the old man's back up, and if there's any more of it, our whiskery fossil intends putting his foot down with a firm hand!

Q. What are the Towers of Silence?

A. Buildings in Bombay and elsewhere where the dead of that sect known as the Parsees are exposed for destruction by vultures. The Parsees are of Persian origin and are followers of the prophet Zoroaster, who taught that bodies must be disposed of in this manner. The Mohammedans believe in burial and the Hindus in cremation by fire.

Q. What is the most famous amateur Association football club in England?

A. The Corinthians.

Q. What is a trichinopoli?

A. An Indian cheroot, Sam Collins, so-called from the place of that name. About eighty years ago, when I was a boy, I had one given to me by an old soldier during a steamboat excursion. Prior to going on the water I had had a satisfying meal of cockles, hardbake, oel pie, chocolate creams and ginger-beer; the sea was choppy; and that trichinopoli put the lid on it all, so to speak! My dizzy aunts!

Q. Can chickens get the pip?

A. This astounding question has been sent in by a lad who signs himself "Townie" and who had been working on a farm. At first I thought he was trying a leg-pull—there are many would-be comedians among GEM readers—but I discovered that he was perfectly serious and supplied the correct answer to his own query. Chickens and other poultry do

sometimes get the pip, which is an affliction of the throat and tongue.

Q. What cats have no tails?

A. The Manx variety. No less than three chums sent in this query, and another, trying to be funny, has asked me if I would send to the Isle of Man and get him the hair out of a Manx cat's tail for luck.



No, this cat hasn't lost its tail through the reckless driving of a road-hog—because it's a Manx cat, which doesn't have a "rudder."

Q. Who invented "plus fours"?

A. A puzzled reader who signs himself "Would-be Tailor" says he has been making inquiries on this sinister subject, and has heard variously that it was King John, Crippen and Guido Fawkes. Which of these three, if any of them, are to blame? I do not think we should be uncharitable and attach the blame to anyone without more definite proof than you have been able to collect, my chum. Not knowing myself, I made inquiries of our sub-editor, who recently staggered the office and stopped the traffic in Farringdon Street with a pair of these enormities in delicate shades of mauve, green and brown. He said "he hadn't the foggiest idea." But we've known that about him for a long time. All I can tell you, my aspiring chum, is that "plus four" is a golfing

term used in connection with the handicap of players. A plus four golfer is an expert—the last giddy word in golf—and I suppose the amazing baggy garments referred to, are the limit in sartorial wear!

Q. What is a papoose?

A. A young child of the North American Indians, Cecil Maine, of Clacton. I should have thought though that you would have heard the term "squaw," derived from the native word "sqa," and that means a woman.

Q. Who said that "Slumber is more sweet than toil"?

A. Tennyson in "The Lotus Eaters." This is the office boy's favourite poetical quotation.

Q. What is a fairlead?

A. This is a nautical term, Sid MacMurray, of Birmingham. It is to be found on the deck of a ship in the form of any ring, bolt, eye or loop which can be used to guide a rope in the direction desired. Sometimes a sailor will refer to it as a "chuck."

Q. What famous ship was called "The Packet of Woodbines"?

A. The Russian cruiser Askold, which was with the Allied Fleet in the Dardanelles during the Great War. It was so-called by our Tommies and Jacks because it had five funnels—and five cigarettes are given in a packet of Woodbines.



To be found on sailing ships—a fairlead. This is a wooden eye or loop through which rope is passed and guided in a certain direction.

Q. Are there any motor-coaches fitted with sleeping berths?

A. Rather, Mike O'Connor, of Belfast! We have plenty of these now in England, and there may be some in Ireland for all I know. In the United States they are a good step ahead of us still in respect of this type of road traffic. Some of their motor-coaches are not only fitted with sleeping berths but also with kitchens, bath-rooms and wireless sets. I suppose the day will yet come when they will be fitting the giddy charabanes with swimming baths and billiard rooms as well!

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A building in Bombay, and other parts of India, wherein the dead Parsees are interred.

Only too willing to oblige, Sefton got to work with a will the next moment.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

The bat rose and fell with terrific vigour. It was certainly not Gussy's lucky day. He howled fiendishly.

"Yawwoooop! Leggo! Oh, bai Jove! Yoop! Leggo, you fearful wuffian! I am goin' to—yow!—thwash you! Yoop!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Sefton was a born bully, and he was not in the mood to be gentle now. For just how long he could have yielded the fives bat before tiring, however, is a matter for conjecture, for at that moment there came a sudden interruption. Without warning, the door of the study was flung open and Tom Merry & Co. rushed in. Gussy's yells had been enough for them. Gerald Knox leaped to his feet in alarm and anger.

"Here, get out!" he snapped. "What the thunder—"

"We'll get out quickly enough!" snapped Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming as he took in the scene. "But D'Arcy goes with us! Stop that, Sefton!"

Sefton stopped it, almost petrified at receiving such an order from a junior.

"Why, you—you impudent little worms—" he began.

"You won't touch D'Arcy again, Sefton!" snapped Tom grimly, careless of the presence of a prefect. "It's partly because of that errand you sent his minor on that D'Arcy's here now. If you don't want that matter to come out, Sefton, you'd better not have any more trouble here. But we're ready to give it you if you want it, senior or no senior!"

Sefton breathed hard. But he lowered the fives bat.

"What the dickens do you mean, Merry?" he blustered.

"You know what I mean!" said Tom calmly, his lip curling. "You sent a fag to the village for some cigarettes, Sefton. It was a rotten thing to do. If the beaks knew you'd get it hot, and you know it! And the beaks soon will know it if you don't let D'Arcy go now! That's a tip!"

Sefton bit his lip. He knew only too well what the consequences would be if word of D'Arcy minor's errand came to the ears of the authorities. Knox knew it, too, and he gave his fellow-senior a warning glance. But Knox said nothing. He was a prefect, but he did not intend to interfere in this if he could help it. It was Sefton's own funeral, and Knox wasn't going to be dragged into it.

"Sling the little worms out!" snapped Cutts, astonished at Sefton's hesitation. "Dash it all, they can prove nothing, and your word will be taken before theirs! Here, I'll boot the young fiends out—"

"Shut up, Cutts!" hissed Sefton, his eyes blazing with baffled fury. "D'Arcy, get out of this! You other kids get out, too—sharp!"

"Ow!" gasped Arthur Augustus. He was hurt, but he was far from being subdued. "Ow—ow! I uttably wufuse to get out until I have done my best to thwash you for sendin' my minah on such an ewward, and for boxin' my yabs! Put your wotten fists up— Bai Jove! Welease me, Blake! Welease me, Tom Mewwy!"

"Kim on!" snapped Blake. "Out you go!"

And, protesting wrathfully, Arthur Augustus went. He had no choice in the matter. Six pairs of hands grasped him, and he was fairly pitched out by his exasperated chums. Often enough did Arthur Augustus mount on his high horse. But this was one of the occasions when his fond pals brought him off it with a bump.

Despite his struggles, he was rushed away along the passage and up the stairs at a breathless rate. Almost before he knew it he found himself in his study and dumped into the armchair.

For the next few moments there was trouble in Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus was angry, and, like Sefton, he felt he did well to be angry. It needed all the help of the Terrible Three, in fact, to prevent the enraged swell of the Fourth from rushing out to proceed with his determination to thrash Sefton of the Sixth.

But Gussy tired at last, and when he had given his word not to go looking for any more trouble, his fond and worried chums released him, and the Terrible Three went along to their own study for tea.

Tea in Study No. 6 was not a happy meal that afternoon. The anticipated walk with the Spalding Hall girls had been a frost, and by the look of things there was serious trouble for one member of the chums of the School House at least!

CHAPTER 8.

No Luck for Gussy!

"NOW, do be sensible, Gussy!"

Tea was over in Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus had not had any tea. All his chums' attempts at persuasion had been useless. While his chums sat at the table and fed, the swell of the

Fourth remained in the armchair and glowered, refusing to discuss the matter that was worrying them all.

Blake did not know what to make of it. That Gussy had been smoking by the haystack, and had caused the trouble, he could scarcely credit. Gussy was the last fellow in St. Jim's he would have expected to take up the habits of dingy rotters like Racke & Co.

Yet he had been caught on the spot a few seconds after the fire had broken out. And cigarettes were found there. They themselves had seen dozens of them trodden underfoot, and they had seen Arthur Augustus running away from the spot.

To make matters worse, Arthur Augustus had not yet denied that he had been smoking—not to them, at all events. He had loftily refused to discuss the matter. Possibly that was because they had chipped him, and also because he was in a fearful "wax."

On the whole, Blake could not credit it.

But a theory was taking shape in his mind. Gussy's chums had seen nothing of Piggott and Watson, who had escaped across the meadows and through the woods. Those two guilty experimenters in blackguardism never entered their minds at all. Blake remembered young Wally and the box of cigarettes, however. Had the young rascal and his chums kept them instead of taking them along to Sefton of the Sixth? And had the young idiots been smoking at the stack and been cleared off by Gussy? It was a possible, though not very probable, theory, for the young scamps might afterwards have cleared, leaving Gussy to face the music.

Certainly the box they had seen at the stack was a chocolate box. But that was just a trick a fag might be expected to do—to smuggle the cigarettes out in a chocolate box.

"Now, do be sensible, Gussy!" repeated Blake, as Arthur Augustus did not reply. "Dash it all, tell your old pals what it means! We only want to help you, you fooling ass! If there's trouble, we want to stand by you."

"That's the idea!" said Herries. "Don't act the goat, Gussy! If you were such an ass as to smoke in such a place—"

"I did not smoke, Hewwies, you cheekay wottah!" hooted Arthur Augustus. "I have nevah smoked, and I wufuse to discuss the mattah. I must ask you fellows to mind your own wotten affairs!"

"Oh, good!"

"Thank goodness!"

It was a point-blank denial at last.

Gussy had not smoked. He was not the guilty party at all! They had scarcely credited it, even though the evidence had seemed high conclusive. But now Arthur Augustus had denied it, and his chums felt greatly relieved.

"Well, now we know where we stand," said Blake. "I fancy I can guess the rest. Young Wally boned Sefton's cigarettes to pay the rotter out. And you caught him and his pals smoking at the haystack, what?"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus jumped. "Bai Jove! Wubbish!" he said indignantly. "Uttah wubbish!"

"Oh, my hat! Then what on earth— Were those Sefton's cigarettes?" gasped Blake. "Is that why Sefton was so ratty? And was—"

"I uttably wufuse to discuss this mattah with you!" said Arthur Augustus. "I considah you wottahs are to blame as much as anyone! Had you not gone off without me, this w'etched business would nevah have happened at all. And you have made me look a feahful idiot befoah those gals!"

"But look here, you ass—"

"I wufuse to be called an ass, Blake!"

"Yes, but—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus got to his feet and made for the door.

"Here, where are you going, Gussy? You're not going to see that brute Sefton—"

"I have already given you my word in wegard to that, Jack Blake!"

And, with that crushing retort, the swell of the Fourth went out. Arthur Augustus was again on his high horse.

But he did not go along to Sefton's study. Now he had had time to reflect upon the matter even Arthur Augustus was beginning to have his doubts about being able to thrash Sefton of the Sixth. In fact, Arthur Augustus could not help feeling rather relieved that his fond pals had taken it upon themselves to interfere. Even the courage of a lion was not sufficient to enable a Fourth-Former to thrash a burly Sixth-Former.

But something had to be done.

At any moment Farmer Thake might arrive at St. Jim's. Then the band would begin to play in real earnest!

Not that Arthur Augustus, having a clear conscience, had any fear for himself. Yet he hated the thought of having to give the two culprits—Piggott and Watson—away. Moreover, there was Wally to be thought of. That Gussy was angry with his chums was not the only reason he had refrained from telling them the full story. He felt that the

less said about Wally the better. It was Wally's foolish joke that had caused the trouble in the first place.

Arthur Augustus made his way to the Third Form quarters—not to see Wally & Co., but to interview Piggott and Watson. He would advise those dingy young scamps to confess at once before Farmer Thake visited the school—as he most certainly would.

He found a noisy crowd in the faggery—an exciting chariot race was in progress, amid an uproar of yells and laughter. Two upturned forms were the chariots, in each of which was a crew of two, and they were being whirled along the dusty Form-room floor in a mad race by fags who were pulling in front and pushing behind.

In one chariot were Wally D'Arcy and Hobbs, and in the other were Reggie Manners and Curly Gibson.

The fags were enjoying themselves in their own peculiar fashion. The din was terrific.

Arthur Augustus didn't discover what was on until he was well into the room. He discovered it too late.

He walked right into the track of the speeding chariots.

There was a sudden howl.

"Look out, there!"

"Out of the way, you ass!"

Crash, crash!

"Yawooooop!" howled Arthur Augustus, as the nearest form struck his legs. "Oh, bai— Yoooooop!"

The swell of the Fourth's words were cut off abruptly as he sat down with a bump.

Wally D'Arcy stared at his major in surprise.

"Well, my hat!" he exclaimed. "What on earth are you doing down there, Gus?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the fags.

"Trust old Gus to chip in where he isn't wanted!" said Wally. "I suppose it was Gus we ran into!"

"You—you—" choked Gussy.

"Mucked up the race!" snorted Wally. "Just like him! Can't help playing kid games like this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Gus?" demanded Wally warmly. "Haven't you the decency to apologise for your rotten conduct in mucking up our race?"

"You—you careless young wuffians!" gasped Arthur Augustus, staggering to his feet. "I am vewy much hurt!"

"Go hon! What the thump have you come here for, anyway?" said Wally. "Want me, old nut?"

"I did not come heah to see you, Wally!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "But now I am heah I intend to administrah a sound thwashin' to you. I intended to chastise you veehahly for that wotten twick you played on me this aftahnoon."

"Eh? What trick?" asked Wally, with a chuckle. "After my bringing you such a nice box of choes, too? Oh, Gussy! I say, did Freda like the choes?"

"You—you—"

"Did she fall on your neck and kiss you?" inquired Wally. "Is everything fixed up now, Gus? When is the wedding coming off? Have you written to tell the pater?"

Arthur Augustus did not answer those delicate and decidedly personal questions. Instead, he made a rush at the humorous Wally.

Before Wally was aware of the fact he had the fag across his knees; then he raised his hand to smite.

But that was as far as Gussy got in the process of chastising his minor.

The proceeding should have been easy enough. Wally deserved to be chastised. Gussy intended that it should be a severe chastisement, as an example to Wally and to his fellow-fags.

But it wasn't easy; for Wally was not willing to be chastised by his elder brother, much as he deserved it. With a sudden, unexpected wriggle, Wally freed himself, and then he slipped a foot behind Gussy's leg and pushed.

Crash!

"Yawooooop!"

Arthur Augustus' legs went up, and the rest of him went down, with a bump and a howl.

"Back up, you men!" called Wally. "We can't have our majors getting their ears up like this. We must make an example of Gus. Why, we'll be having Manners major and a whole crowd of majors coming here flinging their weight about unless we make an example!"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

There was a rush to back up Wally. Arthur Augustus was grabbed in many grubby hands and hoisted across a form, under Wally's stern orders. Then Wally armed himself with the fire-shovel and got to work to make an example of his major.

Whack, whack, whack!

The fire-shovel came down vigorously on Gussy's tight trousers, and the swell of the Fourth yelled fiendishly.

"There!" said Wally, bringing the chastisement to an end at last. "Let that be a lesson to you, Gus! Try to remember that Third Form men are entitled to their enjoyment without outsiders chipping in! Sling him out, chaps!"

And a couple of seconds later Arthur Augustus, in a state of mind bordering on frenzy, found himself seated outside the Third Form-room on the cold linoleum facing the locked door.

"Ow-ow!" he gurgled. "Oh, the fearful young wuffians! Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

And, staggering to his feet, Arthur Augustus hobbled away—sadder if not wiser. His visit had been in vain. The well-meaning Gussy had not even had time to look for Piggott and Watson, much less been given an opportunity of imparting his wise advice.

CHAPTER 9.

Tom Merry's Idea!

TOM MERRY looked in at Study No. 6 after tea was over. Like Gussy and the rest of his chums, Tom was worried. Arthur Augustus, angry as he was, did not seem to see the real gravity of the situation. Only a few trusses of hay had been saved from the stack—indeed, it was only by strenuous efforts of the fire-fighters that the flames had been prevented from spreading along the hedges.

Tom Merry knew the damage was not slight, and that someone would have to foot the bill, and that that someone would also get into a serious row over it.

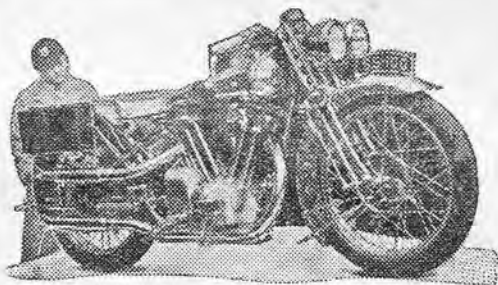
That Arthur Augustus himself had been smoking Tom would not believe. But he had come to the same conclusion as Blake—that Gussy's minor was responsible.

He knew the reckless young rascal only too well. Certainly smoking was not in Wally's line at all. None the less, he had seen the Third-Former with the box of cigarettes. Wally was wild with Sefton for sending him on such an errand, and it was quite on the cards the young scamp would not deliver the box up to the Sixth-Former.

Had he kept them? Had he and his reckless chums fallen to the sudden temptation to test the delights of smoking? The box he had seen by the stack was a chocolate-box, but the youngsters could easily have packed the cigarettes in the chocolate-box to disarm suspicion. Possibly they had even scoffed Gussy's chocolates, and this was the actual box.

The more Tom thought about it the more certain did he become that he was right.

(Continued on next page.)



SOME BIKE!

Something like a motor-cycle, isn't it? It's the famous Brough S.S.100. If you are interested in motor-cycles you will revel in the 1930 HOBBY ANNUAL, from which the above illustration is taken. Motor-cycling, woodwork, railways, model-making, fretwork, aeroplanes, wire-less, these are just a few subjects chosen at random from this better book for boys. You must have it—you'll treasure it for years.

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"Gussy not in?" remarked Tom, looking round the study. "No!" grunted Blake. "The awful ass is still in a huff! There's no doing anything with the born idiot!"

"I've been thinking things over," said Tom, entering the study and closing the door. "Look here, this business is no end serious! Gussy doesn't seem to realise it. But he's booked for a rude awakening unless something's done. Has he explained anything yet?"

"Nothing; except that he didn't smoke himself. But we were already pretty certain about that!"

Tom nodded. "He's shielding someone," he said. "And if I'm not jolly well mistaken it's young Wally! You remember those cigarettes?"

"That's just my belief," said Blake. "Though, now I come to think of it, Gussy said it was rubbish when I said it. Still, it's more likely than not—at least, Wally's chums may have done, if Wally himself didn't!"

"Why the thump doesn't Gussy explain?" snorted Herries. "He knows we'd back him up!"

"He may do when he cools down," said Digby sagely. "He's waxy with us now for going without him. Let him rip for a bit!"

"But the blessed farmer may be along at any minute," said Tom seriously. "Better for the chap who did it to own up, rather than have old Thake get his say in first. As things are, the evidence points to Gussy, and Gussy alone. It's a wonder Thake hasn't been here before this."

"Phew! That's so!" breathed Blake. "Although Gussy didn't do it, the evidence points to him, and, unless the real culprit is made to own up, he'll be charged, and perhaps sentenced."

"My hat, yes!"

"Where is the ass now?" demanded Tom.

"Goodness knows!" said Blake. "But it's no earthly good trying to make him explain yet. He's on his high horse, and nothing will drag him off until he wants to get off. The more you argue with Gussy the more obstinate he gets!"

"Well, we'll have to act on our own, then!" snapped Tom. "Seems to me the only thing to do is to stop old Thake coming here. We'll tell the old chap that the damage will be paid for, and ask him not to report Gussy."

"Some hopes!" growled Herries.

"Well, we can try it!" said Tom. "Young Wally must have done it, and Lord Eastwood will have to foot the bill. Who's game to go and have a talk to Thake—if it isn't too late?"

"I'll come!" said Blake, and the others nodded rather doubtfully.

"Do no harm, anyway," said Digby.

"He may set the dog on us," hinted Herries.

"We'll risk that," said Tom. "Come on, then!"

"Why not see young Wally first?" said Blake. "We may get the truth out of the young rascal!"

"Well, we could do that," assented Tom, frowning. "Just as well, too, in case Farmer Thake turns up before we can see him. The best thing the kid can do is to own up if he is guilty."

"Absolutely!"

All were in agreement about that. When they had left Farmer Thake that afternoon he was in a terrific rage—and his rage was not likely to improve with keeping. He had recognised Gussy, and he knew his name, and he had loudly stated his intention of forcing the Head to make an example of him in addition to making him pay for the damage. Much better for the Head to be prepared for his coming.

They went in a body to the faggery without further ado. Tom Merry kicked the door open, and they marched into the room.

As it happened, Arthur Augustus had not been gone many minutes, and the fags had unlocked the door. But they gave startled yells as they sighted the visitors. Naturally, they imagined Tom Merry & Co. had come to avenge their treatment of Arthur Augustus.

"Look out!" yelled Curly Gibson. "It's those Fourth and Shell chaps!"

"Back up!" called Wally cheerfully. "We'll handle that lot! Out with the cheeky rotters!"

"Yes, rather!"

"On the ball!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Look here, Wally, it's all serene—only a friendly visit, you young ass! We want—"

That was as far as Tom got. The startled fags did not think it was a friendly visit at all. They were used to swift reprisals after handling a fellow from another Form, and, quite naturally, they took it for granted it was a case of reprisals now.

They "backed up" Wally with a will as he made a rush at the Fourth and Shell juniors. Before Tom Merry & Co. realised what was happening they went down under a yelling swarm of excited fags.

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"Out they go!" bawled Wally. "Give 'em socks!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Wally, you young— Yarroooogh!"

A youthful fist smote Tom Merry's nose; not sufficiently hard to draw red, but hard enough to hurt, and Tom roared.

The next moment they were struggling desperately against the tide of fags.

Tom Merry & Co. pushed and cuffed, but their desperate efforts availed them little against such odds. There was a brief, whirling struggle inside the doorway, and then, one by one, the six juniors went whirling out, to fall in the passage in dishevelled heaps.



With the enraged farmer in pursuit, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tore a ditch beyond, and for a brief second he hovered on the brink. V. Gussy w.

"Now go home to your kennels!" bawled Wally triumphantly. "Yah! What price the Third now? Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The door slammed and the key clicked home in the lock. Tom Merry & Co. sat up and glared dizzily at the closed door of the faggery.

"Ow-ow-ow!" gasped Tom Merry. "The—the little fiends! This—yow!—comes of trying to do a fag a good turn! Ow-ow!"

Sadder, if not wiser, as in the case of Arthur Augustus a few minutes before, Tom Merry & Co. staggered to their feet and departed, rearranging their dishevelled attire as they went.

"Blessed if I know why they should have started on us like that!" groaned Blake. "We'll make the little rotters sit up for this another time, though."

"They must have thought we were on the warpath!" said Tom, with a rueful grin. "We'd better get off to Meadow Farm now. I'm blessed if I feel like trying to save Wally's bacon after this! But there's old Gussy to be thought of. We've got to save him, whether he wants us to or not!"

And though Blake and the rest were less keen than ever now on the visit to Farmer Thake, they did not refuse,

but contented themselves with a hearty grouse to relieve their feelings. Gussy had to be saved despite himself. Such a serious matter might easily end in expulsion for the guilty, and they were taking no chances where Gussy was concerned. In their opinion, Arthur Augustus was not capable of looking after himself, and, like loyal chums, they meant to look after him.



desperately through the hedge. Too late he realised that there was in that second Farmer Thake caught him with the hayfork. Splash!

(See Chapter 5.)

CHAPTER 10.

Gussy Gives His Word!

"FACT!" said Baggy Trimble. "I heard Lowther talking about it!"

The fat junior's little round eyes were goggling with excitement as he imparted his information to the little crowd of Fourth-Formers and Shell fellows in the Hall.

"Eavesdropping again—what?" said Cardew.

"Nothing of the kind!" snorted Trimble. "It's no secret, though Lowther didn't know I was just passing the study."

"Then your shoelace happened to come undone, so you stopped to tie it up—with your fat ear against the keyhole!" sniffed Sidney Clive. "Yes, we know all about it, old sport! Now run away and play!"

"But I tell you it's true!" hooted Trimble. "Everybody knows about the fire—heaps of chaps saw the stack burning!"

"Well, that's true enough, anyway!" said Dick Julian. "I saw it myself. As a matter of fact, I got there just after the fire was put out, and I heard the old farmer. He was raving and shouting about some St. Jim's fellow smoking there. But—"

"It wasn't old Gussy," grinned Levison. "Still, I heard something of the kind myself. Whoever it was, he's booked for trouble. Only a madman would smoke near a stack of hay."

"Well, that ass Gussy must have done!" grinned Trimble. "He, he, he! Fancy old Gussy smoking!"

"It is fancy—not fact!" said Talbot grimly. "I'll believe Gussy smokes when I see him at it—not before!"

And he strolled away, frowning rather uneasily. It was the second time he had heard the rumour since tea, and there was certainly some ground for the story. The fire at Meadow Farm had caused somewhat of a commotion. It being a half-holiday, all the fellows were out of doors, and a great number had rushed to see the fire.

Moreover, Talbot had heard the rumour that a St. Jim's fellow had been caught smoking behind the stack, and that it was his criminal carelessness that had caused the blaze.

But apparently Trimble knew more—he was now announcing the name of the fellow who had been caught.

"It's rot!" said Levison. "D'Arcy's back; I've seen him. If the chap was caught—"

"May be truth in it—you never know," said Cardew, yawning. "Matter of fact, I fancied old Gussy looked rather pipped, and I believe he came in drenched and smothered in mud. He'd been up to something. An' he wasn't with his pals; they came in much later, and I believe they were about the first at the fire—helped to put it out!"

"But—but Gussy wouldn't smoke—"

"My dear man, even the dutiful Gussy may kick over the jolly old traces," said Cardew. "I can't think of any other fellow ass enough to chuck a lighted fag among hay, anyway. I must say, bein' Gussy's dear cousin, I'm rather concerned about him. Looks as if he's started on the downward path to the bow-wow!"

And Cardew strolled away, though he certainly didn't look very concerned.

"There you are, you fellows!" squeaked Trimble excitedly. "Cardew believes it anyway."

"Oh, shut up!" said Levison. "You'd better make sure before you start setting that yarn about, you fat clam!"

"But it's true, I tell you!" howled Trimble. "D'Arcy was collared by the farmer, and he fell in a ditch when the giddy old brute chased him. I saw him come in. Smothered in mud, and looking an awful sight. It's a fact!"

"Phew!"

Trimble grinned as he noted the changing faces.

"He, he! Fancy old Gussy being such a goer!" he sniggered. "I know that rotter Racke sometimes smokes, and Knox of the Sixth, too; everybody knows it. And that awful beast Sefton does. I've seen him smoking myself. No good pulling faces at me, Julian. You'll jolly soon know it's a fact."

"Trimble, you ass—" hissed Levison.

"Don't you start, Levison!" grinned Trimble, quite ignorant of the fact that Sefton of the Sixth had come along and was just behind him. "As I say, I knew that brute Sefton smokes, the frightful bully! But it's a jolly surprise to know that old Gussy—"

Smack!

"Yarrooooooop!"

Trimble's howl was enough to waken the celebrated Seven Sleepers of old. It was a terrific slap from Sefton's flat hand and it sent the luckless Baggy staggering against the passage wall.

"So—so I'm a bullying brute, am I?" said Sefton, his eyes gleaming. "So I smoke, do I, you little snivelling worm!"

The Sixth-Former's face was tense, and his eyes scanned the juniors' faces. In view of what had happened that afternoon, Sefton could not help seeing a certain significance in Trimble's remarks.

"What was that you were saying just now, you fat fool?" he demanded, his voice showing his anxiety. "Were you talking about D'Arcy of the Fourth?"

"Ow-ow! Yow!"

"Answer me, Trimble!" snapped Sefton, glancing up and down the passage. "You—you were talking about fellows smoking—you mentioned D'Arcy's name!"

"Yow. I—I didn't!" wailed Trimble. "Yow! And I never said you smoked, Sefton—honour bright! I—I was just saying what a nice—nice fellow you were. So—so honourable and—and straight! Yow-ow!"

Sefton grabbed the fat junior and shook him.

"Out with it, or I'll tan your fat hide," he snarled.

"What's this about D'Arcy and smoking?"

"Yow! Nothing—nothing at all!" gasped Trimble. "I never even mentioned D'Arcy setting the stack on fire! I'm not a sneak, I hope! It must have been someone else smoking there!"

"Oh!"

Sefton gave a violent start. He had supposed, at first, that D'Arcy and his friends had been talking—had spread the news that he had sent a bag for cigarettes all over the school. In that case Sefton of the Sixth had a good need to be disturbed.

But now a new fear came to him. He had heard about the fire, and he had heard the rumour that a St. Jim's fellow had been caught there. The rumour had not disturbed him at all. Not for a moment had he imagined himself concerned.

Now, however, he began to fear that the affair might concern him. If D'Arcy was the culprit, and had been caught smoking there, then he might very easily be dragged into it. The authorities would most certainly want to know where a junior boy had obtained such a supply of cigarettes. On more than one occasion the Head had had trouble with the tobacconist in Rylcombe, over supplying St. Jim's fellows with cigarettes.

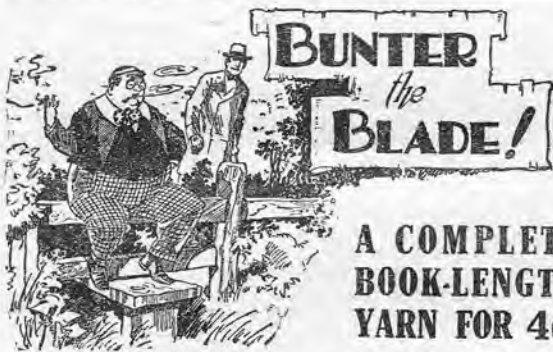
And the cigarettes were undoubtedly those D'Arcy minor had obtained for him. Sefton felt certain of it, now. Quite suddenly the Sixth-Former realised that he might easily become mixed up in the affair, with serious consequences.

With a sudden, savage movement, he sent the scared Baggy Trimble spinning away, and then he hurried along to Knox's study in the Sixth passage.

Knox was in, and he listened with growing alarm as Sefton told what he had heard.

"Good gad!" he said. "Looks as if that young fool's going to put you in the soup, Seffy. The Head will go off at the deep end when he knows a senior sent a bag for cigs! So young D'Arcy caused that fire. Phew! I wondered who the chap could be! I believe Kildare's got wind of it, too!"

"The Head will want to know where they came from!"



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said Sefton almost wildly. "Those little beasts are bound to own up. It'll come out they were mine, and then I'm for it!"

"Hard cheese!" said Knox. "But—but look here, old man, I'm not in this act, remember. I never knew you were getting cigs in, even! No good dragging others into it, is there?"

Apparently Gerald Knox was only concerned as regards his own position in the matter.

"You—you could back me up in swearing I never sent the kid!" stammered Sefton. "You were there—they're bound to say you ordered young D'Arcy to go—and you know you did. But if you swear you didn't, our word will weigh against theirs."

"Certain to!" said Knox, though he was looking very uneasy. "It's nothing to get the wind up about, Seffy. Still, I think I should tackle D'Arcy about it! Get him to promise he won't say anything. He's a quixotic young fool, and he won't go back on his word."

"I'll try it!" said Sefton.

"If that doesn't come off we'll have to swear we know nothing about the business!"

"Right! I'll go and see the young fool now," said Sefton.

He hurried along to the Fourth passage, his face still showing his anxiety. He bitterly regretted now having trusted a youngster like D'Arcy minor with such a job.

If he had only waited until Piggott, his own fag, had turned up. Piggott had been on that same errand often enough, and there had been no trouble.

Study No. 6 was empty when he reached it, but just as he was turning away, Arthur Augustus came along the passage. He had been to change once again after his luckless adventures in the Third Form-room.

Sefton stood aside, and then followed him into the room.

Arthur Augustus was a trifle alarmed.

"Bai Jove! If you have come heah for twouble, Sefton—" he began.

"Nothing of the kind, kid!" said Sefton, drawing a deep breath and trying to speak genially. "The—the fact is I've come about this afternoon's affair—I mean about sending your young brother for those cigs."

"Oh, indeed!" said Gussy coldly.

"It was rather a silly thing to do," said Sefton. "I see that now. Of course I've never done such a thing before, and now I see how rotten it was, I shan't again, D'Arcy. The—the fact is, I'm dashed sorry about it, kid. You might tell your brother that it's all serene—I'm not thinking of licking him for losing them. I—I suppose he did lose them, must have done."

"No, he did not lose them, Sefton!" said Arthur Augustus, his lip curling as he saw through Sefton's hypocrisy. "You are very well aware that he did not lose them! He changed them for my chocolates as you know well enough!"

"But—but where are they now!" asked Sefton, holding his breath.

"They—I wefuse to answah that question, Sefton," said Arthur Augustus icily. "In any case I am suah you know, and I think I can guess why you are heah!"

"I don't understand you," said Sefton, biting his lip. "Well, I've apologised, and I can't do more than that, kid! If you still bear malice I'm sorry, that's all!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, quite sorry now that he had been so suspicious. "I wegwet if I have misjudged your motives, Sefton, deah boy! Howevah, I accept your apology, and I will give my minah your message."

"Good kid!" said Sefton. "Well, we'll say no more about it. As for the cigs—I'm chucking up smoking, and I shan't need the rotten things."

He nodded and moved to the door. Arthur Augustus felt quite ashamed of his base suspicions. He had imagined Sefton had heard about the fire, and had come to ask him to keep his mouth shut regarding the cigarettes. But even as the noble Gussy felt the thrill of shame, Sefton turned back.

"By the way, kid!" he said carelessly. "No need to talk about those fags, of course! It would hardly do to let the beaks know about a Sixth Form man smoking! I suppose I can rely on you not to mention the affair to anyone?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Won't make any difference to you, kid," said Sefton, his eyes showing his acute anxiety. "Save a lot of trouble, perhaps. I take it you'll not spread it round. I know you're a decent kid, and above tittle-tattling!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus stared at the senior haughtily and disdainfully. He had been right, after all.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, his lip curling again. "I knew that was what you were aftah, Sefton, you feahful wottah! You have heard about the fire at Meadow Farm, and you are atwaid those cigawettes will be twaced to you! You want my word to save your own wotten skin, Sefton!"

Sefton's eyes glittered and he fairly writhed at the scorn and contempt in Gussy's face. For the moment he looked

as if he would spring upon the junior, but he managed to control himself with an effort.

"I—I don't understand you, D'Arcy!" he gasped. "You say—"

"You do undahstand me, and you are telling whoppahs, Sefton!" said Gussy with scorn. "Howevah, you have no need to feah, you wottah. I am not a sneak, and I shall not bwing you into the mattah at all."

"You—you mean that!" said Sefton, breathing hard. "I have given you my word!" said Gussy with great dignity. "That should be enough! And I wefuse now to discuss the mattah further with you, Sefton! I considah you a feahful outsiders!"

And with that crushing opinion, Arthur Augustus brushed past the Sixth-Former and marched out of the study. Sefton's eyes blazed and his face was red with shame and fury. He stepped out of the study and made as if to overtake the junior. But he restrained himself, and the noble Arthur Augustus never knew how close he had been in that moment to the thrashing of his youthful life.

CHAPTER 11. Gussy's Brain-wave!

"WOTTEN!"

That was the well-considered view of Arthur Augustus.

He had thought it all out again and again, and the conclusion he had come to every time was that it was "wotten!"

He simply did not know what to do in the matter—short of reporting Piggott and Watson, the culprits. And the swell of the Fourth had no intention of doing that if he could help it. The fags had certainly been reckless and lawless.

They undoubtedly deserved to be punished. But Arthur Augustus was not the fellow to expose them. He had a very tender heart indeed, and he did not wish to see such "thoughtless youngstahs" flogged and possibly sacked.

Yet unless he did report what he knew, he himself was in a very difficult position indeed.

It was certainly rotten from his point of view.

He knew Reuben Piggott only too well—which was another point he could not overlook. Piggott was a little reptile in Gussy's opinion, and the opinion of most fellows who knew him. He was crafty and untruthful; he was a cadging hanger-on, and he was a great deal of a sneak according to the fellows in his own Form—the Third. Arthur Augustus had a feeling that, in any case, Reuben Piggott would deny he had ever touched the cigarettes or been near the stack at the time.

"Wotten!" repeated Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "It is wathah a difficult posish to be in. I wathah wish I had confided in Blake. Possibly he could have suggested the best thing to do. On the othah hand, I do not wegard Blake's judgment vewy highly. No; on second thoughts I had bettah not wely upon Blake's opinion."

Still, Arthur Augustus was feeling better now—his wrath was cooling, and he rather wished he had confided in his chums. It was possible they would be able to suggest a way out of his predicament—possible, but not very probable, Arthur Augustus feared.

His eye fell suddenly upon something as he strolled round by the chapel, thinking his problem out. It was the large dustbin into which he had shoved the box of cigarettes so stealthily.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "I will settle the mattah once and for all. Why did I not think of it before?"

Apparently there was still a faint doubt in Gussy's mind that the cigarettes found by the stack were actually those for which Wally had been sent by Sefton. If they were missing from the dustbin, then that doubt would be settled.

He hurried across to the bin, and, picking up a piece of stick, he started to poke among the papers and rubbish within. He raked over it well and thoroughly. But there was no doubt about it—the box of cigarettes had vanished.

"That settles it, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "That little wascal Piggott must have seen me wight enough. I weally must lose no more time in finding the young wascals!"

He hurried away from the bin, intending to go indoors to hunt for Piggott and Watson. The fags should be warned that Farmer Thake was coming to St. Jim's—indeed, Arthur Augustus had expected the farmer to put in an appearance long before this. In any case, the fags' position would have to be made clear to them.

But there was no need to go indoors. As he came round by the chapel again, he came upon Piggott and Watson.

Both fags looked alarmed as they sighted Arthur Augustus, and Piggott would have bolted had not Gussy been too quick for him.

"No you don't, Piggott!" snapped Gussy sternly. "Wathah not. I have been lookin' for you, you young wascals!"

"Leggo!" panted Piggott, squirming in the Fourth-Former's grasp. "Leggo, you cad! What d'you want us for?"

"I fancy you know that well enough, Piggott!" said Arthur Augustus, who had not failed to note the white faces and scared looks of the guilty pair. "It is about this aftahnoon. You have heard what happened at Meadow Farm, I suppose?"

Piggott drew a deep breath, and strove hard to appear unconcerned. But his heart was beating fast, and his white face showed the fear that gripped him. He had heard about the fire—there were few in the Lower School who had not heard by this time. And the news had come as a blow to both the guilty and tragic experimenters.

That he had set the stack on fire with that luckless half-burned cigarette, Piggott knew well enough. He remembered throwing it down in his fright when Watson had given the warning that someone was coming. No danger had occurred to him then—he had only thought of it when he heard the news of the fire.

But the other news—the rumour that Arthur Augustus had been caught and charged with the crime had filled both fags with amazement. Yet Piggott saw how it had happened, for he had seen Gussy there. While running away he had glanced round to see if they were pursued by the farmer, and he had caught a glimpse of Gussy's silk hat over the hedge.

So he strove to appear unconcerned now.

Oliver Watson's pasty, rather weak face was white as chalk, and he eyed Gussy almost wildly. But no desperate thoughts of selfish cunning were in his mind. He was weak and easily led, but he was decent at heart.

"Y-yes," he stammered, "we've heard, D'Arcy. I—I say, it's not true that you—"

"Shut up, Watson!" hissed Piggott. "Yes, we've heard about it, D'Arcy, but I'm blessed if I see how it concerns us!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Am I to undahstand that you intend to deny the truth, Piggott?"

"What truth?" blustered Piggott, giving Watson a savage warning glare. "I don't know what you're talking about. If you think—"

"Bai Jove! You—you little weptile!" gasped Gussy. "You are well aware of what I mean, Piggott! You saw me shove those w'etched cigavettes in that dustbin, and you wecovered them. You went for a smoke behind that haystack, and it was you who set fire to it, you little wottah!"

"Me?" said Piggott thickly. "What a yarn! I've never been near any haystack this aftahnoon. Watty and me were along the river all aftahnoon. Look here, if you think you're going to shove the blame on us, you're jolly well mistaken, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove! Why, I saw you wunnin' away from the wotten stack myself!" almost shouted Gussy. "How can you stand there and tell such whoppahs?"

"You must have been mistaken!" said Piggott, with an unpleasant sneer. "You'll have a job to prove it, too! As for seeing you shove cigarettes into a dustbin—I deny it utterly! You've been caught smoking there, and now you're trying to shove the blame on someone else; that's what it is!"

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Gussy.

"You can say what you like!" said the young rascal, "but you can't prove it! Everyone knows you're a born idiot, and it's just like you to smoke near a haystack—I heard Racke saying that only to-night. And if you say anything against us, I'll tell—"

Piggott did not finish. Arthur Augustus did not give him the chance to finish. He had been too astounded at

(Continued on next page.)



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the sheer brazen cheek of the young black sheep to act for some moments, but to be called a born idiot by a fag in the Third was a little too much for Gussy.

He took a wrathful step towards Piggott, but that crafty youth ducked swiftly and bolted for his life.

Arthur Augustus started after him, and then he pulled up short. Watson had not attempted to follow his companion in crime.

He eyed Gussy tremblingly as that irate youth returned to him, breathing hard.

"The—the fearful young wascal!" gasped Gussy. "Watson, are you also goin' to deny it?"

Watson eyed him almost appealingly. But he set his lips after a long pause.

"No, I'm not!" he panted. "Piggott said he'd smash me if I didn't back him up and swear I wasn't there. But—but it's no good, D'Arcy. I—I can't see you get into trouble when I know you didn't do it."

Arthur Augustus eyed him queerly. Watson was a timid, inoffensive youngster. Yet he had the reputation of being a fearful funk among his Form-fellows, as Gussy knew. And yet Arthur Augustus wondered if he was such a funk as he gazed at him now. The fag was looked upon as no account in his Form, and it was clear that in his loneliness he had "palled" on with Piggott—another fellow who, for a good reason in the sneak of the Third's case, was more or less shunned by the Form.

Watson's pasty face was grim, and there were tear-stains on it now. Gussy felt a sudden feeling of pity for the unhappy fag as he noted them.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, regarding him steadily. "You are not such a funk as you appear to be, Watson. You have the courage not to save your skin by lies and cunning like the weptile, at all events."

Watson licked his lips.

"You didn't do it, D'Arcy!" he stammered. "You—you've been decent to me many a time, and so has Wally. I don't care what happens, but I won't swear I wasn't there and tell lies so that you'll be blamed!"

"Then you admit that you were smokin' there, kid?" said Gussy gently.

The fag was silent. He looked away, and his lip trembled.

"Bai Jove! This is wathah a wotten posish, Watson!" said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "I know, of course, that it must have been you two young wascals—or Piggott, at all events. It is vewy, vewy serious, I feah!"

"You—you think the chaps who—who did it will be sacked?" faltered the fag.

"I hardly think they will be sacked, youngstah!" said Arthur Augustus, frowning. "But the farmah is wagin', I believe, and there will be sewious twouble. Possibly the culprits will have to pay the damage, and will be flogged at least."

"Oh! I—I say, D'Arcy, I couldn't—" The hapless fag paused, his lips trembling again.

"However," resumed Arthur Augustus hastily, "the worst has not happened yet, deah boy. Farmah Thake has not been yet, and you need not wowwy too much yet awhile. If I can do anythin' to save you fwom twouble you may be suah I will, kid!"

And with a kindly nod the tender-hearted Gussy walked away, frowning deeply.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "I feel vewy sowwy for the wretched kid—I weally must twy to save him somehow. But it is vewy sewious, and a wotten posish for me! I wondah— Bai Jove!"

The great idea came to Gussy then. He would go and see Farmer Thake before he came to St. Jim's! Arthur Augustus had a great opinion of his tact and judgment, and he thought he could talk the farmer round.

"He will have calmed down by this time, and be more weady to listen to reason!" murmured Gussy. "Yaas, wathah! I fancy I can talk the crows-gwained old fellow wound. Aftah all, a stack of hay wouldn't cost much—about a fivah, I should think! By Jove! I'll do it!"

And Arthur Augustus hurried indoors to get his hat, and started out for Meadow Farm. Apparently, Arthur Augustus had a very good opinion of his own capabilities as a peacemaker—and a very hazy idea of what a stack of hay would cost!

CHAPTER 12.

Nothing Doing!

"HERE we are, chaps!" said Tom Merry hopefully. "Yes, we're here!" grunted Herries. "So far so good! But there's old Thake's brute of a son! And if I'm not mistaken he means trouble!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Tom Merry & Co. halted.

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They had run nearly all the way from Meadow Farm, and now they were scarcely a hundred yards from the house.

Then Tom Merry had mentioned the undoubted fact that they were there—or nearly there. And Herries had added the rather dismaying information that Farmer Thake's son was there also, and looked like making trouble.

Farmer Thake was a crusty old man, with a rooted and unreasonable animosity for trespassers. At least, the fellows at St. Jim's thought that animosity was unreasonable.

Possibly they had never considered the farmer's point of view. Thoughtless juniors and still more thoughtless fags were rather apt to forget, or overlook, the rights of property. After the happenings of the afternoon, however, Tom Merry & Co. couldn't help seeing that the farmer had a point of view, and that there was risk in allowing schoolboys to roam over his land at will.

Their point of view in regard to Farmer Thake's son, however, was firm and unshakable. He was a bully, pure and simple, and he had always gone out of his way to make himself unpleasant to St. Jim's fellows.

They looked at the burly figure with some misgiving.

Thake junior had been leaning against a gate in the little lane leading up to the farm. But he had slowly left the gate on sighting them, and he certainly looked like being unpleasant. He glanced in rather an ominous manner across the field towards where a blackened mass showed what was left of the burnt-out stack.

"Come on!" said Tom grimly. "We've done nothing wrong, and the brute daren't touch us. In any case, we can handle him."

"But that won't help Gussy!" Digby pointed out. "Any-way, let's risk it!"

They decided to risk it and went on. Thake junior stepped out into the middle of the lane, and eyed them rather like a cat eyeing a mouse he felt sure of getting.

"Ho!" he exclaimed. "Takin' a little walk, what?"

"We've come to see Farmer Thake!" said Tom quietly.

"Ho, have you?" said the burly youth. "You haven't come to have a little smoke agen?" he added, with heavy sarcasm. "Of all the nerve!"

His face became ugly, and he pointed back down the lane.

"Get out!" he snapped. "I'll give you jest one minute to get clear, my lads! You've done more'n enough damage, you lot have!"

"Look here—"

"Get out!" roared the farmer's son. "By James! I should think as you blame kids would give this bloomin' farm a wide berth after this lot! Get off this 'ere farm!"

"Better clear!" murmured Herries.

"No fear!" said Tom, his eyes gleaming. "We've done no harm, and this lane doesn't belong to the farmer if the fields do. In any case, we've come to see his father—not him. Look here," he added, raising his voice and addressing the disgruntled youth, "we've come to see your father about that stack. Where is he, please?"

"You ain't seein' anybody on this farm!" roared the youth furiously. "I'm fed-up with you kids' airs and graces! The old man's goin' to see your headmaster now—he's getting the pony out this minute! You ain't going to get round him if I can help it!"

"We wanted just a few words—"

"You won't get one! Get out of this! Why, I'll thundering soon make you go, blame you!" shouted the farmer's son.

And he rushed at Tom.

Tom had stepped back, almost on the point of going now. He saw that it was useless to argue with the stubborn, ill-favoured youth.

But before he could turn to go a heavy fist took the junior under the chin, and almost lifted him from the ground.

He staggered back with a gasp and fell heavily.

Ignoring him, Thake rushed at the others, and the next moment they were defending themselves desperately.

The fellow was a handful—there was no doubting that. But he had tackled more than he could handle in Tom Merry & Co. A few savage blows from his fists very soon roused the ire of the St. Jim's juniors, and they forgot their errand, and returned the blows with a will.

It was six to one; but the fellow was a full-grown man, and he had asked for it—indeed, they had to give it him to defend themselves from his bull-like fury.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Try to break free and clear for goodness' sake!"

But it was easier said than done. Whatever his faults, Thake junior had any amount of pluck, and he refused to give in or stop. But they got him down at last, and Herries, Lowther, and Manners sat down on him to pin him down.

Farmer Thake hauled Gussy to the waiting trap and hurled him inside. Then he grabbed the reins and jumped in after him. "Set the dog on them young imps, Joe!" he bawled. "I'll see to this young varmint! Gee-up!" Tom Merry & Co. gasped and jumped out of the way as the pony started. (See Chapter 12.)



"You asked for it," panted Blake. "We came here on a peaceful mission, and you went for us, you rotter! Will you stop scrapping and let us go on to the farm?" "No, I darned well won't!" bellowed the youth, struggling furiously. "By James, I'll make you kids sit up for this! Hi! Father!"

He gave a yell as the sound of hoofs was heard, and next moment Farmer Thake himself, seated in a pony-trap, came bowling round the corner from the direction of the farm.

He pulled up and fairly blinked at the scene in the middle of the lane.

Then he gave a growl, and bundled himself out of the trap, slinging the reins over a near-by gatepost.

"By James!" he stuttered. "What's all this? Joe—"

"These school kids started on me!" roared Joe furiously. "Let at 'em with your whip, father!"

"It's not true!" said Tom Merry indignantly. "We were just coming to see you, and your son attacked us!"

"Ho, did he?" snapped Farmer Thake. He did not seem to recognise the juniors as the fellows who had helped to put out the fire—in any case, it was unlikely he would have been at all friendly disposed to them. "And what—"

Farmer Thake paused, and he blinked along the lane, a look of great and growing wrath on his red features.

The juniors understood the cause as they turned round and followed his fixed gaze.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of the Fourth came along the lane, calmly and sedately, looking the picture of elegance. He halted and his face grew severe as he took in the scene.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "You—you feahful young asses! You—you have mucked up evewythin', you foolish youngstahs!"

"What?" gasped Blake.

"I was about to intahview Farmer Thake!" explained Arthur Augustus, with some warmth. "Now, by the look of things, you have caused more twouble heah! You youngstahs weally are the limit!"

Tom Merry breathed hard.

But before he could make a suitable retort to the self-satisfied Arthur Augustus an interruption occurred.

Farmer Thake had been staring blankly at the noble Gussy. Apparently he was the last person on earth the farmer expected to see on his farm again that day. But as he got over his astonishment he gave a roar and made a bee-line for the elegant junior.

"That's him!" he bellowed. "Why, it's the very young rascal himself, Joe! Comin' 'ere as calm as calm, and as large as life! Here, you're just the kid I want!"

He grabbed at Arthur Augustus. That junior stood his ground calmly.

The juniors had allowed Joe to rise now, and that worthy began to brush himself down and glare.

"There is no weason to get excited, Mr. Thake," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I do not intend to wun away. I wish you to allow me a short intahview in pwivate. I will not take up much of your time. And pway do not be annoyed with these fellows. They are wathah thoughtless youngstahs, and— Yow! Ow! Leggo! Oh, bai Jove! Leggo! You're chok-chokin' me!"

But Farmer Thake did not let go—not until he had hauled Gussy to the waiting trap and hurled him inside. Then he grabbed the reins, and jumped into the trap after him.

"Set the dog on them young imps, Joe!" he bawled. "I'll see to this young varmint! By James! Comin' here as calm as calm, as if he'd done nothin'! We'll see what his 'eadmaster has to say about this lot! Gee-hup!"

Tom Merry & Co. gasped and jumped out of the way as the pony started. The trap bowled away swiftly along the lane, Arthur Augustus struggling frantically to release his head from his headgear which had got jammed down during that brief scuffle.

The trap vanished down the lane, and Arthur Augustus vanished with it.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

The juniors were still staring blankly after the trap when Joe Thake gave an unpleasant chuckle.

"Wait here two ticks, you kids!" he said. "Old Bob ain't been loose for a week—not since he chawed up a tramp as was hanging round here. I can hear him now—he must have heard you! Jest you wait!"

And the humorous Joe started off for the farm at a run, his heavy boots clumping on the road.

But Tom Merry & Co did not wait—they took their departure hurriedly. They had not the least desire to share the experience of the luckless tramp who had been "chawed up" by the dutiful Bob.

Whether Joe carried out his father's instructions and let the dog loose or not, they never knew. As they did not stop running until St. Jim's came into sight, however, that was hardly surprising!

CHAPTER 13.
Before the Head

"D'ARCY!"

The Head's voice was deep and ominous.

It did not frighten Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however.

Having a clear conscience, the noble Gussy saw no reason for fear. He had stood by while the angry farmer had stated his case—had made his charge. It was a serious case and a serious charge. Arthur Augustus had nearly leaped a foot into the air when the farmer had stated that the hay destroyed by fire had been worth twenty pounds. He saw then that the matter was going to be more serious than he had supposed.

None the less, a clear conscience kept Arthur Augustus calm and serene in the face of adversity.

Now the farmer had departed, having been assured by Dr. Holmes that the culprit would be punished and compensation forthcoming.

Then the Head of St. Jim's turned a stern, ominous look upon Arthur Augustus.

"D'Arcy," he repeated, "I am shocked—startled beyond measure by this disgraceful matter! You fully understand the gravity of the situation, I presume?"

"Oh, yaas, sir!"

"Unless that man receives satisfaction," said Dr. Holmes gravely, "he will most certainly appeal to the Courts. Indeed, it is impossible to blame him for desiring justice in the circumstances."

"Oh—oh, yaas, sir! It is all vewy unfortunate!"

"It is more than unfortunate, D'Arcy!" snapped the Head angrily. "It is disgraceful and abominable! Again and again have I made it clear that trespassing on that—on Mr. Thake's land would be punished with the utmost severity. But that is a small matter in comparison with the happening this afternoon. To that offence you have, apparently, added the additional serious offence of smoking."

"Oh, bai Jove!" mumbled Gussy, for he had never admitted guilt, or dreamed of doing so. "Weally, sir, I have not admitted that I was smokin'—wathah not! Farmah Thake—"

"Up to the present you have stubbornly refused to answer my questions, D'Arcy!" said the Head angrily. "You have not, as yet, attempted to deny the charge. You have admitted having had cigarettes in your possession, however, and you have admitted being caught by the stack a few moments after the fire broke out. In the circumstances I do not see what else can be assumed from your attitude, boy! Once again I demand the truth. Were you the boy who smoked by the stack, and whose criminal carelessness caused that fire?"

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus, some of his self-possession deserting him under the Head's stern, ruthless cross-examination. "But—"

"Yet you admit having had those cigarettes in your possession, and you also admit being caught on the spot by the farmer?"

"Oh, yaas, sir! But—"

Arthur Augustus paused. Really it was a most difficult position to be in. He had already told part of the truth, and unless he told the whole of it he looked like being in a very difficult predicament.

But he was determined not to tell the whole of the truth.

For Reuben Piggott he cared little; the rascally fag deserved to suffer for his misdeeds. But there was young Watson. Arthur Augustus could still see the youngster's white, tear-stained face. Gussy's tender heart was touched—he simply could not tell the whole truth.

That was impossible! Arthur Augustus had bid the hapless fag be of good cheer—had practically assured him that all would come right. Arthur Augustus could not forget that the fag had been led into the mischief by the unscrupulous Piggott. He was weak and easily led; a fit tool for the cad of the Third. And he was genuinely remorseful now for what he had done. Moreover, he had showed physical courage in defying the bullying Piggott, and moral courage in refusing to save himself at the cost of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's safety.

Feeling sure the matter would come right in the end, Arthur Augustus was determined not to give the fags away. He himself was innocent, and he had no need to fear anything. Rather not! But it was very difficult.

The Head's icy tones interrupted his reflections.

"I have heard enough, D'Arcy!" he snapped. "It is perfectly clear to me that you are the culprit!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"You would be well advised to confess fully and frankly, my boy!" resumed the Head sternly. "I am quite prepared to believe that this was a foolish experiment—an experiment that has ended in disaster. Did I believe that you were in the habit of smoking I should take the gravest view of the

case. As it is I can only think, in view of your previous good record, that this is your first offence in that respect."

"Oh deah!"

"None the less, you have broken the rules of the school, and you must suffer the consequences. I have given you every opportunity of defending yourself from the charge, which, if you were innocent, you would be in a position to refute. But the evidence and your own stubborn attitude convince me that the matter is conclusive. Your father will, of course, be required to pay for the damage, and you yourself will be punished severely—very severely indeed!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Gussy, quite bewildered. "But I didn't do it, sir!"

"What? Nonsense!" said the Head sternly and impatiently. "It is quite clear to me. If you have anything to say in your defence, D'Arcy—"

He paused.

Arthur Augustus frowned and gasped.

He could have said quite a lot; he could have cleared himself with a word. Reuben Piggott's word would never be taken before his—especially if his word was backed up by the guilty Watson. Indeed, Gussy knew well enough that before the Head's ruthless questioning, both Piggott and Watson would crumple up and collapse like pricked balloons.

But again Oliver Watson's haggard, terrified, and tear-stained face rose before him.

Moreover, there was Sefton. He had given his word to Sefton not to "peach," and he would have to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth to convince Dr. Holmes.

"Oh deah!" gasped Gussy. "I weally wegwet vewy much that I cannot explain the weal posish, sir. But—"

"Enough!" The Head held up his hand with a commanding gesture. "Enough, D'Arcy! I will, however, give you until to-morrow morning to think over your position. If you cannot give me a satisfactory explanation by then you will be flogged by me, and the account for the destroyed hay will be sent to your father. For the present, you may go!"

"Weally, sir—"

"Go!"

Arthur Augustus went.

He was looking quite dizzy as he emerged into the passage where a little crowd was collected. Scores of fellows had seen the hapless swell of the Fourth hauled into the House by Farmer Thake, and the excitement was intense.

There was a buzz as he came out at last.

"What's happened, Gussy?" demanded Levison eagerly and in some anxiety. "Is it the sack?"

"Bai Jove! Wathah not!"

"A flogging, what?" grinned Baggy Trimble. "I say, Gussy, do tell a fellow! Is it a flogging?"

"Wats!"

"He, he! I say, you are an awful ass, Gussy! Fancy smoking against a giddy haystack!"

"Potty!" commented Racke, who looked quite pleased.

"And that's a fellow who always pretended to be p—turned up his nose at chaps who smoked a fag now an' again! Rotten hypocrite! Serves him right!"

"You shut up, Racke!" snorted Grundy. "I'll punch your rotten head, you cad! I say, Gussy, it isn't true; it can't be true! I'm hanged if I believe—"

"Wats!" gasped Gussy.

He pushed his way through the excited, buzzing throng.

At the end of the passage a scared, white-faced fag was standing. He shrank back as Arthur Augustus stalked along.

"D'Arcy," he panted, "what—"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in some alarm, recognising the pinched, wretched features of Oliver Watson. "Pway wun away, deah boy! Someone will spot your face and begin to suspect."

"Oh!" gasped Watson. "Then—then you haven't—"

"I have not given you away, youngstah," said Arthur Augustus in rather a fatherly manner. "It is quite all right, kid. Wun away and wash your face!"

And the fatherly Gussy stalked on to Study No. 6. It was empty; apparently his chums had not yet returned.

"The cheekay wottahs!" murmured Gussy, shaking his head. "If they had not chipped in all would have been well. As it is, things are wathah awkward. Yaas, wathah! Howevah— Bai Jove! Is that you again, Watson?"

It was. Oliver Watson almost slunk into the study. He eyed Arthur Augustus appealingly.

"I had to come," he whispered. "You—you say you've not told, D'Arcy—you've not given us away?"

"Wathah not, youngstah. It is quite all right—for the present! But it is wathah a wotten posish."

"You—you haven't given us away?" stammered Watson shakily. "But the Head knows you were there. If you haven't given us away, then you can't have cleared yourself, D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus frowned. It was only too true.

"That is so, deah boy," he assented, shaking his head.

"It is wathah awkward for me, youngstah. Howevah, you have no need to wowwy yet. The Head is giving me until morning to think the mattah ovah. Possibly something will happen befoah then."

"But—but you—what about you?" said Watson almost wildly. "It isn't right for you to take the blame, D'Arcy. I'm not such a cad as to see you suffer for what you didn't do. Piggott and I did it; at least, it was Piggott who left the cigarette behind and caused the fire. I—I can't



One glance was enough for Jack Blake as he marched into the Head's study. It was a flogging, and Gussy was the victim. Dr. Holmes lowered his arm as the junior entered. "Blake—how dare you!" he thundered. "Go!" (See Chapter 14.)

stand it. I won't! I shall tell the Head; I shall go to him and confess."

"Bai Jove! You had bettah not, youngstah," said Gussy, shaking his head again. "It will be a floggin' for you, and the damage is wathah sewious—twenty pounds!"

"Twenty pounds!" gasped the fag, aghast.

"Yaas! Your patah—I mean, your matah, would have to find your share of that, deah boy!"

"Good heavens!"

The fag staggered back as if he had been struck. Then quite suddenly and unexpectedly he dropped into a chair and buried his face in his hands. A lump came into Gussy's throat as he saw the hapless fag's shoulders heaving.

"Watson! Bai Jove! Pway don't—"

"It's awful!" sobbed the fag. "I—I couldn't stand a flogging, D'Arcy; I couldn't! And the money—why, my mother can scarcely afford to keep me here, much less find all that money extra. Oh, what shall I do?"

His voice broke again.

"Oh, bai Jove!" mumbled Arthur Augustus, remembering suddenly that Watson's mother was a widow, and that this was doubtlessly true enough. "That is wathah wotten—feahfully wotten! Howevah, it is quite all wight, youngstah. I know the pwopah thing to do! Leave this to me, dear boy. Wun off now, and I'll see you thwough!"

And Arthur Augustus hurried out, stern resolve in his noble eye. In the passage he met six juniors hurrying along, and they almost gasped in relief as they saw him.

"Oh!" panted Jack Blake. "What's happened, Gussy? Is it all right?"

"I am in wathah a buwwy, Blake!" said Gussy. "Pway do not bothah me now!"

"But what—Here, hold on, you ass!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus vanished in the direction of the Head's

study. The six juniors stared at each other, and then they hurried after him. They were just in time to see the door of the Head's study close behind their noble chum.

"Now, what the dickens does this mean?" said Blake somewhat wrathfully. "What is that born idiot up to now?"

He was soon to know.

CHAPTER 14.

Just Like Gussy!

"WELL, D'Arcy?"

The Head showed his surprise at the unexpected return of Arthur Augustus.

"I wegret to be obliged to twouble you again, sir!" said Arthur Augustus gracefully. "But it is wathah important!"

"What is it?"

"I have considahed the mattah of this unfortunate fire, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, indeed!" said Dr. Holmes, with terrific grimness. "I trust that you have considered it well, D'Arcy, and that you have decided to abandon your obstinate attitude, and now intend to confess your offence?"

Arthur Augustus bowed.

"Oh, yaas, sir!"

"Oh! Ah! Indeed!" gasped the Head, rather taken aback. "I am very glad to hear that, D'Arcy!"

"At least," said Gussy hurriedly, "I have come to say that I see no reason why the unfortunate matter should be held ovah until morning. Dr. Holmes! I am suah you will agwee that the soonah it is closed and done with the bettah!"

"Bless my soul!"

"It is causing a gweat commotion in the school," said Arthur Augustus, almost confidentially. "I wegwet that you have been twoubled with it at all, Dr. Holmes! I twust you will wealise that no diswespect was intended towards you!"

"D'Arcy, what—"

"It is most unfortunate," said Arthur Augustus. "I feah my patah will be wathah angwy at bein' called upon to pay twenty pounds. But it weally cannot be helped! I will w'ite to him this evenin', sir, and explain the posish."

Arthur Augustus felt that was a stroke of genius to bring it in like that—a worthy sample of his tact. Arthur Augustus had shuddered at the thought of telling the lie direct—of saying he had done what he had not done. Certainly it would be a lie told with the best intentions in the world. None the less, the swell of the Fourth was anxious to avoid the necessity.

Fortunately, Dr. Holmes was too taken aback to see through Gussy's little deception.

"Bless my soul!" he said. "I am very glad you have come to that decision, D'Arcy! Had you still persisted in your unaccountable obstinacy, I should have dealt with you with the utmost severity! As it is—"

"I am quite weady to take the floggin' now, sir," said Arthur Augustus, trying to speak calmly, though his voice shook a trifle. "I would wathah go thowgh it now than to have it hangin' ovah my head. I twust you will gwant me that considewation, Dr. Holmes!"

"D'Arcy—boy—"

"Bai Jove! I—I am vewy sowwy indeed that you find it necessary to flog me!" gasped Gussy. And Gussy was sorry—he was quite certain and sincere about that. He shivered as he saw the gleam in the Head's eyes. "If you would wathah postpone it until to-morrow, sir—"

"D'Arcy, how dare you!" thundered the Head, astonished and angry. "Is this studied impertinence, boy?"

"Oh, bai Jove! Wathah not, sir!" gasped Gussy, quite shocked at the suggestion. "I twust—"

"Very well!" snapped the Head, with ominous grimness. "You shall have your wish. D'Arcy! The matter will be dealt with at once! I will write to your father after I have obtained proof from Farmer Thake that his estimate of the damage done is a reasonable and just one."

He touched the bell on his desk.

A few moments later Toby, the School House page, appeared.

"Find Taggles and send him to me at once, Marsh!" snapped the Head.

"Yessir!"

Toby vanished, and Arthur Augustus went quite pale. He knew what Taggles was wanted for only too well. It was Taggles' duty to hoist condemned juniors into a suitable position on his broad back for a flogging!

Arthur Augustus paled.

But his heart did not fail him. He thought of the tearful, white-faced fag and his widowed mother, and set his teeth. Obviously, the Head did not doubt for one moment that he was the guilty party. Even now there was time to save himself, however. But Arthur Augustus did not take advantage of it. His noble heart was tender—too tender, perhaps—but it was stout.

There was no turning back for Arthur Augustus.

Out in the passage another crowd had gathered by this time. There was a buzz as Toby came out, looking quite scared.

"What's on, Toby?" demanded Blake anxiously. "What are—"

"I bin ordered to fetch Taggles, Master Blake!" said Toby, looking quite upset. "It looks like a floggin' for Master D'Arcy!"

"Oh, great Scott!"

There was another buzz. Toby hurried away, and when he came back Taggles, the porter, was with him. Both vanished into the Head's study, Taggles looking stolid and grim.

"It—it can't be a flogging for old Gussy!" gasped Herries. "He—he can't have owned up to it! He didn't smoke and burn that stack—I'm certain of that! What on earth is the born idiot thinking about?"

They waited, Blake hovering round the closed door like a ghost. Then there came a sudden sound of swishing from within—an ominous sound that made Blake's heart leap.

"Oh, my hat!" he groaned. "It is—poor old Gussy's being flogged! Here, I'm not standing this!"

And before any of his chums could stop him, Jack Blake rapped on the door, opened it, and marched in.

A glance was enough for Blake.

It was a flogging, and Gussy was the hapless victim.

The Head lowered his arm as the junior entered the study.

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"Blake, how dare you!" he thundered. "Go! How dare you interrupt!"

"I—I can't help it, sir!" gasped Blake. "There's a mistake! Gussy—I mean, D'Arcy—couldn't have done it! He doesn't smoke! I know he couldn't have done it! I—"

He was interrupted.

"Blake! Silence, sir! How dare you! Leave my study this instant!"

"But, sir—" pleaded Blake.

"Go!"

It was like rumbling thunder, and it was too much for Jack Blake. He gasped and went.

The flogging proceeded. The listening crowd heard the steady swishing, and they heard the gasps which the flogged junior could not keep back. Out in the passage Gussy's chums writhed, but they could do nothing.

It ended at last.

The door opened, and Arthur Augustus came out unsteadily.

His face was white, and he almost fell into Blake's arms. Without a word, his chums led him to Study No. 6, the Terrible Three forcing a passage through the crowd.

The door of the study closed upon them at last.

Arthur Augustus collapsed into a chair.

"Ow-ow!" he panted. "Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Had it bad?" said Herries, in deep sympathy. "Hard lines, old man! But—but—"

"What does it mean, Gussy?" demanded Blake, almost frenziedly. "You've been flogged for that rotten fire affair?"

"Yow-ow-ow! Yaas! I—I mean, I wefuse to answer that—ow-yow—question, Blake! I would wathah it was—yow-ow—glowed to dwop!"

"Well, my only hat!" gasped Blake. "This beats the band! I only wish I knew—"

Tap!

The door opened, and a youthful form, with a tear-stained, grimy face, edged in. It was Oliver Watson, and the fag started back at sight of the juniors. But his eyes fell upon Gussy's writhing form, and he set his teeth and came in.

"D'Arcy," he breathed, "you—you've been flogged! You've been flogged by the Head! I've just heard about it!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus pulled himself together and turned a crimson face to the fag. "Pway wunn away, deah boy! It's quite all wight! Wush that fag out, you fellows!"

Obviously, Arthur Augustus didn't wish Oliver Watson to be heard.

But Watson was determined to be heard.

"I—I didn't know you were going to own up, D'Arcy!" he panted. "I swear I didn't! I'd have gone to the Head and told the truth if I'd known what you meant to do! I—I shall go to him now and tell him everything!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Gussy, with uneasy glances at his staring chums. "What wubbish! Cut away, young-stah! It is all wight, and all ended now! Dwy up, you young ass! If you dream of goin' to the Head, I'll—I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"But it isn't right!" said Watson tearfully. "You didn't do it! It was me and that rotter Piggott! Piggott threw his cigarette away and set fire to the stack! You only came along just afterwards, and the farmer caught you!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus, blushing as he felt his chums' eyes fixed on him. "You young ass—"

"I shan't forget this!" muttered the fag. "My mater could never have found all that extra money, and—and— You're a jolly decent sort, D'Arcy! There isn't a better fellow at St. Jim's! If—if you have to pay all that money I swear I'll pay you back every penny some day, Piggott's as well as mine! And—"

Oliver Watson got no further—he had gone much too far as it was for Gussy's liking. With a sudden rush the scarlet-faced swell of the Fourth grabbed him and rushed him through the door. Then Gussy dropped into the armchair again, wriggling as he did so.

There was a silence.

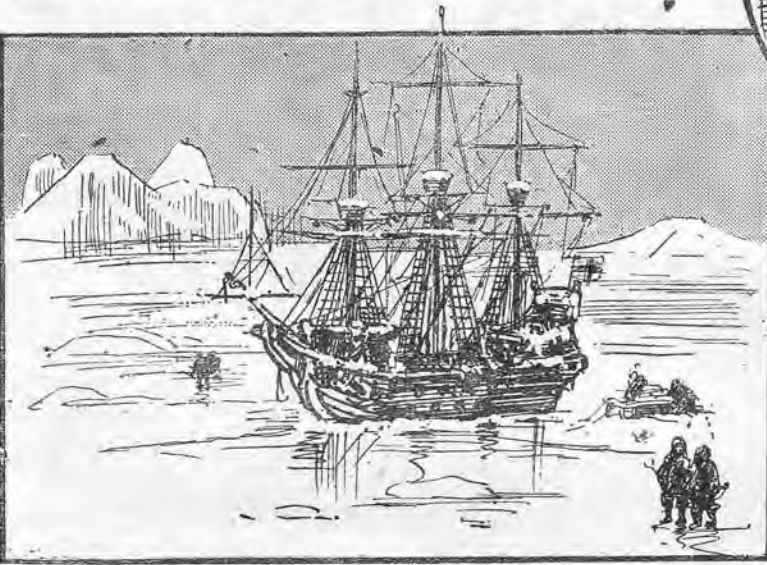
Gussy's chums stared at him, and he blinked back at them rather apprehensively.

"You've been flogged," gasped Blake accusingly, "and you've taken all the blame, and are going to pay for the damage! Gussy, you old—"

"Wats!" mumbled Gussy. "Pway do not wub it in, you fellows! Aftah all, what is a—ow-ow—floggin'? A fellow like me can stand a floggin' far bettah than a w'etched fag! And—and there was Watson's matah. It was wathah a wotten posish, and I twust you fellows won't wub it in. Ow-ow! Howeverah," added Gussy, looking down at his

(Continued on page 23.)

Famous DAREDEVILS!



Out in the great Arctic regions is to be found the most famous bay in the world, that named after the intrepid explorer of the seventeenth century — Henry Hudson! This gallant seaman, in his little wooden ship, helped to build what is now the greatest Empire in the world — the British Empire.

OUT in the great, Arctic regions is to be found the most famous bay in the world; that named after the intrepid explorer of the seventeenth century — Henry Hudson.

In the days when good Queen Bess sat upon the English throne, little was known of those vast, white, unexplored tracts of territory whose secrets have long since been laid bare to the world by Cook, Shackleton, Byrd, Peary, and a host of other brave and fearless men.

In the seventeenth century rumour had it there was a sea passage by way of the Arctic regions to China, but no one had been able to discover it, and it fell to Henry Hudson to make the first attempt upon the North-West Passage.

Though little is known of Hudson's early days, his love of the sea, and the subtle fascination it exerted over him has been set down in print times out of number, and like Raleigh and Drake, great contemporary seamen, he was never happier than when afloat, heaving through the grey water, with all sails set, and the bite of the salt spume upon his tanned cheeks.

On May Day, 1607, Hudson sailed on his first voyage to the Arctic in the good ship "Hopewell," and sighted Greenland a few weeks later. For a considerable time Hudson aimlessly explored the coast of Greenland, encountering blizzards, storms, fogs, and great icebergs. It was a tremendous ordeal and responsibility for the intrepid sea-captain, because the few charts he had with him were badly marked and faulty, and he had great difficulty in ascertaining his position. His boat, too, was small and ill-fitted to stand the buffeting and icy temperature of the Polar seas.

So it is not surprising that Hudson, after many adventures, returned home to England, without finding the North-West Passage, but with the kudos of having penetrated farther North than any other man.

On April 22nd, 1608, Hudson again sailed in the "Hopewell," on a second explorative expedition to the Polar Seas, with the object once more of finding the coveted North-West Passage. Again he was unsuccessful, principally owing to trouble with his crew, who, fearful of their own skins, were only too willing to turn back to England and safety on the slightest provocation.

Henry Hudson's first two epic voyages were backed financially by the Muscovy Company, composed of the principal London merchants. But when Hudson sailed for the Arctic regions for the third time he was under contract to the Dutch East India Company to seek a sea route by way of the North-West Passage. However, after penetrating a number of miles up the Hudson River, he returned home again.

But Hudson did not despair. He fought strenuously for another chance to realise his ambition, and at last his efforts were rewarded by a number of influential men binding themselves together as merchant adventurers, under the patronage of Prince Henry, who sent Hudson to sea again in the good ship, "Discovery."

Hudson sailed on April 17th, 1610. Little did he realise as the white, chalk cliffs of Dover receded into the grey mist that he was never to see England again, that this great voyage — his fourth — was to be his last.

The beginning of July saw Hudson entering Hudson Strait, and sailing up the grim, forbidding coast of Labrador. Soon he began to meet piles of floating ice, great bergs and glaciers, so that his crew were frightened by their immensity, and feared that they would not come out of the expedition alive.

Towards the end of October Hudson found himself in Rupert's Bay, then known as James' Bay, and he dropped anchor, resolving to winter there, as the channels through which he had come were frozen over and impassable at that period of the year.

Several times he had experienced

trouble with his men during the voyage. More trouble arose when he told them his intentions; the crew swearing that there were not sufficient provisions to last them through the winter and get them back to England in safety.

Within ten days, however, the "Discovery" was frozen in, and thus there was nothing to be done but make the best of a bad job, and suffer whatever hardships and privations lay in store. Slowly the dreary months passed, and slowly the rage and discontent of the crew flamed higher and higher, until all were ripe for revolt.

But it was not until the following June, when the ice was breaking up and there was opportunity to set sail, that the storm burst, the storm that was to cost Henry Hudson his life.

Several of the malcontents banded together and hatched one of the most fiendish plots that has ever been devised in the annals of seafaring history.

The plot was carried out to the letter the following morning, when Hudson, securely bound, was placed in a light, open boat, with seven other members of the crew who were loyal to their captain, without food or provisions of any kind, and cast adrift in the great Hudson Bay to fend for themselves, while the mutineers manned the "Discovery," and sailed away to England and safety.

What became of Hudson will never be known. Whether he died from starvation or drowning, or whether he gained land and set up some kind of little colony, has never been recorded. But it is one of the worst tragedies of the sea that this great man, on the eve of his achievement, should have been robbed of the fruits of that victory for which he had been seeking in vain during a long life of romance and adventure.

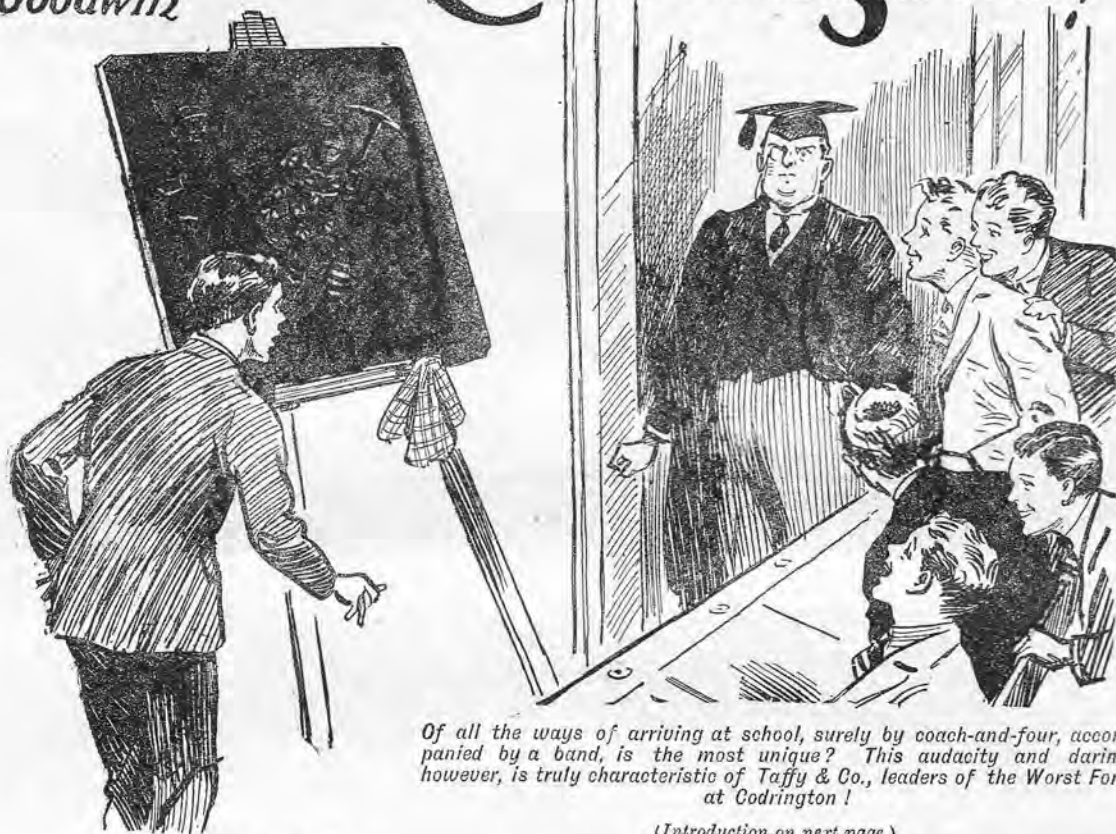
Thus died Henry Hudson. He was the first man to find and christen Hudson Bay. Perhaps it is fitting that Hudson Bay should claim him in the end. Somewhere in those grey-waters, maybe, he lies, while high above the seagulls wheel and scream unceasing homage to one of the greatest daredevils the world has ever known.

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OUR GRAND NEW SCHOOL AND ADVENTURE SERIAL! Start It To-Day!

The Worst Form at Codrington!

By
David
Goodwin



Of all the ways of arriving at school, surely by coach-and-four, accompanied by a band, is the most unique? This audacity and daring, however, is truly characteristic of Taffy & Co., leaders of the Worst Form at Codrington!

(Introduction on next page.)

The New Boy!

THERE could be no doubt that the police officers were after him, Taffy thought. The sergeant and detective—or whatever the plain-clothes man was—came hurrying along in the direction the stranger had taken, talking earnestly together, and peering ahead. But they walked right past the man's hiding-place without dreaming he was there.

Taffy, who was well hidden by the fringe of grass, slid back down the slope in considerable excitement, and beckoned to his chums.

"Here, you chaps," he whispered, "don't make a sound, but just nip up to the top here, an' look over without showin' yourselves!"

The others agreed at once, supposing some jest was in the wind. As they were going gingerly up the slope, Taffy looked back, and saw De Quincey and Mallock walking up from below, naturally knowing nothing of what was to be seen on the other side. Taffy made a sign to them to approach silently, which they did at once. In a few moments all the boys were peering through the long grass on the top, and Taffy, in a low voice, told them what he had seen.

The two officers of the law were now some distance beyond, and soon they disappeared round the bend of the river. No sooner had they done so than the man in the bush showed himself cautiously again, and remained for a few moments motionless.

The boys had a full view of him, though themselves unseen, and they watched him without a word. The stranger looked round cautiously, and glanced at a wooden bridge which spanned the river close by to make sure that nobody

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was approaching from that direction. Then, turning his back on the bridge, he retraced his steps hurriedly by the way he had come, reached the place where he had crossed the embankment, passed over it once again, and set off across the fields at a rapid pace. Just before he did so, he glanced back, and caught sight of the boys lying on the embankment. He gave a slight start, hesitated a moment, and then resumed his flight, and in a few moments was out of sight beyond a small wood.

The boys, who had said not a word hitherto, rose to their feet, and stared at each other in some consternation.

"By gum, he's wanted by the police, an' he's done them in the eye!" said Birne excitedly. "They've missed him!"

"What ought we to do?" queried Dereker.

Before anybody could reply, deep voices were heard, as somebody approached on the river side of the embankment.

"He's doubled back; I'm sure of it!" said one.

"No; it's my belief he went over the bridge, sir. We ought to have separated, and one gone over it," replied the second voice. And the speakers came into sight at the same moment. They were the police-sergeant and the plain-clothes man, and were hurrying back on finding their quarry was not in front. "Hallo, young gentlemen!" said the man in plain clothes. "Have you seen anybody pass by here just now?"

"Didn't he go over the bridge?" interjected the sergeant. "Was it a tall man, rather sleepy-looking, with an eye-glass?" said Taffy quickly.

"That's him!" exclaimed the police officer ungrammatically. "Where did you see him?"

"This way!" cried Taffy. And, running over the top of the embankment, he led the officers to the wooden bridge.

"If you cross over, an' go right ahead as far as you can, you'll run into him!"

The sergeant and his companion hardly waited to hear the end of Taffy's sentence. They set off hurriedly across the bridge without a word of thanks. After which Mr. Talbot Wynne rejoined his companions, and for some moments nobody spoke, as they watched the police hastening off on a fool's errand.

"I say, Taffy, you are an ass!" said Birne at last. "There'll be a rare row when they find you told 'em a whopper like that!" observed De Quincey sourly.

"Do you want a black eye, Quince?" said Taffy sharply. "I told 'em the truth!"

"Why, the fellow bunked in exactly the opposite direction!" said Dereker.

"Just so!" replied Wynne. "I didn't say they'd overtake him. I said they'd run into him. Which is exactly what they'll do if they keep right on an' go slap round the world! Anything else?"

Dereker grinned, but rather feebly. "That's all right," said Birne. "But I think you're an ass all the same, Taffy!"

"I'm beginnin' to think I am," admitted Wynne. "But I did it on the spur of the moment. It would have seemed so beastly putting 'em on the poor beast's track again. They were two to one!"

"It's pretty serious, though," said Dereker, "helpin' a criminal to escape. He must be one. Very likely a murderer, or a burglar, who'd only get his deserts. Never saw such a chap for impulses as you are!"

"Yes," said Taffy rather ruefully; "I suppose you're right about him. But there's all the police against him, an' they're sure to catch him some time. But if you saw bloodhounds huntin' a runaway nigger, who would you help? The nigger or the bloodhounds? There was something about that big slab of a sergeant that put my back up!"

"What do you think about it, Jelly-face?" said Dereker facetiously to the new boy. "Can you see yourself in the police court dock for conspirin' to defeat justice—eh? Tremble, you young sinner!"

"I think Mr. Wynne is quite right," said the new boy seriously. "It—it wouldn't have been nice to tell about the gentleman who ran away because we'd been watching him."

"Oh, that's your way of lookin' at it, is it, kid?" said Taffy. "You've got the ground-work of school decency about you, though one wouldn't expect it. However, let's leave the giddy fugitive to his own devices, an' go an' get some pop. This is dry work!"

They cut across the fields to the high road, and came upon it near the old wayside hostelry of the Crown and Anchor. Many of the Remove boys were there already, for it was a hot day, and all were thirsty.

It was strictly against Codrington rules for any boy to enter a hotel or licensed house, unless with his parents. But, as Taffy remarked, the term had not properly opened yet. The Remove did not affect anything stronger than ginger-beer, and those already there had consumed some gallons of it.

The Remove had its code, wild as it was, and, with few exceptions, the Form considered it infra dig. to go into a bar. Their "pop" was brought outside to them on small tables. Sanderson, a large pump-boy, very well-fed looking, was acting as host.

"Hallo! Is that the oof-bird?" said Taffy. "Well, he looks it! I'm standing Sam to my lot, though; no new kids pay for me! What'll you chaps have—pop? Bring it out, Willyum—lashings of it!"

They were in the act of pouring down generous libations of home-brewed ginger-beer when the sound of a horn down the road reached them, and a four-in-hand coach, with a handsome team of dappled greys, pulled up at the inn door, empty save for the driver and conductor.

"Why, here's the Rocket at last!" said Taffy. "Hallo, Tom!" he cried to the coachman, who flung the reins to an ostler and descended. "You'd better shove those cattle along to the station. The giddy Fifth is goin' to eat you alive for bein' late!"

"Can't help it, young sir!" said Tom. "I've got to 'ave a wet first! I'm perished with thirst! Never had such a day!"

Both the coachman and conductor vanished into the inn,

leaving a solitary ostler from the stable-yard to hold the heads of the leaders.

Taffy looked the coach over, and his eye brightened. In a moment an idea sprang into his head, and was acted upon.

"By gum, Derry, here's our chance!" he exclaimed, in an undertone. "We'll bag the Fifth's coach an' leave 'em lamentin'! I'll tool her to Codrington! Pass the word to the chaps to board her quick, an' chuck me the reins as soon as I'm up!"

Dereker darted off on his errand in a moment. The news was spread swiftly and silently, and received with delight on all sides. In a twinkling half a dozen boys were on top and four inside. Birne hoisted the scared Jellicoe up in front, and Taffy gained the box at the same time.

"Here, 'ave you young gents booked seats by this coach?" cried the ostler.

"The Remove books whatever it jolly well wants!" retorted Taffy.

Birne tossed the reins deftly up to him, Dereker "barged" into the ostler as if by accident and swept him away, and the next moment the long whip cracked, and the team sprang forward smartly. Away went the coach, Dereker swinging himself on behind as it passed, and the ostler, seated on the dusty road, yelled loudly.

The driver and conductor, with half-empty pots of beer, rushed out of the inn, shouting and waving their arms. They raced after the coach to try to catch it up, but Taffy, shouting with laughter, whipped the team to a gallop, and the Barleyford Rocket swiftly left its pursuers far behind, shaking their fists and uttering ferocious threats.

"Steady 'em, Taffy, or you'll have the show over!" said Dereker, for the coach had begun to rock alarmingly.

But Taffy was not on the box for the first time by any means. His father, General Sir Mostyn Wynne, was a famous light of the Four-in-Hand Club, and the boy had often driven one of his drags at home in the holidays. Taffy pulled his team together like a workman, and then sent them along at a slashing trot.

"Dear me!" gasped Jellicoe, holding tight with one hand and keeping his hat on with the other. "My aunt never contemplated my journey to school in this manner, I feel sure! But it—it's rather nice!"

"You're learnin' a lot, aren't you, kid?" said Taffy, swinging his team round a corner. "There's the station ahead! Derry, give 'em a blast on the foghorn!"

Taffy Explains Himself.

AS the railway station came into view right in front, Dereker drew the long coach-horn out of its basket and blew with all his might. The result was nothing like a proper coaching tantivy, but he evolved a terrible, ear-splitting bray from the horn, and the senior boys came pouring out of the station in a hurry.

They gaped in speechless surprise as the coach came into view with its load, Taffy on the box and giving no signs of stopping.

"What the doose are you doing on our coach?" shouted several Fifth Form magnates angrily. "Pull up—pull up! Do you hear, young Wynne?"

"Clear the road for the Remove Rocket!" cried Dereker, with another blast on the horn. "All you other rotters can jolly well pad it to Codrington on your lily feet! Keep 'em going, Taffy!"

The coach swept past, amid a chorus of wrathful cries from the seniors, and was soon away round the corner and full swing on the road to Codrington. The next mile was covered in surprisingly short time, when right ahead, toiling up a hill, was seen a troupe of five nigger minstrels in coats of many colours, with banjos and other properties under their arms, on their way homeward after a day at Barleyford Fair.

"Hallo!" cried Taffy, slowing up alongside them. "D'you want a lift, Uncle Remus?"

"Rather!" said the minstrels, who looked fatigued.

"Jump up on top, then, an' we'll take you as far as Codrington School! Shove up an' make room, you chaps! Squeeze 'em in anywhere!"

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WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

Talbot Delaval Wynne—better known as "Taffy"—and Richard Dereker, his chum, are amused to see in a newspaper, while waiting for the train that is to convey them to Codrington College for a new term, an advertisement for a new master of the Remove. This Form, of which Taffy and Dereker are members, prides itself in being unique in unruliness. No Form master has yet been capable of handling them, and those that had tried, had retired after one term—physical wrecks. Just before the train enters the station, Taffy befriends a pale and nervous new boy—Cecil Jellicoe—when he is bullied by a porter, and resolves to "stand by" him at Codrington. On the train, which is packed with Codringtonians, Taffy and Dereker renew acquaintance with Birne, their other chum, amid terrific hubbub and din, caused by the unruly Removeites. On arrival at the station where they alight for Codrington, Taffy and Co. find that the coaches that are to take the Codrington fellows the six-mile journey to the school, have failed to turn up. So to while away the time until they should arrive, the three chums and Jellicoe go for a walk along the river-bank. Suddenly, while they are tying down, they are astonished to see a man dodging in and out of the bushes on the bank, and then to see a policeman and a man in plain-clothes appear.

(Now read on.)

The burnt cork contingent were only too willing. Luckily, the bulk of the Remove had been left behind in the hurried start, and the boys made room somewhere. Away went the coach again.

"You've got to work your passage, my bucks!" said Birne. "Strike up something cheerful!"

The minstrels, nothing loath, unsling their instruments—two banjos, a fiddle, and a key-bugle—and broke forth into tuneful melody. Accompanied by plenty of incidental music, the coach accomplished the journey rapidly, and the ivied walls and tall spires of Codrington School were already in sight when Dereker looked back and cried a warning.

Flying along the road in hot pursuit came a light dogcart with a big, spanking mare stretching out in a hand-gallop. In the cart were two men—the coachman of the Barleyford Rocket and the ostler from the Crown and Anchor. They were overtaking the coach as fast as the mare could cover the ground.

"Here's Tom after us!" cried Dereker. "Stick the pace on, Taffy! It's the last lap, and we must beat 'em for the honour of the Remove!"

One glance behind did Taffy give, and then urged his team to gallop. Not a quarter of a mile ahead were the tall iron gates of the school. Dereker blew frantically on the coach-horn, and to the strains of music from the minstrel band, the Barleyford Rocket swept up to the school gates and came to a halt—a winner by twenty yards. The four sweating horses blew out their nostrils, and the band blared in triumph, while a cheer arose as Taffy jumped down from the box.

It was quickly checked when the dogcart, with its two infuriated passengers, galloped to the spot and pulled up, while from the school drive an excited master, in cap and gown, bore down upon the arrivals with black wrath upon his brow.

"Phew!" said Dereker, under his breath. "It's Quayle—the one an' only Quayle! The biggest terror in Codrington! Now for a ghastly row!"

The honourable members of the Remove, in something like a panic, scuttled off the coach even quicker than they had mounted at the journey's start. And quicker than any of them was Taffy Wynne, who tossed the reins on the horses' backs and lit off the box with one jump, landing on the off-side, away from the gates and the angry and astounded Housemaster.

"Derry," he hissed, grabbing the arm of his chum, who sprang just beside him, "go an' draw Quayle's fire while I settle Tom. We've got to stop him at any price. Who's got some money?"

Dereker hastily emptied his ticket-pocket into Taffy's hand, and two or three others on that side, hearing the appeal, did likewise. At such times the Remove stood by each other. Already the clanking of the iron gates was heard as Mr. Quayle angrily bade the lodgekeeper open them, and on the off-side of the road the dogcart had pulled up, the horse straddle-legged and steaming, and Tom, the coach-driver, jumped down, with a furious face, and strode towards the boys.

"You young fiends!" he cried. "I'll have ye all in the lock-up for this!"

"S-sh! Steady, Tom!" said Taffy, laying his finger on his lips with a dramatic gesture, and walking to meet the man. "Mr. Quayle's comin' out of the gates. He'll hear you if you shout like that!"

The coachman was so taken aback that he stopped dead.

"Hear me! By gosh, I want him to hear me! You—"

"S-sh!" said Taffy again. "It's all right. Don't raise a row, Tom!" He thrust the money—there was just over three pounds—into Tom's hand. "Take our bob fares out of that, keep the change, jump on the box, an' drive these orchestratin' niggers into the next parish. We've done with 'em. Your friend can tool the dogcart back."

Tom stared at the coins in his palm, and opened his mouth to protest; but he hesitated, and was lost. He liked the boys, and, though he had been in a great rage, did not want to get them into trouble; besides, the money equalled a fortnight's wages. Before he knew how it happened, he was hoisted up on the box, the reins thrown up to him, and the team, starting smartly, drew the coach away at a rapid pace. The crew of minstrels on top, who had been "guying" Mr. Quayle, struck up again on their instruments as it rolled out of sight round the corner.

"Stop the coach—stop it! Pull up, I say!" cried the indignant Housemaster. "Come back!"

But Tom paid no heed. He was busily signalling to the dogcart-driver with his whip before he disappeared, and that vehicle also turned and went back by the road it had come. Till then the coach had shielded Taffy and his transactions from the view of the gentleman in the cap and

gown, and the whole affair was over in far less time than it takes to tell it. Taffy and the chosen spirits of the Remove remained, facing a sorely-ruffled Housemaster before the school gates.

"Go in!" said Mr. Quayle hotly, pointing to the gates. "In with you, and we will see who is responsible for this outrage!"

The heroes of the Remove entered the grounds, some of them looking rather scared. The "jape" was an altogether new one, and they did not know what might come of it. Taffy nudged Birne stealthily in the ribs. The portals clanged behind them.

"Now," said the Housemaster, white with indignation—for the minstrels had been very rude—"what is the meaning of this disgraceful affair? Where is Wynne? Come forward, sir. I saw you on the box of that coach, and you were driving, or attempting to. Come here!"

Taffy stepped forward briskly enough, and met the master politely.

"It was a special occasion, sir," he said amiably. "I did it for the best."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, sir, it was very awkward. There's a fair at Barleyford to-day, and all the carriages an' coaches are doing jobs there. The fair—"

"What has that to do with it?"

"Why, the result is, sir, there wasn't a single—er—vehicle to meet us, except the luggage-carts, an' they said there mightn't be any for hours. There's half the school waitin' at the station; hundreds of chaps, all in a regular stew—I mean very disturbed, sir—because they were afraid they might be late gettin' here."

"Ah, they would be!" said Mr. Quayle, with a dangerous glare. "Go on, sir! What has this to do with—"

"So some of us hurried off to find a—a conveyance, sir; an' we came across the coach standin' outside a pu—a hotel, sir, the driver and guard bein'—er—engaged elsewhere. So, bein' afraid the coach might be claimed for the fair again, and knowing its duty was to get the fellows to the school," added Taffy, speaking very quickly, "I thought it'd be a good thing to bring as many of our men as I could without delay, in case any of the ki—the young ones got into mischief in the town, and—"

"You would think that, of course!" said Mr. Quayle, still more grimly. "Who was the proper coachman?"

"It wasn't his fault, sir, a bit. I concluded it was best not to wait for him, but bring our lot on, and let him follow up an' take the coach back for more. But the worst of it, sir," said Taffy, with a pained air, "was those nigger minstrels. You see, they were coming back from the fair, and they were a rowdy lot, I'm afraid. They would play tunes and sing, in spite of all we could do to—er—keep them quiet, an' they'd all got outside places. We didn't want to have a vulgar row about it an' bring the school into disrepute, so I thought the best thing to do was to hurry up and get here an' be rid of them. So Tom took them on as quickly as he could, and he'll go back to the station for more, sir—not for more niggers, but for the Fifth, I mean!"

Mr. Quayle blew his nose. He had to collect himself before speaking, and, to tell the truth, he hardly knew what to say. He blew his nose yet again.

"Your explanation is very ingenious, Wynne," he said, with a stern air; "but we are not accustomed to having boys arrive here after the manner of a beauneast, and the matter will be thoroughly inquired into! As to the boys at the station—"

"Ah, Mr. Quayle!" broke in a clear, strong voice, as a tall, elderly man, with a commanding presence, came down a path leading to the grounds. It was Canon Wyndham, the headmaster of Codrington. "What was that extraordinary noise I heard? More roughs from Barleyford? The boys are very late! Where are the rest of them?"

As Mr. Quayle turned to answer the Head, the ten boys raised their hats hurriedly and seized the opportunity to get away, leaving the powers to confer. The boys quickly entered the huge, old red-brick schoolhouse by the main doors and made for the lobby.

Jellieoe Introduces Himself to the Remove!

"THAT was a narrow squeak!" said Taffy, with a sigh of relief. "Jolly glad the Head didn't turn up a bit earlier an' spot our giddy arrival for himself!"

"It'll be smoothed over now, with luck," said Birne. "It did look pretty thick at first. Quayle took down your blessed report like mother's milk—at least, I think he did. He won't want to raise a shine with the Head on first night, if he can help it. There's nobody else in the school would ha' done it, though."

"Quayle's an ass," said Taffy, slinging his hat on to its peg; "but he's rather a decent ass! He won't say any more than he needs, and he's afraid of the Head, anyhow. Well, Jelly," added Wynne, glancing at the new boy, whose eyes were as big as saucers with surprise, "how's auntie's pet—eh? What d'you think of it?"

"I think it was rather dangerous," said Jellicoe meekly. "I thought every moment the horses would fall down. And I am still surprised that the gentleman in the square-topped hat did not punish us and put us to bed."

"Ah, that was my giddy diplomacy!" said Taffy. "I told you it was no small beer havin' me for a pal. If I hadn't convinced the Quayle bird we were all innocent, you'd be not put to bed, but havin' the little pink hide flogged off you at this moment!"

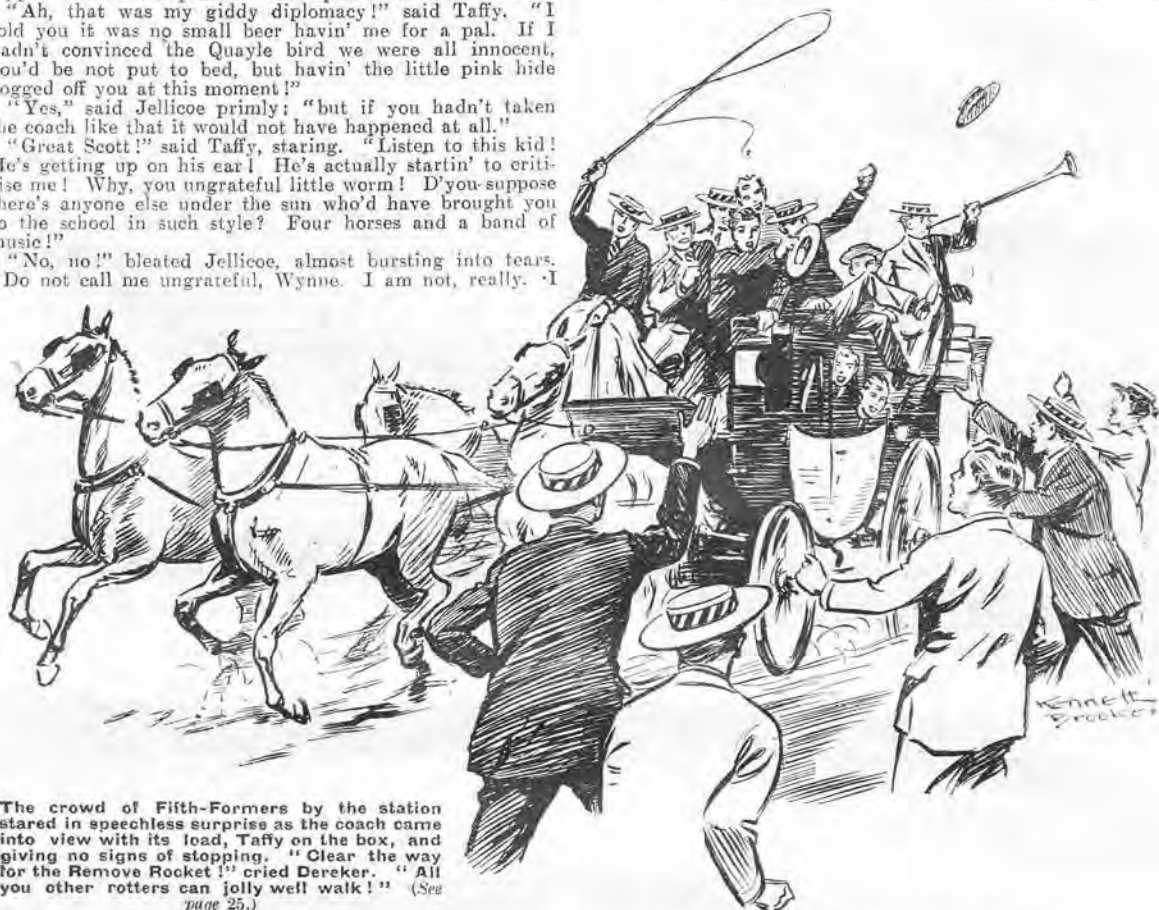
"Yes," said Jellicoe primly; "but if you hadn't taken the coach like that it would not have happened at all."

"Great Scott!" said Taffy, staring. "Listen to this kid! He's getting up on his ear! He's actually startin' to criticise me! Why, you ungrateful little worm! D'you suppose there's anyone else under the sun who'd have brought you to the school in such style? Four horses and a band of music!"

"No, no!" bleated Jellicoe, almost bursting into tears. "Do not call me ungrateful, Wynne. I am not, really. I

"We'll go a third each in that," said Birne and Dereker, "as we're in the firm, Taffy. No use remindin' you that you're an ass, of course. Better see if the luggage is in now."

"Oh, yes, the luggage!" said Jellicoe eagerly, as he accompanied the three chums towards the downstairs box-room, the others remaining behind. "Wynne, I will get the six-and-sixpence somehow and pay it; you shall not lose by your great kindness to me. But the luggage—can



The crowd of Fifth-Formers by the station stared in speechless surprise as the coach came into view with its load, Taffy on the box, and giving no signs of stopping. "Clear the way for the Remove Rocket!" cried Dereker. "All you other rotters can jolly well walk!" (See page 25.)

thought it truly most entertaining. You were so good to me at Stanstead, I—I—"

"Oh, confound it, he's going to turn on the waterworks now!" said Taffy. "Dry up, kid! The School House is damp enough without that! I say, what did you chaps give me to square Tom with? There was a quid of mine—all I'd got. Three pounds five, was it? Jolly expensive job, but it had to be done!"

"We must share it out evenly among the lot," said Dereker. "There are ten of us. That's six-and-six each. Not dear at the price, I call it!"

"I say," said the second new boy, Sanderson—he was big built and prosperous-looking—coming forward rather shyly, "I don't mind contributing a quid to the fund, if you like. Then it won't come so heavy to the others. I liked the ride on the coach."

There was a pause of surprise, and Taffy looked long at the speaker.

"Oh, you're the oof-bird, aren't you," he said—"the chap De Quincey was with, and who bought up the station buffet?"

"Yes."

"Humph! Well, you mean well, I dare say. It's rather decent of you to offer, but it won't do. I prefer to pay my full share for one. I don't want to be paid for."

Sanderson's offer was rejected. The heroic nine rather resented it, and, as it was the first day of term, they were all in funds—all except Jellicoe, who turned very red.

"I am afraid I haven't any money!" he gasped. "I—I was not provided with any, and my pockets even were sewed up. But if you were to write a letter to my aunt, signed by everyone here, applying for my share, perhaps—"

"Shut up!" said Taffy irritably. "I'll stand this kid's share, you chaps, as I've taken him under my sheltering wing!"

I get to it quickly? My white mice are there in their cage, and the darlings must be fed! They have not broken their fast since this morning. But, oh dear, where am I to get food for them?" he exclaimed, in sudden dismay, as the box-room was reached. "What is to be done? At home, Sarah used to give me what I needed. But here"—the tears trembled in his voice—"there is no Sarah! (Sniff!) It is very hard to see them want!"

"Really, this kid is getting to be a bigger nuisance every minute!" said Taffy desperately, as the new boy unwrapped a fancy cage containing two piebald mice. "What are the beastly things fed on?"

"Bread-and-milk, please!" bleated Jellicoe anxiously. "Nice fresh milk and new bread! If you will tell me where I can get it, I will go and ask—"

"They wouldn't give it to you, you little champ!" growled Taffy. "Besides, you'd get murdered on the way. Wait here while I go and see."

"Yes, certainly. It's awfully kind of you to take all this trouble," mumbled Jellicoe gratefully.

Taffy presently returned with some fresh bread and a broken teacup filled with milk, which he had wheedled out of the matron. Jellicoe thanked him in a voice thick with emotion.

"This prize-story hero business is more exhaustin' than I thought it'd be," said Taffy, wiping his forehead. "Don't get up on your hind legs too much, Jelly, for I'm not sure whether I'm going to be your high-souled protectin' angel yet. I can't do it unless the other chaps make a row about it—and I'm hopin' they won't. If I cherish such a little terror as you, it'll be because they drive me to it. Put those beastly things away as soon as you've fed them!"

"Yes, Wynne," said Jellicoe humbly. He was already cured of saying "sir."

"You'd better shove 'em in that empty cupboard up there, an' take care nobody gets an inkling you own them, or you're done for. We're going to work now—we do sometimes—an' when you've done with those filthy mice, you'd better come and boil yourself after it. Bath-room on the lower corridor."

"Yes, Wynne."

"I can't be looking after you the whole time, as you'll be a blight on my bright young life. If you meet any chums in the corridors, and they ask you your name an' form, answer up civilly at once, an' tell 'em."

"Yes, Wynne."

"Don't say anything about your aunt, or white mice, or that sort of thing, or you'll be snitten on the earth an' left for dead. An' don't give your Christian name—it's an awful disgrace here for a fellow's Christian name to be known."

"Yes, Wynne. Please, Wynne, when shall we start learning?" said Jellicoe, in his meekest voice.

"Learnin'! Aren't you learning now, you little ass, when I'm takin' all this trouble to teach you important things? Learnin' what?"

"Ah, yes! Thank you, Wynne! But I meant Greek Testament and Ancient History, and the—er—the other subjects included in the curriculum," bleated the new boy. "I have been working very hard lately. I want to—"

"Oh, great guns, the kid's really hopeless!" said Birne. "You'll have to chuck it, Taffy!"

"I'm sorry to hear this of you, Jellicoe," said Taffy, shaking his head. "It won't do. You can't swot. It's the worst of bad form to swot in the Remove. Come on to the lavatory as soon as you're ready."

It is not probable that Jellicoe understood Taffy's final counsel, but when he found himself alone, he finished feeding the mice, and, with a benediction, placed them in the cupboard. He then opened his tin box, and, diving deep into it, fished out five or six very neatly-kept and spotless school books, though they were not new.

There was a Greek grammar, a work on mathematics, the first three books of Euclid, and two of the books—new—which Coddington used, one of them a Latin Commentary. Jellicoe tucked these under his arm and set out to find the lavatory.

He did not find it—at least, not the right one. He found the prefects' bath-room instead, and in blissful ignorance of the awful crime, he, a junior, committed in desecrating that holy place, Jellicoe piled his books beside the towel-horse and started to wash.

He had not quite dried himself when a six-foot prefect came in and stared at him aghast. The next moment Jellicoe landed out in the passage in a heap, with his books descending round him in showers.

(As was to be expected, Jellicoe has soon put his foot into trouble, and he's in for a lively time at Coddington College—even though Taffy has taken him under his wing.) To continue reading this lively serial, order your GEM well in advance.)

GUSSY'S NOBLE SACRIFICE!

(Continued from page 22.)

trousers. "I weally must go and—yow—change my bags! That careless wuffian Taggles wumped them feebally when he was holdin' me on his wotten back! Bai Jove, this will be the fourth time I have changed to-day, you fellows! Too bad, isn't it?"

And Arthur Augustus limped out of the study, still groaning dismally, and went off to change his rumpled trousers.

"Well," gasped Tom Merry—"well, isn't old Gussy the— the limit?"

And Gussy's chums all agreed that he was.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not seen in public again until the Fourth went up to the dormitory that night.

There was a good deal of comment and curiosity about his flogging in the School House. Very few really believed that Arthur Augustus was the guilty party. But he had been flogged for it, and it was known that his pater was going to pay for the damage. Naturally, the fellows who doubted were very curious, but few of them ever got to know the truth.

As far as the authorities were concerned, the matter was ended. For some days afterwards Mr. Railton eyed Arthur Augustus very curiously indeed, and it was clear that, like many others, he had his doubts over it all.

Naturally, Gussy's noble pater wanted to know more about it before parting with a cheque to compensate Farmer Thake. He came over to St. Jim's, but it was Tom Merry who interviewed him on the matter, and when Lord Eastwood left St. Jim's that same evening Dr. Holmes was no wiser regarding the affair. His lordship had handed over the cheque to pay for the damages, but without disclosing to the Head what he had learned from Tom Merry.

But from the fact that Lord Eastwood was looking unusually pleased when he left St. Jim's, and that he had tipped Gussy a fiver before leaving, it was clear that he was not angry with his hopeful son.

Gussy had paid the price. And the knowledge that it had not been in vain—that Watson had cut himself adrift from the evil influence of Piggott, and that he looked like blossoming out into quite a decent kid, was not the least satisfactory result of Gussy's Noble Sacrifice.

THE END.

(Great story that, wasn't it, chums? There'll be another in next Wednesday's issue of the GEM—order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)



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