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THE GEM 2^d

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SIMPLE
FOOTBALL
COMPETITION
INSIDE



"GUSSY'S
'TALKIE!'"

THE HERO OF THIS QUICK-ACTION COMPLETE SCHOOL YARN IS—

GUSSY'S "TALKIE!"

By
Martin
Clifford

He may not have a film-face; his noble accent may make people laugh; but when it comes to rescuing a damsel in distress, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's the equal to any handsome hero on the silver screen!

CHAPTER 1.

Poetical!

"EYES like stahs!"

"Eh?"

"Teeth like pearls—
like gleamin' pearls!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Yahs like sea-shells— Bai Jove! I wathah like that!"

"M-m-my hat!"

Jack Blake and Herries and Digby of Study No. 6 in the Fourth passage, stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in open-mouthed astonishment.

Prep was over in Study No. 6, and for ten minutes or so Blake and Herries and Dig had been "going it" on the all-engrossing topic of football.

An important fixture was to take place on the morrow, the St. Jim's Junior Eleven being due to entertain a team from Abbotsford. Blake had heard that Abbotsford were enjoying a particularly successful season, and this fact, taken in conjunction with a weakening of the home team, caused by Talbot's going lame, made the captain of the Fourth wonder whether, for once in a way, Abbotsford might prove more than a match for St. Jim's.

While the argument over this point waxed fast and furious, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had sat at the table with a pencil in his hand, a sheet of foolscap before him, and a particularly rapt expression on his classic countenance.

Once or twice Blake had eyed him with a wondering eye. Eventually he had turned round and asked him point-blank what he thought about the problem.

Then had followed Gussy's extravagant and unaccountable remarks concerning somebody's eyes, teeth, and ears. "So it's come!" remarked Blake, when he had got over the first shock of surprise.

"I always said it was bound to in time!" said Dig sagely.

"Poor old Gus!" said Herries, with a sad shake of his head.

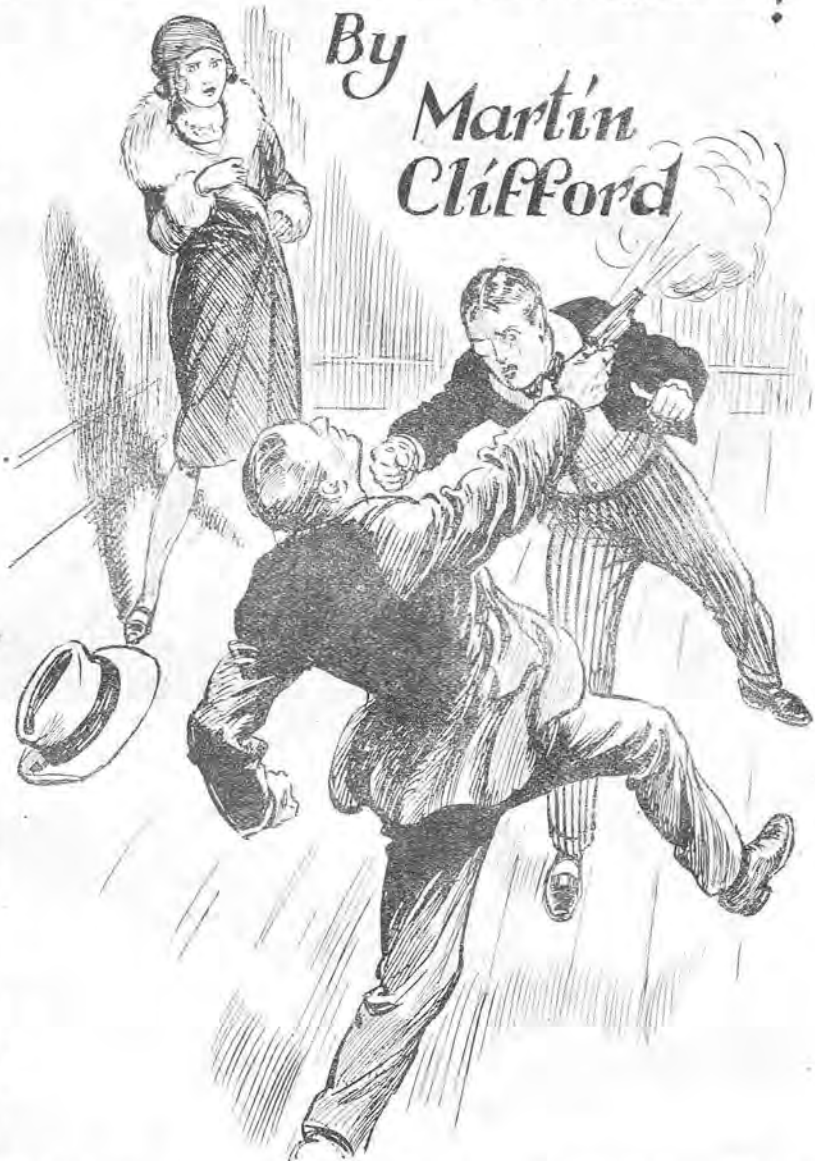
The swell of the Fourth seemed to be unaffected by his chums' sorrowing remarks.

"The problem is," he said, apparently addressing space, "how to find another word to rhyme with 'stahs' and 'yahs.'"

"Great pip!" murmured Blake faintly.

"I must weally wemembah to buy a whymin' dictionawy when I am next in Wayland. Bai Jove! Pewwaps you fellows can help me."

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"'Fraid it's too late, old chap!" said Herries. "If you'd taken it earlier, now, we might have called in a mental specialist!"

Arthur Augustus seemed to wake up suddenly.

"What?" he exclaimed indignantly.

"And there might have been some hope," continued Herries. "But it's obviously too late for that now. I'm afraid it's the padded cell for you, Gus!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Are you insinuat'ing, Hewwies, that I am pottay?"

"Not insinuating it; stating it!" grinned Herries.

"Why, you feahful wottah—"

D'Arcy half-rose, as though inclined to wade in and mop up the floor with the disrespectful Herries. On second thoughts he sat down again.

"Forgiven him, Gus?" asked Dig.

"No feah! At the first suitable opportunity, I intend givin' Hewwies a feahful thwashin'!" said the swell of the Fourth wrathfully. "At the moment, howevah, time

—ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, THE "SWELL OF ST. JIM'S"!



does not permit. You see, I am wathah anxious to finish this poem before I go down to the Common-woom."

"But—" "I will wead as fah as I have got, and pewwaps you youngstahs will be able to help me with the next line," said Arthur Augustus gravely. "Pway don't intewwupt me, deah boys! This is what I have w'titten:

"Deah gal, your eyes are like the stahs;
Your teeth like gleamin' pearls!
Like sea-shells are your dainty yahs—!"

"There, for the moment, I'm stuck. Bai Jove! I've just thought of somethin', though!"

"But—" gasped Blake. "My dear old dummy!" said Herries, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Pway keep quiet for a moment, deah boys! Now, what do you think of this?

"Deah gal, your eyes are like the stahs;
Your teeth like gleamin' pearls!
Like sea-shells are your dainty yahs,
With you no othah gal compahs—!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt! And is that supposed to be poetry?" asked Jack Blake.

"Of course, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a yell from Blake and Herries and Dig. Arthur Augustus turned pink.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Poetry! Oh, ye gods!" gurgled Blake.

"I uttably fail to see anythin' whatevah to cause this cacklin'!" said D'Arcy coldly. "I should pewwaps have explained that that is not the end of the poem!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is still another line to go in before I weach the end of the verse," explained the swell of the Fourth. "Pway cease this idiotic cacklin' and twy to help me!"

"But, my poor, dear old chum—" almost wept Dig.

"I must wequest you to wefwain fwom usin' oppwobwious expressions to me, Dig! Sewiously, can any of you youngstahs suggest somethin' to whyme with 'pearls'?"

"What about 'curls'?" grinned Blake.

"Bai Jove! That's wathah a bwright suggestion, comin' fwom you, Blake! Unfortunately, it hardly applies in

this case. Glowia's hair is bobbed, you see, and not verry curly!"

"Gloria?" echoed Blake, with a stare.

"Glowia!" nodded the swell of the Fourth. "Didn't I tell you, by the way, that the poem is dedicated to Glowia?"

Blake lifted a reproving forefinger in the direction of the poetical Gussy.

"You did not, Gus! Looks as if you've been keeping things from your uncle! Who is Gloria, anyway?"

"Who is Gloria, what is she?" sang Dig, to the tune of the celebrated song written around a lady named Sylvia.

"Bai Jove! I must confess I am wathah surprised at your ignowance, deah boys. Surely you must have heard of Glowia?"

"Fact remains, we haven't," said Herries. "Where have you been hiding her all this time, Gussy? Own up, now!"

"Get it off your chest, old bean!" grinned Dig.

"Weally, deah boys! I assuah you, I haven't been hidin' her. I have nevah even met her!"

D'Arcy's three chums jumped.

"You—you've never met her?" gasped Herries.

"You've never met her, and yet you're writing a poem about her?" hooted Blake.

"Pwecisely, deah boy!"

"Worse and worse!" murmured Dig. "I thought it was a mild attack at first, but this sounds really serious!"

"Oh, rather!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his celebrated monocle and surveyed his chums with a frigid stare.

"Pway don't talk wot!" he said, remaining calm with an effort. "Since it appeahs that you fellows are unable to undahstand anythin' that is not wendahed in elementawy language, I will explain. The lady to whom my poem is dedicated is Miss Glowia Wayne."

"Oh crikey! Now we understand!" grinned Blake. "You mean Gloria Rayne, the film star?"

"The girl who never appears in public wearing less than twenty thousand pounds' worth of jewellery—vide press!" chuckled Herries. "Oh, Gussy!"

D'Arcy turned pink.

"Weally, Hewwies! I must ask you to speak more respectfally of Miss Glowia Wayne! Although I have nevah had the good fortune to meet her, I have the highest opinion of her, and am weady to administrah a feahful

thwashin' to anybody who makes the slightest reflection on her!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway cease this wibald laughtah! I am deadly sewious. For some time past I have admired Miss Wayne's actin' on the seween."

"So we all have if it comes to that," grinned Blake. "But—"

"Don't intewwupt, Blake. I was goin' on to say that Miss Wayne has so impressed me by her beauty and her charmin' and gwaceful mannah that I have firmly made up my mind to take the earliest opportunity of makin' her acquaintance in weal life."

"My hat! Got rather a long trip in front of you, haven't you?" asked Digby casually. "All her films are made in Los Angeles, and that's a pretty far cry from St. Jim's."

"Quite true, deah boy! As it happens, howevah, Miss Glowia Wayne is at pwesent on a visit to England. Furthahmore, she is actually comin' to Wayland shortly to weopen the Wayland Cinenma when it starts its new regime as a talkin' theatre."

"Oh!"

"So when Gloria Rayne comes to Wayland you're going to pal on to her, eh?" asked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, I twust you do not think me capable of actin' in such an objectionable mannah as that. If you mean, do I intend to seek a formal intwoduction to her, the answer is yaas!"

"A distinction without a difference," murmured Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I intend more than that," went on Arthur Augustus serenely. "I have been sewiously turnin' the mattah ovah in my mind, and I am becomin' more and more inclined to go in for a caweer on the films myself."

"What?" yelled three incredulous juniors simultaneously. "Don't woaah, deah boys—I mean it! I have often thought that Miss Wayne's leadin' actah—a gentleman named Douglas Nash—is not quite suited to her. Therefore—"

"Oh, my sainted aunt!" breathed Blake. "Gussy, old pal, surely you don't mean—"

"He can't!" declared Dig. "Even Gussy isn't quite so potty as all that."

"Weally, Dig! What I was goin' to say was that I am sewiously contemplatin' takin' lessons in film-actin' with the ideah of becomin' Miss Wayne's leadin' man myself."

It was out!

Blake and Herries and Dig stared at the thoughtful-looking swell of the Fourth, then stared at each other.

Then they laughed. The laugh became a roar, the roar became a yell. Finally, they shrieked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Whatever you silly asses are laughin' at—"

"Don't!" begged Blake, wiping the tears from his eyes.

"If you want us to survive at all, don't say a syllable!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Herries and Dig.

"You uttah idiots! This is weally too bad! Weluctantly, you force me to administrah a feahful thwashin' all wround." And Arthur Augustus rose and pushed back his cuffs in a very determined manner.

Before he could begin, however, there was a tap at the study door, followed by the entrance of three smiling juniors in the shape of Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell.

CHAPTER 2.

Very Important!

"HALLO, hallo! Trouble in the family?" asked Tom Merry cheerily.

"You really must cure yourself of these bullying habits, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther, with deep seriousness.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats! Do you fellows mind standin' on one side for a minute while I give these three wottahs a feahful thwashin'?"

"Can't be did, old son!" grinned Tom Merry. "I've come along specially to see you—about footer."

D'Arcy dropped his hands and gave a sudden start.

"Bai Jove! That reminds me—"

"If it reminds you that you've got to play up to-morrow, all well and good," said Tom Merry. "That's what I've called about, as a matter of fact."

"Bai Jove!"

"You've heard about Talbot's going lame, of course? I'm giving Hammond a chance in his place."

D'Arcy nodded approval.

"I am vewy pleased to heah it, Tom Mewwy. Hammond

has twied hard for a place in the eleven this yeah. Good luck to him!"

"Exactly. But it's agreed that Hammond is not quite up to Talbot's form. Against a team like Abbotsford he may turn out to be a weak point in our attack. That's why I'm looking to you, on the other wing, Gussy, to give of your best. Savvy?"

D'Arcy, for reasons which were at present rather obscure, looked quite distressed.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, it is vewy good of you, and all that, but—"

"No 'buts' about it, old bean! I'm giving instructions all round that you're to be fed with the ball as often as possible, and I'm expecting you to make the most of the chances you get."

"Yaas, but—"

"You're always pretty reliable, but this time I want you to be more than that—I want you to shine, in fact. Think you can manage it, Gussy?" asked the skipper of the Junior Eleven, with a critical glance at his noble winger.

"Yaas, wathah! I haven't the slightest doubt about my ability to play wathah bwiliantly, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But you see—" went on Arthur Augustus, his brow clouding over once more.

"No, I don't see!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "This is no time for raising doubts and objections. We're going to have a stiff struggle to bring off the Abbotsford match, but we're going to do it."

"Hear, hear!"

"I twust so, indeed, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "But you haven't listened to what I was goin' to say—"

"Can't wait now, old chap!"

"But you must, deah boy! You see, I'm not goin' to play to-morrow!"

Tom Merry jumped. The rest stared at the swell of the Fourth almost incredulously. If Arthur Augustus had dropped a bombshell in Study No. 6 he could not have created a greater sensation than he caused by that simple announcement.

"You—you're not going to play?" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Pwecisely. I'm sowwy to disappoint you, an' all that, deah boy, but I simply can't turn out."

"But why the thump not?" demanded Jack Blake. "You haven't told us you had anything special on. Grandmother hasn't died or something, I suppose?"

"Pway don't wot, Blake! My welvatives are all in the best of health, so fah as I am awah."

"Then what prevents you turning out for the Junior Eleven?" roared Herries wrathfully. "Look 'ere, Gussy, if you're going to start lettin' this study down—"

"I have no intention whatever of lettin' the studay down, Hewwies. As I say, I'm sowwy—fwightfully sowwy. But you yourself will admit that there are mattahs of business which ovahvide in importance even football?"

"There aren't many!" growled Herries. "But, of course, if something important has happened—"

"If it's really serious—" nodded Tom Merry.

"I assuah you, deah boy, it is of the utmost importance and sewiousness!"

"Well, in that case, I suppose you'll have to be excused for once. But it makes it awfully rotten for the team, when we were absolutely relying on you. What's the trouble, exactly?"

"There is no twouble, deah boy."

"Well, what's the fearfully important matter that's keepin' you out then, ass?" snorted Blake. "You're not going to tell us you're turning down the Abbotsford match in favour of a motor-ride or a visit to the pictures?"

"I certainly should not contemplate givin' up the match for eithah of those alternatives. I have already stated that the mattah is of the highest importance."

"Then what is it?" hooted the leader of Study No. 6.

"As a mattah of fact, Blake, it was not my intention to say much about the biznay at this early stage of events. I have told you it is vewy important—"

"That's not good enough! You've got to tell us what it is!" grunted the leader of Study No. 6. "Think we're going to let you cut out the Abbotsford match without a satisfactory explanation? Not likely!"

"Then, in that case, deah boy, I will agree to explain. I wish to keep the thing confidential, but I know I can rely on your discretion. The fact is—"

"Cut the cackle and get to the hosses, old bean!" said Tom Merry impatiently.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! The fact is I have an appointment in Wayland with my elocation mastah."

Dead silence fell on Study No. 6. D'Arcy's chums gazed at him, almost petrified, for some seconds.

"You—you've got an appointment with your elocation master?" muttered Tom Merry at last in a suppressed voice.

"You—you— Oh, my hat! And that's what you called important!" moaned Blake. "Slaughter him, somebody!"

"Weally, Blake! I insist that an appointment with my

elocution mastah is frightfully important at the pwesent juncture—fah more important than footah!"

"Mad!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove! If you are wefewwin' to me——"

"Mad as a giddy hatter!" said Blake. "His elocution master, you know! Ever hear anything like it?"

"Never! And now I've heard it I'm not accepting it as an excuse!" said Tom Merry grimly. "If this is a joke, Gussy——"

"Bai Jove! It's no joke, I assuah you! My elocution mastah——"

"Blow your blessed elocution master! What the thump



Bump! "Whooop!" Gussy gave a roar, as his head was banged against the wall. "Now, you dummy!" growled Blake. "Going to play to-morrow, or not?"

do you want elocution lessons for? Going into Parliament, or on the stage, or something?"

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"Not exactly, deah boy," he said at last. "To tell you the twuth, Tom Mewwy, I am considervin' goin' on the seven as an actor in talkin' pictures."

"What?" yelled the Terrible Three simultaneously, while D'Arcy's study-mates looked daggers at him.

"Pway don't woah! Nothin' to be surprised at, that I see. I have already told these fellows about it."

"You—you're actually serious?" gasped Tom Merry faintly. "You're taking lessons in elocution so that you can act for the 'talkies'?"

"Pwecisely!"

"Gussy!" said Tom Merry, in surprise. "Is this the last stage of insanity or what? Do you really intend to make yourself the laughing-stock of St. Jim's? If you keep on at this rate, you'll finish up in a padded cell! What do you fellows say?"

"I think we'd better write to Lord Eastwood and tell him all about it," said Monty Lowther. "Now, tell me, Gussy, as man to man, are you really serious about this 'talkie' business?"

"Yaas!"

"And you're entting the Abbotsford match for one of the lessons?" howled Lowther.

"Just so!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

The threatened desertion of the Junior Eleven's "star" winger was not exactly a matter for laughter, but the reason given for that desertion could hardly have failed to strike them as humorous. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther yelled, what time D'Arcy's study-mates, who were not in-

clined to see the funny side of his defection from the team, glared; and Arthur Augustus surveyed the hilarious juniors through his monocle in considerable astonishment.

"Bai Jove! I uttally fail to see the weason for this laughtah, deah boys——"

"My hat! We do, though!" said Tom Merry, wiping the tears of merriment from his eyes. "But now you've had your little joke, Gus, let's be serious. You don't really mean this, do you?"

"I certainly do mean it, Tom Mewwy!"

"But the footer——"

"Footah is important, I agwee——"

"Oh, you admit that, do you?" growled Blake.

"Footah is vewy important, but there are certain othah things in life which are more important still. Pwobably you youngstabs will undahstand my meanin' one of these days," said Arthur Augustus, with an indulgent smile. "If you fail to undahstand at pwesent, that's not my fault, is it? I'm afwaid I must ask you, Tom Mewwy, anyway, to find someone else to take my place to-morrow."

Tom Merry's smile faded away again.

"Look here, Gus, be sensible! You can't let us down in the Abbotsford match, of all things—especially for a potty lesson in elocution!"

"If you are goin' to chawactewise my lessons in elocution as pottay, Tom Mewwy——"

"Well, what else are they, when they interfere with footer?" asked the junior captain. "Stop rotting and try to be rational, old chap. You're going to play against Abbotsford to-morrow!"

D'Arcy shook his head firmly.

"Sowwy, deah boy! I assuah you I am fwightfully dis-twessed an' all that, but——"

"Knock his head against the wall until he sees sense!" advised Jack Blake. "I'll do it for you if you like!"

And Blake rose from his chair. Arthur Augustus eyed him coldly.

"If you twy any violent twicks with me, Blake—"

"I'm going to!" said Blake grimly. "How's this for a start?"

Bump!

"Yawwooooh!" roared the swell of the Fourth, as his noble head came into collision with the study wall. "Look heah, you wottah—"

"Gimme a hand, Herries! Now, you dummy! Going to play to-morrow, or not?"

"No! I uttably wefuse— Yawwooooh!"

"You can change your mind whenever you like, you know!" said Blake, continuing to bang D'Arcy's head against the wall with great vigour. "Just say 'Yes!' when you feel like agreeing."

"Whooooooh! You feahful wottah, I'll thwash you— Yawwooh! Gwoooooh!"

"My hat! You'll put an end to what little bit of brain he possesses if you go on at this rate!" remarked Tom Merry, when the interlude had gone on for some little time. "As the duffer seems so determined I shall drop him now, anyway. Hear that, Gus?"

"Ow! Bai Jove! My nappah!" groaned Arthur Augustus, as Blake and Herries mercifully released him. "Don't go yet, Blake, you wottah! As soon as I have wecowed my equilibrium I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Brrrr!" was Blake's only response to that threat. And the leader of Study No. 6 did not wait to receive that fearful thrashing. Instead, he followed the rest out of the study, slamming the door behind him with a slam that echoed down the Fourth passage.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was left alone to compose poetry to the celebrated Gloria Rayne for the rest of the evening if he felt so disposed—which was rather doubtful now.

CHAPTER 3 Elocut'on!

"BAI JOVE!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy paused outside a dingy little house in one of the meaner streets of Wayland and eyed it with a dubious eye.

It was the afternoon following the painful episode in Study No. 6, and the swell of the Fourth had duly come into the town to receive his lesson in the art of good speaking.

His decision to "cut" the Abbotsford match had caused quite a sensation in the Lower School. Comment on that decision in the Fourth had been more forcible than polite, but that circumstance had not deflected D'Arcy from his course. D'Arcy was the possessor of what he himself considered to be great firmness of character. Other fellows usually regarded it as mule-like obstinacy, but D'Arcy himself regarded it simply as firmness. Firmness or obstinacy, he had exercised it on this occasion. Hence, while Tom Merry and his men were turning out on Little Side to play the formidable Abbotsford team, the swell of the Fourth was seeking out the residence of a Mr. Seed, a letter from whom reposed in his pocket.

Mr. Seed was a teacher of elocution, and a trainer of aspirants to honours on the stage and screen. At least, that was what he claimed to be in the three-line advertisement which had caught D'Arcy's eye in the last issue of the "Wayland Gazette." Now that D'Arcy beheld his decidedly unpretentious residence for the first time, he felt a slight pang of doubt.

On reflection, the swell of the Fourth dismissed his doubts. After all, Mr. Seed was probably an old actor himself, and actors were notoriously Bohemian in their habits. Probably this kind of house was more suited to his Bohemian and unconventional habits of life than a modern villa in the middle-class residential part of the town.

Feeling rather consoled by that thought, Arthur Augustus rang the bell.

Response came in the form of a red-faced lady of generous proportions, who fixed a stern and suspicious look on the St. Jim's junior.

D'Arcy raised his topper and bowed elegantly—an action which caused the red-faced lady to start almost violently.

"Good-aftahnoon, madam!" said the swell of the Fourth. "I have an appointment with Mr. Seed—"

"My eye! Are you Master D'Arcy?" asked the red-faced lady, her stern expression dissolving into a smile.

"Yaas. Mr. Seed is expectin' me."

"My eye! Things are lookin' up! Come inside, will you, sir?"

Arthur Augustus entered, feeling a little mystified at the cryptic remark about things looking up. Why things

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should be looking up because he had called was rather a puzzle to the swell of the Fourth.

The red-faced lady ushered her visitor into a little, faded parlour, and withdrew. After that D'Arcy heard her wheezy voice calling up the stairs:

"Mr. Seed! Master D'Arcy to see you!"

There was a muttered response from the upper regions of the house, followed by a patter of footsteps down creaky stairs. A moment later Mr. Seed looked round the door.

Mr. Seed, to look at, was not at all that could have been wished for in a teacher of elocution. D'Arcy had somehow expected a tall, artistic-looking gentleman, with piercing eyes, and a deep, resonant voice. Instead of which the newcomer proved to be short and fat, with watery eyes and a voice which was as wheezy as that of his landlady—for that, D'Arcy had already decided, was the status of the red-faced lady who had answered the door.

Mr. Seed smiled a fat smile of greeting as he entered the room.

"Afternoon, young gentleman!" he remarked pleasantly. "Master D'Arcy, I believe?"

"Quite wight, deah boy! You weceived my lettah, I twust?"

Mr. Seed started. His visitor's accent was rather unexpected.

"Yes, I got it all right," he answered, taking in his visitor with watery eyes. "Now I understand you want some lessons with the idea of acting for the 'talkies'?"

"Quite cowweet, Mr. Seed. In confidence between ourselves, it is my ambition to act on the seween with Miss Glowia Wayne."

Mr. Seed jumped.

"You—you want to act with Gloria Rayne?"

"Yaas, wathah! Fwankly, Mr. Seed, I am not at all impressed with the gentleman who takes the leadin' part in most of her pictures at pwesent. Douglas Nash, his namo is, and you, as a cwitic, will agwee with me. I am suah that his actin' is vewy infewiah to that of Miss Wayne herself?"

Mr. Seed blinked.

"Hem! I see. So what you mean, Master D'Arcy, is that you're aimin' at playing the leading male parts in her films instead of Douglas Nash. That the idea?"

"Pwecisely. I feel quite confident of my ability to do justice to Miss Wayne's actin'—you agwee with me that it is wonderful actin', Mr. Seed?"

"Oh! Ah! Certainly, laddie!" said Mr. Seed, who did not look as if he intended to contradict anything D'Arcy said. "I take it you're rather—hem!—keen on Gloria Rayne—eh, what?"

"I considah she is a most charmin' and gwacious lady," replied Arthur Augustus. "I should vewy much like to act with her in a big film—pwefewably in 'somehin' of a womanic nature; and, as I say, I am confident of my ability to make a success of the biznay. The only thing is that at pwesent I lack technical knowledge. That's where you come in, Mr. Seed."

Mr. Seed rubbed his hands.

"Quite! Quite! You wish me to train you in elocution and the technique of film-acting? Master D'Arcy, I can tell you this—if you'd gone to the West End of London and paid fifty guineas, you couldn't have chosen a better man. What I don't know about the stage and the screen isn't worth knowing, take it from me!"

"Bai Jove! That's good to know, deah boy! Now, bein' quite candid, do you think you can lick me into shape in the next few weeks, so that I can w'ite to Miss Wayne about the mattah with some degwee of confidence?"

"I have no doubt about it, my dear young gentleman," smiled Mr. Seed. "Now, before we begin our first lesson, there is just a minor matter of the payment of the first instalment of my fee—"

"Bai Jove! Yaas. How much do you want on account, deah boy?"

A particularly hard look came into Mr. Seed's watery eyes.

"Shall we say two guineas now, and the balance to be paid off in the course of a month?" he suggested.

"That will suit me admiwably. I have two or three pounds on me at pwesent, and I am expectin' a tewnah from the patah shortly, which will enable me to pay off the wemaiuin' eight guineas. Heah you are!"

Mr. Seed's babby hand closed over two crisp notes and the odd silver with an eagerness that his abilities as an actor seemed unable to conceal.

The hard look vanished from Mr. Seed's face as he transferred D'Arcy's first instalment to his waistcoat pocket. He was all smiles and geniality by the time he had concluded that little operation.

"And now for your lesson, Master D'Arcy!" he said. "You have had, I take it, no previous instruction in elocution and acting?"

"None whatevah, deah boy!"

"Excellent! I prefer it that way. Give me the pupil who comes to me fresh, without the prejudices of previous instructors to hamper his progress!" said Mr. Seed, who seemed to have become enthusiastic since receiving the first instalment of his new pupil's fee. "Now, Master D'Arcy, just to give me an idea of your vocal powers, will you kindly say 'Ah!'?"

"Pleasuah, deah boy!" beamed the swell of the Fourth. "Ah!"

Mr. Seed rubbed his hands together delightedly. "Splendid!" he exclaimed. "We are getting along famously. Perhaps you will hardly credit it when I tell you that merely by hearing you pronounce that vowel sound I can already prophesy a great future for you on the screen!"

"Bai Jove! It weally sounds hardly ewedible!" said Arthur Augustus, unobtrusively. "I suppose your long experience enables you to do that sort of thing, Mr. Seed?"

Mr. Seed seemed to choke.

"Hem! 'Hem! Exactly! That's exactly it!" he managed to splutter eventually. "Now for the next test, young gentleman! Just oblige me by saying 'Oh!' in the same way as you have just said 'Ah!' will you?"

D'Arcy drew a deep breath.

"Oh!" he said, after making that preparation.

"Great! Great!" said Mr. Seed. "Really, you are getting along like a house on fire, Master D'Arcy. Now, I want you to watch me carefully while I recite a couple of lines from Shakespeare. Try to note exactly what gestures I make and how I stress the words. Are you ready?"

"Quite weady, deah boy!"

The teacher of elocution struck a dramatic attitude, raising his right hand above his head and attempting to look stern and extremely dignified—a result which was rather difficult to achieve through the medium of his somewhat flabby face. Having remained in this position for a couple of seconds, his wheezy voice resounded through the faded little parlour in the celebrated lines:

"Friends, Romans, countrymen! Lend me your ears!
I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him."

Mr. Seed's hand descended again, and he smiled at his noble pupil.

"Now, try that, laddie!" he said genially. "Naturally, I don't expect you to get it perfect first go. I was acting Shakespeare before you were born, so I've got a bit of a start on you. But don't be scared. Just try it."

D'Arcy, as a matter of fact, was not a bit scared. He felt quite anxious to declaim those celebrated words, if only to impress his master about his histrionic talent. He adjusted his monocle, and struck an attitude rather similar to that of Mr. Seed, but decidedly more graceful.

"Friends, Womans, countwmen! Lend me your yahs!
I come to buwy Cæsar, not to pwaise him."

"Scissors!" said Mr. Seed involuntarily.

"Eh?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, with a slight start.

"I mean, bravo!" said Mr. Seed hastily. "Well done, my boy—exceedingly well done, if I may say so! You just need to roll the 'r's' a little more—just the weeniest bit you know! Like this:

"Fr-r-riends, R-r-romans, countrymen! Lend me your ear-r-r-rs!
I come to bury Cæsar-r-r, not to pr-r-r-raise him!"

"Try it again, Master D'Arcy!"

D'Arcy nodded.

"By all means, deah boy!"

"Friends, Womans, countwmen! Lend me your yahs!
I come to buwy Cæsar, not to pwaise him."

Mr. Seed seemed to choke again for an instant.

"Much better!" he said gravely, having recovered. "I can see that you are going to prove an easy pupil, Master D'Arcy. You seize on the essential points so quickly. Brains will tell, of course."

"Bai Jove! That's twue, certainly!" admitted the swell of the Fourth. "What do we do next?"

Mr. Seed seemed rather puzzled as to what to do next, for a moment. Eventually he decided that as they had started with Shakespeare, they might as well carry on with the famous bard. So that was what they did.

During the next hour Arthur Augustus struck a good many dramatic attitudes, and recited quite a lot of Shakespeare after his mentor.

The swell of the Fourth, who knew his Shakespeare

fairly well, couldn't help noticing that Mr. Seed had his own peculiar renderings of the poet's works. Either the elocution master had grown a little bazy since his acting days, or else the stage versions of Shakespeare's plays must have differed considerably from the book versions D'Arcy had read. D'Arcy decided to give Mr. Seed the benefit of the doubt and satisfy himself with the latter explanation.

Mr. Seed glanced at his watch at last, and made a gesture. "Enough for one day, Master D'Arcy, I think!" he remarked. "No good overdoing it and knocking yourself up, is it?"

"Bai Jove! I weally don't feel at all like cwockin' up yet, deah boy. But if you considah I've done enough for to-day—"

"Quite enough, if you ask me, young gentleman! Have a smoke?" asked Mr. Seed, producing a case containing half a dozen black and evil-looking cheroots.

"Gweat pip! Not just now, thank you!" answered Arthur Augustus, with a slight shudder. "And now, speakin' fwankly, Mr. Seed, what do you weally think of my pwopets of becomin' a successful 'talkie' actah?"

Mr. Seed winked at the ceiling.

"Shall I tell you my candid opinion?" he asked. "Well, there's no harm in doing so, Master D'Arcy, so I will. Quite candidly, I think you're the most promising pupil I've ever had."

Mr. Seed did not mention whether D'Arcy was promising from the acting point of view or from the point of view of Mr. Seed's pocket. The swell of the Fourth assumed, rather naturally, that Mr. Seed was referring to his histrionic abilities, and he fairly beamed at the welcome information.

"Then you weally think that, aftah pwopah twainin', I might w'ite to Miss Glowia Wayne and offah myself as her leadin' man with some chances of success?" he asked anxiously.

"Not the slightest doubt about it!" replied Mr. Seed readily. "Matter of fact, between you and me—Of course, you'll keep it confidential?"

"Bai Jove! You may wely on my discowetion, deah boy!" "Well, I'll tell you, then, that in film circles just now it's an open secret that Gloria Rayne is looking out for a fresh leading man," said Mr. Seed, in a confidential whisper. "Is there any reason why you should not take on the job when I've finished training you?"

(Continued on next page.)

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"None wbatervah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus gravely.

For the third time Mr. Seed seemed to be in sudden danger of choking. But he recovered, with an effort, and lit up one of his black cheroots.

"Well, I suppose you'll want to be going now," he remarked. "When will it be convenient for you to come along for your next lesson, Master D'Arcy?"

"To-morrow, aifah classes, deah boy, if it will suit you. Say half-past five?"

"Suit me down to the ground!" smiled Mr. Seed, blowing out a great cloud of bluish smoke. "Your hat, sir!"

"Thank you, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus parted cordially from his elocution master at the door of the shabby little house, and walked through the streets of Wayland towards the station as though he were walking on air.

The first step in his career as leading man to Miss Gloria Rayne had been taken, and already the swell of the Fourth could picture himself acting stirring and romantic roles with his film idol. A rosy future seemed to open out before him, and a dreamy look came into D'Arcy's face as he thought about it. That dreamy look was still there when he arrived back at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4.

A Letter to Gloria!

"LOST!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Lost four—one! That's the giddy result, as you're interested enough to ask!" snorted Blake.

"Satisfied now, you dummy?"

"I am weally awfully sowwy!" said Arthur Augustus, sitting down at the tea-table in Study No. 6, and colouring slightly under the grim looks of his study-mates. "Of course, I wathah expected it. I was wathah afwaid that you youngstahs would fall to pieces without me in the team, you know!"

"Brrrrrr!"

"It's a feahful pittay, of course! Now that's all ovah, I wathah wegwet in a way that I didn't play, aifah all. I might have walled you to gweafah efforts, an' all that sort of thing, you know!"

"No use talking about what you might have done," said Herries, bluntly. "It's what you have done that counts! What you've done is to let this study down badly!"

"Hear, hear!" from Digby.

"Silly ass as you are, you can play footer; nobody denies that. And yet just on the occasion when the Junior Eleven relies on you, you back out! You want scragging!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"And it's all for a blessed lesson in elocution—so that you can act on the 'talkies'!" said Blake, more in sorrow than in anger. "Do you realise what you've done, Gussy, or are you too far gone to understand anything?"

"Weally, Blake! If you insinuate that I have lost possession of my weasonin' faculties—"

"Drop it, old bean!" begged Blake. "I'm not ragging now. I'm talking to you as a pal—like a father to his son, if you like!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed the swell of the Fourth, while Herries and Dig broke into an involuntary chuckle.

"Think of yourself as you used to be in the days of yore—say two or three weeks ago," urged Blake. "Would you have let your school down for the sake of a footling lesson in film-acting in those days? Not likely!"

"Yaas, but—"

"Think of what you're likely to be if this process goes on much longer," went on Blake seriously. "It hardly bears thinking about, but just give it a thought, and turn back before it's too late. Imagine yourself if you do get on the films. Just imagine blacking your face and singing 'Sonny Boy'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Herries and Dig, forgetting their resentment for a moment.

Arthur Augustus bestowed a withering look on the leader of Study No. 6.

"Weally, Blake, I assuah you there is no dangah wathervah of my blackin' my face and singin' 'Sonny Boy.' I should utterly refuse to do any such thing! The woles I shall take when I go on the films will be womantic woles. Wathah than black my face I should wesign altogether!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally fail to see anythin' to laugh at, deah boys! Pway, cease cacklin' and listen to me for a moment. I want your advice."

"Oh, go ahead!"

"The problem is this. Should I write to Miss Gloria Wayne before I have finished twainin' for the films, or aifah?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's wathah a delicate mattah, as you fellows will appweciate," said D'Arcy, a thoughtful frown on his noble brow. "I have not yet been intwoduiced to the lady. In fact, I have nevah seen her, apart, of course, from seein' her on the films. Ordinarily, of course, I shouldn't dweam of writin' to a lady I had nevah seen or met, but the case is wathah diffewent with film stahs, and I have satisfied myself that it will not be a vewy sewious bweach of etiquette if I do write to Miss Wayne."

"But what the thump are you going to write about when you do write?" demanded Blake.

"Going to ask for her autograph, perhaps?" suggested Herries sarcastically.

"Pway don't talk wot, Hewwies! I shouldn't dweam of wastin' Miss Wayne's valuable time by wequestin' her autograph. When I write it will be on the subject I have already mentioned to you."

"You mean—" queried Blake, with a start.

"Surely you can't mean—" said Digby.

"I mean that I shall write to offah my services as Miss Wayne's leadin' man for her future pwoductions," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

Blake and Herries and Digby gave vent to their feelings in a simultaneous gasp.

"You—you— Oh, you prize-packet!" breathed Blake.

"You footling, burbling, howling chump!" said Digby.

"You fatheaded, idiotic dummy!" was Herries' contribution to the chorus.

Arthur Augustus started.

"Weally, deah boys, if you insist on usin' oppwobvious expwessions about me I shall have no option but to thwash the lot of you—"

"Isn't it possible to make you see a little sense, Gus?" asked Blake. "I thought when I banged your head against the wall last night that it might knock a little bit of savvy into you—"

"Why, you sillay ass—"

"But apparently that's no more effective than any other method," said the leader of Study No. 6, with a sigh. "Try to be rational for a moment. I know it's a lot to ask from you, but try! You've been talking about a film star who's known all over the world, whose acting is sufficiently good to bring her in a thousand a week—according to the papers."

"I weally don't see how that affects the mattah—"

"Someone who can afford to wear thirty thousand pounds' worth of jewellery when she takes a walk down the street," continued Blake. "That's paper talk, I know, but there's something in it. And remember, you fathead, that she has made all that jewellery out of acting for the 'movies.' Get that?"

"Yaas, but—"

"But nothing!" grunted Blake. "I'm just pointing out that Gloria Rayne is one of the highest-paid and most popular film actresses on the screen. The fellow that acts with her has therefore got to be something of a star himself, and if you'll just think for one moment you'll see for yourself that the prospects of Gloria Rayne taking on a fifteen-year-old schoolboy without experience are more than remote—they don't even exist!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Don't argue! Just put your head under a tap and think it out for a bit. It won't be long before you decide to chuck the film business and come back to footer instead!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and fixed a cold look on his prosaic leader.

"If I might say a few words now—" he began.

"Carry on if you want to. I've said all I can say about it verbally. Anything I've left out I can say with a cricket stump or an Indian club!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I weally do wish you fellows would stop cacklin'!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Now, Blake, I am sowwy to have to do so, but aifah listenin' vewy carefully to what you have said, I can only chawactewise your wemarks as uttah wot!"

"Thought you would. You look in that mood!" nodded Blake.

"I agree that if you look at the mattah on the surface it seems wathah fah-fetched to think of a schoolboy aspiwin' to act with anyone so famous as Miss Wayne. But, aifah all, the cires are not altogether so simple as that. For one thing, I am considerably tallah than most fellows of my own age; then again, I have fah more tact an' judgment than even grown-ups, in most cases. More important still, I am absolutely born to act for the talkin'-films—my voice will wepwoduce perfectly, an' my actin' abilities are beyond question."

"My hat! Who told you that?" asked Blake, with a stare.

"Mr. Seed."

"And who's Mr. Seed when he's at home?"

"Mr. Seed is my elocation mastah, deah boy!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, deah boys—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Blake & Co.
 "Bai Jove! If you eacklin' wottahs don't dwy up—"
 "His elocation master told him so, you know!" gurgled Dig. "And on the strength of that he's going to write Gloria Rayne about it!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Arthur Augustus could stand it no longer. With an expression of unutterable scorn on his classic countenance he discarded his jacket, rolled back his cuffs, and squared up to his hilarious study-mates.

by a sort of common instinct they felt that the present circumstances did not warrant the infliction of violence on the swell of the Fourth. So instead of rushing at D'Arcy they rushed out of the study.

Arthur Augustus uttered a yell.
 "Stop! I insist on your stoppin' until I have thwashed you!"
 "Sorry, old bean!" came Blake's voice from the Fourth passage.

And that was the last D'Arcy heard of his study-mates for another hour. By the time he had gained the passage Blake and the others had vanished.

"Wottahs!" said the swell of the Fourth. With which



There was a yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as Miss Gloria Rayne stepped out of the car. "Suthing bit you, bo'?" asked the film star.

"Pway put up your hands!" he ordered.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Since you persist in this ludicrous behaviah, I have no alternative but to administrah a feabful thwashin'. Put them up, you diswespectful wuffians!"
 "Mercy!" was Blake's ironical response to the indignant D'Arcy's command.
 "Bai Jove!"
 "Mercy!" yelled Herries and Dig, taking their cue from Blake.
 "You uttah idiots—"
 "Spare us, old chap! Don't annihilate us in your wrath!" begged Blake.
 "As you are strong, so be merciful!" implored Digby.
 It dawned on the swell of the Fourth that Blake & Co.'s pleas were a little too exaggerated to be genuine. D'Arcy was not a suspicious kind of fellow, but even he couldn't help seeing something suspicious in the picture of the stalwarts of Study No. 6 begging him to spare them.
 "Look heah, you wottahs—" he said.
 "Mercy!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You're twyin' to jape me—"
 "Now I wonder how he found that out?" asked Blake, in astonishment.
 "Which means that you are addin' insult to injuw!" said D'Arcy wrathfully. "Undah the cires I shall thwash you, whethah you defend yourselves or not! Look out!"
 And Arthur Augustus made a rush.
 Blake and Dig and Herries made a rush, too. They could, of course, have made a rush at their warlike colleague had they been so disposed. But tea was over, and

scornful epithet he temporarily abandoned thoughts of vengeance and retired back into Study No. 6.

Left without guidance from his study-mates as to the best course to adopt, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had to rely on his own good judgment.

Fortunately, D'Arcy's judgment was equal to the task—or so it seemed, at all events, judging from the fact that the postal collection from St. Jim's that night contained a letter addressed to:

"Miss Gloria Rayne,
 The Majestic Hotel,
 London, W."

CHAPTER 5.

Tom Merry's Wheeze!

"SOMETHING will have to be done!"
 Jack Blake spoke quite seriously.
 It was two days later, and a small crowd, consisting of Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth, and the Terrible Three of the Shell, had gathered in the Junior Common-room after prep.

They were discussing Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. D'Arcy had succeeded in provoking quite a lot of discussion in the Lower School at St. Jim's during the previous few days. He had also succeeded in provoking quite a lot of laughter, although, as Lowther remarked, that was nothing new.

But it was getting beyond a joke now. D'Arcy's study-mates were of that opinion, anyway.

"The frabjous ass seems to have lost his head completely," explained Digby to the Terrible Three. "It's elocution and acting from morn to dewy eve. If you try to talk sense to him he just stares blankly, as though he hasn't heard!"

"Poor old Gus!" murmured Manners, with a shake of his head.

"Wouldn't be so bad if it was a simple case of being film-struck," complained Jack Blake. "But it's worse than that. He's got this crackpot notion into his head that he's going to be Gloria Rayne's leading man——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And there's no dislodging it. He wrote her a couple of days ago to tell her all about himself——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Since when he's been watching the blessed postman like a hawk!" said Blake, with a rueful grin. "Of course, he won't get a reply. If Gloria Rayne ever reads the letter she'll simply conclude that St. Jim's is a mental home, and let it go at that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But it won't even end there. She's coming to Wayland shortly to open the Wayland Cinema as a 'talkie' show. Gussy has fully made up his mind that he's going to meet her and have a real heart-to-heart talk about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"At any cost, we've got to prevent that!" said Blake. "For the sake of the prestige of the school—and the form, of course——"

"And the study!" put in Herries.

"Exactly! If Gussy caused a scene at Wayland, Study No. 6 could never hold up its head again!" said Blake quite dramatically. "Yet that's what we're faced with unless something drastic happens. We've simply got to bring the cheerful idiot back to earth somehow. The problem is—how?"

Tom Merry had been quiet and thoughtful for several minutes. As Blake finished he made a sudden exclamation.

"My hat! I wonder——"

"Got a wheeze, Tommy?" asked Lowther.

The leader of the Shell smiled.

"I rather fancy I have. Haven't got the details worked out yet; but if it could be done——"

"Trot it out and leave us to work out the details, old bean!" advised Blake. "With Fourth brains on the problem——"

"The problem that the Shell had to solve!" grinned Lowther.

The Fourth Form juniors frowned.

"Trying to be funny, Lowther?" asked Herries grimly.

"Not half so funny as you chaps are without intending to be!"

"Why, you footling ass——"

"Peace, peace!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "No ragging while affairs of state are under discussion. If you Fourth kids——"

"Kid yourself!" said Dig.

"If you Fourth fellows, then," said Tom Merry obligingly, "will just keep quiet for a few secs, I'll explain the idea. I understand the problem is to convince Gus quickly and unmistakably that the idea of becoming Gloria Rayne's leading man is the wildest, pottiest idea he ever developed. That it?"

"Something like it," nodded Blake. "Carry on!"

Tom Merry's eyes twinkled.

"Suppose Gloria Rayne came to St. Jim's to see Gussy——"

"Eh?"

"Fat lot of good supposing that!" snorted Herries.

"Suppose she turned up to tea in Study No. 6, for instance," pursued Tom, unperturbed. "And suppose she turned out to be a wild and woolly American, with an accent you could cut with a knife——"

"My hat!"

"And clothes you could see a mile off, and simply awful table manners——"

"M-m-my giddy aunt!"

"Suppose, in short, she turned out to be someone who would outrage all Gussy's ideas of what a beautiful film star should really be," smiled Tom. "That would soon solve the problem, wouldn't it? Gussy would drop Gloria Rayne like a hot brick after that, wouldn't he?"

"Gone potty yourself now?" asked Blake pleasantly.

"Not a bit of it!"

Blake snorted.

"Then if you're not potty, what the thump are you talking about? You've suggested that Gloria Rayne will come here to tea. That's daft, to begin with!"

Tom Merry smiled again.

"Perhaps it sounds like it, old chap, but——"

"But even supposing the impossible happened, and she did turn up for tea, the odds are about a million to one

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against everything else. How the thump do we know Gloria Rayne has a fearful accent and awful table manners, and all the rest of it?" demanded Blake.

"Probability is that she's just as nice off the screen as she looks on," said Dig. "If so, Gus would be all the keener."

"Exactly! So what are you getting at?" asked Blake, with a puzzled frown at the captain of the Shell.

Tom Merry laughed.

"If you'll just wait a minute I'll finish, and you'll see for yourself. I'm not suggesting that the real Gloria Rayne is going to turn up to tea at St. Jim's——"

"Oh!"

"But what I am suggesting is that it's quite possible for us to arrange for a spoof Gloria Rayne to turn up in place of the original!"

"A—a spoof Gloria Rayne?" stuttered Blake, staring. "Surely you're not thinking it's possible for one of us to rig up as a blessed film star? Because if so——"

"Impossible!" said Herries, shaking his head. "Nobody at St. Jim's could carry it off. Even Kerr couldn't do it!"

"I didn't say he could," smiled Tom. "Too big a job for a fellow, I agree. But I think I know somebody who could manage it."

"And who's that?"

"Peggy Brooke, of Spalding Hall."

For a moment the juniors stared at Tom Merry almost in bewilderment; then there was a yell.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Of course!"

"Just the job for her, you see," said Tom Merry. "Lady Peggy's an actress to her finger-tips—we all know that. What's more, it's just the kind of jape she'd revel in. Naturally, she'll have to disguise herself. Her hair is auburn, and Gloria Rayne's is fair. But a wig will soon get over that difficulty."

"And, come to think of it, she's got the same kind of profile as Miss Rayne," remarked Manners. "Tommy, old son, I fancy you've hit it!"

"The wheeze of the term!" grinned Lowther. "Didn't I tell you Fourth kids it needed a Shell man on the job?"

But Lowther's chortle passed unchallenged this time. Blake and Herries and Dig were too excited over Tom Merry's bright idea to bother about the respective merits of the Shell and the Fourth just then.

The meeting adjourned to Study No. 10 for a detailed discussion. And if the chuckles and bursts of laughter with which the meeting was punctuated were anything to go by, the juniors' deliberations were of a highly satisfactory nature!

CHAPTER 6.

Great Expectations I

"IT'S wathah stwange!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark.

It was morning break a few days later, and the swell of the Fourth was taking a turn round the quad with Blake and Herries and Dig. For some minutes he had been silent—a somewhat unusual state of affairs where D'Arcy was concerned. Blake and the rest had a shrewd suspicion that his noble brain was occupied with the subject of the celebrated Miss Gloria Rayne. They were not far wrong.

"Talking about your face, I suppose?" remarked Jack Blake chattily. "Well, it is rather strange, if it comes to that. Shouldn't let it worry you, though. Not a very serious matter, after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned pink.

"Weally, Blake! You are well awah that I was not wewefwin' to my face. I have wemarked before that I should be greatly obliged if you would wefwain from makin' pottay jokes. What I meant was wathah stwange, as a mattah of fact, was the peculiah circumstance that Miss Wayne has not weplied to my lettah yet."

"Better send her a reminder," said Blake judiciously. "Something fairly severe and formal, I should say. Like this, 'Dearest Gloria,—How can you keep me thus in suspense? Yours, with love and kisses, Gus'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy's face changed from pink to deep crimson.

"You uttah ass! As if I should wite such dwivel to any lady!"

"She might fall for it—you never know!" grinned Blake. "Hallo! Here comes your scruffy minor! Why don't you tell him to keep his fingers clean?"

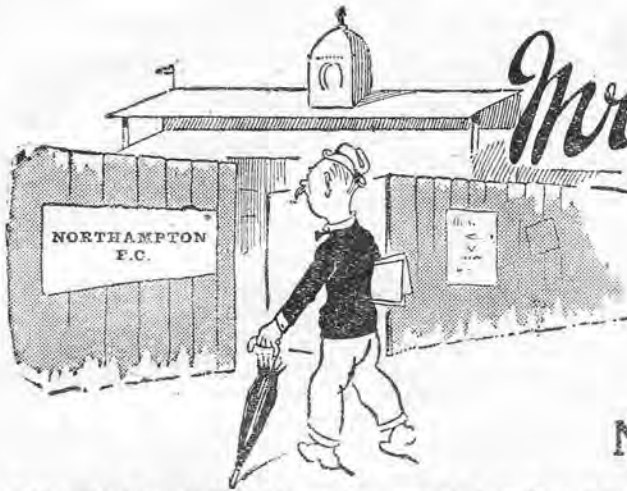
"Same to you, you cheeky Fourth-Former!" said Wally D'Arcy of the Third cheerfully. "You're wanted, Gus!"

Kildare told me to fetch you

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, I wondah?"

"Phone call for you in the Prefects' room," grinned

(Continued on page 12.)



Mr. Parker POPS IN TO SEE NORTHAMPTON.

Each week Mr. "Nosey" Parker, our special football representative, gets more popular. The reason for this is, that "Nosey" knows the right kind of "dope" to dish out to his readers!

"Little Fanny" Walden.

WHEN I think of Northampton my mind runs back to a story I heard a few years ago. A growing lad was asked by his school teacher what he knew about the town of Northampton. He replied: "It is famous for making scoring boots for Fanny Walden." That lad hadn't got his facts marshalled in quite the right way, but he knew that Northampton was famous for making boots, and that "Fanny" Walden was a famous football product of the town.

And as "little Fanny"—the smallest footballer who ever played for England—happens to be a friend of mine, I called upon him when I went to Northampton even before going on to the football ground. I found the one-time player of Northampton and later of the Spurs full of enthusiasm about the present team. He thinks it one of the best the club has ever had, and he also has an idea that they will win the championship of the Third Division this season and thus realise an ambition to take a step up in the football world.

Cricket is another subject which is also interesting the one-time dazzling little footballer, too, for although he no longer plays for Northampton County at the summer game, he is going to take an active part in cricket this summer. He has been appointed a county umpire. He will have to have his white coats specially made for him or, alternatively, those which fit other umpires nicely will have to have tucks put in them when it is "Fanny's" turn to go out into the middle.

A Player-Manager!

IT was Walden who did something to inspire love of football in the hearts of Northampton people, and I think his influence is still felt in the side. For instance, I found when I went to the ground that most of the players at present on the staff of the Northampton Town Football Club are keen cricketers. "If we can't win the championship of the Third Division," said Jack Tressadern, "I believe we could win a cricket championship in which football teams took part, if there were such a thing."

Mr. Tressadern is of course, the manager of Northampton and quite properly, proud of his lads. He knows the game, too, having played for England when he was a half-back with West Ham United, and later on, going to Northampton, he hoped to act for quite a time in the role of player-manager. However, a serious injury compelled him to retire to the managerial chair almost exclusively. But he still takes an interest in poultry. At

one time he had a big farm in an Essex village.

The present Northampton players have been gathered together from many different corners of the country, but they have blended into a happy family. Tom Smith, who usually plays at inside-right, is the captain of the side, and, like everybody else at Northampton, he is most enthusiastic about the club's future. Tom is not the most talkative player I have come across, but on the field his guiding hand is often noticeable. He has four brothers who have all played or are playing with first class football clubs, the best-known of them, perhaps, being Jack, who plays at inside-forward for Portsmouth.

Tom is a cricketer of no mean ability, and in addition to having turned out for Durham in the Minor Counties championship, has assisted his "home village" team to carry off the championship of the Durham Senior League for three seasons in succession.

Singing Footballers!

ALL the time I was talking to Tom about his boys, as he calls them, there was coming to me from another corner of the room the notes of one of the latest popular songs. I eventually discovered that the "canary" of the team was Bob Maloney, the centre-half. On the slightest provocation—and oft-times without any provocation at all—Bob bursts into song. Between the singing of Bob Maloney and other professional footballers I have heard, however, there was this rather important difference—that Bob can really sing.

"The only thing which will stop him from singing," said George Allon, who is a half-back partner of Bob's, "is a gramophone." George never lets pass an opportunity of chipping somebody about something, and if anybody connected with the side is at all down in the dumps the cheeriness of this North-countryman is a certain tonic.

A Thousand Leagues!

ALLON has always a good story ready, and he told me a new one connected with a footballer. There was a young player who, not very modest about his footballing ability was always talking about the prospect of playing in League football. One day a pal made a good effort to cure him.

"We have a book on the shelves at home," he said "which you ought to read. It is all about the Leagues you really deserve to be in." The youngster with the swelled head was all attention, and asked for the book to be brought to him.

It was duly produced—that famous book of Jules Verne's entitled: "A Thousand Leagues Under the Sea."

There were no light stories of that type coming from goalkeeper Hammond. He is a happy soul though, who loves to start an argument and then carry it on in a friendly way, as long as anybody can be found with whom to argue. He and George Russell, the right-back, have long talks about football tactics—defensive tactics particularly, for the full-back takes his football in the most serious way. He was going round the town ground most conscientiously when I was there and looked as though he would continue his training until the cows came home.

Little Tom Thumb!

OUTSIDE-RIGHT ALBERT Sissons is another member of a footballing family who has an ambition quite apart from seeing Northampton climb to the Second Division. He wants to arrange a single wicket cricket match with his captain, Tom Smith. As I knew that Tom is a very good cricketer, I thought that the challenge of Sissons was merely a joke until I learnt that he had played in county trial matches for Yorkshire.

The billiards champion of the first eleven is Frank Brett, the left-back, and when I was there he was showing the other lads how Lindrum makes those nursery cannons. I shouldn't put Frank into the same school as Lindrum, of course, but, on the other hand, I saw enough to convince me that it was no use looking in his direction for a "mug" at the game on the green baize.

Perhaps it is because they remember at Northampton the things "little Fanny" Walden used to do for them that they have encouraged Tom Wells, the outside-left. He is not much bigger than Walden used to be when he was a player. But as he tells the other players, when chipped about his size, "Good stuff lies in small compass." And little "Tom Thumb" is good on the wing.

Hoten—and His Car

AS partner on the left flank of the Northampton attack he has Ralph Hoten, who, having finished his day's training, was dressing himself up in one of the smartest motoring coats I have seen for a long time. Ralph and his two-seater are seldom parted, but he is a goer on the field as well as through the lanes of Northamptonshire. I remember an occasion when he got five goals in a match against the Crystal Palace.

Ted Bowen, the centre-forward—who was once associated with the Arsenal—told me that I might do worse than make real friends with Hoten. At first I thought that tip was being given to me so that Ralph would give me a free ride back to the station. But on making inquiries with that idea in mind I found the notion altogether different. Ralph helps his father to make coffins in the summer-time, said Ted. Let us hope there will be no necessity for him to make a casket in which to bury the high hopes of Northampton Town.

—NOSEY.

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Gussy's "Talkie"!

(Continued from page 10.)

Wally D'Arcy. "Kildare looked ratty. Better stuff your bags with exercise-books!"

"Why, you silly young ass—"

Arthur Augustus paused for a second, as though undecided whether to correct his disrespectful young brother on the spot, or leave that important duty till after he had taken his phone call. Eventually, he decided on the latter course—which was just as well from the point of view of the caller on the phone.

D'Arcy minor walked away, whistling, and Arthur Augustus did a sprint into the House and upstairs to the Prefects' room, where Kildare was waiting, with a frown on his face.

"Suppose you know this is all out of order—receiving phone calls, I mean?" asked Kildare.

"I am weally awfully sowwy, Kildare, deah boy. I was not expectin' a phone call, as a mattah of fact."

"The caller said it was important, so you can take it, I suppose," Kildare said, with a nod towards the receiver. "Mustn't occur again, D'Arcy!"

And Kildare quitted the Prefects' room, leaving the swell of the Fourth in sole possession.

D'Arcy picked up the receiver.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo!" came a voice from the other end of the wires—rather surprisingly, from D'Arcy's point of view, a feminine voice. "That the Honourable D'Arcy?"

"D'Arcy speakin'!" said the swell of the Fourth, a little puzzled at the realisation that the voice contained a slightly nasal tone reminiscent of the American accent. "Who is that?"

"This is Glahria Rayne's secretary!" was the unexpected and altogether astonishing answer.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"What?" he yelled, losing for the nonce that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

"Glahria Rayne's secretary!" repeated the voice. "Speaking from the Majestic Hotel, London. Get all that?"

"Gweat pip!"

D'Arcy was almost overwhelmed. For a moment he felt quite dizzy. A letter he had hoped for and even anticipated; but a phone call all the way from London had been beyond his wildest dreams.

"Miss Rayne wants me to tell you she got your letter, and she'll be right along to see you," went on the film star's alleged secretary. "If she's there at four to-morrow afternoon, can she have tea and cakes on you? Shoot!"

"Bai Jove! I should wathah think so!" gasped the astonished and delighted swell of the Fourth. "I assuah you, deah gal—I mean, madam—I shall be vewy happy to entertain Miss Wayne; and, furthermore—"

"Time's money! Make it snappy!" came the lady secretary's voice. "Listen, honourable—"

"Eh?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Honourable—'h-o-n-o-u-r-a-b-l-e'! That's what they call you when you're at home, ain't it?" asked the transatlantic voice. "Listen, honourable, is it a deal? You'll be in?"

"Gweat pip! I am more than delighted! Then may I weally expect Miss Wayne along to-morrow afternoon?"

"Sure!"

"How weally wippin'! Pway tell Miss Wayne—"

But at that point Arthur Augustus realised that he was addressing an unhearing receiver. Time being money, Miss Gloria Rayne's secretary had already cut off.

The swell of the Fourth quitted the Prefects' room, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels.

Gloria Rayne, the idol of the picture-going public, and, what was more important, the heroine of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, was coming to St. Jim's—to have tea with Arthur Augustus himself! It seemed too good to be true. Yet it was true—must be. There was no denying that transatlantic voice on the phone. The possibility that it might have been the voice of a japer did not for one moment enter D'Arcy's simple and unsuspicious mind.

Feeling almost as bewildered as he was delighted, the swell of the Fourth hurried downstairs again to seek out Blake and the rest and tell them the glad tidings.

He found them at the foot of the School House steps, talking with the Terrible Three. The talk ceased as the juniors spotted D'Arcy, almost as though they had been waiting for him to hear his announcement—a possibility which, of course, did not occur to Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove, deah boys! What do you think has happened?" he asked, panting from his run.

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"They've certified you at last?" hazarded Lowther humorously.

"Pway don't wot, Lowthah! This is a weally gweat surprise I've got for you all. Glowia Wayne's comin' to tea in Studay No. 6 to-morrow afternoon!"

"Wha-a-at?" yelled D'Arcy's listeners, in well-feigned astonishment.

"Fact, deah boys! Bai Jove! I thought you'd be surprised!" beamed the swell of the Fourth. "I can weally hardly believe it yet myself, but it's twue enough. I have just spoken to Miss Wayne's secwetaway on the phone, and fixed it all up."

"My hat!"

"Aftah this, I twust you youngstahs will stop your widiculous jokes on the subject of myself and Miss Wayne," said Arthur Augustus, with a lofty look at his study-mates. "As a mattah of fact, considewin' all that has been said, you don't weally deserve to have tea with Miss Wayne at all, but I shall invite you, all the same."

"Oh, thank you, Gussy!" came in a chorus from Blake & Co.

"And what about us? Not going to leave us out in the cold, are you?" asked Tom Merry reproachfully.

D'Arcy looked thoughtful.

"I weally don't know whethah I ought to inflict Shellfish on a lady like Miss Wayne—" he began.

"Why, you silly ass—"

"But if you promise to be on your best behaviah and to wash your hands before you awvive, I shall be perfectly willin' to have you!" finished up the swell of the Fourth brightly—a remark which drew three deadly glares from the Shell fellows, who decided, in the special circumstances, however, to swallow their wrath and accept the invitation.

For the rest of that day Arthur Augustus fairly bubbled over with excitement. Lessons passed by like unsubstantial dreams, broken only when Mr. Lathom dropped on him with questions relating to the lessons.

The answers which D'Arcy gave to those questions were wild enough to make Mr. Lathom wonder whether his noble pupil was altogether right in the head, and Arthur Augustus left the Form-room that day richer by several hundreds of lines.

The following day was Wednesday—a half-holiday at St. Jim's. D'Arcy's manner in class would probably have been more dreamy than it had been on the previous day, had he not received an early reminder from Mr. Lathom that the cancellation of the half-holiday was not altogether impossible. That gentle hint was sufficient to bring the swell of the Fourth right back to earth again, and Mr. Lathom had nothing more to complain of that day.

Classes were over at last. D'Arcy's excitement, freed from its repression in the Form-room, was now intense. He would have "cut" winner in Hall had that been allowed. The rules of the school forbidding such an omission, however, he scrambled through a little dinner and rushed back to Study No. 6 at the earliest possible moment.

From that time until four o'clock, while Tom Merry and Jack Blake and the rest of the guests punted a football about on Little Side, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was feverishly engaged in making Study No. 6 and, of course, his own illustrious person, fit to receive the idol of the films.

CHAPTER 7.

A Shock for Gussy!

"HERE she comes!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a cheer from the juniors gathered on the School House steps.

A big car had just rolled through the gates of St. Jim's. D'Arcy's guests, ruddy from their exertions on the football field, had been waiting some minutes for that car, and they were relieved to see it.

Arthur Augustus made his appearance in the doorway of the School House at the sound of the cheer.

"Bai Jove! Is that Miss Wayne's cah?" he asked.

"Looks like it. See her in the back?" grinned Jack Blake.

The swell of the Fourth caught a glimpse of fair hair and bejewelled fingers, and beamed.

"Doesn't she look weally wippin', deah boys? Not quite the same as on the films, but just as beautiful, you know. Pway let me pass so that I can open the door of the cah!"

And Arthur Augustus, with a heightened colour, made his way through the crowd and descended the steps.

The car drew up at the foot of the steps, and the swell of the Fourth opened the door and made a graceful obeisance.

"Miss Glowia Wayne? Pway allow me to introduce myself. I am D'Arcy—the writer of the lettah, you know!"

The lady in the car smiled, and her smile was sweet and gracious. Arthur Augustus felt pleasantly thrilled.

But immediately after that something happened to put a sudden end to that pleasant thrill.

That "something" was the circumstance of the lady's speaking.

D'Arcy had never heard Gloria Rayne in a talking film. Up to this time the Wayland Cinema had confined itself to the silent dramas of the screen, so Gloria Rayne's voice was an unknown quantity to the swell of the Fourth.

He had looked forward to this meeting, among other reasons, because he wanted to hear the great film star speak. He had imagined her voice as soft and musical. He knew that Gloria Rayne was a hundred-per-cent American, and that she would probably speak with an accent of some kind, but it seemed impossible that that accent could be other than entirely charming.

But now Gloria Rayne opened her beautiful lips—and Arthur Augustus almost fell down at the unexpected shock.

"You the Honourable D'Arcy? Waal, I'll tell the world I'm glad to have you know me!"

Arthur Augustus jumped. It was not so much what Gloria Rayne had said, though that was certainly unexpected enough; it was the way she said it that made D'Arcy jump.

Far from being soft and musical, Gloria Rayne's voice was harsh and nasal—almost too harsh and nasal to be convincing, really, though D'Arcy was convinced all right. D'Arcy had been to the great United States and heard Americans speak. But never in the course of his American experiences had he heard the American language rendered in so harsh and nasal a manner as it was rendered by Miss Gloria Rayne.

"I—I—" he gasped.
"Going to give a 'movie' dame the helping hand out of the old auto?" sang out the idol of the films cheerily, rising from the cushioned seat.

"I—I— Oh cwikey!" Arthur Augustus, with an effort, pulled himself together. "Pway accept my hand, Miss Wayne!"

"You've said it!"
And Miss Rayne accepted the slim hand of the swell of the Fourth and tripped out of the car.

The next instant there was a yell from Arthur Augustus. "Yawoooooop!"

"Suthing bit you, bo'?" asked the film star.
"Oh cwumps! Not at all, deah gal—Miss Wayne, I mean. I thought I experienced a sudden pain for a moment—that's all!" explained the swell of the Fourth. It was impossible, of course, to explain that his sudden yell had been caused by Miss Rayne's alighting with surprising force on one of his feet.

"These all the boys?" asked Miss Gloria Rayne, turning her eyes on D'Arcy's smiling chums. "Say, I'd like to have 'em all know me, too. Spill the beans, honourable!"

"Bai Jove! Delighted, I assuah you!" mumbled D'Arcy, though his face expressed tragedy rather than delight at that moment. "This is Tom Mewwy—"

"Howdy, Tom Merry?"

"An' Blake—and Hewwies—an' Digby—"

Arthur Augustus went the round, and Miss Gloria Rayne shook hands with each of the chums in turn. The swell of the Fourth noticed, as she did so, that her fingers were liberally covered with rings containing gems of all colours. If this was the famous £30,000 worth of jewellery of which the papers had spoken, then D'Arcy privately had to admit to himself that the £30,000 had been spent with a singular lack of taste. A few shillings spent in a sixpenny bazaar could have achieved results equally good. As a matter of fact, the "jewels" on his fair guest's fingers had in reality been purchased in a sixpenny store only the previous day. Arthur Augustus, naturally, did not suspect that.

Her clothes, too, were not in the very best of taste. There was something eccentric in their design—something almost freakish—and the colours were very striking and aggressive. D'Arcy found himself quite dazzled.

Having concluded the introductions, the swell of the Fourth led the alleged Miss Gloria Rayne into the House.

Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake Co. followed, grinning cheerily. Whatever disappointment Arthur Augustus might have been feeling over his celebrated visitor, the rest of the juniors were apparently entirely satisfied with her.

Going up the stairs, the swell of the Fourth did his best to recover his usual sang-froid. He was disappointed—deeply disappointed—he couldn't disguise that fact from himself. But at all costs he had to conceal his disappointment from Gloria Rayne herself. The thought that she might suspect filled her noble and hospitable host with horror.

So D'Arcy plunged desperately into conversation, pointing out to the honoured lady guest objects of interest in the old School House building—conversation to which Miss Gloria Rayne introduced her strident transatlantic voice at very frequent intervals.

People who met the little procession on its way stared. Fags, who, of course, could not be expected to know better, tittered. When Kildare of the Sixth happened to pass on the stairs he blinked and hesitated as though wondering whether his duty as school captain required him to interfere and make inquiries concerning the unusual-looking guest.

Altogether it was not a very comfortable journey up to the Fourth passage, and D'Arcy was perspiring freely by the time they arrived at Study No. 6.

"Pway entah, Miss Wayne!" said Arthur Augustus, having opened the door of the study.

"I surely will!" said Miss Gloria Rayne, suiting the action to the word. "My! If this li'l outfit ain't the cat's meow!"

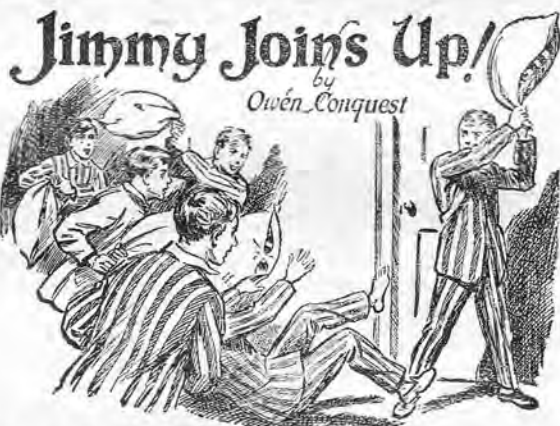
Arthur Augustus shuddered, despite his efforts at self-control.

While Blake and Herries prepared tea, Miss Gloria Rayne yarned about life in the film studios of far-off Hollywood. Her slang seemed to grow worse and worse as her yarns grew wilder and woollier. And wild and woolly they most certainly were. Crooks and gangsters and "gunmen" and underworld kings and "thugs," those strange products of the American civilisation, were almost the only kind of people the visitor could talk of. In less than five minutes D'Arcy had come to the conclusion that nobody except a thorough-paced scoundrel could hope to enter the film industry at all. Which was exceedingly disconcerting to the swell of the Fourth.

Tea was served. With it Arthur Augustus received the crowning blow.

That Miss Gloria Rayne's voice was unmusical had been unfortunate; that she should turn out to be slangy and

(Continued on next page.)



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Gussy's "Talkie"!

(Continued from previous page.)

vulgar in her speech was worse; that she should boast of being an associate of "gangsters" and crooks was very regrettable indeed; but all these unfortunate attributes of the visitor D'Arcy could manage to tolerate.

What he really could not tolerate was bad table manners. Arthur Augustus had a great regard for table proprieties. When lady visitors were present Study No. 6, under his watchful eye, was a model of delicacy and refinement in the disposal of those very necessary evils, food and drink.

It was a little feature of the study which could not fail to impress a lady visitor. Or so Arthur Augustus imagined, anyway. But Miss Gloria Rayne woke him up to the fact that a member of the fair sex could exist who not only didn't appreciate the niceties of behaviour in her hosts, but actually had no idea of table deportment herself!

The film star committed every crime known to the book of tea-table etiquette. She drank her tea out of the saucer, spread fish-paste with a jam-knife, and jam with a fish-knife, reached across the table to help herself to scones, and, in short, behaved like a particularly ill-bred fag at a Form-room herring-feed.

Arthur Augustus watched, with tragedy writ large across his classic countenance. His idol had collapsed in ruins before him. The beautiful and romantic Gloria Rayne of the silent screen existed no longer; in her place was a loud-voiced, slangy, American female, possessed of a doubtful character and the manners of a boa-constrictor.

The disillusioned swell of the Fourth felt that he needed air. With a muttered excuse, he fled precipitately from the study. He would return, of course. But for the time being he wanted to be alone.

At the end of the passage he started and paused. Was it his imagination, or had he really heard from Study No. 6 a ripple of girlish laughter such as he had formerly hoped would proceed from the fair lips of Gloria Rayne? On consideration, he decided that he must have been mistaken.

He strolled downstairs.

Meanwhile, in Study No. 6, Lady Peggy Brooke, of Spalding Hall, was finishing her tea with due regard to the proprieties of the occasion. Furthermore, she was chatting cheerily to the chums of the School House in a voice that was musical and quite sweet and totally free from any trace of an American accent!

CHAPTER 8.

Gussy's Little Mistake!

"LETTER for you, Gussy!"

Levison made that remark. Arthur Augustus had run into him in Hall. Levison held a letter in his hand, and passed it over as he spoke.

"Thank you, dear boy!" said D'Arcy absently.

He was about to transfer the letter to his pocket and finish his interrupted cogitations on the subject of the disappointing Miss Rayne, when something made him glance down at the envelope.

His name and address were typewritten, and the envelope bore the London postmark. Arthur Augustus wondered vaguely who could be writing him from London.

Then he started. In one corner of the envelope was a printed inscription. The swell of the Fourth held the letter a little closer to make sure that his eyes had not deceived him.

They had not.

This was the inscription:

"MAJESTIC HOTEL,
LONDON, W."

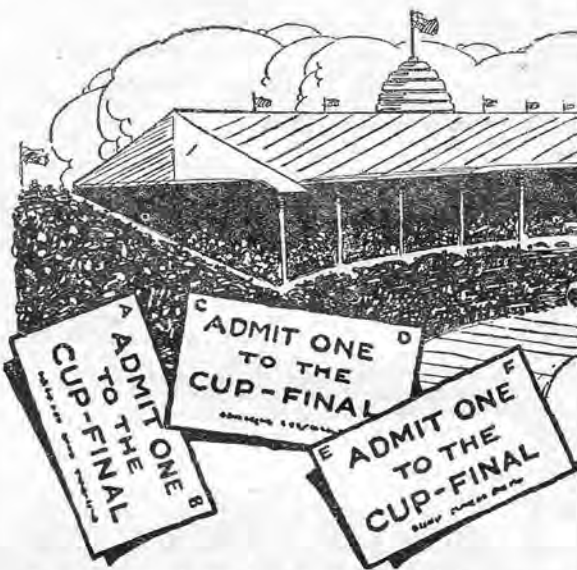
"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Another instant, and the envelope had been slit open. In a state of great agitation and increasing astonishment, he unfolded the letter and read its contents:

"Dear Mr. D'Arcy,—Many thanks for your very kind letter, your beautiful poetry, and all the nice things you say about my pictures. It is my very sincere wish that you may continue to like them in the future. But please don't be very disappointed if you find you cannot star with me right away. My director may have something to say about that—and, besides, I may be satisfied with his present arrangements, mayn't I? Sincerely, GLORIA RAYNE."

(Continued on page 16.)

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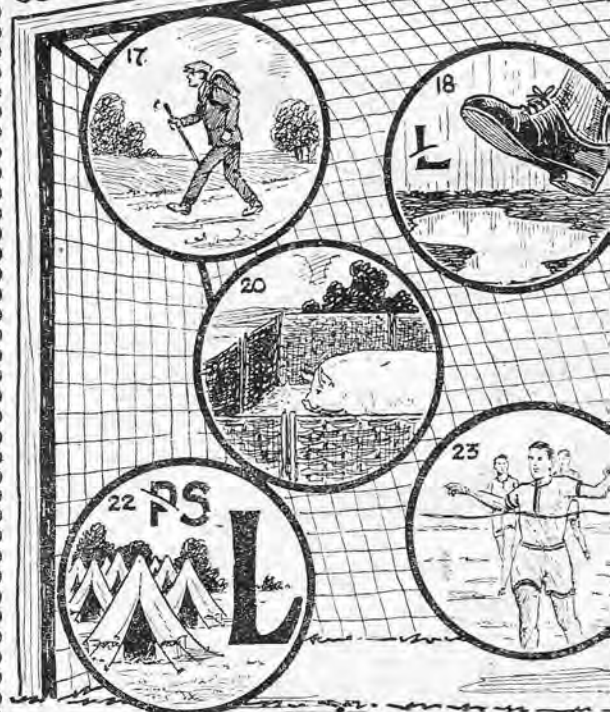


We are now in the third week of our grand free competition FREE, and below you have Set 3 of our splendid puzzles. If you ask your newsgiant for the two previous issues of the GEM (dates of the earlier puzzles and start in at once).

Now this is what you have to do to win one of the prizes. and in each of them is a picture-puzzle representing the name of the prize. So as to make the contest absolutely fair and equal for every one, which contains the answers to all this week's puzzles.

As you find the solutions write them IN INK against the corner of the puzzle which you should sign, also in ink, and then cut out the coupon—until next week, when the fourth and final set of puzzles and full instructions for the sending in of your entries.

Who Kicked Them



Who Scored those Goals?

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reader and missed the opening sets, you should
6th and 22nd, respectively), so that you can get

net, which you see here is a further eight circles,
n footballer, which we invite you to solve.
give on this page a list of Footballers' Names

umbers on the Entry Form given on the right,
by you—together with the two earlier coupons
es belonging to them will appear, together with

OUR COMPETITION RULES.

The Six "Mead" Bicycles will be awarded to the six readers whose solutions of the four sets of puzzles are correct or most nearly correct, the other prizes of Twelve Cup-Final Tickets following in order of merit.

In case of ties, the Editor may divide the prizes, or their value, as he considers necessary, but in any case the full value will be awarded.

Any number of entries may be sent, but each must be made out on a separate set of the "Who Kicked Them?" Entry Forms (Nos. 1 to 4, inclusive, that is). No responsibility can be taken for entries lost, mislaid, or delayed in the post, or otherwise, and no correspondence will be allowed.

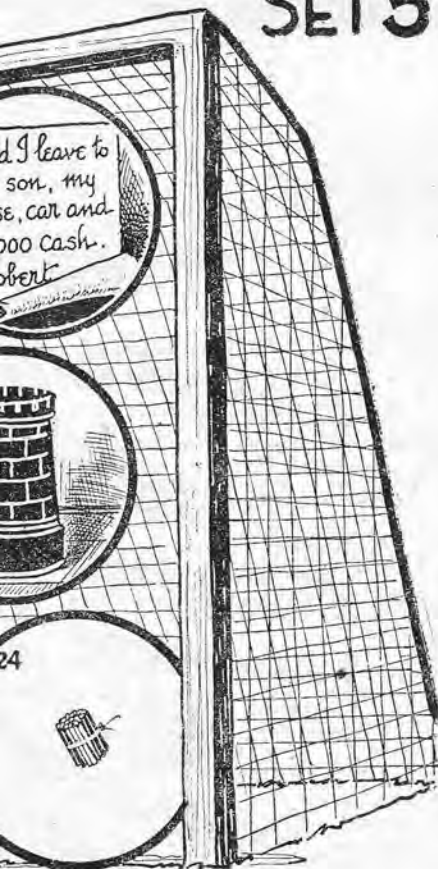
The Editor's decision will be final and legally binding throughout. Entries mutilated or bearing alterations or alternative solutions will be disqualified. Employees of the proprietors of GEM and of "Nelson Lee," whose readers are also taking part in this contest, must not compete.

YOU CAN FIND THE ANSWERS HERE.

NOTE:—This list is for use with this week's puzzles only, a separate list being given with each picture-set.

Allen	Law
Amos	Leach
Andrews	Littlewood
Barclay	Marsden
Barrington	Mason
Beresford	Meads
Bishop	Mitchell
Black	Morris
Campbell	Nisbett
Camsell	Oliver
Castle	Pease
Curran	Penn
Dunne	Phillipson
Dutton	Pierce
Elliott	Pigg
Fawcett	Puddefoot
Firth	Purcell
Forward	Quantrill
Freeman	Race
German	Raw
Goodier	Robertson
Goodwin	Rounce
Gunson	Scott
Hampson	Searle
Hart	Slicer
Horton	Strange
Hulme	Temple
Hutchison	Thirlaway
Jennings	Turnbull
John	Walker
Johnson	Watson
Keeping	White
	Wilson
	Wood

SET 3



"Who Kicked Them?"

FREE ENTRY FORM No. 3.

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

"GEM"

Competitor's Name

3

Gussy's "Talkie"!

(Continued from page 14.)

Arthur Augustus stared at that letter for some seconds in a state of stupefied amazement. What could it mean? What was Miss Gloria Rayne's idea in posting this cheery little epistle when she knew she was going to take tea with him?

D'Arcy read through the letter again. It didn't sound like the strident creature who was tea-ing in Study No. 6 at that moment, somehow. It was not aggressively and offensively American, for one thing. It was cheery and friendly, though not quite so encouraging to his film aspirations as he could have wished it to be. Had Arthur Augustus known it, it was typical of the countless thousands of letters that are sent out to admiring "fans" by film stars every week.

In his present state of bewilderment, Gussy's brain did not work at express speed, and it was fully a minute before he saw what the letter really meant.

Then it came to him in a sort of blinding flash. It was a jape! The whole thing was a cruel, heartless jape on the part of some of his chums. The "lady" in Study No. 6 was not Gloria Rayne at all, but one of the juniors dressed up in Dramatic Society "props."

"Oh, gweat pip!" murmured Arthur Augustus. For the moment the discovery took the wind out of his sails. Then he saw the brighter side of the picture. After all, if the person upstairs were an impostor, then all his old hopes might be revived. The probabilities were that the real Miss Rayne was just as nice as he had always imagined her to be.

D'Arcy smiled again. Then he frowned. He was thinking of that bejewelled, flamboyant impostor whom he had left in Study No. 6.

Who could it be? There were not many fellows at St. Jim's with sufficient acting ability to bring off such a jape. D'Arcy couldn't think of anyone in the School House capable of it.

His mind suddenly conjured up Kerr of the New House, and he started.

"Bai Jove! That wottah, Kerr!" he exclaimed. It was a natural enough error for the swell of the Fourth to make. Kerr was the acknowledged actor of the Lower School at St. Jim's. In the art of disguise and make-up as well as in acting, nobody else could hold a candle to the canny Scot of the New House.

It must be Kerr—couldn't be anyone else, in fact. Kerr had set himself out to jape the swell of the Fourth, aided and abetted by Blake and the rest. Now that he knew what he knew, D'Arcy correctly guessed that all his guests at the celebration tea were "in the swim."

"The wottahs! The feahful cads!" muttered Arthur Augustus, adjusting his monocle and regarding the stairs with gleaming eyes.

A few seconds later he was sprinting up the stairs two at a time. A base impostor had deceived him and brought ridicule upon his noble name. Arthur Augustus was not the fellow to stand for that. He would first denounce the impostor, then mop up the floor with him—if necessary, with all his confederates, too.

His righteous wrath increased with every stair he negotiated. Like the prophet of old, D'Arcy felt that he did well to be angry, and by the time he had regained the Fourth passage, his frown was deep and majestic.

Jack Blake was looking out from the doorway. He grinned cheerfully on seeing Arthur Augustus.

"Hurry up, Gus!" he said. "Wondered where the dickens you'd got to!"

The swell of the Fourth responded to that cheerful salutation with a freezing glare and the request:

"Pway allow me to pass, Blake!"

"Certainly, old bean! Anything wrong?"

"Everything is w'ong!" was D'Arcy's frigid reply.

With that, the swell of the Fourth stalked into the study. Five grinning juniors looked up from the tea-table—not to mention the smiling face of one alleged film star.

"Shucks!" drawled the latter. "If it ain't the honourable again! Howdy, cutie!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's monocle seemed to gleam with a dangerous light. He glared at the person who was being entertained as Miss Gloria Rayne.

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"Wottah!" he said.

The juniors jumped; Miss Gloria Rayne blinked. "Come again. Guess I didn't get you that time!" she said.

"Wepwobate! Japin' wascal! Diswespectful cad!" said Arthur Augustus, in measured tones.

"Say, is this how you reckon to speak to fillum stars who come to tea with you?" asked the visitor, whose indignation was rather befuddled by a slight look of uneasiness in her eyes. "Because if it is—"

"It is not the way I weekon to address film stahs!"

Arthur Augustus interrupted. "If the weal Miss Wayne had turned up heah I should have been most delighted to treat her with wevy gweat wespect. Secin', howevah, that a wotten New House japah has turned up instead, politeness would be wasted."

"But—" "I uttally decline to discuss the mattah furthah! Pway wemove your wig! Aftah that, I shall insist on administwin' a feahful thwashin'!"

"But—"

But Arthur Augustus did not intend to have any argument on the point. He reached forward with a sudden movement and made a grab.

Tom Merry gave a yell.

"Gussy—"

But he was too late. Alrcady a fair wig was in D'Arcy's slim fingers. Within a fraction of a second it had been jerked off the auburn head of Lady Peggy Brooke.

"Now, you wottah!" roared the wrathful Arthur Augustus.

"Gussy!" shouted Jack Blake.

But there was no need for further warning. D'Arcy had suddenly realised himself that the lifting of the wig, instead of revealing Kerr's closely-trimmed head, had brought to light a tousled mop of hair that obviously belonged to a member of the fair sex.

The swell of the Fourth gazed at the auburn mop in blank astonishment and utter dismay.

"B-b-bai Jove!" he stuttered.

"Now what made you go and spoil a good joke like that?" asked Lady Peggy Brooke, giving him a somewhat rueful smile. "Just as everything was going swimmingly—"

"Lady Peggy!" gasped the swell of the Fourth.

"Just so! No good keeping up the Gloria Rayne business any longer, I suppose," smiled Lady Peggy. "Don't go and think now that I'm Kerr disguised as Peggy Brooke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a yell from the juniors. The jape had come to an unexpected and rather disconcerting end, and their object had certainly been defeated. But despite that, they had to laugh. D'Arcy's face as he gazed at the girl from Spalding Hall was, as Lowther expressed it afterwards, "worth a guinea a box."

"Oh, gweat pip!" gasped D'Arcy. "My deah gal—"

"Not going to give me a fearful thrashing, are you?" asked Lady Peggy anxiously.

D'Arcy crimsoned.

"Bai Jove! I assuah you, deah gal. I wouldn't dweam of it—I mean I weally thought it was Kerr, you see! Oh cwikey! I weally hardly know what I am sayin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lady Peggy Brooke rose, looking a little troubled.

"I do hope you're not going to think too badly of me now," she said in her most winning way. "It seemed a good jape while it was on, but now I feel just a bit sneaky over it."

Arthur Augustus made a gallant attempt to smile.

"Pway don't distwess yourself, deah gal! I twust I should nevah forget myself to the extent of thinkin' badly of any lady. Latah, of course, I may have somethin' to say to these wottahs—these chaps, I mean—"

"Spare us, old chap!" urged Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But for the pwesent the best course is to dwop the whole mattah. Pway forget all about it, deah gal!"

And with that gracious speech from the victim of the jape the incident closed.

Lady Peggy left St. Jim's in her hired car on the best of terms with everybody, D'Arcy included.

Needless to say, the amiable relations between Arthur Augustus and the rest of the juniors disappeared completely with Lady Peggy's departure. For the rest of that day, and for quite a long time after, the swell of the Fourth preserved an attitude of frigid aloofness towards his chums.

That, of course, was only to be expected in the circumstances. As Blake mournfully remarked, Gussy never had been the one to show gratitude for being saved from himself. And, anyway, he was bound to come round in time.

CHAPTER 9.
Gussy Insists!

"NOW, look here—" "I am sowwy, deah boy. I am not pwepared to discuss the mattah!"

Some days had passed, and the old friendly footing had been resumed in Study No. 6. Which, of course, did not imply that Arthur Augustus had abandoned his hopes of a film career. On the contrary, since the failure of Tom Merry's wheeze, he had been keener than ever.

"But, my dear old chump—" said Jack Blake, more in sorrow than in anger.

"You can't!" growled Herries.

"Simply can't!" said Dig. "Mustn't, in fact!"

"I twust I am capable of managin' my own affaihs, Dig," remarked Arthur Augustus severely. "I have decided to attend the weopenin' of the Wayland Cinema this afternoon. Furthahmore, I have decided to take the opportunity of seekin' a personal interview with Miss Wayne. That ends the mattah!"

"But it doesn't!" said Blake. "Whether the matter ends there or not rests with us."

"Oh, rather!"

The swell of the Fourth gave his leader a withering look through his monocle.

"You are not sewiously suggestin', Blake, that you may twy to pwevent me goin' to Wayland?"

"Just that! Think we're going to have you making an idiot of yourself before a crowd of Wayland yokels?" snorted Blake. "Disgracin' us—"

"Wats! There is not the slightest possibility of my disgwacin' you!"

"Showing up the school!" grunted Herries.

"If you insinuate that I am goin' to show up the school, Hewwies—"

"Well, you're not going, anyway!"

"I have nothin' more to say."

And with that dignified remark Arthur Augustus D'Arcy picked up his gold-mounted cane and made to leave Study No. 6, where the little argument had been going on.

Jack Blake glanced at his chums, then glanced at D'Arcy.

"Collar him!" he said. "Nothing else for it!"

Herries and Dig had been waiting for the order. They rushed at the swell of the Fourth as one man.

Possibly Arthur Augustus had been anticipating something of the sort. At any rate, he was half a second too soon for his assailants.

Gussy's movements were usually leisurely almost to the point of slowness, but on this occasion he acted as though he had received a powerful charge of electricity.

One bound took him clean out of the study. Immediately afterwards he was sprinting down the Fourth passage with the speed of a hundred yards champion.

Jack Blake uttered a yell.

"After him! Don't let the silly coon escape."

And D'Arcy's chums streamed down the passage after him.

Down the stairs three at a time raced the fleeing swell. Close on his heels came Jack Blake & Co.

Digby, thinking to gain an advantage, did the last lap by the simple process of sliding down the banisters. That move might well have resulted in the fugitive's capture, but for the unfortunate circumstance that Kildare of the Sixth happened to be standing at the foot of the stairs chatting to Rushden.

Crash!

"Whoooooop!"

"Yaroooooop!"

Digby's flying body collided with Kildare with irresistible

force, and in a mere fraction of time two seniors and one dismayed junior were sprawling on the floor, yelling.

Arthur Augustus chuckled and tore on.

Blake and Herries, after negotiating the scene of the collision as inconspicuously as possible, carried on the chase without their fallen comrade.

The swell of the Fourth "did" the Hall at top speed, with his two pursuers twenty yards in the rear. By the time Blake and Herries were descending the School House steps he was half-way across the quad, running as if for a wager.

Blake spotted three figures in the distance, ahead of his quarry. A more hopeful light came into his eyes.

"The Shell chaps!" he panted. "Give 'em a yell!"

The Terrible Three looked round even as he spoke, their attention attracted by the sound of the chase, and Blake and Herries shouted to them as they ran.

"Stop him!"

"Collar the ass!"

Then they saw Tom Merry and his two liegemen separate, spreading out to receive the flying Arthur Augustus.

The swell of the Fourth had not prepared for that move. Before he could evade them, Tom Merry had joined him on one side and Manners on the other, and Arthur Augustus came to a sudden stop. He was almost out of breath.

"Got you, my pippin!" said Tom Merry, clasping Arthur Augustus affectionately round the neck.

"Can't have you running around like this, Gussy!" grinned Manners, from the other side. "Why the rush?"

Arthur Augustus struggled furiously.

"Let me go, you wottahs! I'm in a huwwy!"

"Too much of a hurry to wait for your old pals in the rear? Fie, fie!" said Lowther chidingly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A moment later Blake and Herries were on the scene.

"Hold him, you chaps!" said Blake. "Silly ass wants to go to Wayland to create a scene at the reopening of the cinema!"

"Can't be did!" said Tom Merry, with a shake of his head. "Take your uncle's advice and stay away, Gus!"

"I uttably wufuse to stay away. After w'tin' me, Miss Wayne will natuwallly expect me to turn up this aftahnoon and make her personal acquaintance, and I have no intention of disappointin' her. Fway weflease me, Tom Mewwy!"

"Pleasure, now your keepers have turned up!" grinned the captain of the Shell; and he and Manners released their grasp of the swell of the Fourth.

Nobody anticipated that D'Arcy would renew his bid for liberty immediately. He looked "winded"

and ruffled, and it would have been more like him if he had stopped to compose himself afresh. But such was the strength of his determination to get to Wayland that afternoon that even his ruffled appearance did not delay him.

The moment he was released, D'Arcy made a leap for liberty.

"Hold him!" roared Herries.

Too late! Already the swell of the Fourth was speeding away towards the gates. And the chase was renewed, with three additional runners with the bounds, this time.

The Terrible Three were fresh, and could no doubt have overtaken the fugitive had the race lasted a hundred yards more than it actually did.

Unexpectedly, however, it came to a sudden end just outside the gates.

A car was passing the school as Arthur Augustus flashed past the porter's lodge into the road. D'Arcy spotted that car, and his eyes gleamed. Racing beside it for a few yards, he put on a desperate burst of speed as it drew past him,

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A CHAT WITH YOUR EDITOR.

Well, you chaps, I was going to begin this "jaw" by asking you whether you'd been at work on this week's set of picture-puzzles, but the jolly old "win or bust" gleam in your optics tells me you have. That's the stuff!

I want every one of my readers to have a shot at collaring one of the splendid prizes offered in our easy, interesting competition. You all stand an equal chance, and remember that the six Mead cycles and the twelve Wembley Cup-Final tickets simply must be won! The fourth and final set of puzzles will appear in next Wednesday's GEM, but there's still time for any of you who haven't yet made up your minds to join in. Get busy, chums, and good luck to all of you!

Now a word or two about next week's programme. Topping the bill is a magnificent long story of Tom Merry & Co. of St Jim's entitled:

"SENT TO COVENTRY!"

It features Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth, and that in itself will tell you, without dwelling upon it, that you've a treat in store. He's a queer mixture of good and bad, is Cardew, and never has he provided a greater puzzle for St. Jim's than in this gripping and dramatic story. It's one of Martin Clifford's best!

Then we have our usual unbeatable list of attractions, which includes another fine instalment of that thrilling serial yarn, "THE VALLEY OF FORTUNE!" and excellent contributions from our evergreen pals, MR. "NOSEY" PARKER and THE ORACLE.

Cheerio till next week, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

and with his last ounce of energy made a spring for the luggage-grid at the back.

It was touch-and-go; but he was fortunately able to get a firm hold on it and work himself into a position of safety. By the time he turned his head round again, Tom Merry and the rest were quite small figures in the distance.

"No use!" panted Blake, slackening down as he saw the hopelessness of the chase. "The ass has dished us!"

"Insult to injury!" growled Herries. "He's waving to us!"

And the rest, looking up the road, were just in time to see Arthur Augustus waving his hand from his perch at the back of the car before the car turned the corner of the lane and was lost to sight.

"And what's the next move?" inquired Tom Merry, as they strolled back to the school. "Chucking it up now?"

Jack Blake snorted.

"Not likely! We're just going to collect Digby, who got lost en route, and push off to Wayland. Coming?"

"Count us in!" smiled Tom.

And when Digby had been duly collected and Jack Blake & Co. started out for the town, they had with them "for moral support," as Lowther put it, the Terrible Three of the Shell.

CHAPTER 10.

By Sheer Chance!

"THUNDER!"

That ejaculation came from a gentleman sitting in the back of an open car on the Wayland road. He started violently as he spoke.

There was some excuse for his obvious amazement. He had been blissfully ignorant of the fact that for the last half-mile the car had been carrying an additional passenger on the luggage-grid, and that that passenger had been making frantic efforts to climb over the folded hood into the car itself. So when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did at last come into his line of vision, he came like a bolt from the blue.

Arthur Augustus climbed over the top as gracefully as was possible in the peculiar circumstances, and sank into the seat beside the staring passenger.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" he said, doffing his topper.

The gentleman did not reply to that salutation. For a moment or two he seemed incapable of speaking at all. When he did recover his breath, he utilised it for the purpose of addressing the driver and another gentleman who was sitting beside him.

"Here, boys!" he called out.

"What's on?" came a growl from the driver, while his companion looked round and then jumped as his eyes fell on the swell of the Fourth.

"For the love of Mike, where did you come from?" asked the driver's companion.

"I am weally awfully sowwy to intrude on you in this mannah, gentlemen—"

"Who are you?"

"My name is D'Arcy. I am fwom St. Jim's School, which you have just passed up the woad. As I say, I am sowwy—"

"You a schoolboy?"

"Quite wight, deah boy—my deah sir, I mean."

A quick glance passed between the driver's companion and the passenger in the back of the car. D'Arcy thought queerly enough, that he read relief in their expressions; naturally he couldn't be sure, but that was the momentary impression he received. Why they should be lieved because he was a schoolboy was certainly a mystery. He decided that he must have been mistaken.

"What I want to know," said D'Arcy's interrogator, "is how you got here, and why you did it?"

"The explanation is vewy simple, my deah sir. I got here by jumpin' on the back as you were passin' the school. My weason was to escape fwom some wottabs who were twyin' to pwevent me gettin' to Wayland."

The road at the point where they were travelling being straight and clear, the driver at this moment looked round. Strangely enough, D'Arcy seemed to see in his face also an expression of suspicion changing to relief.

"Just a schoolboy lark, eh?" growled the driver.

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Hardly that, sir. I am not in the habit of indulgin' in schoolboy larks. You see, those wottabs wanted to pwevent me seein' Miss Glowia Wayne and—"

The driver's companion started a little.

"Gloria Rayne, the film star?"

"Pweicisely. Possibly you are awah that she is comin' to Wayland this aftahnoon to weopen the Wayland Cinema. I am particularly anxious to see her personally. I have been in cownespondence with her with a view to actin' with her in talkin' films, you see, and I should like to meet her and discuss the mattah in detail."

A quick and peculiarly significant look flashed between the driver's companion and D'Arcy's neighbour. It was too quick for Arthur Augustus to notice.

"You've never met Miss Rayne?" asked the man in the back.

"To my wegwet, nevah. That is why I was particularly desivous of takin' the opportunity by her appearence in Wayland this aftahnoon. Pewwaps if you are passin' through Wayland—"

"We're passing through Wayland." The driver's companion flashed another look at his friend in the back of the car. At the same time, he brushed his lips with the back of his hand. To a less unsuspecting fellow than D'Arcy the latter action might almost have been interpreted as a signal—a signal, perhaps, for silence. D'Arcy did not observe anything unusual. "But that's not what I'm thinking about," went on the man.

"I was goin' to say, that if you were, you might dwop me—"

"Listen!" interrupted the man in the front. "As it happens, you've struck a real coincidence this aftahnoon. When you jumped us to get to Gloria Rayne, the film star, you boarded a car that's driving right to where she is. Sheer chance!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We'll dwop you at Wayland if you like," went on the man in the front—a dark, sharp-featured, thin-lipped young man, D'Arcy noticed. "But I fancy something may go wrong with Gloria Rayne's Wayland programme to-day. That's why we're here."



As Gussy looked round, he saw his pursuers falling in a heap at the foot of the stairs on top of Kildare and Rushden of the Sixth.

"Whatevah do you mean, deah boy?"
 "I mean that an accident has happened—a serious accident. We're on our way to Abbotsford, where Gloria Rayne stops for lunch, to break the news to her and take her along. Heard of Douglas Nash?"
 "Yaas, wathah! Douglas Nash is Miss Glowia Wayne's pwesent leadin' man. I wemembah seein' him in several of her films, includin'—"
 "Never mind that. As you've seen him on the films you'll be interested to know that he's the victim of the accident."
 "Bai Jove! I am awfully sowwy to heah that!"
 "He's in England with Gloria Rayne, you see. He was motoring up from the coast to join her at Wayland, and smashed up half-way from Southampton. Hit a lorry head-on."
 "How weally wotten! I twust he is not vewy badly injahed?"
 The man laughed grimly.

The sharp-featured young man appeared to be greatly surprised.
 "Well, I hadn't thought of that," he remarked. "Think you'd be able to work it for us—I mean, explain matters to Miss Rayne, if we take you to the hotel where she's lunching, and bring her out to the car?"
 Arthur Augustus nodded.
 "I have no doubt whatevah as to my ability to bwreak the news in a diplomatic mannah. Among my fwienids it is generally acknowledged that any mattah where tact an' judgment are needed can be left to me with perfect safety."
 "It seems too good of you," remarked the sharp-featured young man, with a slightly twisted smile. "But I don't mind telling you I should be glad to pass the job over. Sure you wouldn't mind?"
 "Bai Jove! I shall be delighted to help you in the mattah, I assuah you. An' I feel quite suah that I shall be able to bwreak the news to Miss Wayne in such a mannah that she will not weceive too gweat a shock."



The driver of the car and D'Arcy's neighbour in the back smiled under their soft hats. The other member of the trio managed to preserve a grave countenance, though had D'Arcy only known it, it cost him a considerable effort.

In this manner Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth at St. Jim's achieved his consuming wish to make the personal acquaintance of Gloria Rayne, the idol of the screen. As the sharp-featured young man had said, it was sheer chance that had brought the opportunity to him. Certainly Arthur Augustus would have preferred it if the chance had been associated with something more pleasant than a serious accident. But pleasant or not, he had, by a rare stroke of luck, been given the chance of meeting Gloria Rayne. And Arthur Augustus

"So badly that he probably won't last more than a few hours. We happened to be driving past the scene of the accident, and the police asked us if we could go to Abbotsford and bring Miss Rayne back. That's right boys, isn't it?"

"Right enough!" answered the man in the back seat, while the driver growled out:

"True as true can be!"

A close observer might have noticed that both looked a little surprised at having to confirm their friend's story. Possibly they were wondering why he had gone to the trouble of explaining matters to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. If so, they were soon to learn.

"Nasty business," remarked D'Arcy's informer. "Not very pleasant to be the bearer of bad tidings, is it?"

"Wathah unpleasant, weally," agreed D'Arcy. Then he looked a little thoughtful. "I wondah—"

"None of us fancy the job of breaking the news to Miss Rayne," went on the sharp-featured young man. "You know the relationship between Miss Rayne and Douglas Nash, of course?"

"I am not awah of it. But I was wondewin'—"
 "She'll be cut up about it, and no mistake. Wish, in a way, we hadn't taken on the job."

D'Arcy finished making up his mind and adjusted his monocle.

"Pewwaps you would like me to welieve you of the task, my deah sir?" he suggested.

thrilled at the thought that he was bound on an errand of importance to the fair damsel whose screen charms had exercised such a spell over him.

It was well past the usual hour for luncheon when they arrived at Abbotsford, but the sharp-featured young man, who seemed to know rather a lot about Miss Gloria Rayne's movements, said that she had planned to halt at Abbotsford until about three o'clock, so that she could drive over to Wayland and make a kind of state entry into that town at about three-thirty.

It was really rather extraordinary that the sharp-featured young man should have known so many details concerning Miss Rayne's trip to Wayland. D'Arcy thought of that later, when it was a little too late, but for the moment he was too excited at the prospect of his approaching meeting with Miss Rayne to notice anything peculiar about it.

At last they were speeding through the outlying parts of Abbotsford. A few minutes later they had arrived at the Royal George Hotel, which, according to the wonderfully well informed young man in the front of the car, was the hotel at which Miss Gloria Rayne was to have taken lunch.

The driver swung round in a circle so as to face in the direction of Wayland again, ready for the return journey. Then he drew up in front of the Royal George Hotel, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy alighted.

By this time the swell of the Fourth knew exactly what he was to say and how he was to say it. Apart from the fact that he had been applying his own noble brain to

the problem, his three companions had also helped him in shrewd suggestions and hints. And Arthur Augustus felt full of self-assurance as he ran up the stone steps leading to the Royal George.

Luck was with him. Without having to make a single inquiry, he ran into the film star herself in the lounge of the hotel.

There was no mistaking Gloria Rayne. Now that he saw her in the flesh for the first time, Arthur Augustus wondered how he could possibly have been deceived by Lady Peggy Brooke's impersonation. The film star, languorously beautiful and dressed in distinctive fashion and with faultless taste, seemed to radiate light in the rather drab-looking hotel lounge.

A crowd of important-looking people surrounded Gloria Rayne as D'Arcy entered. By the look of things, quite a large number of local notabilities had turned up to do honour to the world-famed picture actress.

Undismayed by their presence, the swell of the Fourth, topper in hand, advanced to the front and halted in front of the fair lady of the films.

"I twust I am not intwudin', madam—" began Arthur Augustus.

At least a dozen separate and distinct glares were bestowed on him from various parts of the important-looking circle; but D'Arcy passed them by like the idle wind which he regarded not.

"My name is D'Arcy. I am fwom St. Jim's School, neab Wayland—"

Miss Gloria Rayne gave him a friendly smile. Perhaps she found this fresh-faced schoolboy a welcome change from the ponderous gentlemen of Abbotsford.

"D'Arcy?" she interrupted. "I guess there's something familiar about that. What is it?"

"You probably wenenbah my witin' you wecently," suggested Arthur Augustus, noting, with pleasure and relief, that Miss Rayne's voice, though obviously an American voice, was pleasant and musical. "But you will pardon me for sayin' that this is no time for discussin' that mattah. I am, unfortunately, the beswah of some what distwessin' news."

Gloria Rayne looked surprised and a little suspicious.

"Be yourself!" she remarked, in the terse transatlantic idiom. "What do you reckon you're giving me?"

"I am vovwy sowwy to say, Miss Wayne, that this is no joke. Mr. Douglas Nash—"

"I guess he's all right? He long-distanced me from Southampton this morning—"

"I wegwet to say that he is not all wight. He has been injahed in a motah accident—"

The film star uttered a sharp little cry.

"I guess you're kiddin'—"

"I am weally dweadfully sowwy, but it is so. Some fwends of mine are waitin' outside in a cah, weady to take you to Mr. Nash."

Gloria Rayne clutched the swell of the Fourth by the arm. "Tell me, he's not badly hurt, is he? What happened? Where is he?"

In a few moments the film star seemed to have changed from a cold and unemotional statue to a deeply-distressed young woman. D'Arcy felt quite embarrassed.

"I weally cannot give you details, Miss Wayne," he said. "My fwends are waitin' outside to dwive you wight to the scene of the accident. I undahstand that Mr. Nash has been wemoved to a house near by, where you will doubtless be able to see him."

"Then I'll go right away."

A young man who had been standing in the background hurried forward just then, with an alarmed look on his face.

"But, Miss Rayne, you can't go now!" he exclaimed. "There is your appointment to open our theatre at Wayland—"

But Gloria Rayne was not even listening. Already she was half-way across the lounge, with Arthur Augustus rushing to open the door for her.

And almost before they realised what was happening, a dozen ponderous notabilities of Abbotsford and one cinema manager from Wayland were left staring at each other—minus the illustrious presence of Miss Gloria Rayne.

CHAPTER 11.

Their True Colours!

"HURRY!"

Gloria Rayne panted out the word.

She was seated in the back of the car between D'Arcy and the latter's late neighbour on the journey to Abbotsford. The car was rushing along at a speed which seemed positively dangerous at times, but no speed could satisfy the film star in her present state of mind.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was grim and silent. Apart from the distressing nature of their errand, he had been rather perturbed by a little incident which had occurred

outside the hotel in Abbotsford. After conducting Miss Rayne to the car and assisting her into the seat, he had had the mortification of seeing the door of the car slammed in front of him before he could get in. The sharp-featured young man had been responsible. Apparently neither he nor his two friends desired the company of the swell of the Fourth on the return journey.

D'Arcy, however, had insisted, and the men in the car, possibly not wishing to cause a scene, allowed him to come in the end. But Arthur Augustus found it hard to forget the incident, hence his grim and silent demeanour as the car raced along the smooth country roads towards Wayland.

The town of Wayland itself the driver avoided, taking a narrow road that rejoined the main road two miles the other side of the town. Eventually he turned off into another narrow lane leading into a lonely part of the country. Two or three miles passed without a house being sighted. D'Arcy, taking stock of his surroundings, began to look rather surprised.

"Bai Jove! Suahly Mr. Nash was takin' an unusual woute fwom Southampton!" he remarked. "We are goin' miles off the main woad now."

The sharp-featured young man in front turned round, with a peculiar glitter in his eyes.

"Mr. Nash lost his way; got on the wrong road," he explained. "We're within a mile of the house where he has been taken now. Better hold your tongue."

A hot reply rose to D'Arcy's lips. But he remembered Miss Rayne and did not utter it.

A few minutes later they came in sight of a solitary house standing back from the road.

"This the place?" asked Miss Rayne, her hands clasped nervously, as she eyed its somewhat forbidding exterior.

The sharp-featured young man nodded.

"This is it."

"Bai Jove! The house is empty!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in surprise.

The young man muttered something under his breath.

"Only the front; there are people living in the back—a caretaker and his wife. Here we are," he said, as the car rolled up the short, moss-covered drive and pulled up before the house.

The three men jumped out, and the driver ran up the steps and opened the door, which had been left unlocked.

"Follow me, Miss Rayne," he said.

The film star passed through the doorway, with D'Arcy at her heels. Behind the St. Jim's junior came the driver's two friends.

And then—

"Hands up!"

D'Arcy jumped. What was the meaning of that sharp command? Who had uttered it?

In a state of blank astonishment, he found suddenly that he was staring into the muzzle of a revolver, held grimly and menacingly in the hand of the driver.

"Put 'em up!" came a snarl from the rear.

Like one in a dream, the swell of the Fourth recognised the voice of the sharp-featured young man.

"What the mewvy dickens—" he gasped.

There was a sudden ripple of laughter from Gloria Rayne.

"Crooks! It was all guff!"

"My deah Miss Wayne—" gasped Arthur Augustus, the dreadful truth coming to him in a sudden flash.

"To think that I've fallen for this!" said the film star.

"But it was slick. When you told me Doug had smashed you got me where I lived!"

"Put your hands up, Miss Rayne!" hissed the driver.

"And drop that handbag—quick!"

The film star hesitated. There was a slight movement of that menacing revolver, and she dropped the handbag.

In the circumstances, there was nothing else to do.

The sharp-featured young man picked it up and laughed as he opened it and produced a tiny revolver.

"Just as well, chief!" he remarked.

The driver of the car nodded.

"As I thought! Now, Miss Rayne—"

"You're after my trinkets, I guess?" said Miss Gloria Rayne.

"Right first guess!" was the unsmiling reply. "What's more, we're going to get them! Just to make it more convenient for us, perhaps you'll step over to the wall and allow my friends to tie a bit of cord round you?"

It was at that moment that Arthur Augustus recovered his breath, which had been temporarily taken away from him by the stress of his emotions.

"You feahful wottahs!" he yelled.

"Eh?"

"Wottahs! Scoundwels! Blackguardly wuffians!" hooted the swell of the Fourth furiously. "You have delibewately deceived me!"

There was a laugh from the two men at the back. Apparently they found something entertaining in D'Arcy's discovery.

"They fooled you all right," remarked Gloria Rayne. "And they were clever enough to get you to fool me! If I'd seen them first, maybe I wouldn't have fallen so easily."

"Bai Jove! The wottahs are not goin' to wot you before my vewy eyes!" said Arthur Augustus. "As I was wesponsible—"

"Stand back, you fool!" snarled the man with the revolver, as D'Arcy made a sudden movement. "Another step, and I'll—"

Bang!

His sentence finished with a flash and a loud report, followed by the sound of splintering glass.

But Arthur Augustus had foreseen the move and ducked in time. Another instant and his fist crashed on the scoundrel's jaw, sending him reeling backwards.

There was a shout from Gloria Rayne.

"Good for you, kid! The gun—quick!"

But the odds were too great. Already the sharp-featured young man was half-way across the room, and before D'Arcy could make an effort to wrench the revolver from the hand of his quarry he felt a deadening pain as something hard struck him on the head.

The room seemed to swim round for a moment, then everything faded out, and the swell of the Fourth collapsed in a limp heap.

"So much for him!" snarled the sharp-featured young man, aiming a vicious kick at the inert figure. "You all right, chief?"

The man who had driven the car staggered to his feet a little dizzily and nodded.

"I'm all right. The young whelp could punch, though! 'Tis up that girl before she tries any monkey tricks!"

"Monkey tricks," however, were useless at this stage, and Gloria Rayne realised it. For a moment there had been a ray of hope when D'Arcy flung himself at the leader of this trio of crooks, but now that that move had failed there was nothing for it but to throw up the sponge.

In less than a couple of minutes she was bound hand and foot.

"And now for those trinkets you spoke about, Miss Rayne!" said the sharp-featured young man. And, watched by the glittering eyes of his two companions, he began

(Continued on the next page.)



Q.—What is a coracle?

A.—Patrick O'Connor writes to me from Cork. Is it something, he asks, that will fly or will walk? He says he has read that they float on the foam, and Welshmen are often seen taking them home. A coracle, Pat, is a small fishing-boat, and off in Welsh rivers you'll see them afloat; they are oval in shape, made of canvas or skin, and covered with pitch so the wet won't get in. They are easy to manage if you know the knack, and a fisherman carries it home on his back. Two men with one each have a net in between, and over the sides they will lazily lean; they paddle about till the net's full of fish, then pull up their catch with a heave and a swish. For two thousand years have the Welsh used the coracle. Indade, Pat, they're nearly as old as the Oracle!

Q.—What is a wombat?

A.—Another natural history query for the old gentleman to think about. This time from a youth at Yarmouth, who signs himself "Animal Lover." Perhaps he's thinking of having a few wombats in the back garden, along with the bloaters and other fruit. The nearest description of a wombat I can think of is to say it's like a small bear, with a flat back and short legs; it sleeps during the day, lives on roots and grass, is black, brown, or grey in colour, grunts when annoyed, is three feet long, and shy and gentle in disposition. Just the thing for a run on the sands before breakfast.



Here's a nice, good-natured little pet you could keep at home. A wombat!

Q.—What is a secretary-bird like?

A.—That's an easy one, Willy Mole, of Ungar. The nearest thing resembling that quaint creature called the secretary-bird is another sec bird—in fact the resemblance between them is remarkable. You are quite mistaken, old lad, in thinking that this secretary-bird spends its time making tea or rushing off to tennis. It has, however, a great liking for snakes, and shows its affection by knocking the old snake dizzy with its wings and kicking it with its feet. After which the old scout swallows the snake. This shows its pluck, I think, because in South Africa, where the secretary-bird lives, the snakes can put up a good fight, being big and poisonous. It's four feet high, with long legs, and long black feathers hanging in pairs from the back of the head. These feathers will stand up straight in the air when the old bird is excited. A funny-looking fellow altogether.

Q.—What does "Obiter dictum" mean?

A.—These latin words, Harry Lloyd, of Leeds, mean, in their literal sense, "said by the road." The phrase is used to describe some opinion given by a judge during a trial which is "by the way," and is not supposed to have any influence on the decision of the Court.

Q.—How long are my whiskers?

A.—This personal query comes from a GEM reader in Australia. Well, my lad, I'm not telling you for nothing, but if you feel them when you're wandering about in the bush, you'll be tickled to death.

Q.—What is a palanquin?

A.—A palanquin, "Regular Reader of the Gem," is something you will find in the East. It consists of a litter or couch, eight feet long and four feet wide, protected from the sun by a cover, and having movable curtains or blinds at the side. The whole contrivance is slung on two long poles, and is carried along by four bearers. Indian and Chinese women of rank are always carried about in this fashion. The word is pronounced "palankeen."

Q.—How should "golf" be pronounced?

A.—Now that looks an easy one, but Hector McPherson, of Muckle-whackit, has been arguing about it, and he's surro he's right, for he calls it "gof" and his pal calls it "golf." Neither is wrong, Mac, so whisht awa'. Having blown the cobwebs off my dictionary, I find golf and gof are both given. But in the old days it was spelt goff, gouff, and gowff, and it looks as if the "l" had crept in later. In the time of James IV. it was referred to as "The Royal and Ancient Game of Goff." James VI.

had different ideas, and spoke of "golfo ballis" (golf balls).

Q.—What was the Gordian Knot?

A.—This was a curious knot tied by one Gordius, who founded Gordium, an ancient city of Phrygia. It tied the yoke to the pole of his wagon, which he dedicated to Zeus on becoming king. It was prophesied that the man who undid the knot would rule over Asia. Alexander the Great cut it with his sword, and the town was captured and destroyed.

Q.—How much salt is there in the sea?

A.—Lots and lots. I know, because I swallowed several mouthfuls last summer. But I expect K. Baxter, of Colchester,



How much salt does the sea contain? A Dickens of a lot, as I expect a good many other chaps know who have swallowed some.

wants what they call statistics. Right-ho! old bean, I'll make it as clear as mud for you. If the entire ocean—all the lot everywhere—dried up, it would yield four and a half million cubic miles of rock salt; or, in other words, an amount of salt fourteen and a half times the size of Europe. Don't ask me how I know. You can take it from me that these figures are correct, and need not be taken with a grain of salt.

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systematically to relieve the film star of the costly rings, bracelets, and other articles of jewellery that adorned her fair person.

CHAPTER 12.

Amazing!

"IMPOSSIBLE!"

"You're dreaming, old chap!"

"But it's true, I tell you!" said French of the New House at St. Jim's.

Jack Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three had just arrived at Wayland. They had run into French outside the station, and French had poured out the astounding story into their unbelieving ears.

"It's really too thick to take in!" Tom Merry remarked, with a shake of his head. "Gussy is all sorts of an ass, everybody knows that—"

"Oh, rather!"

"But I absolutely refuse to believe that even Gussy is capable of kidnapping a film star," finished Tom Merry. "Whatever kind of an ass he is, he's not the kind to do anything so idiotic as that!"

"All the same, that's what everybody's saying," said French. "The whole town's talking about it. A schoolboy wearing a monocle led a gang of crooks up to the hotel where Gloria Rayne had had lunch. Under his directions they collared her and rushed her off in the car. Must be something in it, I should say. No smoke without the fire, you know."

"Great pip!"

"Well, if it was a schoolboy wearing a monocle, it must have been Gussy," admitted Tom Merry, with a puzzled frown. "But it can't be true—that is unless Gussy went completely off his rocker after he left us this afternoon."

"What about the gang of crooks, anyway?" asked Jack Blake. "Where did they come from?"

"Goodness knows! Unless—"

"Unless what?"

Tom started.

"I was just wondering. There were three fellows in that car that carried Gussy away. If there is anything in this weird yarn—"

"If!" said Herries sceptically.

"Well, French seems to think there is. If Gussy really has been to Abbotsford and got himself into some queer trouble, then those three fellows must have been with him."

"My hat! Something in that," remarked Blake. "Come to think of it, he couldn't have got to Abbotsford in the time unless he'd been taken there in a car. But what the thump does it all mean?"

"Give it up! Let's go along to the cinema and see what we can find out."

French nodded and left them, and Tom Merry and his chums walked down the old Wayland High Street towards the cinema.

Their walk took them past the offices of the local newspaper, the "Wayland Gazette." As a rule, that part of the street was no busier than any other part, but on this occasion something exceptional was evidently "on," for a crowd of several hundreds of people had gathered round the "Wayland Gazette's" plate-glass windows.

"What's the excitement?" asked Manners.

"Seems to be the notice that's hung up in the window," said Tom Merry. "See if we can squeeze through."

And he led the St. Jim's contingent, not without considerable difficulty, through the crowd right up to the front, where many pairs of eyes were strained up at the hand-written notice which had been pasted up inside the window.

Tom read out the notice aloud for the benefit of those of his followers who had not been fortunate enough to gain a position of advantage.

"MISS GLORIA RAYNE.

"We are informed that Miss Gloria Rayne has been kidnapped from the Royal George Hotel, Abbotsford, this afternoon. A schoolboy, described as well-dressed and wearing a monocle, called on Miss Rayne after lunch, and stated that Mr. Douglas Nash had met with a serious motor accident. In her distress, Miss Rayne willingly allowed herself to be taken off in the car which the schoolboy placed at her disposal. She was driven away immediately, the car being occupied by two other men in addition to the driver and the schoolboy. It now transpires that the story of the accident was a fabrication. Nothing has since been heard of the famous film star."

"Phew!"

The St. Jim's juniors were staggered. There was no getting away from this informative notice. They stared at it as though mesmerised.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Jack Blake. "If this doesn't beat the band! Our Gussy—"

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"Gussy, the bandit! Gussy, the bold, bad villain!" murmured Lowther.

But nobody laughed. This extraordinary development in D'Arcy's relations with Miss Gloria Rayne was beyond a joke.

That the schoolboy described in the notice was Arthur Augustus none of them doubted. Schoolboys who wore monocles were few and far between. Arthur Augustus was almost unique in that respect. It simply must be the swell of the Fourth.

What could have induced Arthur Augustus to behave in such a manner was, of course, at this juncture, a complete and apparently insoluble mystery to his astounded chums. They could only stare at each other blankly for the time being.

After a minute or so they moved back through the excited crowd of locals, and continued their interrupted walk towards the Wayland Cinema, outside which another buzzing crowd had collected.

As they moved away from the crowd, a short, stout gentleman, with rather watery eyes, followed them, catching them up just before they reached the Wayland Cinema.

"Young gentlemen!" he called out.

Tom Merry and his chums looked round. The short, stout gentleman was a stranger to all of them.

"Calling us?" asked Tom Merry.

The stranger nodded.

"You are from St. Jim's School, aren't you?"

"Right on the wicket!"

"I recognised you by your caps. Do any of you young gentlemen happen to know Master D'Arcy?"

"Know him? We've seen him grow up from an infant!" grinned Blake. "What about him?"

The short, stout gentleman gave a cautious look around him before replying.

"The fact is, young gentlemen," he said, after that manoeuvre, "I have grave suspicions concerning Master D'Arcy. You have read that notice in the window of the 'Wayland Gazette'?"

"We have. What you're thinking is that Gussy—D'Arcy, that is," corrected Tom Merry—"is the schoolboy referred to. But what do you know about it?"

"Hem! As a matter of fact, I am D'Arcy's elocution master, you see—"

"You are Mr. Seed, then?" grinned Blake.

"Exactly. At your service, and always willing to give lessons in elocution and the drama at very moderate fees," said Mr. Seed. "But to return to our young friend D'Arcy. I'm feeling uneasy about him. Possibly you don't know he's rather keen on acting with Miss Gloria Rayne—"

"Don't know! Have we heard anything else from him for the last week or so?" asked Blake, with a grimace.

"Then you are not surprised that he should have been involved in this affair?" Mr. Seed sank his voice to a whisper. "I am wondering whether we ought to tell the police, as a matter of fact. What is your opinion, young gentlemen?"

Tom Merry frowned.

"I can't believe for a moment that D'Arcy has done anything wrong," he said. "It may possibly be a lark, though it's difficult to see where the joke comes in. More reasonably, I should say that if this is a real kidnapping stunt, D'Arcy must have been made the cat's paw."

"My hat! That's possible!" exclaimed Digby. "And perhaps been kidnapped himself afterwards!"

"Sounds more likely than anything else I can think of."

The St. Jim's juniors looked at each other with rather startled eyes. Tom Merry's suggestion opened up an altogether new vista of possibilities.

"But why the kidnapping, anyway?" asked Herries.

Tom Merry laughed.

"That's easy. According to the papers, Gloria Rayne wears about thirty thousand pounds' worth of jewellery when she goes out. 'Nuff said!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake suddenly. "I wonder if those fellows in the car that Gussy boarded were crooks, and—"

"And Gussy, with his trusting nature, fell for the confidence trick?" finished Manners. "It begins to look like it!"

"What's the old boy doing?" asked Lowther just then.

He was referring to Mr. Seed, who had suddenly left them and darted across the road to grab the arm of a tall gentleman who was passing.

The juniors looked, and saw D'Arcy's elocution master in earnest conversation with the stranger.

"Something familiar about that Johnny," remarked Jack Blake. "Can't think what it is for the moment—"

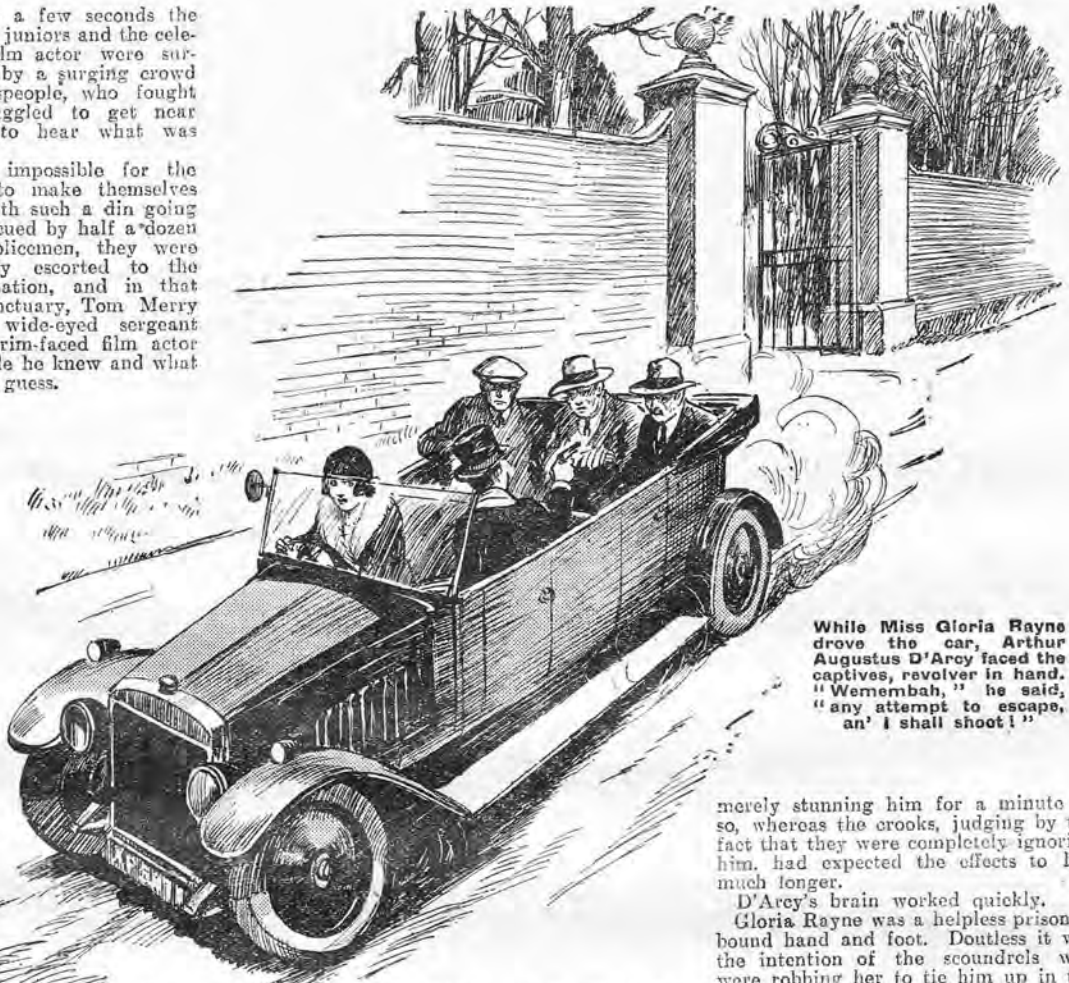
"But I can!" said Digby excitedly. "That's Douglas Nash, who plays leading part with Gloria Rayne in most of her big pictures."

"Great pip! So it is!"

And confirmation was speedily forthcoming, for a minute later Mr. Seed returned, with the tall gentleman striding beside him.

Within a few seconds the St. Jim's juniors and the celebrated film actor were surrounded by a surging crowd of townspeople, who fought and struggled to get near enough to hear what was said.

It was impossible for the juniors to make themselves heard with such a din going on. Rescued by half a dozen burly policemen, they were eventually escorted to the police station, and in that grim sanctuary, Tom Merry told a wide-eyed sergeant and a grim-faced film actor what little he knew and what he could guess.



While Miss Gloria Rayne drove the car, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy faced the captives, revolver in hand. "Wemembah," he said, "any attempt to escape, an' I shall shoot!"

And every minute in the Wayland High Street the crowds increased and the excitement intensified.

CHAPTER 13.

Winning Through!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stirred slightly.

His temples were throbbing, and his limbs ached.

For a moment he wondered where he was, and how he had come there.

Almost instantly the recollection of that desperate leap he had made at the scowling crook came back to him.

An instinctive caution told him not to open his eyes immediately. Instead, he listened.

"Now the ear-rings, my fine lady!"

It was the voice of the sharp-featured young man. D'Arcy felt his body stiffen with anger as he heard it. The realisation that he had been fooled—that he had been made the catpaw of a trio of crooks—came to him with almost overwhelming force.

He was fully conscious again now. His aching head was almost forgotten already in the fierce, burning anger he felt at having been tricked.

How stupidly he had acted! How innocently he had swallowed the glib story of that sharp-featured young man! And now, as a result of his innocence and stupidity, Miss Gloria Rayne was helpless in the hands of unscrupulous bandits—for that, D'Arcy mentally decided, was the only term applicable to them. He almost groaned aloud.

A shrill cry of pain made him forget caution for a moment and open his eyes.

The sharp-featured young man was relieving the film star of her earrings, and he was using force, regardless of the fact that in so doing he was putting the helpless girl to considerable pain. D'Arcy almost leaped to his feet for another desperate effort as he saw what was happening.

Almost—but not quite. Experience teaches, and D'Arcy had learned a lesson from his experience of a few minutes before.

It could not have been more than a few minutes before. That fact occurred to him as he closed his eyes again. Evidently the blow he had received had had the effect of

merely stunning him for a minute or so, whereas the crooks, judging by the fact that they were completely ignoring him, had expected the effects to last much longer.

D'Arcy's brain worked quickly.

Gloria Rayne was a helpless prisoner, bound hand and foot. Doubtless it was the intention of the scoundrels who were robbing her to tie him up in the

same way before they left. In that way, and in that way only, would they be assured of a long enough respite to enable them to get well away before the police were after them.

He was single-handed, and he was up against three ruthless criminals, armed with revolvers, and not very particular as to how they used them. Once they turned on him to secure him all hope of escape would be gone.

But what was he to do? D'Arcy's brain swam as he turned over the problem.

To give in without a struggle was impossible. Better to die fighting than take that ignoble course. Yet it seemed that only by a miracle could he hope to obtain his freedom, let alone gain the upper hand.

Arthur Augustus opened his eyelids just a fraction of an inch. The crooks had apparently finished their work. They were standing together in the middle of the hall, examining the spoils and talking in low tones. The swell of the Fourth longed for the opportunity of dealing with them one at a time. With characteristic optimism he felt sure that he could have given all three of them the knock-out on such terms.

But it was useless to indulge in idle dreams. Action was what was required, and that right quickly.

Suddenly he started.

Something lying on the floor near the enemy had attracted his attention—something small and bright. D'Arcy's half-closed eyes gleamed as he recognised it.

It was a tiny revolver.

He remembered it. The sharp-featured young man had taken it from Miss Rayne's handbag. Evidently it had been dropped in the scuffle when D'Arcy had made his ineffectual assault.

Arthur Augustus felt the blood course wildly through his veins.

Possibly it was unloaded and useless. On the other hand there was a chance that it would give him the whiphand over the crooks.

One of the men looked round just then, and Arthur Augustus closed his eyes again and feigned to be still unconscious. He heard them discussing the "school kid" as

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they disrespectfully described him, and guessed that very soon they would be trussing him up—unless something quick and decisive happened in the meantime.

That something quick and decisive should happen, however, the swell of the Fourth was quite determined now. He felt that it was up to him. He had been the means of Gloria Rayne's falling into the hands of these ruffians, and it was only doing the decent thing to make a supreme effort to save the situation for her.

Fortunately, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the right man in an emergency. He knew no such emotion as fear, and bad as the situation was, he was as cool as the proverbial cucumber. Furthermore, he had unlimited confidence in his own powers.

He half-opened his eyes again. The men were still in the same place, talking in whispers now—discussing their plans after leaving the house, D'Arcy hazarded.

His glance rested again on that bright little object lying on the floor. He calculated the approximate distance that separated him from it, and also the considerably shorter distance between the revolver and the crooks.

It seemed almost impossible to reach it without attracting attention to himself. He swiftly debated whether to creep cautiously towards it or just "chance" it and make a rush, and decided to try the former first.

At last he acted. With muscles taut and breath held in he rolled over on his stomach and commenced to creep inch by inch towards the gleaming little weapon which he hoped might help him to victory.

There was just the faintest gasp from the corner where the film star was lying. Gloria Rayne had seen what was happening—was watching his movements, praying for his success. That thought sent a pleasant thrill through Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He was half-way towards his goal when what he dreaded came to pass.

The sharp-featured young man happened to light up a cigarette. In doing so he turned right in the direction of D'Arcy's advance.

Then he shouted, eyes ablaze with rage.

"The fool kid! He's round!"

"What?"

Almost instantly three scowling ruffians were rushing at the swell of the Fourth.

Arthur Augustus saw only that bright little object on the floor—the object that represented his only chance of winning through. With one great spring he was on it.

Momentarily exhausted by his effort he sprawled across the floor and immediately the enemy was upon him.

But D'Arcy was not going to throw up the sponge at this stage of events. The blood of his ancient line boiled within him at the thought that his aggressors had tricked and deceived him. He almost enjoyed the prospect of a scrap, impossible as the odds might seem.

Even as he fell, his hand shot out and closed round an ankle, which was the only thing he could see just then. One mighty wrench and to his satisfaction he felt a heavy body crash to the floor beside him.

Like a flash the swell of the Fourth was on his feet again, ducking and dodging with the elusiveness of an eel as the other two men reached out for him.

The sharp-featured young man was yelling at him.

"You'll suffer for this, burn me if you won't! Give in before we kick the life out of you!"

As he finished the amiable young gentleman rushed at the St. Jim's junior again, with a rush that might have been intended to sweep D'Arcy off the face of the earth.

But Arthur Augustus was not intimidated by that ferocious rush. At St. Jim's he was one of the foremost boxers in the Lower School, and he was equal to the occasion now. Instead of that fierce rush wiping D'Arcy off the face of the earth it nearly achieved that result with the sharp-featured young man himself. One lightning-like side-step took the intended victim out of the line of attack. A fraction of a second later something hard and painful collided with the ruffian's eye, and he fell, roaring. That hard and painful object was D'Arcy's fist.

Another leap and Arthur Augustus was across the hall again. And now, for the first time, he had the opportunity of grasping Gloria Rayne's little revolver by the right end.

"Hands up, you wottahs!"

It was a ringing cry from the swell of the Fourth. The third of the crooks, who had just started to advance on Gussy again, pulled up with a jerk.

"What—what—"

"Hands up, you wuffian or I shoot!" roared D'Arcy.

The man hesitated for a second, and then a slight movement of that gleaming little revolver decided him. He put his hands above his head.

As he did so the leader of the trio and the sharp-featured young man got unsteadily on their feet again, their faces evil and furious.

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Arthur Augustus eyed them grimly.

"You, too—both of you!" he rapped out.

And his order, slowly and grudgingly it must be admitted, was obeyed.

Brains were working rapidly on both sides in the pause that followed. D'Arcy, for his part, was wondering, with a certain amount of misgiving, whether the little weapon was loaded with anything more deadly than blank cartridges. If it were not, and the fact came out, the game was up with a vengeance. The evil-looking trio, on their side, were asking themselves whether this slim schoolboy would really have the nerve to fire, when it came to the point.

Though he certainly gained the upper hand, Arthur Augustus realised that his victory might easily prove to be a temporary one. It behooved him to act quickly.

Still covering the scowling trio, he crossed the hall to the spot where Miss Rayne was lying. With his disengaged hand he produced a pocket-knife from his pocket and opened it.

Necessarily, he had to bend down before he could cut the prisoner's bonds. For a fraction of a second the pointing revolver wavered.

The leader of the crooks must have been waiting for that opportunity. As it came he sprang.

But that spring was never completed. Acting almost by instinct, D'Arcy pulled the trigger. There was a flash and a report—then a cry of pain and a thud. D'Arcy's assailant had fallen, and a trickle of blood from his hand showed where he had been hit.

The wounded man's two companions, who were on tip-toe, waiting to take advantage of his lead, fell back like whipped dogs at the sight of blood.

Arthur Augustus had them covered again now, and his hand was still steady and unflinching.

"Stand back, you wottahs!" he said sternly. "I warn you that I'll shoot again without hesitation the moment either of you moves!"

And the swell of the Fourth spoke with even more confidence now. He had received proof that Gloria Rayne's "gun" was loaded with something very different from blanks. Now he felt for the first time that he really had the whiphand, and he saw that they felt it, too.

In a matter of seconds he had freed the film star, and Gloria Rayne, looking somewhat ruffled and very much surprised, was able to stand up and take notice, so to speak.

"Well, if you're not the dandiest turn I've seen in years!" was her first comment.

Arthur Augustus blushed.

"I trust you are not feelin' the effects of these scoundwels' wuffness too severely, Miss Wayne?"

Gloria Rayne laughed.

"I guess I'm all right. Quite enjoyed it, in fact! But that's not denying that I owe you a whole lot of thanks for fixing this as you have done."

"Bai Jove! It was nothin'—"

"I'll say it was something!" said Miss Gloria Rayne emphatically. "I've always been brought up to believe that we had the monopoly of living wonders over the pond, but after this I've got to hand it to you!"

"Weallf, deah gal—I mean, Miss Wayne—" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"You were just great! Don't deny it now!"

"I weally must protest that it was nothin'. Aftah bein' so sillay as to act as the dupe of these wuffians and land you in a fix, the vewy least I could do was to get you out of it again— Stand back!" finished Arthur Augustus, as the sharp-featured young man made a slight move.

The film star shot a keen glance at the cowering prisoners.

"Better corral these guys. Keep them covered and get them out into the auto; I'll drive."

"Bai Jove! That's a weally bwainy ideah!" said Arthur Augustus admiringly. "What about wetwiev'in' your jewellery first, Miss Wayne?"

"Good for you!"

And before they quitted the house Miss Rayne took back from the defeated crooks every article of which they had previously dispossessed her.

This transaction completed, the three men were shepherded out of the house and into the waiting motor-car, the wounded prisoner white and unsteady, and the other two cowed and sullen.

There was a delay of a few minutes while the film star bandaged up the injured man's hand; and then Miss Gloria Rayne sat at the wheel and took stock of the controls.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, revolver still in hand, sat beside her and faced round so that he could keep his captives under observation.

"Wemembah," he said, as the self-starter operated and

the engine of the car began to hum, "dawin' our journey, I intend to hold this wevovah in my hand! Any attempt to escape, an' I shall shoot! I twust that is quite cleah!"

"Burn you!" came in a growl from the sharp-featured young man.

"Wight away, Miss Wayne! Pway ignore this evil cweatuh!"

The film star laughed merrily, though why she should have done so was for ever a mystery to Arthur Augustus. A few moments later the car was buzzing along the country road that led back to the main road and Wayland.

CHAPTER 14.

The Conquering Hero!

"**T**HANK you, gentlemen—and you boys! I don't think I need detain you any longer."

And the sergeant in charge of Wayland Police Station put down the pen with which he had been taking notes of the St. Jim's juniors' statements.

"Can't say we haven't done our best now, can they?" asked Mr. Seed of nobody in particular.

Mr. Douglas Nash, who had said but little during the proceedings at the police station, looked keenly at the sergeant. The handsome hero of a hundred film romances, whose engaging smile had caused feminine hearts to flutter all over the civilised world, was looking drawn and haggard.

What the relationship was between him and the missing film star none of the juniors knew; but that he was deeply affected by her disappearance was obvious to all.

"What steps are you taking, sergeant?" he asked.

The police-sergeant smiled reassuringly.

"Everything that can be done is being done—you may rest assured of that, sir."

"I guess that's not enough. I want to get back Gloria if every policeman in this old island has to turn out on the job!"

"I can only assure you, sir—" the sergeant was saying, when a sudden roar from the High Street drowned the rest of his remark.

"What the thump—" said Tom Merry, with a startled look out of the open doorway.

"It's cheering!" exclaimed Jack Blake.

"Great pip!"

"Something must have happened!"

A startled look came into Douglas Nash's eyes. His haggard face brightened.

"I guess something has happened. I'll say this can mean only one thing—"

With a sudden movement, he straightened up and darted across the room and out of the police station.

Tom Merry & Co., in a state of great curiosity, followed him down the steps and out into the High Street. And as they saw the crowded street they gave a yell.

"Gussy!"

"Our one and only Gus!" roared Blake. "And just look at him!"

"My hat!"

"What the merry dickens—"

The St. Jim's juniors were staggered. Certainly, the picture presented by the Wayland High Street at that moment was staggering in the extreme.

A motor-car was crawling slowly along the street towards the police station. At the wheel was sitting Gloria Rayne, whose visit to Wayland that afternoon had brought out the crowds that thronged the town. In the back were three grim and sullen men. And facing them, revolver in hand, and a look of grim determination on his face, was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's!

"D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Seed, as he came out of the police station, after which he gave expression to his feelings in an exclamation which would hardly have been expected from a teacher of elocution: "Dash my buttons!"

And he followed Douglas Nash and the St. Jim's juniors to the car.

The film actor had already jumped into the car, and was embracing Gloria Rayne, oblivious to the alarming swerves it took as a consequence.

The cheers of the crowd grew louder and louder. Rarely had the old High Street seen such exciting events.

With difficulty, the car at last drew up outside the police station. Tom Merry & Co. fought their way to the front.

"Gussy!"

"Gussy, old sport!"

"Bai Jove! Steady on, you fellows! Pway don't knock my arm. This wevolver is loaded!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"What's it all about?" roared Blake. "Tell your uncles what it means!"

"Merely that I have brougnt a gang of wuffianly wascals to book, deah boy!"

"Great pip!"

A square-jawed gentleman carrying a moving-picture camera and his youthful assistant, loaded with equipment, burst through the crowd at that moment.

"Stand back there, please!" roared the square-jawed gentleman. "Let me get this shot in before it's too late. Keep the bobbies back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you please, Miss Rayne. Care to say a few words?" Apparently Miss Rayne was not averse to saying a few words.

"I guess it's real good of all you folks to greet me like this," she said. "I've had a pretty exciting time this afternoon, and I want to tell you that the gentleman who brought me safely through it all is my young friend here—Mr. D'Arcy."

"Good old Gus!"

And Tom Merry & Co. joined in the general roar of cheering with a right good will.

The camera-man saw uniforms coming nearer. He made another hurried request.

"Mr. D'Arcy—a few words, if you please!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle.

"Weally, deah boy, I scarcely know what to say," he remarked. "As Miss Wayne has told you, we have had a vewy excitin' time, an' by a ware stwoke of luck we have come through on top. I assuah you, howevah, that what I did was merely what any othah fellow would have done in similah cirs. Bai Jove! I wathah fancy the police are goin' to butt in, now!"

And that concluded D'Arcy's first speech for the "talkies." In another moment policemen were all round the car, asking questions, and quickly getting to the facts. Shortly afterwards they were leading the defeated trio of bandits through the surging crowd to the police station.

D'Arcy followed, surrounded by his chums, and behind them came Gloria Rayne and Douglas Nash, on whom Arthur Augustus turned round now and again to bestow a rather morose look. Bringing up in the rear was Mr. Seed, his watery eyes blinking furiously with excitement.

The formalities inside the police station did not occupy much time, and very soon the film actress who had succeeded in turning Wayland into a turmoil was at liberty to fulfil her engagement at the Wayland Cinema.

Almost needless to say, Tom Merry & Co. were there in full force, while Arthur Augustus was given a seat of honour, and even called on to make another speech—an honour which, on this occasion, however, he felt it politic to decline.

The opening ceremony having been performed, the principals adjourned to the private room of the manager of the Wayland Cinema—the said principals including Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who by this time hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels.

Tom Merry & Co., after a little confab on the subject, decided to follow him—"just to see the thing through," as Tom Merry expressed it.

CHAPTER 15.

Not for the "Talkies!"

"**I** WONDAH if I might have a word with you on a confidential mattah, Miss Wayne?"

Arthur Augustus asked that question.

The manager's room in the Wayland Cinema was filled, as he might have said himself "to capacity." There were as many prominent Wayland citizens present as there had been at lunch-time that day in the Royal George Hotel at Abbotsford. Despite which circumstance, the swell of the Fourth had managed to get a word in, as tea and cakes were being passed round.

Gloria Rayne looked a little surprised at D'Arcy's question.

"Why, certainly! Go to it!"

"Hem! I mentioned it in my lettah, if you wemembah, that I was sewiously contemplatin' a cawcer on the "talkies," and—"

"Gee-whiz!"

"Bai Jove! I beg your pardon!"

"I mean, sure—I remember!" said the film star. "Wouldn't, if I were you, though. Crowd-work, and all that—plenty of work, and not much pay, I'll say! I've been through it."

Arthur Augustus looked a little abashed.

"Hem! As a mattah of fact, I was weally not thinkin' of cwowd work. You will wecollect that in my lettah I mentioned the possibility that you might considah me as a possible candidate for the honah of actin' with you in a weally big film. That was what I weally meant."

Miss Gloria Rayne stared.

"Then you figure you were serious when you wrote that?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

(Continued on page 28.)

YOU'LL ENJOY THIS UNIQUE STORY, BOYS!



THE VALLEY of FORTUNE!

By JOHN SYLVESTER.

Fate leads our gallant band of radium-seekers into the most extraordinary adventure of their careers—an encounter with the first men of the world!

Trent's Narrow Escape :

BUT the snakes have heard us!" put in Dick Blackwood. "We charged into this place like a herd of buffaloes."

"Snakes are deaf," was the impatient reply.

"It's a superstition that they can hear anything at all."

It was Chica who interrupted next.

"There is only one thing for us to do, senors. I will fire the grass all round, and we shall be safe for to-night, at least."

"Start at once," said Trent, turning to him with a new eagerness. "But do you think the stuff is dry enough to burn?"

"I'll make it burn!" nodded the Indian confidently.

"Meanwhile—" began West, and he got no further. His eyes were riveted on the reeds, and he gripped Trent by the arm. "Look! They are coming!"

"Hurry, Chica," cried Trent hoarsely, "or it will be too late! Dick, use your gun as a club. Don't shoot unless you are obliged. These stones might come in useful."

As he spoke, he bent down and tugged at a huge lump of granite embedded in the soft earth. Chica plied his flint and steel feverishly. West's hand went instinctively to his revolver. Dick watched, fascinated despite himself by the utter evil of those black, gleaming bodies, flecked with orange, uncoiling between the coarse grasses.

They were coming from all directions, deadly swamp adders, measuring from three to six feet in length, and as thick as a man's arm. That horseshoe cul-de-sac was like a magnet which attracted these terrible reptiles from far and near. Almost unknown outside the Amazon basin, and usually considered rare, they flourished in this immense marsh in fantastic numbers. The spectacle was like some old illustration of a legend. As the explorers stood waiting, every muscle taut, the earth seemed to vomit serpents.

"Take care, Dick!" someone—he was not sure who—shouted.

Trent had already flung the stone held above his head. It descended with crushing force on three reptiles not a foot away from him.

Dick looked down to see the flash of scarlet fangs, the quick movement of a lithe, jet-black body. He swung his rifle, and brought the butt down on the V-shaped head. The rest of the snake writhed horribly, but it was no longer a danger.

Then the fight began in earnest, a bizarre battle between reptile and man. The smell of smoke was their only warning that Chica had partly succeeded, for they dared not look around. The flames were slowly moving owing to the damp. But gradually they crept on until all four men were in a circle of fire. No more serpents could enter; but, on the other hand, those already inside could not leave.

With clubs and stones the work of destruction continued. One snake, measuring over four feet, coiled itself around Dick's leg. He felt it tighten like a rope, and a second later he would have received a fatal bite. But a revolver shot rang out, and the vicious head was shattered in the nick of time. Another leapt towards Trent, rearing itself on a level with his arm. He jumped back, his foot squashing a writhing mate. Dick barely missed the death-dealing fangs of the largest of them all. He struck, but did not quite kill. He was thrown off his balance, and felt himself falling on top of three squirming reptiles. But Chica gripped his arm, steadying him.

By this time the sun had long gone down. It was pitch dark save for this pool of firelight. They were fighting now almost blindly. The smoke stung their eyes and entered their lungs chokingly. But it had one inestimable advantage; it seemed to daze what remained of that brood of serpents. Some of them were motionless, as though dead, and only sprang into brief, horrible struggles when they were struck.

"We've beaten them off!" exclaimed West, pausing for a moment. "But we must take care. Some may be only suffocated."

Cautiously they went over every square inch of the ground, and they accounted for six more.

"Anybody bitten?" asked Trent, when they had finished.

"I'm all right," said Dick.

"So am I," replied West, in tones of relief. "How about you, Chica?"

"Si, senor," nodded the Indian, grinning.

"Then we are lucky," West declared. "It seems hardly credible that not one of us was bitten."

"One of us was!"

Dick looked up in dismay; so did West. They were both staring at Trent, whose face was glistening with sweat.

"You don't mean—" Dick gasped.

"Unfortunately, I do," answered Trent grimly. "I'm not sure how long the poison takes to act, but there's no mistaking when it does." He suddenly held out something to West—his revolver. "You may think I'm a coward, but, believe me, it's the best way."

West's face changed colour. He fell back a pace. His usual icy composure was gone.

"You may be wrong. We must wait—"

"Look at my ankle; and, if that isn't enough, look at my arm!" Trent tore aside his shirt as he spoke. "You can only see

TRENT, the leader of the Radium-Seekers.



HOW THE ADVENTURE STARTED.

Convinced that Pedro Lopez, a Brazilian adventurer, has stolen their map which holds the key to the whereabouts of a fortune in radium, Robert West, a scientist, and his companion, John Trent, together with a plucky youngster named Dick Blackwood, determine to follow the arch-villain to Brazil. On reaching a desolate plateau in the Andes, Dick is captured by Lopez and offered as human sacrifice to the God of the Shrieking Pit. He is saved, however, in the nick of time by Chica, a faithful Indian, who, to revenge the death of his father, dynamites the caves and puts Lopez and his villainous crew to rout. Later, the radium-seekers fall into the hands of a Huasuran tribe of head-hunters as does Lopez himself. Having no other alternative, the cunning and merciless Lopez calls a truce and fights side by side against the savages, who are eventually beaten off. Realising they may never reach the Valley of Fortune without the map, the Britishers agree to release the Brazilian in exchange for the precious document. Following the instructions on the map they eventually reach a vast marsh, which, to their amazement and horror, is infested with thousands of poisonous snakes.

"Come on!" screams Trent hoarsely. "Run for your lives!"

(Now read on.)

a couple of tiny punctures. It's scarcely drawn blood. But the poison is circulating through me. Presently my heart will pump it through the main arteries to the brain. The first stage of the madness is a burning thirst. Yet when you bring me water I shall shriek at the sight of it, as in rabies. Convulsions come next. I have seen a man, lying on the ground, suddenly arch his body convulsively, a dreadful, shuddering spasm, so that he almost stands on his feet, but his head is touching the ground. After that, the tertiary and worst stage—

"For Heaven's sake, stop!" cried West, in horror. "But isn't there anything we can do? Can't I suck out the poison? Or even—he hesitated—"even amputate?"

Trent shook his head.

"I shouldn't be much use to anyone without my right arm and leg. But even if you did that you would be too late. For a wamba bite there is no cure. The most merciful thing is to shoot the victim."

Dick felt as though his blood had been suddenly turned to ice. He remembered that look of terror which had crossed Trent's face when he fled at first from the lair of the serpents. Trent knew, of course, more than any of them, what the danger really was. But now it almost seemed as though his fear had been a premonition.

Perhaps West was feeling the same. Trent was his best friend, in spite of their dissimilarities. He had to choose between shooting him with his own revolver, or letting him die in lingering torture.

"I can't do it!" he muttered, clenching his teeth. "I can't, old man! It'll have to be someone else."

Trent did not reply for more than a minute. He regarded West as though he perfectly understood; then his gaze travelled to Dick, and the boy felt his heart stop beating. He was about to open his mouth, to protest, to implore, when Trent, with a look of sympathetic comprehension, turned finally to Chica.

"Take that revolver, Chica," he ordered slowly. "Try and manage it with one bullet. We mustn't waste one shot."

"Trent, you can't—"

But West checked himself in time. As the wondering Indian crossed over to him, reluctantly he gave up the weapon. In the circumstances, he would have been a poor friend if he had refused.

"But it's like a nightmare! It's ghastly!" he groaned.

That was what Dick felt; it was like a nightmare. Only a few minutes ago they were united in fighting for their lives. Now they were going to witness the death of one of the finest men either of them had ever known.

"You'll carry on without me," said Trent, bracing his shoulders. "I believe you'll find your way out of this plague spot and you'll reach the Valley of Fortune. I've got a feeling—a hunch, if you like—that you'll survive everything. You'll come back with one of the most tremendous discoveries of modern times. It was too much to expect we should all get through unharmed. But don't worry too much about me. And now I'm going to wish you good-bye and good luck!"

"Good-bye!" muttered West hoarsely, as Trent held out his hand. Then he held out his hand to Dick, who marvelled at the firmness of that grip.

"Good-bye, old son! You are made of the right stuff!"

He released Dick's hand sharply and turned to Chica.

"I'm ready," he said.

West swung round on his heel. He couldn't endure that final sight. He felt a crazy impulse to leap on Chica and tear away the revolver. Dick felt much the same sensation and he also turned. He could hear Chica draw his breath as he raised the revolver and took aim. In another second he would have fired; but a cry from Dick, who started forward, made him stop.

"Look!" gasped Dick, pointing to the wall of half-reddened smoke. "Is someone watching us, or am I imagining things?"

"No; you are right!" echoed West, following the direction of his pointing finger with his eyes. "I saw a face!"

It was a dramatic moment. Trent, who had been within an ace of death, also turned. He, too, as the smoke rolled back again, saw between the rifts a motionless face. It was brown and covered with hair. The protruding jaw, the spatulate nose, the sunken eyes, and receding forehead were reminiscent of a gorilla; yet those dark, beady eyes had a look of uncanny intelligence.

"Is it human?" Dick whispered.

Meanwhile, Chica had raised the revolver which he had been about to use on Trent and seemed on the point of shooting, when West stopped him.

"Don't fire—but keep ready!"

"It's coming towards us!" Dick stammered.

The creature had begun to move. It seemed to take shape out of the smoke itself like a fabulous monster. It ad-

vanced slowly, and now it was completely visible. That simian head was set on a pair of powerful shoulders. It had enormously long arms, and carried a heavy club. But the club and the grass loin cloth it was wearing decided that they were confronted with something that belonged to the human species.

"Reminds me of those pictures you see of cave men in the Stone Age," murmured Dick in astonishment.

"You aren't far wrong," nodded West, still keeping his eyes upon the grotesque apparition, "except that there are no caves."

They were interrupted by a startling cry from behind, and turned in time to see Trent fall to the ground, his hands pressed to his stomach as he rolled in agony.

Dick and West looked at one another in helpless dismay.

"It's begun!"

"Should we—"

"Look! The monster is going up to Trent!"

Again the alarmed Chica raised his revolver; but, for a second time, West stopped him.

"I believe the brute means to be friendly. It's just possible—"

"What do you mean?" faltered Dick

"It's possible he knows more about the bites of these snakes than we do. I may be wrong, but there's no harm in hoping. And poor Trent can't be worse than he is."

In amazed suspense they watched the hairy creature remove what looked like a bunch of herbs hanging at his waist. He knelt down before Trent—who was unconscious of everything but the pain shooting through him—and with extraordinary gentleness the ape-like man inserted some of the herbs he had selected between those frothing lips; then he rose. And he had barely got to his feet when the spasms convulsing Trent subsided.

It was like a miracle.

West rushed across to see if there was any sinister reason for the stillness. He felt Trent's heart and then his pulse, and turned to Dick in stupefaction.

"He seems to be just sleeping!" he exclaimed.

"Then those herbs—they were an antidote!" cried Dick excitedly. "They must have been! This man must belong to a tribe living in the swamps. How could they live here if they didn't know how to protect themselves against the snakes?"

"By Jupiter, you've got it!" ejaculated West. "That means Trent's life is saved! We also have nothing more to fear from snakes. We've only got to get a supply of that antidote. But what sort of creature have we discovered?"

His voice was tense with a new excitement. The scientist in him was uppermost again. He turned at the same time as Dick.

"My sainted aunt!" whispered Dick. "He's brought his pals!"

Between rifts in the smoke they could see at least a dozen other similar faces, covered with hair, all with the same jutting jaws and receding heads. They were peering with inquisitiveness rather than hostility.

It was an amazing hour.

The scene was photographed unforgettably on Dick's mind. High overhead the glittering stars of the southern hemisphere; around them smouldering grasses and bushes; inside the red glow no less than fourteen subhuman creatures, the chief of whom was trying to communicate by signs.

Chica, who knew several native dialects, tried them all out, but he didn't succeed in striking a single word which they understood.

They made friendly gestures, however, and then sat down in a ring. They seemed tremendously interested. One of them touched Dick's bare arm in a puzzled fashion.

"Looking for your hair," chuckled West. "But this is luck!"

"So far," conceded Dick cautiously.

"Oh, they are friendly enough!" West exclaimed.

"So were the head-hunters at first," responded Dick. "I'm not so sweet and trusting as I used to be. It wouldn't surprise me to discover that we were being saved up for the sacred crocodile."

West shook his head.

"You are wrong, Dick. It's natural enough for you to be suspicious; but what you haven't grasped is the extraordinary significance of this. You don't realise that we have made a discovery of much greater importance, in one sense, than the radium deposits we are looking for. I haven't the smallest doubt that we are face to face with the first men who appeared on the earth."

(Don't miss next week's instalment of this great adventure serial whatever you do, chums.)

Gussy's "Talkie"!

(Continued from page 25.)

"You really figured you could star with me in a feature film?"

"Precisely. I have had a great deal of experience in amateur theatricals, and my elocution mashes assuals me that I was born to act for the 'talkies'."

Gloria Rayne touched his arm gently.

"I guess you wouldn't have thought of it if you hadn't happened to strike me on the screen, eh?"

"Pewpaws it is true that I had hoped to become a wealthy friend of yours as a result of our actin' togethah," admitted the swell of the Fourth.

"Then you've got what you wanted without the acting part," smiled the film star. "I guess we're friends, aren't we?"

"Bai Jove! I hope so."

"All's well, then. And now, just forget that stuff about going on the 'movies,' and let me introduce you to someone I want you to meet."

As she spoke, Gloria Rayne turned to a tall, handsome gentleman who had just entered the room in company with Tom Merry & Co. D'Arcy recognised the gentleman—it was Douglas Nash. He rose and bowed. Mr. Nash extended a big hand, and D'Arcy, after a momentary pause, shook it.

Then he started violently. He had suddenly become conscious of what Gloria Rayne was saying by way of introduction.

"Doug, I want you to meet Mr. D'Arcy. Mr. D'Arcy, I want you to meet Douglas Nash—my husband!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Glad indeed to know you!" was Douglas Nash's hearty greeting. "What I owe you for seeing my wife through that hold-up this afternoon, I can never repay!"

"Bai Jove! I—I— Then you're mawwed?"

D'Arcy's face was a study. How he could have carried on a light conversation after this crushing blow was afterwards a matter for conjecture. Fortunately, Tom Merry & Co. came to the rescue, and the swell of the Fourth was allowed five minutes in the background during which to recover from his embarrassment.

For the remainder of his sojourn in the manager's room at the Wayland Cinema, Arthur Augustus was observed to wear a preoccupied and rather gloomy expression, and for once he had very little to say for himself.

Towards the end he did brighten up a little, and when the time came to see Miss Rayne and her smiling husband off, he managed to look quite cheery. But he lapsed into gloomy silence again after they had gone.

Tom Merry & Co. respected his feelings sufficiently to ignore the subject of Miss Gloria Rayne on the return journey to St. Jim's. They knew that after this climax it would be only a very short time before Arthur Augustus was his old self again. In the meantime, they were prepared to be merciful with him.

When Mr. Seed met them outside the cinema and broached the subject of more elocution lessons, Arthur Augustus handed over to that rather uneasy-looking gentleman a five-pound note, and briefly explained that he would not be taking the remainder of the course.

Back at St. Jim's, D'Arcy was summoned before Dr. Holmes, who pointed out to him in no uncertain fashion the folly of a youth of his age becoming infatuated with cinema actresses.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, somewhat subdued, withdrew.

After that little interview it was noticed that the swell of the Fourth hadn't much to say about the screen, or even Gloria Rayne. His enthusiasm for a career in "talkies" had obviously waned.

The final break came when he went with a crowd of St. Jim's fellows to see and hear himself at the Wayland Cinema in the topical film of his triumphant return to Wayland.

Even Arthur Augustus, blind as he might be to many of the realities of life, realised that he did not cut quite so romantic a figure on the screen as he could have wished. And when the good-natured applause of the audience gave way to an unfeeling roar of laughter as his inimitable accents thundered through the hall, the swell of the Fourth felt that his lesson was complete.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had firmly made up his mind that never, as long as he lived, would he have anything more to do with the "talkies."

THE END.

(Look out for another topping story of Tom Merry & Co. in next week's GEM, entitled: "SENT TO COVENTRY!" You'll enjoy every line of it, chums, for it features an old favourite in Ralph Beckness Cardew.)

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