

The

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LIBRARY

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Every Wednesday

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GUSSY GETS GOING!

An Amusing Incident from the Gripping Long Complete School Story Inside.

EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums.—Your old friend the one and only Gussy gets quite a good show all to himself this week, doesn't he? I am sure you will like this rollicking story, which is quite up to the high standard of "Gem" yarns. Next week the story will be entitled: "Tom Merry's Task," and although I am not going to spoil your interest by giving away the idea of the yarn, I am convinced that it will delight you all. "Tom Merry's Task" is really quite a novel departure, and when I mention that the

story introduces that delightful character, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, you will no doubt be more eager than ever for next Wednesday to arrive. As I fully expected, the publication of the portrait of Kit Wildrake has been greeted with a storm of praise, and I am pleased to see how well this new character has been received by all my readers. There will be another excellent portrait on the back of next week's "Gem," and you must take care not to miss it, or you will spoil your collection. Our next issue will be

a splendid one in every way, and I hope all my chums will tell their friends who are not already readers of the "Gem" to be on the look-out for it. The long complete story is quite one of the best we have yet published. There is another splendid number of the "Boys' Herald" on sale this week, which contains, amongst many other fine features, the first of a new series of sparkling school stories, entitled: "Tales of St. Antony's." I am sure you will like them!

YOUR EDITOR.



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GUSSY GETS GOING!



A Grand Long Complete School Story of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I.

Arthur Augustus is Thoughtful!

"JOLLY good show!" said Tom Merry enthusiastically.
"And it was a British film, too!" remarked Jack Blake. "We've had a ripping afternoon, thanks to old Gussy!"

"Yes, rather!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy might have looked pleased had he heard that glowing tribute to himself, but as he did not seem to look pleased it was apparent that Gussy had not heard. Indeed, there was a portentous frown on the aristocratic features of the swell of St. Jim's.

The party of eight St. Jim's juniors had just emerged from the cinema in Wayland High Street, and were making their way towards the railway-station.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell—and Jack Blake, Horries, and Digby, and Ernest Levison of the Fourth had been D'Arcy's guests at the cinema that afternoon. Lord Eastwood, D'Arcy's noble patron, had sent him another of those famous "fivers," and Gussy had proceeded to entertain his chums in his usual lavish manner.

D'Arcy was "going the whole hog," so to speak. Not only had he "stood" the seats at the cinema, but there was to be a feed in Study No. 6 when the party arrived back at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry glanced curiously at his noble chum. Arthur Augustus seemed preoccupied.

"What did you think of the show, Gussy?" asked the captain of the Shell jovially, linking his arm with that of D'Arcy's.

Arthur Augustus seemed to awake from his reverie with a start.

"Er—er—what did you say, deah boy?" he stammered.

"Don't you think it was a jolly fine show, old chap?" said Tom Merry.

"Oh—er—wathah good, deah boy!" replied Gussy, in an abstracted tone of voice.

"Enjoyed yourself, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"Yess, wathah!"

"Wake up, ass!" said Monty Lowther.

"What are you so jolly thoughtful over, Gussy?" demanded George Horries, in his abrupt manner.

"Nun-n-nothin', deah boy!" replied D'Arcy; but next minute he was once again plunged into the depths of thought.

The others exchanged wondering glances. Evidently, some weighty matter was occupying the thoughts of the noble swell of St. Jim's.

"Here we are at the station, chaps!" said Monty Lowther at length. "Got those giddy return tickets, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus did not reply.

"Wake up, Gussy!" bawled Jack Blake in his ear.

"Gwoogh! Bai Jove! Weally, Blake—"

"Where are the return tickets, chump!" demanded Blake.

"Wh—what— Oh, yess, the return tickets!" stammered Gussy, in confusion, feeling in his waistcoat-pocket. "Heah they are, deah boys!"

"The porter's waiting to clip 'em!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle.

"Bai Jove!"

The ticket-porter clipped the tickets, and handed them back to D'Arcy with a grin.

"Come on, Gussy—the train's in!" announced Robert Arthur Digby.

The heroes of the School House clambered into the train, Manners having selected an empty compartment. They were soon comfortably seated.

Monty Lowther suddenly burst into a chuckle.

"Look at old Gussy, chaps!" he said. "He's still carrying the tickets in his hand!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus did not seem to hear the laughter of his chums. He had sunk into a corner seat, and was gazing out of the opposite window, wrapt in deep thought.

Monty Lowther deftly took the tickets from his own pocket, and slipped them into his own pocket. Arthur Augustus did not move. His thoughts were far away.

"Now we're off!" said Tom Merry.

The others kept up a merry run of chatter during the train journey to Ryelcombe. When that station was reached, Blake had to arouse Arthur Augustus by the simple means of pulling his ear.

"Yow! Blake, you wuff ass!"

"Here we are at Ryelcombe, dreamer!" exclaimed Blake. "Come on, Gussy, pull yourself together. What are you day-dreaming for?"

"Weally, Blake, I am not day-dreamin'," said Gussy, with asperity, as they descended from the train. "I have been thinkin'—"

"Go hon!" said Monty Lowther.

"Where are the tickets, Gussy?"

"All right, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, fumbling in his waistcoat-pocket. He tried every waistcoat-pocket in turn, but the tickets were not forthcoming. Then he hastily went through his trousers-pockets, and then his jacket-pockets. A look of dismay came over his aristocratic features.

"Oh ovwombs! I—I've lost the tickets, deah boys!"

The others exchanged winks, but preserved their gravity.

"You careless duffer, Gussy!" said Blake. "D'you mean to say you don't know where you put the tickets?"

"I—I weally cannot remember where I put them!" gasped Arthur Augustus, hastily turning out the contents of his pocket-book. "They seem to have got lost, deah boys. I'm frightfully sowsy—"

"Tickets, please!" rapped the porter at the barrier.

"Weally, deah boy—" gasped D'Arcy, in dismay.

"Tickets, please!"

"I—I've lost them, portah, deah boy," said D'Arcy, adjusting his monocle.

"Weally, it is vovy careless-of me!" Monty Lowther wagged a forefinger solemnly at Arthur Augustus.

"Gussy, you ought to kick yourself!" he said severely. "Don't you think you are a careless chump?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Absent-mindedness is the first stage of insanity, Gussy!" said Lowther.

"Now, suppose those tickets were found and given to you, would you be angry, old chap?"

"No, wathah not, deah boy," replied Arthur Augustus innocently. "I should be most gwatful."

"In fact, you'd shake hands with the honest fellow, and treat him ever so nicely?" said Lowther.

"Oh, yass!" said Gussy. "But I'm afraid I shall have to pay—"

"Here are the missing tickets, Gussy!" said Lowther, producing them from his pocket. "I'll give them to the porter for you!"

The porter took the tickets, and Tom Merry & Co. passed out of the station, smiling, with the sole exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was looking quite angry.

Outside the station he went up to Lowther, his eyeglass glinting with wrath.

"Lowthah, you shwiekin' boundah, I wufese to have silly jokes played on me!" he said sternly. "Therefoah, I considah it my painful duty to administrah a fearful thwashin'—"

"Oh, Gussy!" said Lowther in a pained voice. "Surely you wouldn't go for me! Remember, you said you'd be most grateful to the fellow who found the tickets—in fact, you'd shake hands with him, and treat him ever so nicely!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

"Shake hands, Gussy!" said Lowther coolly. "You can't go back on your word, you know."

Arthur Augustus seemed to gulp, but there was no resisting this appeal to the honor of the D'Arcys. He extended his hand, which the humorist of the Shell grasped, and fairly wrung.

"Gwoooogh!" gasped the noble swell of St. Jim's, when Lowther at last released his hand. "Weally, Lowthah, I considah that you are a wuff beast! I shall not administrah that fearful thwashin', but I regard you as a wuff beast, all the same!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

The others chuckled, and proceeded up the village High Street towards St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus marched along with his nose high in the air at first, but his lofty demeanour soon relaxed. He was soon completely wrapt in

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thought again. And Tom Merry & Co., seeing their noble chum's preoccupation, grinned, and wondered what subject his mighty brain was grappling with.

CHAPTER 2. Gussy's Great Wheeze.

"I WONDRAH!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that statement quite suddenly.
Tea was in progress in Study No. 6, and Tom Merry & Co. and the chums of the Fourth were, to use Monty Lowther's own expression, "wiring in." Conversation had turned upon footer topics, which were all-absorbing. Only Arthur Augustus had remained silent during the "feed."
His sudden remark caused his chums to stare.

"I wondrah!"
"What are you wondering, Gussy?" inquired Blake affably. "How many goals we are going to lick Rookwood by next week?"

"No, I was wondrahin'—"
"Don't wonder, old chap," remarked Tom Merry. "Can't you take that boiled oil look off your chivvy? We've just decided that you shall play outside-left in the team next week."

"After tossing up whether you should be left outside or not, Gussy," said Monty Lowther, with a grin.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked distressed.

"Bai-Jove! That's vevy unfortunate, Tom Mewwy," he said. "I am afraid I shall not be able to play!"

"Why not?" demanded Tom, in considerable surprise.

"Well, you see, deah boy, I shall probably not be at St. Jim's."

Manners, who was in the act of holding a cup of tea to his lips, let go of the cup in his amazement, and then gave vent to a fiendish yell as a flood of hot tea surged all over his trowsers. Tom Merry dropped his knife and fork, and all sat bolt upright and stared at D'Arcy in astonishment.

"Wh-what did you say, Gussy?" gasped Jack Blake, in a faint voice.

"In all probability, deah boys, I shall not be at St. Jim's next week," said the swell of the Fourth calmly.

The other occupants of Study No. 6 gasped. Arthur Augustus' statement took their breath away.

"Look here, Gussy!" said Blake at length. "What in thunder do you mean by saying you won't be at the school next week?"

"Well, deah boys, I have been wondrahin'—"

"Wondering what?"

"Whethah to become a weporthah or a bank-managah—"

"What?" yelled Tom Merry & Co.

"Pewwaps I had bettah twy my hand at weporthin' first," said Arthur Augustus reflectively. "Bank managahs have to work themselves up through the wanks, I believe. Yaas, I think I'll become a weporthah!"

Monty Lowther tapped his forehead significantly.

"Gussy's gone clean off his onion!" he said.

"He must be potty!" gasped Blake in wonder.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Has anybody asked you to be a reporter, Gussy?" demanded Tom Merry.

"No; but I am sewiously thinkin' of becomin' one, deah boy."

"Poor old Gussy!" said Monty Lowther, shaking his head. "I've seen this coming on for some time. What will your pater say when he knows you've gone off your rocker?"

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"Weally, Lowthah, this is not a time for youah wibald jokes," said D'Arcy loftily. "I am weally sewious. I am goin' out into the world to earn my own livin', like that fellah on the picturahs this afternoon."

Tom Merry & Co. drew deep breaths. They began to understand the drift of Gussy's apparently rambling remarks, and his deep thoughtfulness.

"My only hat!" said Blake in wonder. "You surely haven't swallowed all that, and—and want to copy the hero on the film?"

"Why not, Blake?" demanded the swell of St. Jim's, with asperity. "What we saw on the screen was vevy true. The story dealt with a young man who was left a hundred pounds, and was sent out into the world to make his living. The film was called 'Winning His Way,' and it appealed to me vevy strongly. Why shouldn't a fellah go out into the world and be self-dependent? Why should I, at my age, remain at school strottin' Latin verbs and Euclid, while I might be earnin' my own livin' just as handweds of othah young fellahs are doin'?"

"Ye gods!"

"I mean what I say!" said D'Arcy, his eyeglass flashing. "I considah that I have been dependent on my pater long enough. He has to keep me at this school, and pay heaps of cash for my clobber, an' pocket-money an' things, while I do nothin' in return, except gwind lessons in a wotten Corn-wool!"

There are heaps of young fellahs of my age earnin' their livin', and that's what I'm goin' to do. I'm goin' to emulate that fellah we saw on the screen this afternoon. I am goin' to ask my pater to give me a hundred pounds to start with, and I shall leave St. Jim's, and use my capital to make more, like the good servant with the talents in the parable, you know. I shall not be satisfied until I have made five hundred pounds out of the hundred, unaided and alone!"

"Oh, umbs!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. looked at their noble chum in dismay.

Arthur Augustus was sitting up in his chair, his eyes glinting with determination. It was evident that, having thought about his new venture ever since leaving the cinema, the swell of St. Jim's had made his mind up.

"Gussy, old man," said Tom Merry seriously, "don't play the giddy o' you know. You simply can't do such a mad thing."

"I refuse to play the giddy o'; I-I mean I refuse to have my ideah weferred to as bein' mad, Tom Mewwy," said D'Arcy. "I feel perfectly justified in takin' this step. I shall wite to my pater this evenin', and explain things to him, and ask him for the hundred pounds. As soon as I receive the money, I shall leave St. Jim's, and commence earnin' my own livin'."

"Oh, you fathead!"

"You frabjous chump, Gussy!"

Such were the expressive of opinion that followed Gussy's telling speech.

As a matter of fact, there was a great deal of reason in what the swell of St. Jim's had said, but it was outrageously impossible, his chums thought, for him to embark upon such a hazardous project. Besides, they were quite sure that Gussy's pater would not allow it.

But Arthur Augustus never turned a hair. He jammed his monocle into his eye a little more tightly, and regarded the little party unmoved.

"I trust, upon reflection, you will agree with me, deah boys."

"Rate!" said Blake. "You're a lilly

chump for lettin' a cinema-picture fill your noodle with such tosh, Gussy. Of course, there are heaps of young chaps earnin' their living, but—but they're different. Get on with your tea, old chap, and don't talk such utter rot."

"It is not uttah rot, Blake!" said D'Arcy, with dignity. "Every young fellah should be self-supportin'—"

"Cheese it!"

"I refuse to—cheese it! When I receive the hundred pounds from my pater—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Wheu!"

"There is nothin' to cackle at, you duffahs! I refuse to stay in heah and listen to youah imbecile laughter. I am goin' to wite to my pater at once!"

And Arthur Augustus stalked from Study No. 6, his noble nose at a lofty angle. Tom Merry, Blake, and the others chuckled, and went on with their tea. They could not take Gussy seriously, and regarded his latest idea as hopelessly impossible.

CHAPTER 3.

Looking for Lodgings!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was extremely distant in his manner to his chums after that.

Jack Blake & Co. did not seem to mind—indeed, they chipped Gussy unmercifully.

Tom Merry & Co., too, regarded Arthur Augustus' new project as a great joke, and did not for a moment think that anything would come of it.

The next day passed uneventfully, except that Arthur Augustus was "on the high horse," and treated the humorous remarks of his chums with lofty contempt.

After lessons on Friday morning, the Tessible Three strolled down to the school-gates, to meet the postman. Funds were low, and the chums of the Shell were hoping that somebody had remembered them, and sent along a "tip."

Soon afterwards, Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby came along. They also were in narrow circumstances.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "Where's Gussy?"

Blake grunted.

"The burbling chump's on his blessed dignity, because we don't believe in his scatter-brained scheme of earning his own living!" he said. "Of course, his pater won't hear of him leaving St. Jim's—let alone advancing him a hundred quid to start out on. Gussy is an ass; and he's as obstinate as a mule!"

"Talk of angels!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Here comes Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus strolled up. He jammed his monocle a little tighter in his noble eye, and treated Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. to a stony stare.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Blake. "Waiting for the postman?"

"Yaas, Blake," replied D'Arcy frigidly.

"I may, old chap, we're awfully sorry to have offended your dignity," said Blake diplomatically. "Make it pax, Gussy. An apology from one gentleman to another—"

"Yaas, that's, all right, deah boy," said D'Arcy, unbending. "I suppose I could not expect you fellahs to see sense—at least, not in this match. Heah comes Blake!"

The village postman rolled through the gates, and was soon surrounded by the eager St. Jim's juniors.

Tom Merry received a letter from Miss Priscilla Fawcett, maid nurse, and was immensely satisfied to find a postal-order for fifteen shillings enclosed. Herries' letter was from his uncle. Then Blagg handed Arthur Augustus a letter.

"Oh, good!" said D'Arcy, as he ripped open the envelope. "It's from my patah, deah boys, in reply to the letter I sent him on Wednesday, I expect. Bai Jove!"

The first thing that Gussy withdrew from the envelope was a cheque. The others stared at it in awe and wonder. Then came a letter, which the noble swell of St. Jim's proceeded to read.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, when he had read it. "How weally wippin'!"

"What's happened, Gussy?" demanded Blake breathlessly. "Has your pater agreed?"

"Yas, watah! Listen to this, deah boys!"

And Arthur Augustus commenced to read the letter, as follows:

"My dear Arthur,—I was very much surprised to receive your letter, with such an extraordinary request. The spirit that prompted you to write it is admirable, and I have decided to allow you to go ahead with the scheme. Whether you succeed in your project is another matter, but I shall be interested to watch developments, and if you make good, as I sincerely hope you will, I shall be more than gratified. There are certain conditions I must make, however. The first is, that your absence from St. Jim's must not exceed the period of two months. Secondly, you must confine your activities to the neighbourhood of the school, so that you will not be able to become a newspaper reporter. Personally, I should prefer you to seek some humble, honest job, and prove your grit. I enclose a cheque for one hundred pounds, and have notified Dr. Holmes of the arrangements. So go ahead, my lad, and good-bye!"

Your affectionate father,
"EASTWOOD."

The chums of the Lower School drew deep breaths when D'Arcy had finished reading that letter.

"My only sainted Aunt Maria!" gasped Blake. "Who'd have thought it!"

"Ye gods and little fishes!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy chuckled.

"There you are, deah boys!" he chirruped. "I thought I should impress my patah! I am goin' to see the Head now, and shall leave St. Jim's wright away, if I am able!"

"Great pip!"

The swell of St. Jim's, highly elated, made his way across the quadrangle, and into the School House. He went upstairs to the Head's study, and Dr. Holmes' grave voice told him to enter.

The Head of St. Jim's was seated at his desk when D'Arcy came in.

"Ah, D'Arcy, I was just about to send for you!" he said, peering at the swell of the Fourth over the rims of his eyeglasses. "I have received a surprising communication from your father, giving details of a project you intend to undertake. Are you really serious in this intention, D'Arcy?"

"Yas, watah, sir!" replied Arthur Augustus, with alacrity. "It will give me an opportunity to show my patah that I can be self-supportin'. I sha'n't mind whatever work I undertake, for all honourable toil is honest. I considah it my duty to show my grit, and a D'Arcy nevah shirked his duty."

The Head smiled.

"Very well, D'Arcy," he said. "I have, of course, acceded to Lord Eastwood's request. Personally, I consider the scheme rather absurd—unusual, but it will certainly prove your worth. When do you propose leaving this school?"

"To-night, sir, if I may," replied D'Arcy eagerly. "I have only two months, so I wish to proceed immediately."

"Very well, my lad. You may leave when afternoon lessons are finished."

"Thank you vewy much, sir!"

D'Arcy marched out of the Head's study with joy in his heart. His chums were awaiting him at the end of the passage, and when he told them that he was to leave that day they whistled.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Blake. "What shall we do without old Gussy? The place won't seem the same. I say, old chap, where the merry thunder are you going to sleep to-night?"

"I am goin' to look for lodgin's atfah tea, deah boys," said D'Arcy calmly. "Would you chaps like to come with me?"

"Oh, rather! We'll come!"

Afternoon lessons were an ordeal for the swell of the Fourth. Mr. Latham had a few parting words with him when lessons were over, and wished him the best of luck.

Then Gussy had tea in Study No. 6, and went down to the fillage with Tom Merry & Co. and his study-mates to look for lodgings.

Lowther discovered a notice in a small stationer's shop announcing "Furnished room for single gentleman to let.—Apply within."

So Arthur Augustus marched into the shop, followed by his chums.

The old man behind the counter blinked at Gussy when that youth had made his inquiry about the room that was to let.

The swell of St. Jim's was a picture of elegance, from the crown of his topper to the tips of his patent-leather shoes, and was certainly not the type of applicant Mr. Jibson had expected.

"Yessir!" he gasped. "Upstairs, sir. The missus will show you. Maria!"

In response to this call, a tired-looking woman came out of the back parlour. "Young gent called to see the spare room, Maria!" said the newsagent.

"He'd like to see it now."

"This way, sir!" said Mrs. Jibson, after she had recovered from her surprise at seeing such an aristocratic applicant.

Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three followed Gussy and Mrs. Jibson up a narrow and steep flight of stairs leading from a rear passage to an upper landing. The spare room was a tiny one, but neat-looking and comfortable.

"Yas, that will suit me all wight," said Gussy, rubbing his nose. "Pway what is the went, ma'am?"

"Fifteen shillings a week, sir," replied Mrs. Jibson.

"Bai Jove! That's watah reasonable. I'll take this woom, ma'am. Would you like a week's went in advance?"

"Thank you, sir!" said D'Arcy's new landlady.

Gussy extracted a pound note from his beautiful Russian leather wallet, and handed it to Mrs. Jibson, saying that she need not bother about the change.

"My boxes will awvive during the evenin', ma'am," he said graciously, as he walked out of the shop with his chums. "I have instructed the cawwier to fetch them from St.—I mean, from my old address. Good-evenin'!"

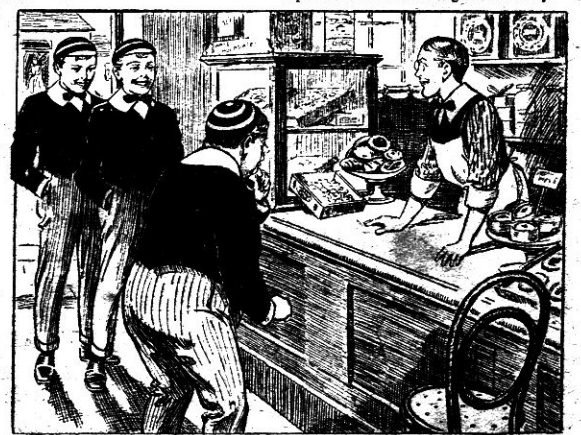
And Arthur Augustus departed, leaving Mr. and Mrs. Jibson in the throes of great astonishment.

"Well, Gussy, you're doing things thoroughly, and no mistake!" said Blake ruefully. "I reckon you'll feel jolly cooped up, though, in that little room. We—we wish you all good luck, of course, but—but we shall miss you."

"Oh, that's all wight, deah boys!" said Gussy cheerfully. "I shall probably open a shop of some sort, and you'll come down and patronise me, won't you?"

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

That evening there were three disconsolate faces among the Fourth-Formers. Those faces belonged to Jack Blake, George Herries, and Robert Arthur Digby. For Arthur Augustus had left them, and had taken up his quarters at No. 73A, High Street, Rylocombe. "He'd like to see it now."



D'Arcy, with a white apron covering his elegant attire, greeted Figgins & Co. with a polite smile. "Good-afternoon, deah boys," he said. "Pway, what can I do for you?" "Well, I'm blessed!" said Figgins, looking round the shop. "This is not a bad looking shanty, Gussy, and the truck looks first-rate." (See Page 6.)

CHAPTER 4.

Rough on Arthur Augustus!

"My hat! It's Gussy!"
Fatty Wynn of the New House gave vent to that surprised exclamation.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were passing a small shop in Rylecombe High Street on Wednesday afternoon, when Fatty caught sight of a well-known face through the window.

The chums of the New House Fourth were spending the half-holiday in the village, football being "off." Tom Merry & Co. of the School House were playing the Fifth on Little Side.

Fatty Wynn had been urging Figgins to come along to the village bunshop for tea, and being in funds, Figgins had yielded. They were making their way along there when Fatty caught sight of Arthur Augustus in the shop. The chums of the New House halted.

Over the shop window was displayed this legend:

A. A. D'ARCY, CONFECTIONER
AND TOBACCONIST."

Figgins & Co grinned.
"My hat!" said Figgins. "So Gussy's started a tuckshop! Let's pop in and have a jaw."

"What-ho!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a white apron covering his elegant attire, greeted Figgins & Co. with a polite smile. He was looking very businesslike.

"Good-afternoon, deah boys. Pway what can I do for you?"

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Figgins, looking round the shop. "This is not a bad-looking shanty, Gussy, and the tuck looks first rate."

"I can recommend our jam-tarts, deah boys—I mean, sirs," Arthur Augustus said briskly. "Weal waspewey jam, and awt threepence each."

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, looking approvingly at the tarts. "Trot out a dozen, Gussy. They look prime!"

Arthur Augustus, with a beaming face, proceeded to supply the chums of the New House with a feed that made the heart of Fatty Wynn beat fast with joy.

"I say, Gussy, you're doing things in style," he said. "You may rely on us to always patronise your shop, and we'll recommend it to others, too. You haven't wasted much time in getting started."

"No, wathah not, deah boy," replied the schoolboy shopkeeper. "You see, the fellow who owned this shop was called away to London yesterday, and I've taken over the business as a partner. This was formerly a tobacco shop onlay, but I have turned it into a tuckshop as well. I reckon I shall make three times the usual profits, deah boys."

"Good old Gussy!"
The door opened, and a plump youth entered. It was Baggy Trimble of the School House. He blinked at Gussy, and grinned.

"Opened up a tuckshop, D'Arcy—what?" he chuckled. "Not a bad wheeze, old chap. Count me as a regular customer. Gimme a plate of doughnuts and some pineapple cordial."

"Yass, Master Trimble," said D'Arcy, adjusting his monocle, and looking severely at the fat youth of the Fourth. "But have you any money to pay for your provisions?"

"Ahen!" coughed Trimble. "As a matter of fact, D'Arcy, I'm stony, but you might let me have some tuck on tick."

"I'm sorry, sir, but credit is not

allowed!" said D'Arcy firmly. "This business is run on strict cash lines."
"Oh, don't be unpalpy, Gussy!" said Trimble. "I'll bring you good custom. I'll advertise this show for you. Look here, gimme two bob's worth of tuck, and I'll spread the news at St. Jim's. Tom Merry and all the others will then come down at once and patronise you."

"Bai Jove!" said the youthful tuckshop-keeper. "That's quite a nobbaw suggestion, Twimble, deah boy. Yass, I'll agree. If you bring back my customers, I'll allow you two shillin's worth of goods!"

"Let me have 'em now, Gussy!" urged Baggy.

"No, I can't do that, Twimble," said D'Arcy firmly. "You may have youah wemuneration when you come back."

"Oh, all right!" granted Baggy; and he rolled out of the shop.

Ten minutes elapsed, and then there came a tramping of feet outside. Next moment the door opened, and a party of five schoolboys entered. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Figgins & Co. gasped when they recognised Gordon Gay, the leader of the juniors of Rylecombe Grammar School, and his chums—Frank Monk, the two Woottons, and Mont Long.

"Hallo, Gustavus!" chuckled Gordon Gay, looking round him with interest. "So you've opened a tuckshop—eh? We fellows always like to see enterprise, and we are going to give you our patronage."

"We heard you'd got it from young Trimble."

"Oh, yass!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway what can I get you, sirs?"

"Ginger-pop and pastries!" said Gordon Gay; and the Grammarians seated themselves round the only other table in D'Arcy's shop.

Figgins & Co. glared at them. There was no love lost between the boys of St. Jim's and the Grammar School juniors. In fact, the two schools were on terms of deadly enmity. But despite the glares of Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, Gordon Gay & Co. did not appear to notice them. They proceeded to chatter on footer subjects, and the New House juniors went on with their feed.

Soon other customers arrived. Aubrey Rucke, Croke, and Mellish of the School House, came in for some cigarettes, and seemed quite aggrieved because Arthur Augustus refused to serve them. Smoking was strictly prohibited at St. Jim's, and Gussy did not approve of Aubrey Rucke & Co.'s indulgence of the fragrant weed.

Then other Grammarians entered Gussy's shop. Carboy, Flip Derwent, and Tadpole strolled in, too, until Gussy's tuckshop was overcrowded.

There was no lack of custom. The Grammarians seemed to enjoy the novelty of having the noble Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wait upon them, and Gussy kept very busy executing the orders they lavished upon him.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were feeling uneasy. Gordon Gay & Co. had deigned to notice them at last, and the remarks they passed upon the St. Jim's juniors were far from complimentary.

"Look here, you rotters," said Figgins at length, arising in great wrath. "We didn't come in here to be slanged by you Grammar School bounders!"

"Hark at the little boy twitting!" smiled Gordon Gay sublimely. "Me-thinks we have got his rag out, chaps. Say, Figgins, who trod on your chivvy last? Your features are rather bent, you know."

"Why, you—you cheeky cad!" exclaimed Figgins, pushing back his cuffs. "I'll punch your blessed head, Gordon Gay!"

"Come on, then, fiddle-fad," chuckled Gay, also pushing back his cuffs.

Figgins needed no second bidding. His

blood was up, and the lanky New House leader did not funk a fight with the hero of Rylecombe Grammar School. The Grammarians formed a ring in the shop, and soon a wild and whirling conflict was taking place.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking on from behind his counter in deep distress. "Pway don't fight in here, deah boys!"

"Tramp, tramp, tramp!"
Figgins and Gordon Gay were fighting hammer-and-tongs.

Ting-a-ling-a-ling!
The little bell on the shop door tinkled, and next minute the Terrible Three strode in, followed by Jack Blake & Co., and Kangaroo, Clifton Dene, Tabbot, and Levison.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry, on seeing the shop full of Grammarians. "What are these scraggy Grammar School bounders doing in Gussy's shop?" Figgins, old chap—"

"Groooohch!" moaned Figgins, mopping his nose.

Gordon Gay had fallen back at the entry of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's. "Oh crumbs!" he ejaculated. "St. Jim's rotters! Boys, don't let 'em take possession of this shop! Chuck 'em out!"

"Down with the cheeky Grammarian cads!" roared Tom Merry. "Come on, boys! Out with 'em!"

The two parties fell upon each other, and in the space of two minutes pandemonium had broken loose in Gussy's tuckshop.

The youthful shopkeeper dashed from behind his counter, waving his arms in alarm.

"Gweat Scott! Weally, deah boys, you cannot—Yawooooooh!"

D'Arcy broke off as Carboy of the Grammar School seized him round the waist and yanked him off his feet. Gussy could not put up with that. The blood of the D'Arcy boiled in his veins, and he waded into the fray, reckless of the damage that was being done to the furniture, fittings, and stock of his shop.

"Down with the Grammar School!" yelled Tom Merry, waltzing Gordon Gay round and round.

"Give 'em socks!" shrieked Gordon Gay.

Crash! Thud! Whack! Whallo!
The battle in D'Arcy's tuckshop was fought grimly and earnestly.

Soon a crowd had gathered round the door, and encouraging shouts for the combatants came from the village urchins, who were enjoying the scene.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!
Gordon Gay & Co. were slowly overwhelmed. Carboy dragged open the door of Gussy's shop and scuttled forth, and Gordon Gay & Co. followed. Tom Merry & Co. pounded after them, like hounds on the scent. They allowed the Grammarians to get into the High Street, and then they raided a box of eggs outside the shop of Mr. Sands, the grocer.

"Give them a volley, chaps!" sang out Tom Merry.

"Rather!"

Whiz! Bang! Thud!
Soon the air was alive with eggs, which crashed upon the fleeing Grammarians and burst over them.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co., as their rivals, baffled and egggy, disappeared over the village green.

"We've kyboshed the Grammar cads properly this time!" chuckled Joe Blake.

Mr. Sands, the grocer, dashed up, waving his arms excitedly.

"You young villains! Who's going to pay for my eggs? Which I'll complain to your 'eadmaster—"

"It's all serene, Mr. Sands!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Let me see, we've used about three dozen eggs. At four

Bob a dozen, that makes the damage twelve bob. Got any money, chaps?"

The heroes of St. Jim's whipped round quite cheerfully, and Mr. Sands departed into his shop satisfied.

"Well, chaps," grinned Tom Merry, "we'd better go and have a look at poor old Gussy! Ha, ha, ha! I reckon his shop is in a state!"

When they entered Gussy's tuckshop, weird sounds proceeded from within. Arthur Augustus was there, and so was Baggy Trimble. There was also a man in a bowler hat. All three were sneezing energetically. "Pepper was in the air. It assailed the noses of Tom Merry & Co. as they entered the shop.

"Atchoo!" sneezed Tom Merry, blinking round the wrecked shop.

"What in thunder—Atchoo!"

"Ah-ti-shoo! Choo! Choo!" sneezed Arthur Augustus. His aristocratic nose was crimson in hue, and his eyes were watering. "Oh, bai Jove! Those awful wottals have upset a large bag of peppah fwom the shelf—Atchoo! Gwooooh!"

"Atchoo—choo—chooh!"

The shop rebounded with gigantic sneezes.

The man in the bowler hat turned wrathfully to Arthur Augustus. He was purple with sneezing and fury.

"Atchoo! D'Arcy, you rascal, you've ruined—ah-ti-shoo!—my trade! Look at this—ah-ti-shoo!—shop!"

To an observer out of range of the pepper the scene would have been decidedly comic. But Tom Merry & Co. did not think so.

Mr. Bloggins grasped Arthur Augustus by the collar. He could not speak, but actions spoke louder than words. He propelled the sneezing swell of St. Jim's to the door and sent him staggering out into the High Street.

"Don't you come in 'ere again!" he shouted, between his sneezes. "I'll wring your neck—Gwooooo! Ger-raway—Atchoo-shoo-shoo!"

"I refuse to come back to assist you, undah the cires!" gasped Arthur Augustus, groping for his monocle.

"I regard you as a wuff, unweasonable beast, and demand my ten pounds back!" Atchoo!

"You won't get no ten quid outa me!" Gwooooh. "That will help pay for the damage, you young maniac—Shooo-shoooh! Yah!"

"Oh cwumps! You uttah boundah!" gasped Gussy, rubbing his crimson nose.

"If you were not old enough to be my fathah I should give you a foashful thvashin'! Undah the cires, you may keep the ten pounds—Gwooooh!"

"Gussy, you ass," exclaimed Blake, seizing his old study-mate by the arm, "you are surely not going to allow that chap to stick to your ten quid?"

"I wogad Mr. Bloggins with uttah contempt, Blake!" said D'Arcy. "I shall not lowah myself to hankah aftah the monay I advanced as a partner in his business!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other. They could not see Gussy scolded out of ten pounds through an affair that had been no fault of his own.

"Go up to your digs, Gussy, and we'll come along later," said Tom Merry. "Bloggins has got to be reasoned with."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I considah it—"

"Look at your clobber, Gussy, and your face!" said Monty Lowther. "You must get back to your lodgings at once and have a wash! You look an utter wreck!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus needed no second bidding. He hastened across to Mr.

Jibson's shop and disappeared inside. Tom Merry & Co. then returned to the devastated tuckshop, and found Mr. Bloggins cleaning up the debris, still sneezing.

"Look here, Mr. Bloggins," said Tom Merry, "it's hardly fair to D'Arcy to break the partnership and stick to his ten quid. He brought you in a lot of custom this afternoon. Just look in the till."

Mr. Bloggins looked in the till, and when he saw the amount of cash in there his face cleared. Mr. Bloggins was at heart an honest and good-natured man, and he was now quickly recovering from his bad temper.

"By Jingo!" he said. "There's more money in—ere for to-day's sales than I sometimes get in a week! Well, young gents, I suppose what you say is right. Master D'Arcy can have his ten pounds back. Now I come to look round, there's only a chair broken, and the leg of one of the tables knocked off. I can soon repair those."

"Oh, good!" said Tom Merry, as he took ten pound notes from Mr. Bloggins. "It's jolly sporty of you, sir! You may be sure that we St. Jim's fellows will patronise your shop, if you continue what D'Arcy started and sell tuck."

"Yes, rather!" said Mr. Bloggins. "I never thought there was much money in the confectionery line. Master D'Arcy has certainly given me an idea for the new line. Thank you kindly, young gents! This shop will continue to sell confectionery, and you can be sure of my best attention always."

"Right-ho, Mr. Bloggins!"

Tom Merry & Co. found Arthur Augustus up in his little room, sitting on the bed and looking very disconsolate. When they told him of Mr. Bloggins' concessions, and handed him the ten pounds, Arthur Augustus brightened considerably.

"Bai Jove! That's verry good of you, deah boys! And I wogad Mr. Bloggins as quite decent now, bai Jove! I shall weally have to go ovah and apologise to him!"

"Gussy, old man," said Blake, "why don't you chuck this money-making stunt and come back with us to St. Jim's?"

But Arthur Augustus shook his head firmly. "No, deah boys; my mind is made up. I shall return to St. Jim's when I have increased my capital to five hundred pounds—not befoah!"

Tom Merry & Co. did not argue further with their chum. They made him have tea with them at the village, bunshop, and then left him to return to his lodgings. They chuckled over the events of the afternoon as they retraced their footsteps back to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 5.

Gussy's Ardour is Damped!

THE Fourth Form at St. Jim's were hard at work in the Form-room, under the charge of Mr. Lathom, their Form-master. It was three days after the adventure in Ryeolme High Street at Gussy's tuckshop. There was an empty seat in the Form-room, and the aristocratic figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was conspicuous by its absence from that seat. Gussy had been an ornament to his Form, and Jack Blake & Co. had not yet got quite accustomed to his removal.

History lesson was in progress, and the subject was the Scottish War. Mr. Lathom was telling the story of Robert Bruce and the spider. The Fourth Form were thrilling at the narrative of a humble spider coming down from the ceiling, when something came down from

the ceiling in the Form-room. That "something" landed on Mr. Lathom's bald pate, causing that gentleman to cease his narrative abruptly and give a startled gasp.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the little Form-master, feeling the top of his head. "What ever was that? My goodness! Water!"

"Drip, drip, drip!"

The water was coming down from the ceiling in swift drips. Mr. Lathom looked up, and gave a jump as the water dripped into his eye.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth Form.

"Silence, boys!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, wiping his eye, and looking up from a safe distance. "Dear me! A pipe seems to have burst in the bathroom above, and the water is leaking through the trapdoor. This is most awkward, especially as the lesson is in progress. Boys, pray be silent while I telephone for the plumber. This leak must be repaired at once."

Mr. Lathom placed his mortar-board upon his head and swept from the Form-room. As soon as he was gone a buzz of conversation broke out.

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake, looking up. "What a giddy Turk, you fellows! I hope it stops lessens this afternoon altogether!"

"Yes, rather!"

The Fourth-Formers were not slackers—perish the thought!—but an interruption from the usual grind of lessons was most welcome.

Above the Fourth-Form-room was a bath-room, and a small trapdoor, let into the Form-room ceiling, connected the two. The drips, that had come at first slowly, now increased, and finally developed into large splashes.

"He, he, he!" grinned Baggy Trimble in high glee. "Wouldn't it be fun, you fellows, if the Form-room was flooded out? Look! There's a big puddle on the floor now!"

Splash, splash, splash! came the water from above.

"Gave!" said Cardew suddenly; and the boys resumed their places.

Mr. Lathom returned, and behind him came Taggles, carrying a metal bath. Taggles placed the bath on the floor to catch the water, and departed.

"Let us proceed with the lesson, boys," said Mr. Lathom mildly, seating himself at his desk, out of harm's way. "I have despatched Toby for the village plumber. Pray give me your attention, instead of watching the water. Trimble, do not grin in that idiotic manner! This is no laughing matter!"

Splash, splash, splash!

This rather interrupted the lesson; but Mr. Lathom perseveringly stuck to his guns, and the Fourth Form were soon engaged upon the Scottish War, and the adventures of Robert Bruce with the spider.

Half an hour elapsed; and then Taggles came in to announce that the plumber had arrived. Taggles seemed to be labouring under considerable excitement, but he did not make any statements.

Soon, noises came from above, indicating that the plumber had commenced operations. The trapdoor was removed, and a gruff voice floated down to the Fourth Form below.

"Now, then, young 'un, you gott'er get busy. This 'ere's a bad leak, and I want some more tools. I'll leave you to turn the water off, and clean the pipe, while I fetch my things from the barrier. I shan't be long."

Mr. Lathom looked up. The water was still coming down from the aperture in the ceiling. Heeky footsteps sounded.

and the door banged. Evidently the plumber had departed, leaving an assistant in charge.

Bang, bang, bang!
These sounds indicated that the plumber's assistant was getting busy. Mr. Lathom gave a hopeless look round the Form, and laid down the book.

"Boys, you had better read your textbooks," he said wearily. "I—Dear me!"

Mr. Lathom broke off, and stood spell-bound, as an elegant leg came through the trapdoor in the ceiling. Then there came a gasp from above.

"Bai Jove! I—I've twodden through that beastly twapdoor!"

The sound of this voice acted like magic upon the Fourth Form. Only too well did they know those dulcet tones and the aristocratic accent.

"My only Sunday topper!" cried Blake, jumping up. "It's Gussy!"

"Gussy!"

"Gwooooooh!" said the owner of the dangling leg.

Next minute Arthur Augustus himself came into view. He clambered down from the trapdoor, and landed on the bath.

"Oh cwumbs!"

Mr. Lathom and the Fourth Form gazed at the plumber's assistant in fascination as the latter youth scrambled out of the bath.

Arthur Augustus was attired in a large overall. His coat was off and his sleeves were rolled up above his elbows. Various smudges on his face and hands and arms indicated that Gussy had been working.

"Oh deah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, jamming his monocle in his eye, and surveying the startled Form. "Pwax excuse this intwusion, Mr. Lathom. Weally, I did not intend to come down heah. I happened to twead through the twapdoor, and had to climb down into this woom. I apologise most sincerely, bai Jove!"

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom.

Jack Blake was looking at his chum in amazement.

"Gussy," he ejaculated, coming forward and seizing Gussy by the arm, "what the merry dickens are you doing here? You—you're not working for the plumber?"

"Yaas, wathah?" said D'Arcy cheerfully. "You see, deah boy, hearing that plumbahs make a great deal of monay, I became apprenticed to Mr. Jobbah. Weally, I hope to make a success of my new trade."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Fourth Form.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth Form seemed immensely tickled at the idea of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as a plumber's mate.

"Weally, I quite fail to see any reason for this wibald newmewnt," he said loftily. "I wufuse to stay heah and listen to you. I'm goin' to wvair the leak, befoah Mr. Jobbah wetrans."

"Go it, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus stood on a chair, gave a little jump upwards, grasped the frame of the trapdoor, and swung himself up.

Soon he was busily engaged. He turned the water off, and then commenced operations on the water-pipe. Arthur Augustus had told Mr. Jobber that he was inexperienced, but Mr. Jobber would have needed no telling if he had seen Gussy now. He took a file and filed round the leak. Then, lighting his blow-lamp, he proceeded to solder up the hole. It seemed easy enough the way Mr. Jobber did it. Arthur

Augustus, having placed a huge blob of solder on the pipe, was satisfied that he had repaired the leak properly. But when he turned the water on again he received a decided shock. A great flood of water surged out of the pipe, and struck Gussy in the region of his solar plexus.

"Ywooooooh!"

Arthur Augustus sat down. The bathroom was rapidly becoming flooded, and an avalanche of water poured down through the trapdoor into the Form-room below.

Swooooooh!

Mr. Lathom's desk was drenched, and the Form-master himself came in for a bad wetting. He leaped out of the way of the torrent, and stood, dripping and astounded, before the Form.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jack Blake. "Gussy's done it now! We shall soon be flooded out!"

Swooooooh! came the water from the pipe.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, making frantic endeavours to turn off the water, but failing to succeed. "Oh deah! What evah can be the mattah? Gwooooooh!"

Gussy was soon swamped.

"Wot the blazes—!" Mr. Jobber sailed into the room, and stood rooted to the water-floer. "Why, you little idjit, the water—Wot ave you done?"

"Gwooooh!" moaned the luckless plumber's mate. "I am vevy sorry, sir. Oh deah! Accidents will happen, you know. Yoooooop! It's all wight. The watah wants turnin' off, that's all. Weally, the beastly handle seems to have stuck. I am twyin' my hardest. Gwooo!"

"You silly idjit!" roared Mr. Jobber, wallowing through the water towards his assistant.

"Weally, Mr. Jobbah—"

"You blithering loonitick!" shrieked the plumber. "Git hout! Lemme get at that handle!"

"Oh cwumbs!"

Mr. Jobber grasped the handle, and turned the water off by means of a gigantic wrench. Loud shrieks of laughter came from the Fourth Form below. Mr. Lathom was shouting for silence, but without response.

Mr. Jobber glared at Arthur Augustus as though he would have liked to eat him.

"Git hout," he said, "before I kick you hout!"

"Weally, my deah sir, accidents will happen—"

"You'll ave an accidint, you balmy young idjit!" roared Mr. Jobber. "Git hout! You're sackerd! When I ask for an apprentice, I want someone wiv brains! 'Op it!"

"Pwax listen to wvason, Mr. Jobbah. I have not finished wvairpin' the leak. Ywooooooh!"

Mr. Jobber rushed at Arthur Augustus, and caught him by the collar. The swell of St. Jim's struggled, but Mr. Jobber was furious. He dragged Arthur Augustus from the room, whirled him downstairs, took him to the head of the School House steps, and planted a heavy boot behind him.

Arthur Augustus went spinning into the quadrangle, and collapsed on the hard, unsympathetic ground.

He sat up in a dazed condition.

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott! Oh deah! What a watah beast! I shall absolutely wvase to assist Mr. Jobbah any moah. Gwooooooh!"

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet. His mind was made up. He was done with so violent and unreasonable an employer as Mr. Jobber. He crawled away

to the gates, and wended his weary and bedraggled way back to the village, leaving a trail of water behind him. Like Alexander of old, he would look round for fresh worlds to conquer. Gussy still had most of the hundred pounds left!

CHAPTER 6.

The Trials of a Traveller!

"MY giddy aunt!" exclaimed Aubrey Racke. "Look at this, you fellows!"

Racke indicated an advertisement in the "Rylcombe Gazette." He and Crooke, Scrope, and Mellish were standing in the High Street of Rylcombe, outside Mr. Jibson's newspaper shop. Racke had just been in to buy a paper.

This is what had attracted his attention:

"HOLEPROOF SOCKS!"

Men, these pre the Socks you are looking for! Save your Wives the Trouble of Darning! These Holeproof Socks WON'T wear into Holes! Price 2s. 6d. a pair! Sole local agent: A. A. D'Arcy, 73a, High Street, Rylcombe.

Aubrey Racke & Co. chuckled.

"Well, this takes the bun!" chuckled the black sheep of the Shell. "Fancy Gussy peddling socks—holeproof socks! Why, here he is!"

The little shoe door had opened, and Arthur Augustus stepped forth into the High Street. He looked his old picture of elegance, from his glistening topper to his patent shoes and spats. Arthur Augustus was as spotless as a new pin. He carried a large attache-case in his left hand, and looked very businesslike.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Racke, grinning. "We've just spotted your advert in the paper. Why don't you come up to St. Jim's with your giddy holeproof socks? The fellows would buy them like winking; and the Head and the masters might give you some custom, too."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, quite impressed. "That's wathah a good wheeze, deah boy. Shall I show you a sample of my socks? They are weally vevy good."

"Trot 'em out, old son!" grinned Racke.

Arthur Augustus opened his bag, and withdrew a pair of blue socks. He held them forth for inspection.

"H'm!" said Racke, looking critically at the socks. "They seem to be all right, Gussy. I hope you sell a lot of 'em."

With a quick movement, Racke grasped the brim of Gussy's topper, and pulled the hat down over its wearer's eyes. Arthur Augustus was so taken by surprise that he dropped his bag of holeproof socks, and, in staggering forward blindly, tripped over it and sat down.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Aubrey Racke & Co., and they sauntered along the High Street, leaving Arthur Augustus sitting on the pavement, surrounded by holeproof socks, groping wildly in the air, with his topper jammed right over his eyes.

"Oh cwumbs! Bai Jove! The fearful wotahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, struggling to his feet and dragging frantically at his jammed topper. "I shall give Wacke a fearful thwashin'! I wvaghid him as a howwid' beast! Gwooooooh! I—I can't get this beastly toppah off my head! Oh cwumbs!"

The topper had certainly become a fixture, and, try as Gussy did, he could not remove his headgear.

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed the village urchins, of whom a crowd had collected,

to watch Arthur Augustus struggle with his topper.

"Gwooooh!"
At last, by a superhuman effort, Gussy managed to extricate his head from the topper. That article of adornment suffered considerably in the operation. Gussy's aristocratic features were red, his clothes rumpled, and his hair, which he had brushed so carefully before coming out, was dishevelled.

"Bai Jove!" said Gussy, looking round for Aubrey Racke & Co. "The fearful wuffians! They're gone!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed the village urchins. The elegant swell of St. Jim's presented rather a funny aspect, and they were disposed to spend a few minutes "chivvying" him.

"Crumbs!" said one youth. "There's 'airt Lart at 'im!"

Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs, and sailed into the midst of the urchins. They trod all over his wares, and overwhelmed him. One youth kicked Gussy's topper into the road. Two or three of the sportive youths dribbled his attache-case along the pavement. D'Arcy fought nobly, and was much relieved when reinforcements arrived in the shape of Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn, of the Shell.

Grundy & Co. hit out manfully, and soon the village urchins were scattered. They retreated up the High Street, yelling and boozing defiantly.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, retrieving his topper and attache-case from the gutter, and proceeding to gather up his scattered socks. "What a crowd of howrid little hooligans! Thanks vevy much, deah boys! Gwooooh!"

Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn assisted Gussy in the task of gathering up his scattered wares. When, at last, all the holeproof socks were back in the attache-case, they regarded Arthur Augustus curiously.

"Well, Gussy?" demanded Grundy. "What did you want to get into a row with those young rotters for?"

"Gwooooh!" It was not my fault, deah boy," gasped the amateur salesman, and then D'Arcy proceeded to explain.

Grundy & Co. drew deep breaths.
"Well, I'm jiggered!" was Grundy's comment. "So you've started out selling socks that won't wear into holes! Jolly useful things, if they're genuine. My socks always go at the toes. I'll have a pair, Gussy."

"Same here," said Wilkins, with a grin.

"So will I," remarked Gunn. "Anything to give you a helping hand in making your fortune, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus smiled again. He supplied Grundy & Co. each with a pair of socks, and when those youths strolled away, to spread the news at St. Jim's, Arthur Augustus was the richer by seven-and-six. He went up to his little room in quite a cheerful frame of mind, and, having procured a wash and a new topper, and dusted his soiled garments, he sallied forth once again to do some canvassing.

D'Arcy met with many rebuffs from the shopkeepers in Rylcombe. They regarded his holeproof socks with suspicion, and, after half an hour, he had sold only one pair to the local bootmaker.

He turned down the Rylcombe Lane, and knocked at the door of a small cottage. A grim-looking female opened the door to him. She fixed a pair of beady eyes upon him.

"Good-mornin', madam!" said Arthur Augustus, raising his topper, politely. "Wathah nice wathah for this time of the year, bai Jove!"

The formidable-looking lady seemed deaf to these polite greetings.

"What do you want?" she snapped.

"I have called to show you my holeproof socks, madam," said D'Arcy respectfully, producing a sample pair. "I can quite recommend them. They will not wear into holes, like othah socks. Pewwaps you would care to try a pairah for vouah husband—"

"What!" snapped the lady, with a peculiar look.

"May I pwess you to buy a pairah of holeproof socks for vouah husband?" asked D'Arcy innocently. "They are only half-a-crown a pairah, and—"

"Young man," hissed the lady, in a terrible voice, "how dare you! I haven't a husband! I hate and detest me! They are a plague and a nuisance!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Slam!

The front door closed with a bang, and Arthur Augustus was left on the step, quite at a loss.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated at last, gathering up his case and walking from the house. "What a vevy unpleasant lady! Weally, I wasn't to know that she hadn't a husband!"

Arthur Augustus was beginning to experience the joys of commercial travelling. He had heard that travellers made heaps of money, but now realised that the life was not all honey.

The next house he knocked at was occupied by an irascible old soldier, who, as soon as he saw Arthur Augustus and his holeproof socks, snorted with disgust and management and led the youthful peddler to the gate, pointing out a notice affixed thereon, saying: "No Hawkers or Canvassers."

"Pewwaps I had bettah try St. Jim's," he reflected. "The fellahs up there are sure to patwonise me, without bein' wude. I'll see Doctah Holmes first."

So Arthur Augustus proceeded on his way to St. Jim's.

Taggles glanced curiously at Arthur

Augustus as he walked in at the gates of the old school.

"Good aftahnoon, Taggar, deah boy!" said Gussy politely. "I vrondah if you'd like to buy a pairah of socks that won't wear into holes? They are vevy vevy good!"

"My heye!" said Taggles, blinking.

Arthur Augustus produced the socks, and Taggles surveyed them in considerable astonishment.

"My heye!" he said again. "Which Hi don't want no socks, Master D'Arcy. Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Vevy well, deah boy," said D'Arcy briskly, "I will pwocceed to interview Doctah Holmes."

Arthur Augustus made his way across the quadrangle, taking care to avoid the fellows.

He entered the School House and tapped at the Head's door, and the deep voice of Dr. Holmes bade him enter.

Mr. Raitton was with the Head. They both looked in surprise at Arthur Augustus as he walked in.

"D'Arcy!" exclaimed the Head, peering at the ex-Fourth-Former over the rims of his spectacles. "You have returned so soon. I was under the impression—"

"I am afraid I have not returned to stay, sir," said D'Arcy respectfully, opening his attache-case. "As a matter of fact, I have come to show you a vevy good line in socks. They are perfectly holeproof, and each pairah is wawanted for six months."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Dr. Holmes.

Mr. Raitton was looking astounded.

"Just look at them, sir!" proceeded the amateur commercial traveller, holding up his wares. "They are equal in quality and appearance to othah socks sold at three times the cost. The pwice I am askin' for these wonderful holeproof socks is merely half-a-crown!"

"D'Arcy, I—I do not require any—ahem!—socks, whether they are holeproof or not!" said Dr. Holmes tartly.



Mr. Latham broke off, and stood spellbound, as the elegant D'Arcy came through the trapdoor in the ceiling. "Bai Jove! I—I've fallen through the beastly trapdoor!" The sound of this voice acted like magic upon the Fourth Form. "My only Sunday topper!" cried Blake, jumping up. "It's Gussy!" (See page 6.)

"Is this a joke, or do you seriously intend making a living by selling these socks?"

"I am weally sáwious, sir," replied D'Arcy stolidly. "Pewpaws Mr. Waitton would care to twy a pair of socks?"

"No, thank you, D'Arcy," said the housemaster, smiling.

"Vewy well, sir," said D'Arcy, replacing the socks in his case. "I am sowywy I cannot do business with you. I twust, howehav, to have the pleasur of youah custom in the neah future. Good-afternoon!"

And Arthur Augustus marched from the Head's study before either Dr. Holmes or Mr. Railton could recover from their astonishment.

Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. were coming off the football-field as Arthur Augustus crossed the quadrangle. They rushed over to him and surrounded their old schoolfellow.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Blake, wringing his chum's hand.

"What are you come home to roost?"

"No, wathah not, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "I am twavellin' for a firm of holepwoof sock manufactuwers.

May I show you some?"

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry. "We'll do all we can to help you, Gussy. Come up to our den. We've got a fine spread. We can discuss matters over tea."

"Vewy well, deah boys."

Arthur Augustus was the honoured guest in Study No. 10. Tom Merry & Co. listened sympathetically to the account of his adventures, and laughed heartily, too. But they held a sale in the Common-room, and when it was time for Gussy to go his stock of holepwoof socks had been disposed of.

"Cheerio, Gussy!" said Blake, as he parted with Arthur Augustus at the school gates. "Keep your pecker up, old man, and, remember, as soon as you've got over this work-craze we want you back here."

CHAPTER 7.

Still Going Strong.

AFTER long and serious consideration, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy abandoned his hope of making a fortune by means of selling holepwoof socks. So he looked round for fresh fields and pastures new, for his activities. D'Arcy was quite determined to do or die, and when D'Arcy's mind was made up, wild horses would not drag him from his resolutions. D'Arcy always said that he was as firm as a rock, but Blake & Co.'s views were that Gussy was as obstinate as a mule.

D'Arcy did not heed his chums' urgent appeals to chuck playing the giddy goat. So when he heard that Old George, the village cobby, was confined to his bed with influenza, D'Arcy was smitten with a sudden fancy to become a cab-driver. He had heard how taxi-drivers in London made fortunes in a month, and, in his inward eye, saw himself doing a brisk business at Rylcombe, putting fresh blood into a slow business that Old George had previously carried on.

D'Arcy went to see Old George, and arranged with him to ply the neighbourhood with the ancient horse and vehicle. Arthur Augustus knew a great deal about horses, and although he made a wry face when he saw Old George's ancient quadruped, he philosophically resolved to do his best, until he had saved sufficient to enable him to purchase a real taxicab. So, dressed in Old George's braided coat, with top-boots, and a tarred topper on his aristocratic head, Arthur Augustus set out one morning on the cab, and took his stand outside Rylcombe Station.

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People glanced curiously at the new cobby, with his monocle and elegant trousers, but D'Arcy treated them with lofty contempt.

Gussy's first fare that day was an elderly lady with an ear-trumpet. She wanted to know, before entering the cab, whether the horse was strong, and Arthur Augustus replied in the affirmative.

"The poor animal looks weak and tired," said the old lady, shaking her head. "Are you sure he will not run away?"

"No, wathah not, deah gal—I mean, madam!" replied the youthful cobby.

"Eh?"

"He won't win away, madam!" shrieked Gussy into the ear-trumpet. "You may safely trust yourself in my hands—I mean, my cab!"

"Vewy well," said the old lady, entering as D'Arcy held the door open for her. "Do not drive fast, my man, otherwise I shall not give you the threepence extra!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus mounted the box and drove off, amidst the grins of the villagers. He did not drive fast—indeed, Old George's horse did not feel like exertion. When the lady's destination was reached Gussy came down and opened the door for her. She presented him with two shillings and threepence.

"Think you vewy much, ma'am!" shouted D'Arcy into the ear-trumpet, as he raised his tarred topper. "I twust you have had a comfortable journey?"

"Yes, quite!" said the lady, beaming. "Really, you are a very nice cabman, quite unlike some of the rude fellows I have previously met. I am sure your wife is very proud of you!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as the lady, with a beaming smile, trotted into her house.

He returned to the station, and there picked up another fare.

Business seemed quite brisk that day. By the time evening came D'Arcy had earned over thirty shillings. He was waiting in the station-yard for another fare, when a thin gentleman emerged from the station.

"Gweat! Soot!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Mr. Watcliff!"

Mr. Horace Ratcliff was the unpopular master of the New House at St. Jim's. The boys called him "Ratty" on account of his very bad temper. The New House fellows had to bear most of the brunt of Ratty's spleen, but the School House fellows often had their rubs with him.

Gussy's heart beat fast as Mr. Ratcliff looked round for the cab. Mr. Ratcliff was not an athletic gentleman, and the walk to St. Jim's was an item for him. He usually took the cab.

"Cab!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff, in his thin, acid voice.

"Oh, cwumba!" said D'Arcy, screwing his monocle into his eye, and looking at the New House master.

"Cab!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff again, walking up. "I wish you to convey me to St. Jim's. You may— Good heavens! D'Arcy major!"

Arthur Augustus climbed down from his cab, and held the door open.

"St. Jim's, sir?" he said respectfully.

"Vewy well. Kindly stop inside."

"D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff, peering in amazement at the ex-Fourth-Former. "Wh-what is the meaning of this? What do you mean by masquerading in this village as a cabman?"

"Weally, Mr. Watcliff, I wufuse to be warged as a masquewader!" said D'Arcy. "I am takin' of the usual cabman's place durin' his illness. I twust theah is no reason why I should not do

so, considin' that I am earnin' my own livin'!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "How—how dare you lower yourself so far as to patrol this neighbourhood in such a ridiculous role! D'Arcy, this is disgraceful—intolerable! What would Dr. Holmes or Lord Eastwood say? Think of the school prestige!"

"Weally, sir, so long as I do honest work, and earn an honest livin', I shall not have cause to be ashamed," replied D'Arcy with dignity. "I twust I am not so snobbish as to considah if you goin' profession inwa dig. Are you goin' back to St. Jim's in my cab, sir?"

"But—but—" gurgled Mr. Ratcliff.

"It is preposterous—unprecedented! D'Arcy, I command you—"

"Praw wemembah, Mr. Watcliff, that, bein' no longah a pupil of St. Jim's, you have no authority to command me. I am quite at youah service, if you weaquah me to convey you to St. Jim's."

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Ratcliff was floored. He hesitated about entering the cab; but, after consideration, he climbed inside. He did not relish the walk back to St. Jim's.

D'Arcy whipped up the ancient steed, and the cab rattled away. Swift thoughts passed through the mind of Arthur Augustus. He never had liked Mr. Horace Ratcliff. In fact, he had always regarded him as a "tyrannical wotter." And Mr. Ratcliff's remarks about entering the cab had certainly influenced Gussy in his favour.

Rylcombe Lane was in a bad state of repair, and was beset with innumerable ruts and mud-holes. It was downhill to St. Jim's, too, and Arthur Augustus shrewdly calculated on getting quite a good amount of speed out of the cab-horse. That ancient animal had been more or less asleep all day, except when engaged pulling the cart.

Arthur Augustus, as soon as the outskirts of the village were reached, applied the whip for the first time, and the horse commenced to trot. The cab commenced to lurch and bump.

Bump, bump! Jolt! Bump!

Arthur Augustus was getting every ounce of speed out of the horse, and the cab fairly whizzed along Rylcombe Lane. It lurched from side to side, plunged into puddles and ruts in the road, and rattled on a mad career.

"Yooop!" Oh dear!" howled Mr. Ratcliff, as his head came into violent contact with the framework of the door. "D'Arcy, there will be a horrible catastrophe if you do not relax this mad pace! Ow-ow-ow! Grooooo!"

Bump, bump! Rattle! Bump!

Arthur Augustus, mounted on the box of the cab, was enjoying this mad ride. Not so Mr. Ratcliff inside. He was jostled and buffeted about from side to side of the cab, and soon had many aches and pains.

"My heye!" said Taggles, as the cab dashed in at the gateway of St. Jim's. "Wot the— Look ere, my man, that here is dangerous driving, and— My heye!"

Taggles quite lost his voice in his amazement at recognising the cobby.

Arthur Augustus pulled his fiery steed to a halt, and dragged open the cab door.

"Heah we are, sir!" he said cheerfully. "Grooooo!"

Mr. Ratcliff staggered out of the cab, gasping and groaning. As it happened, the heroes of the Lower School were just coming from the footer-ground, and, seeing this little scene at the gates, they came up. The Terrible Three were there, also Blake & Co. and Figgins & Figgins, and Kerruish, Talbot, Kangaroo, Clifton Dane, and Reilly.

They gazed spellbound at the cabman, and at his luckless fare.

"Gussy!" roared Blake, "Gussy, by Jove!"
Tom Merry & Co. and the others uttered these ejaculations in tones of incredulous amazement.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and grinned at his old schoolfellows.
"Hallo, deah boys!" he said, quite calmly. "I am a cabby now, you see! I have just had the honah of drivin' Mr. Watchif heah. That will be two shillin's, Mr. Watchif, please!"

"Groocoooh!" gurgled Mr. Ratcliff, rubbing his head. "You young rascal!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the onlookers. They roared with laughter. They could not help it. Mr. Horace Ratcliff looked so funny.

His hair was dishevelled, and a large bump showed on his forehead. His collar was hanging gracefully over his left shoulder, whilst his necktie dangled over the other. The New House master was in a breathless and ruffled state.

"D'Arcy, you unmitigated little scoundrel!" he managed to articulate at last, glaring at Arthur Augustus in quite a basilisk manner. "How-how dare you drive so recklessly, at the hazard of having the cab over! Yow-ow! I might have been killed! I believe you did that on purpose!"

"Didn't you wish me to drive you heah as soon as possible, sir?" inquired D'Arcy sweetly. "Penwaps the horse went a little too quick. I am awfully sorry, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the others. "Silence!" screamed Mr. Ratcliff. "Here is your fare, D'Arcy. I shall consult with the Head on this matter, and shall do my utmost to have you prevented from proceeding further with this ridiculous venture. Groocoooh! Boys, cease your foolish laughter!"

But the boys did not cease their laughter. Mr. Ratcliff knew how undignified he looked before his pupils, so he strode away to the New House, leaving Arthur Augustus and his cab surrounded by a chortling and admiring crowd.

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Blake. "Still going strong! Gussy launching forth as a cabby. Going to make your fortune at that, old son?"

"Yaas, wathah—at least, I shall make an honouvable livin'" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "Mr. Watchif seemed surprised to see me, and made wathah a fuss. I wegahd him as a snobish old boundah, bai Jove, and I had my vengeance on him, as you see!"

"Look ere!" said Taggles, interposing. "There goes the call-over bell, and the gates 'ave to be locked. I must ask you to take your cab hout, Master D'Arcy!"

"Vewy well, deah boy!" said the youthful cabby graciously.

"So-long, Gussy!" called Tom Merry, as Arthur Augustus turned his horse and drove off.

"Good-bye, deah boys!"
The cab rattled out into the lane. Arthur Augustus returned in the direction of Rylcombe, looking for more fares. Tom Merry & Co. and the others crossed the quadrangle, chuckling.

"Good old Gussy!" grinned Tom Merry. "Heaps of grit! He'll make the name of D'Arcy famous in the twentieth century yet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 8. D'Arcy Chips In.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS, meanwhile, was driving his horse, now quite weary and languid, down the Rylcombe Lane. He was chuckling over the manner in which he had discomfited Mr. Ratcliff. The cab

had reached the cross-roads, when he was hailed by somebody in the road.

"Hi, cabby!"
Arthur Augustus stopped the horse, and looked down at a young, neatly-dressed man, carrying a leather attache-case.

"Cab, sir?" asked D'Arcy, touching his tarred topper respectfully.

"Well, yes," replied the young man generally. "I have walked so far from Rylcombe Station, and have lost my way. Do you know Hollydene Lodge?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" replied D'Arcy. "Hollydene Lodge is the residence of Sir Hiram Greenwall, and it stands on the outskirts of Wayland Heath. I'll take you orah theah in ten minutes, sir."

The young man stared at Arthur Augustus. Perhaps he was wondering at the cabby's aristocratic accent. Certainly, it was unusual to see so elegant a cabman, using such faultless language, and wearing a monocle in his eye.

"Vewy well!" he said at last. "I'll engage you, cabby."

He climbed inside the cab. D'Arcy whipped up the horse, and the cab rattled down the road to Wayland Heath.

Dusk had by now deepened over the countryside. Gussy had already lit his lamps.

The cab joggled along leisurely on its way to Hollydene Lodge. Arthur Augustus kept his word, and within the space of ten minutes he had pulled up outside a large, handsome mansion, standing in its own grounds just by Rylcombe Woods.

"Hollydene Lodge, sir" said the youthful cabby, opening the door.

"Thanks!" said his fare, emerging and setting down his attache-case while he took out his pocket-book. "I will pay you now, but shall be glad if you will wait. Probably I shall not stay more than twenty minutes or so. You can then drive me back to Rylcombe Station. I must return to London to-night."

"Vewy well, sir!" replied Arthur Augustus.

His fare gave him a ten-shilling note, which he changed. Then, taking up his case, the young man entered the large iron gates of the mansion, and disappeared in the gloom of the grounds.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, as he caught sight of a white object on the ground. "He has drowped something!"

He picked it up, and saw that it was merely an ordinary visiting-card. The fare had probably dropped it from his pocket-book when he had extracted the Treasury-note. Arthur Augustus glanced casually at the slip of pasteboard. This was the legend it bore:

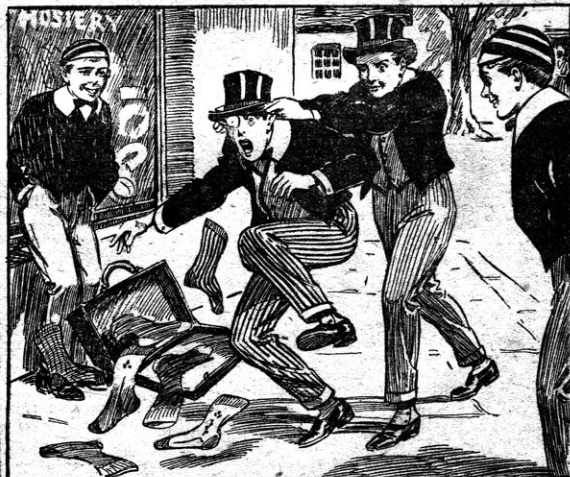
"Glenthorpe & Owen, Jewellers,
Old Bond Street, London, W.
Representative: Robert Chester."

D'Arcy slipped the card into his pocket. Evidently, he thought, his fare was the Robert Chester mentioned on the card, and that he had come as a representative of the firm of jewellers, to show jewellery for Sir Hiram Greenwall to choose. He knew that large firms of jewellers were accustomed to sending representatives to well-known clients, with selections of jewellery. The attache-case that Mr. Chester had carried probably contained a valuable assortment of rings, or diamond trinkets.

Arthur Augustus mounted his dicky again, and pulled the reins. The horse walked forward leisurely. D'Arcy meant to drive up and down the road until his fare reappeared.

Ten minutes passed, and Arthur Augustus was humming cheerfully to himself, and wondering how things were at St. Jim's. Although he was still determined to earn his own living, he could not help wishing that he was back at the old school, among his chums. He was just thinking about Jack Blake & Co. and Stady No. 6, when two men hurried out of the gates of Hollydene Lodge and hailed him.

"Say, cabby, drive us to Wayland Junction. We must get there quick!"



With a quick movement, Racke grasped the rim of Gussy's topper, and pulled the hat down over its wearer's eyes. Arthur Augustus was so taken by surprise that he dropped his bag of holeproof socks, and in staggering forward blindly, tripped over it. (See page 8.)

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and looked down at the man who addressed him. He was a fat, florid individual, wearing a large felt hat. His companion was tall, dark, and sinister looking. D'Arcy gave a start when he saw that this man was gripping a leather attache-case in his right hand. He recognised it as the same case as that which his first fare had carried into the house.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "but I have already received instructions to wait for another gentleman—"

"Mr. Chester won't be leaving the house to-night," said the tall man impatiently. "We'll pay you ten shillings, cabby, if you reach Wayland Junction in a quarter of an hour!"

Arthur Augustus' eyes gleamed. Swift suspicions entered his head. Why were these men so anxious to reach Wayland in so short a time? What were they doing with the jeweller's attache-case?

The men climbed into his cab, and D'Arcy started the horse. As the cab joggled down the dark country lane, he was debating in his mind what to do. Arthur Augustus' suspicions were aroused. What had happened to Robert Chester? That something was wrong, he was certain. And he meant to nip the game in the bud. D'Arcy had heaps of pluck. He whipped up the horse, and the cab went forward at quite a good pace.

The cross-roads were reached. To the right was the road leading to Wayland. Straight forward was the Rylcombe Lane, leading to the village. D'Arcy did not turn to the right, but drove his horse straight on, towards Rylcombe. He meant to stop when he saw P. Crump, or when he reached the police-station. But evidently, the men inside the cab knew the neighbourhood. The fat, florid man leaned out of the cab window, waving his arms furiously.

"Hi, stop! You're going the wrong way! Turn round, you scoundrel—"

"Wats!" gasped Arthur Augustus. And he urged the horse to further efforts.

"The two men in the cab were shouting to him. Finding that shouts made no impression, they spoke furiously to each other. They realised that the cabman was astute, and had suspected their game. The cab was going at a good pace, and they dare not leap into the road.

Crack!

It was the spiteful bark of an automatic pistol. The tall man, leaning out of the cab window, had whipped out the revolver and fired before him, hoping to frighten the cabman. But Arthur Augustus was quite unperturbed.

Crack, crack!

A bullet whistled past the horse's head and frightened it. The animal reared in its shafts, and dashed into the side of the lane. A ditch ran alongside the bank, and into this the side wheels of the cab sunk deep.

The whole vehicle gave a sickening lurch sideways. There was a terrified scream from the horse, frantic shouts of horror from the passengers inside the cab, and the sound of splintering wood.

D'Arcy was hurled from his seat by the force of the impact, and next minute found himself, bruised and dazed, on the grassy bank of the lane. Then came the pounding of horse's hoofs, and D'Arcy, sitting up, was aware that the horse had wrenched itself free from the broken shafts, and was careering towards the village at top speed.

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet and looked round him. In the dim light of a road lamp near by, he could see the cab, poised over the ditch, its side wheels and front axle smashed. He went over to the cab door, and wrenched it open. The huddled figure of the tall man lay inside, motionless and still. He had evidently been knocked unconscious. The other man was on his feet, daubing at a ghastly cut in the side of his face. He gave a snarl of rage when he saw D'Arcy.

"You wascal!" said the schoolboy cabman, thrusting himself forward. "Hand ovah that case, or—"

"Hang you! You sha'n't do me! I'll do for you!" hissed the man, and next minute he and the plucky schoolboy were locked in each other's embrace.

They staggered away from the cab, fighting desperately. Arthur Augustus barked his shins on the cab, and went down, his assailant falling on top of him. Then began a grim struggle on the bank of the lane.

D'Arcy, though an elegant young man, was one of the best athletes at St. Jim's, and he put all he knew into his fighting now. Over and over they rolled, desperately struggling.

D'Arcy's assailant got a grip on D'Arcy's throat, and bore him backward. A giant fist came down, and caught the boy on the head.

D'Arcy's senses reeled for a moment beneath that stunning blow. The ruffian had leapt to his feet, but in that instant Arthur Augustus recovered himself. Even as the man sprang away, D'Arcy's arm shot out, and his hand gripped his ankle, pulling it back. With a bellow of intense rage, the man went down again. D'Arcy, summoning his fast-failing strength, hurled himself on the man's back, and hung on.

He was conscious of the man grappling again with him before his head began to swim. Then through the mist came men's voices. His assailant, with a snarl of baffled rage, tried to drag himself free, but with a supreme effort, D'Arcy still hung on. It was only for an instant. His senses reeled, and, with a low groan, he fell back, oblivious to anything further.

CHAPTER 9.

Back to the Fold.

"THANK Heaven!"

These words, spoken in a hushed voice, came to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as consciousness slowly returned to him.

His head was aching, and he felt sore all over. He looked round him wonder-

ingly, and recognised the school sanatorium at St. Jim's.

Then he realised that Dr. Holmes was there, and with him his own partner, Lord Eastwood. It was the Head who had spoken those words. D'Arcy gave a low groan, and his father leaned forward eagerly, laying a gentle hand on his brow.

"You are all right now, Arthur, my dear lad," he said softly. "Do not exert yourself—"

"Bai Jove! What has happened?"

D'Arcy sat up, although his father had motioned to him to lay still.

He forgot the pain in his head in his anxiety to know what had transpired since he lost consciousness in the Rylcombe Lane.

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"My brave boy, much has happened," he said gently. "Several men from the village, seeing the runaway horse, went up the lane to discover what had happened, and were just in time to capture the rascal you were fighting with before he escaped. The other man, inside the cab, was captured, too. They are both in Wayland Gaol."

"But the attache case, and—"

"The case of jewellery was found inside the cab," proceeded Lord Eastwood. "One of the men confessed everything soon after he was arrested. It appears that, in the absence of Sir Hiram Greenwall, his butler and an accomplice wired to the London jewellers, asking them to send a representative down to Hollydene Lodge with a sample of diamond-rings and brooches. As Sir Hiram is an important client of Messrs. Glenthorpe & Owen, and they had often previously sent down their representative for him to choose from their stock, Mr. Robert Chester was despatched last evening, and arrived at Rylcombe, as you know. When he went to Hollydene Lodge, these men attacked him, bound and gagged him, and made off with the case of jewellery. But for your brave intervention, my boy, their scheme would have been successful. Five thousand pounds' worth of jewellery have been recovered, thanks to you. The police wired Messrs. Glenthorpe & Owen last evening, and Mr. Clifford Owen came down this morning. He has had to return to London on business, taking with him the case of jewellery. Mr. Chester, who was released from Hollydene Lodge, accompanied him, none the worse for his adventure. But Mr. Owen did not leave without an appreciation of your services. I have here a cheque for five hundred pounds, which is ten per cent of the value of the jewellery recovered."

Arthur Augustus gasped. He was too utterly amazed to speak for a few moments.

"Five hundred pounds!" he murmured, in a dazed voice. "Gwaet Scott! I am in quite a flutah, bai Jove!"

"That is the reward the jewellers have given," said Lord Eastwood, with a smile, "in recognition of your bravery. The two men captured have been recognised by the police as notorious jewel thieves who, after having carried out a series of daring robberies in London, have lain in wait for over a year. They will be placed where no opportunities for further activities will be given them."

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath. "Gwaet Scott! I—I have earned five hundred pounds! I can hardly believe it!"

Lord Eastwood smiled, and took his son's hand.

"You have fulfilled the purpose you set out to attain, Arthur," he said.

"The five hundred pounds you were bent on earning are now in your possession,

(Continued on page 18, col. 3.)

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Joy's Gossip

Perhaps they were a bit bored by the garden. Suddenly I saw Doris change colour.

"We'd best hurry on," she said. I—"?" She sat down suddenly on a rustic seat, and I saw that something was amiss, for there were tears in her eyes. "It's so stupid of me!" she went on. "I wish I were a sport. I was biking yesterday, and fell off. I didn't say anything about it, but my knee hurts still a bit."

"Well, of course, I had to stop, and just then Talbot's voice fell on my ears from the other side of the walls."

"You've seen Clark?" asked Talbot. "Oh, yes?" replied Cardew airily. "I gave the blessed chump your letter, and he wasn't half pleased about it. Astonishin' what fellows like him see in fifty pounds. They make money the master, instead of the servant. That's their way. I told the blighter what I thought of him, and he grinned, and said he hoped Master Merton would have a good recovery, and that his mamma would stop worrying. I felt inclined to tap his ugly nose, but there are some things, y'know—well, anyway, I let him understand that if ever he came practisin' his nasty tricks at St.

Jim's again, lending money at hopeless interest to promisin' juveniles, he would get it in the neck. I also said that my friend, Talbot, might not be disposed to come down handsome again."

Talbot kicked a stone. "It was you all the time, Cardew," I said. "How splendid!"

"Me!" cried Cardew, with mock surprise. "How you can talk like that, old bean, beats me. Here you come and tell me the facts—how this young donkey, Phil Merton, is pretty well dyin' of fever because he thinks his mother will be ruined through him! It was nothin' to do with me. Not my fault if my honoured grandsire sends me odd cash. I wash my hands of the whole biznez. Merton was an ass to think he could make money by betting."

I hated to be there listening, but I couldn't really help it. Cardew kept on with his half-mocking air, throwing off all responsibility. Then Talbot gave a husky cough.

"I was allowed to go and speak to Merton, poor chap!" he said. "Miss Marie said I mustn't be more than a minute. Mrs. Merton was standing by the window. She looked round once. She had been crying. Phil knew me. He's so thin. I said, 'It's all right, old top. Money paid by Cardew. No need to fret. Clark won't worry any more.' He tried to press my hand."

Cardew gave a growl. "Didn't I tell you, you howlin' chump, that I washed my hands of the whole thing?"

That was all. How like Cardew! Doris got up and said she was better. She and I walked slowly on. We met Mrs. Merton going to her quarters in the village. She smiled at us, and looked so happy. I did not see Cardew before I left St. Jim's. I might have told him what I thought. But, no, I couldn't have done that. Cardew is a hero, even if he never will realise the fact.

IT was very pleasant indeed to get a letter from Doris Levison, asking me to go with her on a visit to St. Jim's. Doris was visiting her brothers, Ernest and Frank. She showed no resentment at what I had said of her.

Doris and I went through the great gates of St. Jim's, and received an extremely cheery welcome. It was early in the afternoon, and we did not know when we called that anything out of the way was taking place. Cardew told me afterwards that he and Talbot had not meant to say anything about it for fear of making us sad. But the truth was that a fellow called Merton, who had only been at the school one term, was lying ill. Most of the boys did not think it was anything serious at all. Merton was a quiet, reserved fellow, the only son of his widowed mother, and it appeared that Mrs. Merton had pinched and screwed to send Philip to St. Jim's.

But we learned all that afterwards. Not a word was said as we had tea. For one thing, D'Arcy was pretty quiet. He let his relative, Ernest Levison, do most of the talking. Ernest Levison, too, was a bit subdued, though Frankie did his best to liven things up, while Talbot was really grave and preoccupied. He had reason for this, as I found out later.

There was no doubt that poor Merton, lying in the sanny, was in a bad way. "It'll be rotten if it turns out to be fever," said Frank Levison. "Shurrup! It isn't that kind of fever. It's brain fev—"

Cardew cut him short, and began talking in his well-known style. You know it so well—the sparkle and epigram—and he seemed in the highest spirits.

"Really, Miss Joy," he said, as he handed me the angel cakes, "one might think they had asked you here to listen to an argument on hospitals. Let's talk on something else. I've been never so interested in your articles."

Something caused Cardew and Talbot to stay behind after tea. Doris and her brothers and Gussy and I went off to make a grand tour of the old buildings. Believe me, the place is far more fascinating than Mr. Martin Cliford has described it. I loved the chapel and its violet lights, with the tablets on the walls which will "glimmer to the dawn," as Tennyson puts it, though I am not poetical. We came afterwards into an old Dutch garden, of which the Head is very proud. I slipped my arm through Doris' and drew her close.

"It makes things seem different, somehow, to be here," I murmured. Gussy and the others had gone on.

SIDELIGHTS ON ST. JIM'S.



No. 3.—WHAT I OVERHEARD AT ST. JIM'S.



JOHN SHARPE.

New Readers Start Here.

John Sharpe, the great analytical detective, is engaged by Chief Burnett, of the Secret Service, to track down the band of organised and dangerous criminals operating under the guidance of Iron Hand, a fearless, clever man of dominating personality. Marna Black, one of the band of crooks, is captured, and Burnett induces Anne Crawford, a woman agent of the Secret Service, to assume Marna's identity and get into the confidences of Iron Hand.

She is instructed to keep her real identity a secret even to Sharpe; but she often assists him and sends him information concerning the movements of the gang, and he is puzzled to know just where it comes from.

Iron Hand has a number of hiding-places in different parts of the country, which are referred to as "Nests," the most important of which is Eagle's Nest, situated on a deserted cliff. The leader's chief assistants are Potsdam and Black Flag. John Sharpe has had many big tussles with the gang, and has foiled many of their deepest schemes.

Bledson Loses the Jewels.

COLONEL JOE BLEDSON hired a special train to take him and his precious jewels home, and when he entered the station it was waiting in readiness for him to enter. The jovial Cattle King had with him two cowboys as a bodyguard, and he stood for a few minutes in conversation with the railway guard.

Colonel Bledson firmly gripped the strong casket containing the jewels, and the two cowpunchers were on the alert, and continually looked round in order to see if there were any suspicious characters in the vicinity. They all carried very business-like-looking revolvers.

In answer to a question put to him by Colonel Bledson, the guard said: "We make no stop at all, except for water, between here and Frisco. Whenever we do stop, my assistant and I will be ready with our revolvers, in case anything that you mention should happen. You can rely on us. We'll keep a look-out on the outside of the train, and we'll see you safely through to your destination."

Colonel Bledson nodded, and there was a faint suggestion of a smile on his good-natured countenance.

"All right," he replied. "The boys and I will take care of the inside of the train. We'll just make sure that there ain't nobody on it."

The whole party walked over towards the train. The Cattle King and the

The INVISIBLE HAND

This wonderful story has also been filmed by the popular VITAGRAPH Film Company, and readers of the "GEM" should make a point of seeing the picture week by week at their favourite cinemas.



IRON HAND.

guard, followed by two cowboys, boarded the goods carriage of the long compartment train. They walked through the car, and were satisfied that there was no place for concealment. At the other end the guard's assistant greeted them. He was evidently a trusted man, and the guard seemed very pleased to see him.

The party next passed on to the refreshment-coach, making quite sure there were no enemies concealed there, and they then walked on towards the sleeping-compartment of the big, cross-country train. There was a porter in the corridor, and he escorted them down. He then unlocked the door of the compartment, and Colonel Bledson looked inside.

It appeared to be quite empty, and all the sleeping-berths were closed. Then they proceeded to the next compartment and satisfied themselves that this, too, was empty. There was only now the reception and smoking compartment.

It was very luxuriously furnished, and possessed a large table and many comfortable rest-chairs.

Colonel Bledson entered with his two cowboys, who were in attendance, and the guard and porter left them.

The Cattle King placed the jewel-casket on the table, and arranged one of the comfortable chairs to suit himself.

One of the cowboys drew the window-blinds, leaving the one on the glass door up. His friend noticed this; and the other, seeing his questioning glance, said: "We can keep that rear platform in sight that way!"

The three men sat down. There was one facing the corridor, the other towards the rear platform, and Colonel Bledson was sitting in a position so that he could turn his glance in either direction if necessary. The rear platform was lighted by a single dome light.

A moment or two later the porter entered from the direction of the saloon, carrying a tray with drinks, cards, and a box of counters. Colonel Bledson believed in thoroughly enjoying himself at all times, and he felt quite satisfied that nothing amiss could possibly happen to the wonderful jewels that he prized so much.

The next minute the train started and pulled out of the station. It was now quite dark. Some distance outside the starting-point there was a level-crossing, with a smooth road running close to and parallel with the railway-track.

The train was travelling at a comparatively slow rate at present, and soon after it passed the crossing a large touring-car appeared on the scene and turned and ran parallel to the train. There was nothing unusual in this, for the road running parallel with the railway-track was a specially designed motor road. Soon the train gathered speed, and the motor-car followed suit.

Had Colonel Bledson known that the car contained Iron Hand and Potsdam and other members of the gang, he would not have continued to take so much interest in the game of cards he was playing.

Anne Crawford, who was an expert driver, was seated at the wheel, and as the car speeded along, keeping level with the express, she guided it as close as possible to the train.

The men in the back of the car were busily preparing a lasso, which they intended to throw to the roof of the train.

In the smoking-compartment Colonel Bledson was still playing at cards, and thoroughly enjoying it. The stakes were running high now, and the porter was an interested spectator of the game. At the jovial colonel's invitation that worthy helped himself liberally to drinks and smokes from the table. Everyone was quite happy, and nobody suspected the trap that was being set for them.

The train was now travelling at a great speed, and Anne had considerable difficulty in steering.

Presently Potsdam stood up and threw the lariat well up towards the top of the car. It was well directed, and the noose dropped over one of the ventilators on the roof.

The rope tightened, and Potsdam, taking his life in his hands, started to climb up hand-over-hand to the top of the train. The other end of the rope, of course, had been firmly fixed to the car, and the gang cleverly arranged the speed of their vehicle to exactly coincide with that of the express, thus making the feat possible.

The other members of the gang followed Potsdam's lead, leaving Anne Crawford and Iron Hand, the leader, alone in the car.

Soon Potsdam, Black Flag, and three others were on the roof. Black Flag and another immediately made their way to the front end of the smoking-car, while Potsdam and the others went to the rear.

Meanwhile the car still continued to run parallel with the train, and owing to the darkness of the night, the well-planned movements of the gang were not noticed.

Gaining the rear of the car Potsdam first directed his attention to the light, and leaning over from the roof, he unscrewed the bulb, thus causing the light to be extinguished. By this time Black Flag and his assistants had got to the platform, and had entered the corridor.

The Cattle King and his cowboys were becoming more excited as their game proceeded, and Joe Bledson was about to refill their glasses, when something happened to change his plans entirely. The colonel glanced out into the corridor, and shouted, "Great Scott!"

The others followed his startled gaze, and at that moment Black Flag and

another stepped from the corridor with their revolvers levelled at the heads of the party. Both the men were masked.

Colonel Bledson and his cowboys immediately reached for their own weapons, when they heard a noise behind them coming from the rear platform. They glanced around.

Three other masked men then entered the smoking-compartment with their revolvers levelled. The Cattle King and his friends were completely taken by surprise, and they had to quietly submit to disarming.

Potsdam rushed over to the jewel-casket, which he hastily secured, while Black-Flag took the guns, rifles, and ammunition belonging to Bledson, and, breaking a window in the train, he threw them outside.

There was an evil leer on the face of Potsdam. He looked straight at Colonel Bledson.

"Well! You three dead shots are about the tamest bunch of fire-eaters we ever stacked up against," he said.

The colonel bit his lip with anger, but he was powerless to act.

Potsdam then ordered one of the men to pull the emergency stop. The brakes were jammed on, and the train slowed down. The second-in-command coolly helped himself to a drink.

"Better luck next time," he said, raising his glass to his lips. Then he and the gang walked towards the corridor, taking the jewels with them. The man in the rear still covered Bledson and the cowboys with his revolver. He was taking no chances with these crack shots.

Potsdam and his men walked along the corridor in single file, passing on their way the sleeping-compartment. They were very jubilant over their success, and did not imagine that they would capture the valuable jewels without a severe struggle. But their glee was short-lived.

Suddenly the door of every compartment in the sleeping-car opened, and Detective John Sharpe, Captain West, and a number of troopers covered the gang with their loaded revolvers.

The tables were thus completely turned upon the unsuspecting members of the gang.

Sharpe and West drove them back towards the smoking-compartment, and with their hands above their heads, covered by the guns of Sharpe and West and the soldiers, they looked a thoroughly beaten crowd.

Colonel Joe Bledson, who had not quite recovered from the shock of being relieved of his jewels in such an unexpected manner, was astounded to see the gang enter again.

With a smile on his face, John Sharpe handed back the jewel-casket to the Cattle King.

Bledson looked very sheepish, and, laughingly, Sharpe said:

"You see, colonel, I was right after all. I told you you had a clever gang to deal with. So I arranged with the railway people to remove the mattresses from the sleeping-bunks. If you had looked more closely you would have discovered us. I hope you don't mind us intruding in this way?"

The humour of the situation now dawned on the Cattle King, and it was his turn to laugh.

Gripping Sharpe's hand, he admitted that he and his wonderful cowboys had been a complete failure.

The railway track now ran along the edge of a steep ravine. At this point John Sharpe and his assistants walked up the corridor quite near to the motor-car driven by Anne. In the dark the detective was not recognised by Iron

Hand. Seeing a figure there the leader shouted out:

"Well, have you got them?"

Sharpe grinned as he realised that Iron Hand mistook him for Potsdam, and he shouted in answer, "We have!" And with these words he leaped off the train towards the motor-car. Captain West and the soldiers immediately followed suit.

Anne Crawford recognised Sharpe's voice, and her feelings were a mixture of delight and astonishment. Sharpe and his party made a complete capture of Iron Hand and the girl who was posing as Marna Black.

Colonel Bledson and the cowboys, assisted by the guard, drove the gang from the train, and it started off again on its interrupted journey, with the Cattle King once more in possession of his coveted jewels.

Sharpe and Captain West ordered the remaining members of the gang to get into the car, and then he made Anne more aware of the wheel; but the gang were not beaten even yet. There was no villainy too bad for them to undertake.

While Sharpe's attention was occupied, Black Flag reached across and released the brake, and the motor-car started to move, gaining momentum as it headed down the ravine.

One of the soldiers standing beside the detective was knocked down by a heavy blow, and Sharpe was seized and dragged into the car. As the motor continued its plunge down hill, Captain West, and the others, recovering from their amazement, followed on the run.

While Sharpe was dragged, struggling, into the car, Black Flag reached over to the driver's seat and took his position at the wheel. Sharpe was then placed at the rear of the car by the gang. This was a part of their scheme on their part to prevent Captain West and the soldiers from firing at them. The last the gallant officer saw was the car swiftly heading down the steep ravine.

One of the soldiers raised a rifle to his shoulder and took aim, but Captain West stopped him.

"Don't shoot," he shouted out, "you might hit Sharpe!"

Colonel Bledson, from the train had seen where the car was taking place, and he was very angry over the escape of the robbers and the capture of the plucky detective. He ordered the train to be stopped again, and the party made their way over to the soldiers.

Captain West made a quick decision. "They're heading for the desert," he said. "Tell the engine-driver to run like mad to the next town, where we can get horses, and pursue them!"

The engine dashed off towards the engine, and the others piled on to the train as it once more resumed its journey.

Black Flag, who was still at the wheel of the motor-car, had brought it almost to the edge of a gorge. The country round about was very level, and this made what was known as a "sink" in the desert, and the cleft was not noticeable at a distance.

The gorge was very deep, and it was a good job for the gang that Black Flag noticed it in time. He pulled the car up with a jerk, and they all alighted, carrying Sharpe with them, for they had taken the precaution to bind his feet up. His wrists were crossed behind his back, and bound, and there was a rope passed around his body.

The outlaws carried him to the edge of the gorge, and then they set him down, and awaited Iron Hand's orders.

Potsdam glanced at the chief with a gloating look in his eyes.

"What do you want us to do with him?" he asked.

Iron Hand pointed to the gorge.

"Throw him down there!" he said maliciously.

Anne Crawford, standing close to Iron Hand, shuddered when she heard this, and then, gaining control of her emotions, she said:

"Wouldn't it be better—"

Potsdam glared at the girl, and, with disgust in his voice, said:

"Don't butt into this game!"

He had had the detective in his grip on several occasions, before, only to be foiled by the uncanny cleverness of Sharpe at the end.

This interruption by Anne made him at once suspicious of her. For once Potsdam was glad to note that Iron Hand was not inclined to listen to her.

He agreed with his second-in-command, and, turning to Anne, he said:

"It is his life or ours, Marna. I've a fancy for living, if you have not. We cannot let him off again, or take any risks. He has fooled us long enough."

A look of terrible rage and hatred passed over Iron Hand's countenance as he recalled the many occasions upon which the clever detective had outwitted him. Once again he had the man in his power. He swung round to his men, and ordered them to fix Sharpe up.

West to the Rescue.

OUTSIDE the lively-stable in a small town stood Captain West and his troopers. They had already secured a number of horses. Colonel Joe Bledson was conversing with the officer, and then, shaking him by the hand, said:

"You can always find me c/o Bledson & Co, San Francisco. Good luck!"

Captain West and his men mounted their horses and rode rapidly away. There was one spare horse, and they took this with them.

Meanwhile, John Sharpe was in a dreadful predicament, and he could see no hope of escaping the dreadful fate which awaited him.

In obedience to their leader's orders, the outlaws picked him up and held him above the brink of the precipice.

Anne looked on the scene with horror, but feared to attempt any interference. She could think of no way of getting round the angry chief and helping John Sharpe out of his terrible position.

Iron Hand was gloating over the powerlessness of his victim, and then he said:

"Over with him!"

The outlaws swung Sharpe to and fro in order to throw him well over the edge, and then, on the word "go," they hurled him over!

Fortunately for the detective the rift slanted a good deal some way from the top, but this fact was not apparent to the men above, who were too scared to go too near the edge.

A little lower down the trunk of a dead tree protruded from the side of the rift, and in his descent it stopped him. The lasso binding his arms caught in a branch which, projected, and held him there.

Iron Hand and the others walked over towards the motor-car after accomplishing their dastardly work. Anne was trembling a good deal, and the leader, who noticed this, said:

"You're squeamish for a German woman!"

This retort was a delight to Potsdam. At last he thought his master was treating her as he should, and keeping

the interfering girl in her proper place. He sneered and looked in a disapproving manner at the girl, but Anne merely shrugged her shoulders, disdainingly to reply.

"Well, I'm glad we've done with him at last," muttered Iron Hand. "He was beginning to get on my nerves!"

The party entered the car and drove away.

Sharpe was considerably shaken up by his fall, but he had now recovered his senses, and he commenced to struggle, hoping to get his arms free. He writhed and twisted, and then, to his dismay, the tree was gradually loosened and uprooted, and he fell down the rift.

Landing at the bottom he lay stunned for an instant, and then feebly commenced to try to remove the ropes which bound him. He found there was little play in the ropes, and he was unable to move his arms much. Sharpe sat up and paused an instant, and then a brilliant idea came to him.

The detective gradually worked his hands around so that he could reach into his hip-pocket, and soon he was able to take out a small patent cigar-lighter which he carried. It was a metal contrivance which produced a flame.

He inserted the lighter in a niche in the rocks, and then pressed the button; the lid sprang back and the flame lit up.

Sharpe held the ropes above the flame so that they started to catch fire. He winced with pain, for he could not prevent the flame from burning his wrists. Grimly setting his teeth, however, he stuck to his task. Soon the ends of the rope were well ablaze, and at last they broke asunder.

The detective rubbed his wrists to ease the pain, and then, recovering his lighter, he stood up and looked around, seeking a way of escape.

As Sharpe gazed upward to the top of the rift, he realised that he would have to use his wits if he were to succeed in escaping from his prison. In fact, it seemed an almost impossible task, and he had visions of staying there until he actually died of starvation. It was a very desolate spot, and it was unlikely

that anyone would come along and discover him.

But Captain West and his soldiers had now arrived in the vicinity. The party paused, and the officer called attention to the motor-tracks on the ground. They followed the direction of the wheelmarks.

Soon Captain West reached the edge of the rift, and he commenced to examine the tracks.

Turning to his men, he remarked: "They couldn't cross this, so they evidently headed off across the prairie. We've nothing to do but follow where the tracks lead."

He ordered them to mount again, and they commenced to ride off in the direction taken by Iron Hand's motor.

Suddenly Captain West halted the party again, and he held up his hand to indicate silence.

"I think we'll make further investigation before saying good-bye to this spot," remarked Captain West; and they rode back to the edge of the rift.

Captain West peered over the edge, and shouted out: "Is there anyone there?"

John Sharpe heard him distinctly, and, recognising the voice, he yelled in return.

It was the work of a minute for West and his troopers to tie their lassoes together. Then they dropped one end into the gorge.

Sharpe seized it eagerly, and, with considerable difficulty, he was gradually drawn up towards the top, assisting himself up the side of the cliff with his feet.

When the detective had landed at the top he thanked them wholeheartedly for coming to his aid, and the whole party mounted and rode off in the direction taken by the motor-car, the detective making use of the spare horse which they had thought to bring with them.

Iron Hand and his gang had arrived at the small wayside station, and they drew up close to the telegraph-office. Iron Hand got out, and, after a conference with the second-in-command, entered the office.

When he came out again he said to Potsdam:

"That wire will put Wong Li on the job. We can get to Frisco in this car almost as soon as Bledson's special train."

He got back into his seat, and they moved off once more.

West, John Sharpe, and the soldiers had reached the railway-station, and were waiting for a train. As it entered the station, the detective turned to the officer, and said:

"You go back to the camp, and wait instructions from me. Keep a close watch on the gang's headquarters."

West nodded.

"The express will make better time than the special," he said. "You'll arrive in Frisco only about half-an-hour behind her."

Then the detective walked towards the train, and the captain and his men waved farewell as it moved off.

Guarding the Jewels.

MR. WONG LI was generally believed to be a respectable business merchant, but in reality he was the head of a Chinese gang of crooks. He was just now at work in his private office. At the back of this was a huge warehouse filled with packing-cases, and underneath it was a vast cellar which contained many tunnels and secret chambers.

The merchant was dressed in a gorgeous Chinese costume, and he was evidently expecting some important visitors. Presently his clerk announced a visitor, and Iron Hand, accompanied by Potsdam and Anne Crawford, entered his business office.

The Chinese merchant greeted the leader and his second-in-command, for he was already acquainted with them. Iron Hand then introduced Anne.

"This is Marna Black," he said, and he quickly explained the identity of the girl.

Wong Li rang a bell in his office, and in answer to the summons, a young Chinaman entered. The merchant gave him various instructions, and told him to shadow Colonel Bledson. The assistant, unlike his master, was attired in ordinary clothes, and not dressed as a Chinaman.

When he had departed Iron Hand explained to Wong Li the full circumstances regarding the jewels, and the Chinaman listened intently, and was much impressed by the whole affair.

By this time Colonel Joe Bledson, the Cattle King, and his two cowboys, Cactus Bill and Honeydew had arrived at their destination. The three left the station, and Bledson was carrying the case containing his precious jewels. Even now, the cowboys were alert in order to prevent another attempt by the gang to steal the valuables.

The party walked over to a tank, and entered a taxi.

They were not aware that their actions were being observed. As a matter of fact, Wong Li's assistant was watching every movement with the greatest of interest from the kerb, and as soon as they drove off he mounted his bicycle and followed. There was a cunning leer on his yellow Oriental countenance.

When Iron Hand had finished relating the history of his attempt to capture the jewels, Wong Li nodded his head significantly, then he walked slowly and silently across the room.

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MY READERS' OWN CORNER.

HADN'T THE HEART.

A full-back of a football team, whose goalkeeper had just failed to stop a slowly-travelling ball, shouted:

"Why did you let it pass you?"

"Well," came the reply, "after it had passed about six of you chaps, I hadn't the heart to stop it."—Fred Ball, 8, Rose Avenue, South Shore, Blackpool.

GOOD INTENTIONS.

The new typist was determined to make a good impression upon her chief. She turned in half an hour early, and began tidying up the room. When that was done she examined her typewriter, discovered it in a shocking condition, found a bottle, and gave it a thorough oiling. While about it she examined all the other typewriters in the office, and oiled them, too.

There is nothing, she thought, like making oneself indispensable.

The chief arrived. He looked around him with an air of satisfaction, and crossed to the mantelpiece. Then his smile changed to a frown.

"Miss Smith," he said, "have you seen my cough mixture?"—R. F. Cyster, c/o Shea & Co., St. John's, Newfoundland.

WHY?

A baker is not called a loafer, and a bootblack is not called a footman. A fireman is not called a hosier, and an orator is not called a gasman.—I. J. Colman, 28, Highgate Street, Jeppetown, Johannesburg, South Africa.

HIS ANSWER.

A smartly-dressed woman was sitting in an omnibus, when a quiet-looking young man accidentally trod on her dress. She lectured him for ten minutes, and wound up by saying: "A gentleman would have apologised." The young man bowed. "A lady would have given me the chance," he said calmly.—Miss Dora Berland, 28, Yalford Street, Whitechapel, E.L.

THE VERY THING.

The mistress of the house had been to a concert, and when she returned she was met by the servant with:

"Baby was very ill while you were out, mum!"

"Oh dear!" said the alarmed parent.

"Is he better?"

"Oh, yes, mum, he is all right now, but he was bad at first."

"Good gracious! What have you given the child? There's no medicine in the cupboard, is there?"

"Oh, yes, there is. It's written on it." And the girl produced a bottle labelled "Kid Reviver."—Miss Edna Roughley, Wynna, Euston Road, Hurlstone Park, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

ONLY HALF.

An Irishman, on entering a photographers, asked to have his photo taken. The assistant told him it would cost 2s. 6d.; so the Irishman, well-satisfied, went home. Next day he called at the shop; his photo was immediately brought to him. He looked at it amazingly, and after a while told the assistant it was only worth 1s. 3d.

"Why?" pleaded the assistant.

"Well," argued the Irishman, "there is only the front of me in this photograph, where is the other half?"—Ernest Hicks, 7, Queensbury Street, Essex Road, Islington, London, N.1.

DONE.

The grocer looked over the counter and espied a little boy with a jar.

"Well, my little man, what do you want?"

"Pip-please, sir, me muvver wants a pennorth of treacle," answered the wee fellow, handing the jar to the grocer.

Presently the man returned with the jar of treacle, and beheld the boy frantically searching his pockets.

"What's the matter?" inquired the grocer.

"I tink I've left my penny in the jar," said the boy, in dismay.—J. W. Riley, Edgerton Buildings, Barrow-in-Furness.

FORETELLING THE WEATHER.

Animals are credited, by some people, with great powers of foretelling the state of the weather.

Some say that when rain is coming on cats will wash right over their ears, and that they will roam over the house, at the approach of a thunderstorm. The braying of a donkey is believed by many to herald the approach of rain. When bees return to their hive and do not come out again for a time rain may be expected. Working bees are supposed to dread bad weather to such an extent that, even when a cloud obscures the sun, they hurry home. When domestic geese are observed to fly without any obvious reason, rain is probably coming on. A yet day is imminent when rooks settle noisily in the tree-tops and subsequently scatter in all directions. Swallows, flying high, are supposed to indicate fine weather, but when flying low, rain may be expected. When the same birds fly near the ground in winter, going and returning noiselessly, a sharp frost may be anticipated. The shrill voice of the plover often announces a change in the weather. When the wise man sees ducks going out in the grass fields in the daytime to look for snails, he usually hurries home to dodge an expected shower.—R. P. Smyth, Summerville, Dalkey, Co. Dublin.

APPEARANCES ARE DECEPTIVE.

It was in the Royal Infirmary. One patient, who was in a very bad condition, was not allowed to smoke. The nurse, when entering the ward, noticed a partly smoked cigarette on the patient's table.

"I thought I gave you strict orders not to smoke," she said.

"But," said the patient, "I have not been smoking."

"Why, there is a partly-smoked cigarette here," said the nurse. "How do you account for that?"

"Well," said the patient, "that's nothing. I have a bicycle at home, but I am not riding it."—Thomas William Norman, 76, Beeton Street, Holderness Road, Hull.

CHAT ABOUT ST. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS.

One will be very sorry to hear that Gosling is down with a very bad cold. Either he's trying to be fashionable, or else he's been drinking out of a wet glass.

Discontent seems to be pretty general among the juniors of St. Jim's owing to the poor food now being issued in Hall. Arthur Augustus D'Argy's latest complaint is about the puddings. Well, Bagley Trimble of the Fourth Form informed me some time ago he thought the pudding was rather "duff."

Latest news to hand states that Cyril Chowle has enlisted his company with the noble band of "night birds." Well, it's quite true a "Chowll" flutter.

Bagley Trimble is not having what one could term a very pleasant time of it lately. The poor chap has been confined to his study until further notice owing to the fact that his study-mate

has been admitted to the sanatorium with the measles. Undoubtedly the best policy, too, as it's catching. Baggy would be almost certain to "spread" it about.

Together with the many letters of thanks from my numerous readers for the Free Art Portraits of the juniors of Greyfriars School, now appearing each week in the "Boys' Herald," comes one from an ardent reader, who asks: "How long will it take to publish the whole of the characters?" Well, dear chum, rest assured we shall keep going until we've "done Brown."

We agree it was rather hard luck on Alonzo Todd being hit with a cricket-ball whilst at practice. But, there you are, "soft" people have most of the "hard" luck.

Joy tells me that she would very much like to stick a pin in the fat-hide of

William George Bunter of the "Boys' Herald." Surely she must know that pin-cushions are cheap enough.

We are told that Baggy Trimble has at last received just payment for eavesdropping at keyholes. Whilst trying to elude capture from the occupants of Study No. 1, our inquisitive friend slipped on a piece of peel, and fell heavily to the floor. The incident of the "peel" hardly appealed to Baggy, although it brought "peals" of laughter from his many onlookers.

We have been advised that a good hawking would do William George Bunter the world of good. We fully agree that the idea would prove a "howling" success.

A girl reader writes to ask if Joy resides in Jersey. A sure she's not "jumper" mad.

"The Invisible Hand."

Continued page 16.

From a cabinet he produced a covered porcelain bowl, and also some small packets carefully wrapped up. The next action of the mysterious Chinaman was to slip off his elaborate robe, revealing beneath the ordinary street attire of a Chinaman.

He intended to journey forth from his office, and he instructed Iron Hand and the others to wait his return. Wong Li took with him the bowl and mysterious packages, and ordered a boy to bring in some refreshments for the leader of the gang, Potsdam, and Anne. Then he took his departure.

The taxi-cab containing Colonel Bledson and his friends had now arrived outside the Cattle King's San Francisco office. Standing in the doorway of the outer office was a Chinese office-boy. This is the custom in many offices in San Francisco, where the Chinese population is very large. The boy held the door open to allow Bledson to enter.

The Cattle King and the cowboys made their way to the inner office, and the office boy handed his chief a bundle of important letters which had arrived since his absence.

Bledson's office was a well-furnished one, and in one corner of the room there was a large and strong-looking safe.

The Westerner immediately walked over to this, opened it, and deposited the jewel-case inside, and then closed the intricate combination lock. As a further precaution, he placed a table in front of the safe door, and he told the cowboys to draw up their chairs on either side.

"At his directions they sat down each in a chair alongside the table. The two men then took up their revolvers, which they placed on the table within easy reach.

With a smile on his face, Joe Bledson looked at them.

"You fellows sit there tight till I get back. They fooled us once, and they mustn't do it again," he said.

The cowboys assured him that the valuables would be quite safe, and that no one would ever take them away from them again.

"I'll go and arrange a special train to take this to the ranch," continued Joe Bledson, "and watch out. Sharp can't come to our aid now you know."

The idea of having the jewels stolen from them was a source of amusement to the cowboys, and they laughed heartily. Only a miracle could wrest them from them this time. Without speaking further Colonel Bledson went out, and the cowboys produced the inevitable pack of cards, and started to play their usual game of poker.

Very soon after the colonel had left the building the office door opened once more, and Wong Li entered. The Chinese boy at once went over to him to ask him his business. The important-looking Chinaman, however, did not reply; instead, he contented himself by giving him a mysterious sign.

It consisted of holding the fingers of the right hand in a peculiar manner, and moving the thumb up and down, while his left hand touched the lobe of his ear.

A peculiar change immediately came over the face of the boy, his expression

changed from one of interest in the newcomer to terror and fear. He recognised the mysterious sign of the All-Powerful High Binders.

The boy at once dropped to his knees, and terror-stricken, promised immediate obedience to the orders of his superior. Wong Li motioned him to remain quiet. Then this strange yellow man moved towards the inner office, and peered carefully through the open door.

What he saw made him halt for a moment; his gaze met the sight of the two cowboys playing cards as they sat at the table in front of the safe. Both were so interested in the play that they did not see the yellow face of Wong Li. The Chinaman returned to the outer office, and issued further instructions to the boy, who was still in a somewhat nervous state and ready to do the bidding of the chief. He nodded, with great fear and respect, as he listened.

Wong Li went over to the large cupboard that was standing in the office, and he concealed himself in it, while the office-boy walked towards the inner office. He entered the other room, and one of the cowboys, startled by his sudden intrusion, reached for his gun, but he laid it down again immediately he saw who the visitor was.

The boy went nearer the table, and then said in his quaint accent:

"Me go get food at shop. You like me bring you some?"

Honeydew and Cactus Bill brightened up instantly at the thought of food.

"Bet your life!" replied Honeydew.

"Think, I could eat a boss!" said Cactus Bill chimed in with.

"Me too!" The boy nodded, and hastily made his exit.

When the lad returned to the outer office again, Wong Li produced the covered bowl which he had brought with him, and the boy looked on, fascinated by his movements.

The Chinaman produced the packages, and opening them he poured the contents into the bowl. He pushed the boy roughly to one side, lest he inhaled the fumes. Then Wong Li lit a match, and dropped it into the bowl.

The smoke at once commenced to ascend, dense and heavy, and Wong Li tilted covered the bowl over with the lid, holding his head away to avoid inhaling the fumes. From a pocket he next produced some chopsticks, and handed the bowl and the sticks to the boy, whispering a warning that he must be careful not to inhale the fumes.

As the boy grasped the bowl, Wong Li took a handkerchief, which he commenced to bind around his head, covering his nostrils, and the lad carried the bowl of mystery into the inner office.

The cowboys looked up from their game as he entered, and Cactus Bill instinctively reached for his gun, thus showing that he was on the alert, although only a second before he had been so deeply interested in the game.

The boy placed the bowl on the table between the two hefty sons of the Wild West, saying: "Chop suey. Velly good!"

He then backed towards the door, and the cowboys smiled at one another at the prospect of a feed, even if it were only the Chinese dish of chop suey. Honeydew and Cactus Bill picked up the chopsticks, and they bowed politely to one another, remarking "After you, Alfonso!" as they prepared to start.

(See next week's GEM for the continuation of this remarkable story.)

"GUSSY GETS GOING!"

Continued from page 12.

and you are now able to return to the school. Don't you agree?"

Arthur Augustus groped for his monocle, which the nurse had placed on the locker at the side of the bed, affixed it in his eye, and looked hard at his noble pater. Then he looked at Dr. Holmes.

Then he grinned.

"Vevy well," he said slowly. "Havin' earned the five hundred pounds, I am quite willin' to return to St. Jim's. As a match of fact, I wathah think that I had bettah wait a little longah befoah I set out in earnest to earn my own livin'. I shall be jolly glad to return to the school, bai Jove! I told Blake that I'd succeed, although I don't considah that I have wealy revided the five hundred pounds. Out of that I shall weepah a hundred pounds I bowwow, and the west shall be given to the ex-Service men's fund at Wayland."

"That is very noble of you, my dear lad," said Dr. Holmes kindly. "I am proud to think that a boy of St. Jim's is capable of such pluck and bravery as you have shown, D'Arcy, in many ways. I must congratulate you on your success."

"And, as regards the hundred pounds that I lent Arthur, I shall not require that back again," said Lord Eastwood. "The cheque for five hundred, if Arthur wishes, shall all go to the ex-Service men's fund, together with the remainder of the cash I advanced."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, smiling.

The doctor came in then, and Lord Eastwood and the Head departed.

D'Arcy made rapid strides to recovery, and at the end of that day presented himself at Study No. 6.

Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby, and the Terrible Three, who were there, welcomed him with open arms.

"Oh, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, shaking his aristocratic chum by the hand. "You've been splendid—simply ripping! Of course, we heard about it this mornin' from Kildare! How do you feel, old son?"

"All sewene, deah boy!" replied Arthur Augustus, beaming. "I trust you fellahs are willin' to admit that you were in the w'ong when you said I'd make a mucker of earnin' my own livin'?"

"Why, Gussy, we'll admit anything!" said Jack Blake joyfully. "And are you really going to chuck that silly—mean, that ripping stunt, and come back to the school?"

"Yaas, wathah!" "Good old Gussy!"

There was a gorgeous feed in Study No. 6 that evening, and Arthur Augustus was the guest of honour. Lord Eastwood was present, so were Figgins & Co., of the New House. Everybody was glad that Arthur Augustus was back in his old place at St. Jim's. There was much to discuss over the festive board, and the merry-makers laughed loud and long over the stirring events of Gussy's latest!

(Another grand long story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "TOM MERRY'S TASK!" By Martin Clifford. Make sure and order your copy RIGHT NOW!)

ANSWERS TO READERS.

KATHLEEN B. (Mount Farm).—Sidney Clive is fifteen years and four months old, and has dark hair. Dick Julian has been at St. Jim's a considerable time. My replies are certainly intended for everybody. I think every reader approves of our splendid serial, "The Invisible Hand." Write again, by all means.

DOROTHY (Hythe) writes: "I find I have missed some good stories in the GEM, although I am an old reader. I have no special favourites at St. Jim's. I like them all, except, of course, the ones I like. Joy's chat each week. She is very interesting, and seems to be a very jolly girl."

W. T. (Ireland) writes: "Will Miss P. Armstrong, of Melbourne, please write to W. T. Ireland, as he has had no letters for three months?" I am very glad to oblige this correspondent, who is a Service man.

MISS K. AMANO, care of Hamai, 28, Oyamadori, Dairen, Manchuria, writes to me that she is a Japanese reader of the GEM and "Boys' Herald." She takes a great interest in the stories of St. Jim's, and also in postcards with views on them. She obtains the weeklies through the foreign bookseller at Tokio, Japan.

STANLEY R. ROOKE, 941, McMillan Avenue, Winnipeg, Canada, writes: "Could we not have a stamp column? If you could not work a regular one, why not insert one occasionally? I mean, a column to which readers could send in the latest bit of interesting news concerning stamps."

After the summer season I should like to introduce something of the sort. Of course, just now the thoughts of most fellows are fixed on outdoor interests. When and wherever possible, I want to bring new features into the GEM and the "Boys' Herald," and I shall not forget the notion sent in by my Canadian chum.



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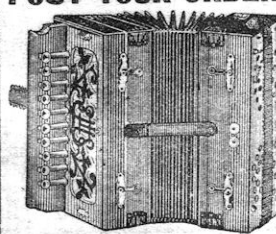
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