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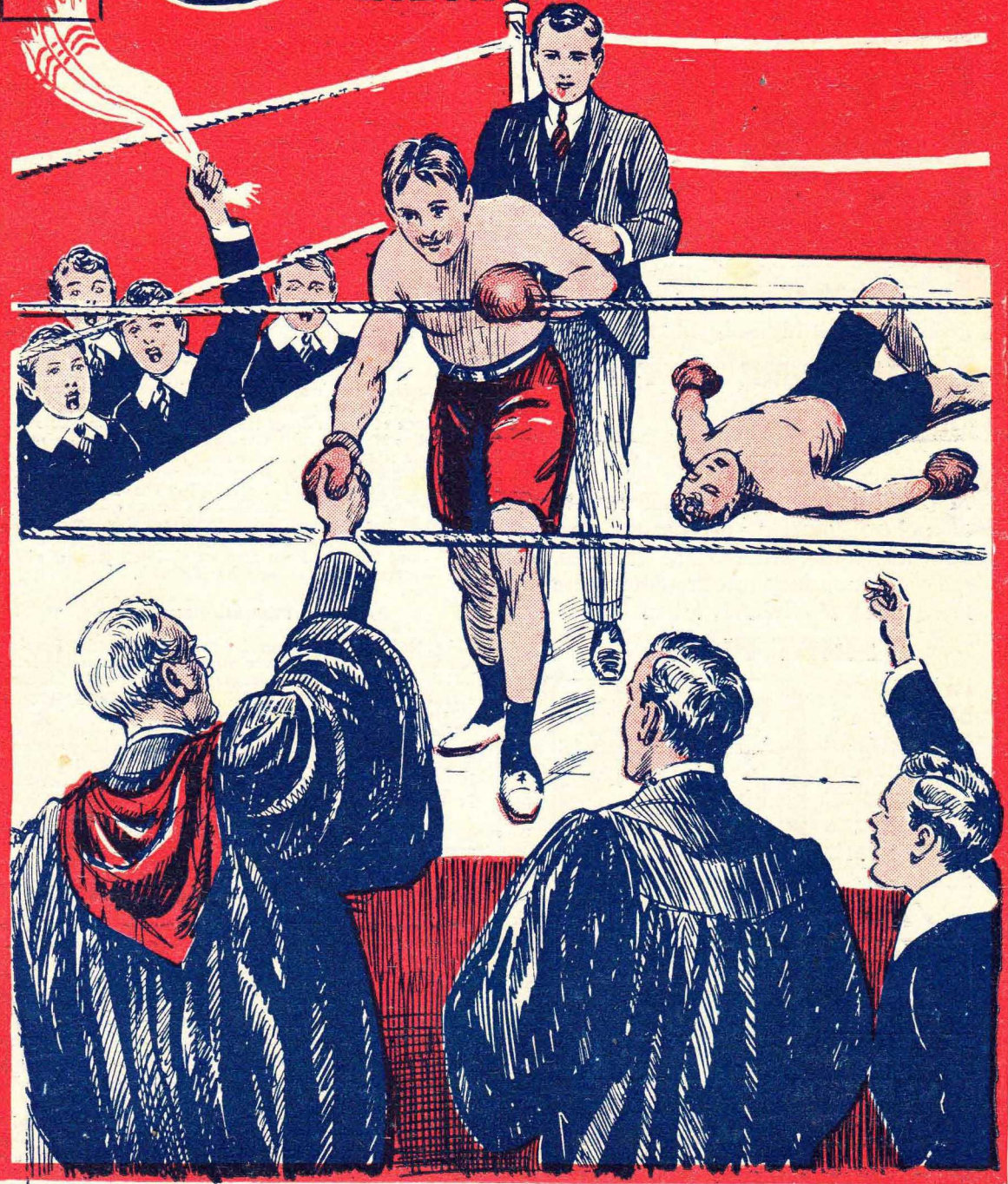
(SEE INSIDE.)

EVERY WEDNESDAY

The GEM 2!

LIBRARY

No. 975.
Vol. XXX.
Oct. 23rd,
1926.



CONGRATULATIONS FOR GUSSY, THE VICTOR!

(A powerful incident from this week's grand extra-long story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.)

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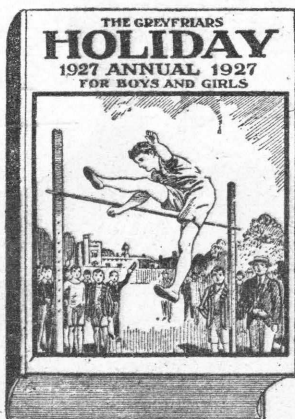
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BONZO—THE MONGREL!

A READER from Wallington writes and tells me that he's just been given a dog, or rather, a puppy. Now this puppy is as ugly as sin, so my correspondent says, and thoroughly deserves the name of Bonzo. His young master is already very fond of him, but is worried no end because Bonzo will tear up everything indoors that comes within his reach. My correspondent's parents have declared that unless the dog is taught to behave itself it will have to go. Poor old Bonzo! says my chum. Well, don't look at the worst side of things, for all you know Bonzo may have understood that ultimatum, and will mend his ways accordingly. If he doesn't, it is up to you to correct him. You needn't be cruel to him, but you must be firm enough to make him understand that you mean business. Of course, this tearing-up habit is common to all puppies, but it doesn't as a general rule last long. When Bonzo begins to look round for something to tear, my chum, get an old "condemned" duster and take it into the garden and play with Bonzo by frisking the duster about. He will get the idea quickly enough, and will amuse himself until he is tired by dragging and "shaking" the end of the duster nearest him. Of course, you may think this rather boring, but it may do the trick. It may cure Bonzo of that indoor tearing habit, anyway. Give it a trial!

A GEMITE'S SUCCESS!

There is so much sporting good-fellowship amongst GEM readers that I know there will be plenty of interest felt in the doings of a Gemite of long standing. I am referring to Mr. Julius Herman, who was an ardent GEM reader many a long year since, and who has from time to time contributed to the favourite weekly under another name. Mr. Herman has just published a book called "The Music of South African Life," a subject of which he knows a great deal, for though he is a frequent visitor to this country, Mr. Herman's home is in the great Dominion in the south, where GEM readers are legion. I am sure we shall all join in wishing Mr. Herman every success with his book.

FRETWORK!

The 1927 catalogue issued by Hobbies, Ltd., Dereham, Norfolk, is full of interest to every reader interested in this fascinating hobby. It is larger than ever, with 246 pages of fretwork designs, tools, etc., and with every copy two large designs are given free.

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NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME:

"SKIMPOLE'S TELESCOPE!"
By Martin Clifford.

This yarn shows your favourite author in light vein, and is one long bubble of laughter from beginning to end. Mind you read it, chums.

"WHITE EAGLE!"

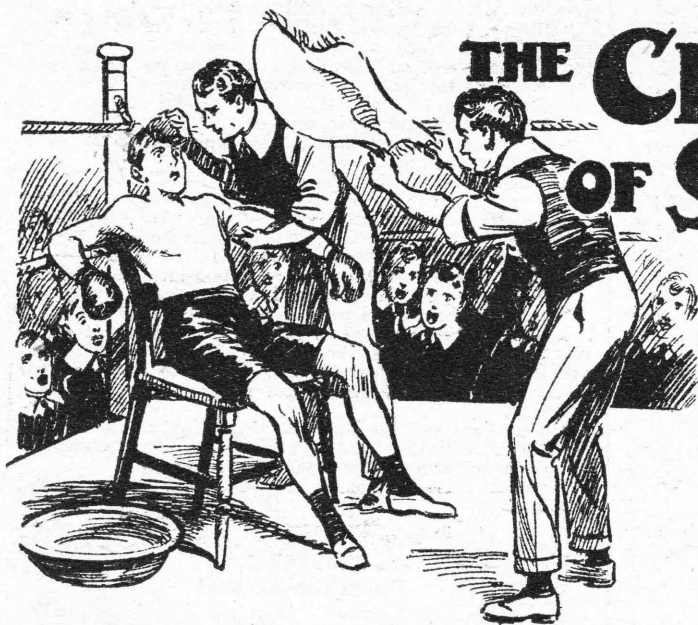
There will be another grand instalment of this popular serial, and once more Hunks proves himself a real pal to young Tom Holt.

AND DON'T FORGET THE TUCK HAMPERS!

These "Tuck" prizes are immensely popular, and it behoves all of you who know a funny story to send it along and try your skill. Look out, too, next week, for another ripping poem by the St. Jim's Rhymester. Cheerio, chums!

Your Editor.

GUSSY, THE FIGHTING MAN! Arthur Augustus is more renowned for his celebrated monocle than his prowess as a boxer, but in this case he certainly deserves his new title—



THE CHAMPION OF ST. JIM'S!

A Powerful New Extra-Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, featuring Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the Swell of the Fourth.

BY

Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER I. Gussy Enters!

BANG! The door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage at St. Jim's, opened suddenly and violently, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy crossed the threshold.

The swell of St. Jim's gazed importantly at his chums—Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth, Herries, and Digby—who were busily engaged in prep.

Scratch, scratch!

"I have entahed—" began D'Arcy.

"So we notice!" grunted Herries, without looking up.

"Yes! Shut the door!" said Jack Blake.

"Also shut up!" added Digby meaningly. "We're working!"

Scratch, scratch!

Three pens scratched their way over three sheets of paper at a great rate.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard and deep.

"Weally, you fellows," he remonstrated, in an injured tone. "Surely you can listen to me for a moment. I want to inform you that I have just entahed—"

"Brrrrrr!"

Jack Blake threw down his pen.

"So you have just told us, Gussy," he said wearily. "Now that you have entered, for goodness' sake shut the door and sit down!"

"Yaas, bai Jove! But—"

"Shut that thumping door!" growled Herries.

"But—"

"Only a silly chump like Gussy would leave it open!" remarked Digby disgustedly.

Arthur Augustus closed the door very deliberately, after which he jammed his eyeglass into his eye and surveyed his chums severely.

"I have just entahed—" he began again, in studied tones.

Crash!

He got no farther, for a book, hurled by Digby, thudded against the door behind him, missing him by the fraction of an inch.

"You silly ass, Digby! That might have hit me!" he exclaimed.

"Go hon!"

Jack Blake turned in his chair and wagged an admonishing forefinger at D'Arcy.

"Look here, you chump!" he said sternly. "If you jaw any more you'll go out on your silly neck!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Shut up, Gussy!" howled the chums of Study No. 6 in unison.

"But I was goin' to tell you," continued Arthur Augustus, in exasperated tones, "that—"

Digby placed his pen carefully upon the table. Really, it

was impossible to pay any attention to prep when Gussy got the bit between his teeth, so to speak.

"Collar him!" he growled. "He'll go on chin-wagging for ever!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

The three juniors pushed back their chairs, sprang at their immaculate study-mate, and seized him in a manner that was far from gentle.

"Yawwooooh!"

"Now, you utter ass!" said Jack Blake. "You have had your chance. Now you're going out, my pippin!"

"Weally, you fellows—" gasped Arthur Augustus.

But he had no time to expostulate further, for he was whirled off his feet.

"Ow! I— Whoo-oo!"

Bump!

"Yawwoop! You silly wottahs! I only wanted to tell you—"

The swell of St. Jim's was planted on his feet again.

"Open the door, Herries!" growled Blake.

"What-ho!"

Herries opened the door.

"Now then, out with him! One, two, three!" said Blake grimly.

Propelled by his exasperated chums, Arthur Augustus sailed through the doorway, his monocle flying at the end of its silken cord.

"Hallo! What the—"

"Here, look out, you ass!"

"Mark time, Gussy! Look where you are going!"

Three juniors, who had been about to enter the study, staggered back, with Gussy in their midst.

They were the Terrible Three, from Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.

"Ow! Bai Jove, I'm fallin'! I—"

Bump!

Arthur Augustus failed to keep his footing, and the next moment he was sitting on the passage floor.

"Little argument in the happy family—eh?" grinned Tom Merry, the junior captain of St. Jim's, gazing down at the ruffled swell.

"Being turned out of giddy home, Gussy?" asked Monty Lowther, with a grin.

"Hold it, Gussy!" shouted Harry Manners, producing a pocket camera hastily. "Hold the pose, and I'll snap you in a jiffy. I—"

Arthur Augustus let out a dulcet yelp, and literally flew up from his sitting position.

"Bai Jove, Mannahs!" he said indignantly. "I should nevah allow you to snap me in that wiculous posish. I trust you did not take me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Tom Merry. "Good job for you, Gussy, that there are no films in that camera!"

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D'Arcy breathed a sigh of relief. Then he ramed his glimmering monocle deeper in his eye, and gave his study-mates a withering look.

"You fwabjous chumps!" he said. "You have acted like wude wuffians! I considah your conduct most wewpewhensible, and, unless you give me what I considah a pwopah apology, I shall be undah the painful necessity of administewin' a feahful thwashin'."

"Rats!" grunted Blake. "You shouldn't have played the silly goat. There are times, Gussy, when you are hopeless."

"Japing about when we want to get our prep done!" complained Digby.

"Bai Jove! But I was goin' to tell you chaps that I had entahed for the intah-House boxin' competition!"

Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries started.

"You were going to tell us what?" they echoed in chorus.

"That I had entahed for the intah-House boxing competition!" repeated D'Arcy frigidly.

Jack Blake gasped.

"Oh, my hat! You silly fathead, why didn't you tell us before?" he asked blankly.

"Why, you uttah asses, you would not allow me to speak! I twust I am the last fellow in St. Jim's to jape when othah fellows wish to do their pwep. I am waitin' for that apology!" Arthur Augustus added icily.

For once in their lives Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries were utterly nonplussed, and they stared at their elegant chum speechlessly for a few moments.

Then Blake found his voice.

"Is that honest injun, Gussy?" he asked, a curious note in his voice. "Have you really put your name down for the boxing?"

Before Arthur Augustus could answer, however, Tom Merry broke in.

"He has, Blake! We can vouch for that!" Tom Merry exclaimed. "We saw his name on the board just now."

"So we came along to shake hands with the chump!" said Manners.

"And to promise him a decent burial after Redfern of the New House has finished with him," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove, that is vewy decent of you, deah boys!"

There was a roar of laughter as Arthur Augustus spoke. But the good humour of the swell of St. Jim's was completely restored as Blake, Digby, and Herries pumped at his fist.

"I did not wefer to what Lowthah said," he corrected, beaming on all as they crowded into the study. "I weferred to your good wishes, deah boys! I mean to win the intah-House match, and then wewpewent St. Jim's at Aldershot, in the Public Schools' Boxin' Competition. Yaas, bai Jove!"

"You'll be up against a good man in Redfern, Gussy," remarked Jack Blake. "You know what you'll be letting yourself in for?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Training—strict training!" said Herries.

"The vewy switcetest, Hewwies," acknowledged Arthur Augustus.

"And you'll very likely get the shape of your aristocratic boko changed," warned Digby.

"I shall have to chance that, Digbay," said D'Arcy cheerfully.

"There will be the risk of cauliflower ears and a broken jaw," mentioned Monty Lowther hopefully.

"I have already considahed the pwos and cons, Lowthah, deah boy."

Tom Merry held out his hand frankly.

"Put it there, Gussy," he said warmly. "I, for one, wish you jolly good luck, anyway!"

D'Arcy beamed.

"Thanks, deah boy!" he said.

"It's like this, you chaps," said Jack Blake, who had entirely forgotten prep under this unlooked-for surprise. "It's up to us to back old Gussy through thick and thin. After all, he's got the right blood in him, and he ought to whack a New House ass!"

As he spoke the door was kicked open, and upon the threshold stood George Figgins & Co. of the New House.

"I should think so!" grinned Monty Lowther, who knew that the newcomers must have heard what Blake had said.

"Gussy ought to knock Redfern into smithereens!"

"Rather!" said Herries.

"With both eyes shut!" exclaimed Digby.

"Gussy, every time!" said Manners. "Good old Gussy!"

The tall leader of the New House frowned as he strode into the study, followed by Kerr and Fatty Wynn, the latter munching at a bun.

"What's that?" Figgins asked, with ominous calm.

"That tailor's dummy whack Redfern? Why, the silly ass'll be trounced in the first round!"

"Gussy won't stand an earthly!" said Kerr briefly.

"He couldn't knock a pound of butter into smithereens!" mumbled Fatty Wynn.

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"Bai Jove, you fellows," said Arthur Augustus, "I should hate to upset the harmony of this meetin', but if you are goin' to speak in a disrespectful mannah, I—"

"Dry up, Gussy!" said Blake. "If you are going to be the giddy champion of St. Jim's, you must keep out of trouble. At the same time," he went on darkly, "if Figgins and his two tame pets have come over here with the idea of being thumping rude, Herries, Dig, and me can quite easily chuck them out again, and—"

"I'd like to see the chump who could chuck me out!" snorted George Figgins hotly.

"Is that an invitation?" asked Blake blandly.

"It's what you jolly well like!" retorted Figgins. "Gussy fight Redfern!" he went on scornfully. "He'd do better to scratch before he's killed! That's what we came over to advise the ass to do. We heard he had entered, and—"

This was more than the chums of the Fourth could stand.

"Outside, Figgy!" demanded Blake.

"Yes, and sharp's the word!" said Digby.

Monty Lowther grinned as Figgins thrust him out of the way in order to get at Blake. Monty stumbled against Kerr, and his upfing hand caught that canny Scot full upon the mouth. Kerr misunderstood and thought Monty Lowther meant it.

The next moment the humorist of the Shell stopped Kerr's bony fist with his nose, and he was under no misapprehension as to whether or not Kerr meant that!

From that second boxing started at St. Jim's in real earnest.

CHAPTER 2.

Mellish Gets An Idea!

AT the exact moment that things thus began to get lively in Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage, in another study a little farther along two juniors sat staring gloomily at a letter one of them held.

They were Mellish and Scrope of the Fourth, juniors who did not bear the best of reputations. There had been many shady doings in the past connected with the names of this bright pair.

Mellish's face never did show much brightness, and his expression usually was one of gloom.

Now, however, it was showing tinges of grey, and his shifty eyes were like those of an animal at bay.

"Do you think the beast will do what he says?" asked Scrope.

Mellish did not reply, but sat staring dully at the letter he held in his shaking hand.

And, certainly, it was not a script calculated to fill any junior with joy.

"Dear Sir," it ran, in irregular characters,— "I am just about fed-up. So this is to tell you that Dr. Holmes is going to know all about that little ten quid you owe me unless it is paid by Saturday. I've waited long enough, and don't want no more playing about.—Yours,
"S. SOLOMON."

The letter bore an address in Wayland, and Mellish had received it by the late afternoon's post.

"Blow him!" he suddenly burst out. "Why can't the brute wait?"

Scrope gave a grin.

"Well, he has waited no end, Mellish," he said. "He's tired of it, I suppose, and—"

"Oh, shut up, you silly fool!" growled Mellish impatiently.

"Of course he's fed-up. He says so here, doesn't he? The thing is, how am I to raise the confounded wind? The pater won't brass up another shilling this term."

Scrope did not reply. Secretly he was enjoying Mellish's discomfort, for there had been times when the boot had been on the other foot.

Scrope's mind went back to that day at the local races some six months before, when he and Mellish had a little flutter. Mr. Solomon, as the bland bookmaker, had been very obliging then, when, after having lost all their ready cash to him, he had very generously allowed them to bet by credit.

That credit amounted, before the afternoon's racing had closed, to fifteen pounds for Mellish and eight pounds for Scrope.

"Your pater paid up for you, didn't he?" suddenly asked Mellish.

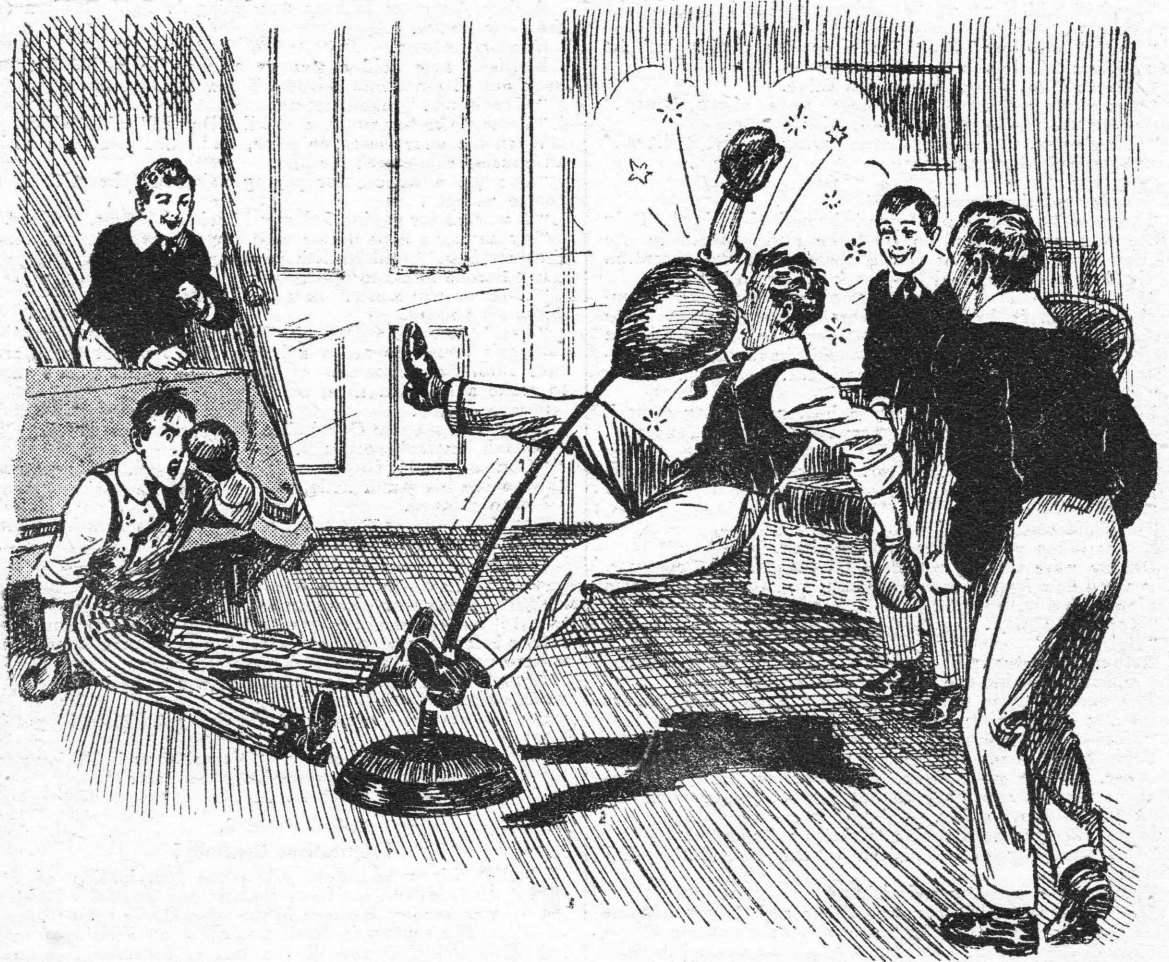
Scrope nodded, remembering rather vividly the painful circumstances under which the pater had paid.

"Yes, he did!" he grunted. "Why?"

Mellish looked at Scrope hopefully, his face brightening a trifle.

"Do you think he would lend me the cash to pay up?" he asked.

"No," answered Scrope with conviction; "I don't!"



Tom Merry punched at the quivering punchball and it shot out, biffing the indignant features of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who happened to be in its line of flight. "Wow! Yawwooh!" yelled the swell of St. Jim's. Tom Merry was so surprised at what happened that he forgot the return of the captive punchball which caught him full in the face and hurled him backwards. (See Chapter 4.)

"I—I don't mean for him actually to lend the money to me. I mean, sort of lend it to you, and I could—"

Mellish stopped as Scrope shook his head.

"Nothing doing!" Scrope said, with a shudder. "If you want to touch my gov'nor, you trot up to London and ask him yourself."

"Well, if Solomon isn't paid there looks like being trouble for us, anyway," said Mellish surlily.

Scrope grinned.

"Us?" he repeated unfeelingly. "You, old scout, I'll agree, but not us! I've paid up, you see!"

Mellish wriggled in his chair.

He was one of those juniors who, if he got into any sort of scrape himself, liked immensely to have another junior in the mud with him; and if he could drag someone else in he would.

"You were in it with me," he said nastily. "If you hadn't advised me to back that last horse I shouldn't have owed old Solomon half as much. I put six pounds on that beastly outsider. You were as much responsible for that debt as I was, and—"

"Only, seeing that you betted and it went down in your name, the payment is up to you!" said Scrope sarcastically.

"You measly rotter!" Mellish growled. "If I go before the Head over this, I'll see that he knows that you had a flutter, and—"

The amiable Mellish broke off suddenly as there floated from a little higher up the passage the unmistakable sounds of strife.

A door was opened, shouts filled the air, and a number of quiet thuds indicated that a battle royal was in progress.

"What's up?" he said surlily, getting up and going to the door. "A set of silly fools spoiling each other's faces, by the sound of it!"

Scrope followed him into the passage, and then they gasped with surprise.

Streaming through the open doorway of Study No. 6 were

George Figgins & Co., Jack Blake & Co., and the Terrible Three, and in their midst were two sets of fighting figures.

"My hat!" muttered Scrope. "Figgins fightin' Blake, and Lowther scrapping with Kerr. What's the giddy trouble?"

It was not to be wondered at that the two juniors were surprised, for usually the New House juniors were friendly enough, save for much good-humoured japing. Against a common enemy the three Co.'s were as concrete.

But at the moment it was very evident to Mellish and Scrope that there was a severe rift in the lute.

Doors opened all along the passage, and amazed juniors poured into the corridor.

"My aunt! A dust-up!" said Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth to Levison and Sidney Clive, his study-mates.

"Gad! New House chaps!" said Ernest Levison.

"Wonder what's up?" said Clive.

Together with Mellish, Scrope, and many more curious juniors, they pressed forward to see the fun.

The fight between Monty Lowther and Kerr, started so unintentionally, had immediately spread to Jack Blake and George Figgins, who had first commented to argue.

In the narrow confines of the study the battle had been rather apt to spread. So Tom Merry had opened the door obligingly, and the contestants had fought their way through.

Manners, Herries, Digby, and Tom Merry followed closely, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Fatty Wynn stood in the doorway.

Fatty Wynn was trying to bolt a whole bun he had forced into his mouth, preparatory to throwing himself into the fray. He had not quite made up his mind whom to attack, but he had his eye sideways on the unsuspecting Gussy.

"Go it, dear men!" yelled Cardew. "That's the ticket, Monty! One on his jolly old boko!"

"Ouch!" said Kerr, as the said one on the jolly old boko landed. "Gr-r-r!"

"Pouf!" spluttered Jack Blake, as George Figgins' fist caught him full in the mouth. "Br-r-r-r!"

"What's it all about?" inquired Clive.

"These New House asses were rude about Gussy!" answered the leader of the Shell, with a grin.

"Gussy's entered the inter-House boxing against Redfern!" supplemented Manners.

"My hat!"

A surprised shout went up.

The news as yet had not spread through the school. Only those who had stopped to read the notice-boards in the Houses were in the know, and these, with the exception of the Terrible Three and Figgins & Co., were but few.

This was the last day for entering the inter-House competitions, and it had been generally thought that there would be no opponent in the feather-weight class against Redfern, who would then automatically have gone to Aldershot in the Public Schools' Competitions.

"Mum-m-m-m-m-m-m!"

Fatty Wynn made an effort to hurl a scathing remark disposing of Arthur Augustus' prowess as a boxer generally. But the bun stuck!

Nobody noticed this, however. There was far too much excitement otherwise.

"Good old Gussy!"

The shout was started by Cardew.

It was taken up all along the corridor.

Juniors were turning up from all points of the compass. The word flew from mouth to mouth, and the Fourth Form juniors yelled with joy.

"Good old Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus, still standing in the doorway, screwed his monocle into his eye a little more firmly.

The corridor was ringing with his name, and juniors seemed to be cheering all around him.

"Mum-m-m-m-m-m-m!"

Fatty Wynn beside him seemed to be dancing in a strange manner, but the swell of St. Jim's paid no heed either to that or the extraordinary sounds the fat junior from the New House was making.

It was all very bewildering to Arthur Augustus.

"Up, the jolly old champion of the Fourth!" yelled Cardew.

There was a rush towards D'Arcy.

Monty Lowther and Kerr, and Blake and George Figgins were thrust aside. Their little troubles were nothing to the juniors of the Fourth, who almost to a man wanted to rally round the swell of St. Jim's, who had put himself up to do battle for the honour of the Form.

The choking, and by this time almost black-faced, Fatty Wynn was rudely pushed away.

He went stumbling back into the study, to fall heavily upon the floor.

"Ho-o-o-ough!"

The bun, given the required impetus, slid down his throat, and, with a sigh of relief, Fatty Wynn sat up again.

He saw Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hoisted on to the shoulders of Ralph Reckness Cardew and Sidney Clive, and borne, weakly protesting, along the passage.

A dense crowd of excited juniors of the Fourth followed, and on their fringe Fatty Wynn waddled. George Figgins and Kerr were somewhere among the mob, being carried along with the tide.

The Fourth was to be represented, after all!

That was enough for the Fourth.

It mattered not to the juniors at the moment that Redfern of the New House was a formidable man.

Gussy was going to have a smack at him, so—

"Good old Gussy!"

The yell passed and repassed along the corridor, down the stairs, and into the Common-room, where Arthur Augustus was borne.

"Mind your head, Gussy!"

"Duck!"

Arthur Augustus "ducked" with such promptitude to escape the top framework of the Common-room doorway that his hearers were not prepared for the sudden plunge forward that his movement caused.

The monocled hero of the Fourth disappeared from sight with a dismal howl.

In the excitement George Figgins & Co. escaped to the New House to spread the news of Arthur Augustus' entry into the inter-House boxing.

In less than minutes the whole school was buzzing with the news. Crowds of juniors and seniors, and even kids from the Second and Third, crowded round the notice-boards for official confirmation of the fact.

It was true!

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Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was going to fight Redfern of the New House.

Good old Gussy.

Mellish's face held a strange grin as he pulled Scrope back out of the Common-room a few minutes later.

"What's up?" asked Scrope.

"Come up to the study, and I'll tell you!" said Mellish.

When the door closed on them, he turned to Scrope with an unusual excitement for him.

"I've got a wheeze for paying Solomon!" he said, in a hoarse whisper.

"A wheeze for paying Solomon?" echoed Scrope. "How?"

"By having a little flutter with Lodgey on the inter-House Feathers fight!" said Mellish meaningly.

But Scrope failed to understand.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "Bet?"

Mellish nodded.

"Yes," he said. "Back Redfern for all I'm worth. Lodgey's bound to make a book. Don't forget there are four inter-House contests of different weights. He's sure to make a book on them all!"

Scrope gasped.

"But—but suppose Gussy should win, what then?"

Mellish laughed scornfully.

"You silly fool! Gussy won't win!" he said. "He may be able to use his fists a little, but—"

Scrope grinned.

"Yes! I seem to remember more than one occasion when he's biffed you tidily, and—"

"Shut up!" growled Mellish. "I'm talking about actual boxing. When it comes to a boxing match with a chap like Redfern, Gussy won't have an earthly. I tell you I'm going to put it on thick and heavy with Lodgey—he won't want any money before the match, and after it he will have to pay me, not me pay him!" he finished, with a chuckle.

"But," said Scrope, "supposing Gussy should win, what would happen then?"

Mellish wriggled uneasily at the thought. Then he put it from him.

"He won't!" he said sourly. "Now shut up! I'll have to think out a letter to Solomon—hang the brute!"

CHAPTER 3.

Preparations Generally!

FEW things had ever taken the imagination of St. Jim's as did the news that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was to meet Redfern in the inter-House competitions. The contest in itself was quite an exciting event, but with Gussy as one of the boxers concerned, interest soared amazingly.

From the seniors in their exclusive and lordly quarters down to the domains of the inky-fingered fraternity in the Second and Third, there was only one topic of conversation—and argument.

How long would Gussy last against Redfern?

That was the burning question, and it was surprising to find that St. Jim's harboured such a large number of boxing experts.

In less than twenty-four hours St. Jim's had gone boxing mad!

Arthur Augustus himself was, undoubtedly, the most tranquil junior in the whole school.

His aristocratic countenance wore that expression of calm repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

"Pway be calm, deah boys!" he counselled, the following afternoon, as he and his study-mates were discussing the forthcoming match with the Terrible Three, who, as the Shell was not putting up a contestant, naturally were out to back up D'Arcy.

"Don't be a thumping ass!" growled Jack Blake. "We all know that you've got the pluck, and that you can use your giddy fists. But this will be a boxing match, you know—not a jazz-walk!"

"I am quite aware of that, Blake, deah boy. Do not wowy—I am goin' stvictly into twain' to-night."

"You've only got three weeks, Gussy," warned Tom Merry. "You'll have to put your back into it. What about sparring partners?"

"Yaas, bai Jove! I have thought of that," said Arthur Augustus seriously. "I had thought of havin' two or three of you fellows, but—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy paused.

"But what?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I shouldn't like to hurt any of you chaps, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The study rang with laughter.

"You silly owl!" roared Jack Blake. "A sparring partner has to chance that."

"You want to look out that your sparring partner doesn't hurt you!" said Digby.

"You don't want to worry yourself about trifles like that, Gussy," chuckled Lowther.

"Bai Jove! That's awfully decent of you chaps!" said D'Arcy warmly. "Look heah! I think, perhaps, if I had all you fellows as spawwin' partnahs, I should get used to a waviety of styles, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You duffer, Gussy, you don't want more than two!" laughed Tom Merry.

"Unless he engages the whole of the Fourth," suggested Monty Lowther. "He'd get used to every style, there is going, then, I should think."

"Look here, Gussy! Suppose you have Tom Merry and me," suggested Jack Blake.

Arthur Augustus beamed.

"Bai Jove! That is awfully good of you, deah boy. Do you agree, Tom Mewwy?"

The leader of the Shell nodded.

"Like a bird!" he said. "The Shell ought to have some sort of jolly old finger in the pie."

"And—and you are quite suah that you would not get huffy if I hit you vewy hard?" asked D'Arcy dubiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake. "No, Gussy, we won't get huffy."

"And you won't get your august shirt out if we happen to jolt you up now and again, will you, Gussy?" inquired Tom Merry, winking at the others.

"Bai Jove! Wathah not!"

Arthur Augustus beamed all round the assembly.

"Now, you fellows watch me do a little shadow boxin'!" he said, taking off his jacket and waistcoat and rolling up his shirt-sleeves.

"Watch you do a little which?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Shadow boxin', deah boy," answered Arthur Augustus, dropping into the approved pugilistic attitude. "In shadow boxin', a fellow pwetends he has an opponent, and imagines now an' again that he has been biffed. Now watch!"

The juniors crowded back against the wall and watched the elegant form in the centre of the room advance warily towards his imaginary opponent.

"We will suppose that this is about the fifth wound, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, in explanation. "I am pwetty well gone, an' so is he, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy skipped and dodged round the study, his bunched fists putting in some deadly work. Suddenly he brought up with his back to the wall and began some defensive fighting which was quite good to look upon.

Then he made a mistake.

In his imagination he allowed for a heavy blow to his face—and he jerked back his head to miss it.

Bump!

"Ow! Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the style, Gussy!"

"That made you see stars, didn't it?"

There had been no imagination about the stunning blow to the back of his head, and D'Arcy turned in surprise to find himself staring at the wall against which he had banged it.

His first impression had been that someone had caught him from the rear, and when he realised just what had happened, his face dropped.

"Bai Jove! I forgot the beastly wall, deah boys," he gasped. "Dwat it! I must be more careful!"

"Don't forget your opponent, Gussy," warned Tom Merry. "He would have jolly well knocked you out by this time!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

D'Arcy squared up again and proceeded with the round. "Toppin', this!" he gasped, delivering a short-arm jab into nothingness. "Good for a fellow's wind, anyway!"

Round the study he fought his way, and finally, with great imaginary tact, he forced his opponent towards the door.

"In a weal match," Arthur Augustus panted, "this is where I should delivah the knock-out! The othah fellow would fling up a feeble defence—wight, then left! I should knock the wight up like—that! Then, cwushin' thwough his left, I should send a smashah wif my wight like that! Oh!"

At the crucial moment, the door had opened and a face had peered around it.

The face was that of Mellish, of the Fourth!

D'Arcy's fist reached the same spot with exactitude.

Thud!

"Ow! Groooouch! You howling idiot!"

Mellish's face disappeared with promptitude, and to the juniors' ears there came the flop from the passage without as the unfortunate visitor sat very, very forcibly on the floor!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! My hat! Gussy's delivered the first of his knock-outs!" roared Jack Blake.

"A smasher with his left!" howled Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove! Did I hit Mellish?" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Digby. "I believe you did, Gussy!"

"As neat a dot on the nose as I have ever seen!" chuckled Herries.

The juniors crowded to the door and gazed down at the discomfited Mellish, who was feeling his chin tenderly.

"Ha, ha, ha! Did he hit you, Mellish?" laughed Tom Merry. "You seemed to go out very quickly."

"Ha, ha, ha! He doesn't look very pleased about it!" said Monty Lowther.

"He ought to be honoured, being knocked out by the coming champion of the Fourth!" said Manners.

Mellish struggled to his feet.

His eyes looked a trifle wild, and his fists were bunched. Mellish was not noted for his bravery, nor yet for his fighting. But there are limits to everything.

To be "dotted" upon the nose when he was on a peaceful mission, even to a fellow of Mellish's kidney, was not an event to pass unchallenged.

He had intended to offer D'Arcy the use of his stand punching-ball, which he had received from his pater some time before, and which, it is hardly necessary to remark, he never used. Doubtless behind Mellish's charitable intention there lurked something distinctly uncharitable.

"You hopeless maniac!" he shouted, dancing up to the astonished fighting man of the Fourth.

Smack!

Arthur Augustus staggered back into Study No. 6, tripped over a mat inside, and sat down heavily.

Mellish followed—thirsting for vengeance.

"Here, steady!" said Blake, laying his hand on Mellish's shoulder. "Let him get up!"

"Yaas, wathah!" panted D'Arcy, rising rather dazedly, and shaking his head. "But I don't wish to fight you, Mellish, deah boy! I— Ouch!"

The swell of St. Jim's went down for the second time as Mellish's left shot out and caught him on the mouth.

"Weally! It is a good job for you that I happen to be in the w'ong, Mellish," Arthur Augustus gasped, assuming an air of dignity as he rose to his feet. "Othahwise I should have been in the posish of bein' quite unable to do anythin' else than give you a feahful thwashin'. But it was quite an accident, deah boy, and I am feahfully sowwy that I hit you. In the cires I am willin' to count the mattah closed."

He dabbed at his mouth and his eye.

Blake whistled.

"That's what your jolly old eye will be in the morning, Gussy—closed!" he growled. "Aren't you going to paste the rotter for what he did to you?"

D'Arcy drew himself up proudly.

"Weally, Blake, I hope I am a gentleman," he replied severely. "I was unfortunate enough to commit an assault upon Mellish, and therefore, as a gentleman, I apologise to him."

"Handsomely put!" said Monty Lowther. "Mellish, hold out the giddy palm of peace and shake hands with Gussy!"

"I don't want to shake hands with the idiot," growled Mellish sourly. "The silly fool—he's nearly broken my nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you chaps, there is nothin' to cackle about," said D'Arcy. "I did catch him a fweightful cwack!"

"And since then," observed Blake dryly, "he's caught you a couple of frightful cracks. He's had his interest!"

Mellish walked away without disclosing why he had put his head into Study No. 6 at such an unfortunate moment.

He burst into the study he shared with Scrope.

"Hallo!" chuckled Scrope. "Someone dotted you on the nose?"

Mellish growled.

"There's nothing to cackle about!" he snapped. "Listen!"

Tenderly holding his nose in his handkerchief, Mellish told Scrope what had happened.

"So I didn't offer the silly fool the punching-ball," he added. "Don't you see what I can do now? I can tell Lodgey that I was able to knock D'Arcy out in two biffs, and that it will be absolutely safe to make Redfern favourite. I'll offer to collect as much money on D'Arcy as I can, to win, if Lodgey'll stand me ten quid. That'll help to get me out of the soup. See?"

Scrope nodded.

"And what about the punching-ball?" he asked.

"I'll buzz along with that to-morrow, and say I'm sorry for knocking the silly ass about. He'll be no end pleased, and then he'll let me watch his sparring bouts now and again, and see how he shapes. If you and I work this

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little scheme properly, we stand to make a nice bit for ourselves."

It was a pretty little idea of Mellish's, and when he expounded it to Mr. Lodgey, the gentleman of horsey appearance, and who was generally to be found at the Green Man public-house in Rylcombe, that gentleman rubbed his hands.

"Yes, young sir," he said. "I'll do it! You work up a nice little 'book' up there at the school, and I'll back it. I know both men, an' I don't think there's much doubt. I'll see you get a tenner out of it, Master Mellish, if you take enough bets! Take as much ready cash as you can, though!" he added, with a wink.

Mellish promised, and went back to St. Jim's as though he were treading on air. His debt to Mr. Solomon was already paid, he felt. He almost imagined that he could feel the receipt rustling in his pocket.

It was a happy and contented Mellish who turned in that night, despite a swollen and horribly aching nasal organ!

CHAPTER 4.

The Chums Don't Like It!

KEEP your right up, Gussy—keep it up!" Tom Merry jerked out the words rather impatiently.

He was engaged in a sparring match with the swell of St. Jim's, in Study No. 6, which had been suitably cleared for action.

Monty Lowther and Manners, and D'Arcy's study-mates, stood well back against the wall, watching and offering advice from time to time.

"You see," went on Merry quickly, striking out and catching Arthur Augustus a tap on the nose; "I could have dotted you well and truly then, if I had liked. You must keep up your guard!"

"Bai Jove! Wight-ho, Tom Mewwy, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I'll keep my wight up!"

Jack Blake was watching the exhibition D'Arcy was making rather glumly.

So, also, were the others.

Arthur Augustus, in his series of sparring matches, prior to the fight with Redfern, was not showing up at all well. His blows, when they landed at all, lacked vim—there was no go in them.

In addition, his ring-craft left much to be desired.

"What's the matter with you, you owl?" grumbled Blake. "Ginger up, for goodness' sake!"

"You're shaping worse than a Third-Form kid!" grunted Herries.

"Perhaps he's afraid of hurting poor old Tom!" suggested Monty Lowther, with a grin.

"Weally," gasped Arthur Augustus. "I wish you fellows would dwy up. I—I am doin' my best—deah boys—theah!"

Plop!

As he had been speaking, Tom Merry's gloved fist landed upon the swell's mouth, and he staggered back from the blow; for Tom purposely put a little pep in it.

"You silly asses!" bleated Arthur Augustus. "If you hadn't been dwivellin' then, I shouldn't have—"

He ceased speaking abruptly and flung up his hands once again, for Tom Merry was following up.

"Time hasn't been called yet, Gussy," grinned Tom Merry. "Come on! You've only got three weeks—and at the rate you are going this afternoon, you'll want three months."

"Bai Jove! I sincerely twust not, Mewwy. I'll buck up in a moment, deah boy!"

But Gussy didn't "buck up"; far from it.

Instead, he seemed to go all to pieces and in another few seconds he was sitting gasping on the study floor, wondering how he got there.

It was at that moment that the door opened and Percy Mellish appeared.

"Hallo!" said Blake rudely. "What do you want?"

"Look after your nose!" said Lowther. "Gussy's at it again. Mind he doesn't spring up and deal you one!"

"My hat! He's got a punching ball out there!" exclaimed Digby.

Tom Merry wheeled round and faced Mellish.

"Got a what?" he asked.

Mellish grinned rather sheepishly.

"Where's Gussy?" he asked.

"Heah I am, deah boy!"

Mellish peered farther round the door, and then saw the swell of St. Jim's in the act of rising from the floor.

"Oh, I say, D'Arcy," Mellish said, "I'm sorry for being such a short-tempered beast yesterday. I gave you a pretty rotten eye, by the look of it."

Mellish's face was curiously pleasant, and the chums stared at him in sheer amazement.

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"That's all wight, Mellish, deah boy!" beamed D'Arcy. "I was a silly ass not to have been more careful."

Mellish grinned.

"You've got some pluck, putting up against Redfern," he said. "I hope you beat him!"

Monty Lowther gasped.

"My only aunt!" he said wonderingly. "Mind, Gussy—he'll want to tap you for some ready before the week's out!"

Mellish looked indignant.

"Don't you want Gussy to beat Redfern?" he asked. "There's one thing, the Shell hasn't got anyone with pluck enough to face him!"

The juniors in the study gasped.

This was startling coming from Mellish. What had come over the cad of the Fourth?

As long as any of them could remember, they had never heard him talk in this fashion.

Mellish turned round to the passage and then clasped the stand-ball he had brought with him. He dragged it into the study slowly, for its massive stand was heavy.

"Look here, Gussy," he said quietly, "the pater sent me this some time ago. I don't use the blessed thing. If it's any use to you, borrow it, by all means."

He looked challengingly at Monty Lowther as he spoke.

"Great pip!" gasped that worthy. "Here, hold me up, someone! I'm dreaming! I've gone to sleep standing up, and I shall jolly well fall down in a minute. Phew!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy drew himself to his full height and withered Monty Lowther with a glance.

"Weally, Lowthah," he said coldly; "you might, in the circus, act like a gentleman! I am quite weady to admit that Mellish has not always been—ahem!—what he ought. But when a fellow plays up, you know, it's up to us to be decent about it."

He turned to Mellish.

"Thanks vevy much, Mellish, deah boy!" he beamed cordially, holding out his hand. "I'll accept the loan of the jolly old punchin'-ball with pleasuah!"

Mellish turned his shifty eyes away.

"Oh, that's all right," he said. "If you'll let me come along and see you sparring sometimes, that'll square things. I'm dashed interested in this inter-House match, and I want to see you win!"

"Certainly, deah boy—come along any old time, bai Jove!"

Mellish closed the door and was gone.

"Great Scott!" said Tom Merry. "What the dickens is the matter with Mellish?"

"Getting thumping generous, isn't he?" said Blake.

"I don't like it!" said Herries slowly. "Not a little bit!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"That cad doesn't get chummy and run about lending things for nothing," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"What's the game, I wonder?" muttered Manners.

"Bai Jove, you fellows! You're talkin' pwetty wottenly, don't you know. A fellow—"

"Gussy, you chump," said Blake severely, "why on earth did you give that rotter permission to come here and spy on you while you're in training? You silly ass—"

"Look heah, Blake—"

"He's up to something!" said Digby.

"The cheeky ass, barging in like that!" growled Herries.

Arthur Augustus gazed around the little assembly of juniors freezingly.

"I weally think you chaps have forgotten your manna's," he said frigidly. "I think Mellish has done the wight thing!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Mewwy, he has forgiven me for what I did yesterday—"

"And you seem to have forgiven him, you chump!" growled Blake.

"Well, deah boy, he accepted my apology, that is vevy certain. Othahwise he wouldn't have lent me this ball!"

"Gussy, there are times when you ought to be smothered!" said Digby wrathfully.

"Bai Jove! I should wefuse uttahly to be smothahed!"

"Fathead!"

"Cwumbs, Mewwy, what could Mellish be up to?" asked D'Arcy in exasperation. "Don't be a biggah silly ass than you can help!"

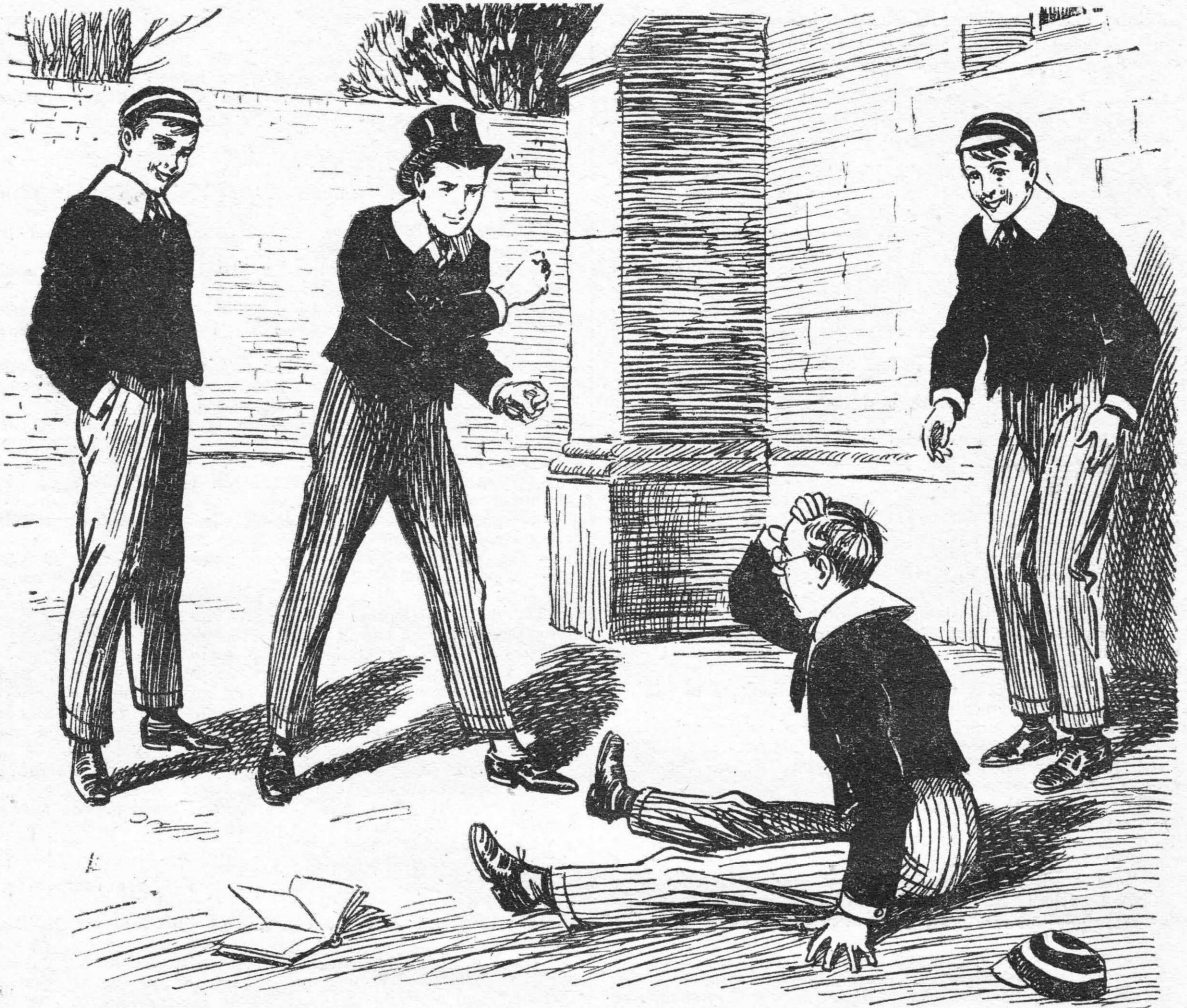
But a gloom settled deeply upon the juniors.

On the face of things it was perfectly natural that a Fourth-Form junior should wax enthusiastic about D'Arcy's entry into the boxing.

But not Mellish!

It was against all Mellish's past records, and although the juniors could find no ready reason why he should have any motive other than loyalty to his House, they were convinced in their minds that "something was up!"

Arthur Augustus stood by the side of Mellish's punch-ball furiously indignant with his chums.



"When Racke attacks you, this should be your position," said Skimpole. "Now, Racke, if you were to hit me I should be—Ow!" Skimpole sat down with a bump. "What—what was that?" he gasped. Racke and Crooke grinned "That," said Racke, "was a straight left, stopped by you on the point of your chin. There was something wrong in your attitude of defence, Skimpole!" (See Chapter 7.)

The soul of honour himself, he could not for a moment suspect Mellish of any underhand motive in this matter. To his august mind, Mellish had done the correct thing—just as he would have done, had he been in Mellish's place.

Tom Merry suddenly swung his gloved hand and punched at the quivering ball at the end of its pliable support.

"Hang Mellish!" he said.

The ball shot out.

And, as the indignant features of Arthur Augustus happened to be in its line of flight, it smote them.

Biff!

"Wow! Yoooooop!"

The swell of St. Jim's sat down for the second time that afternoon!

The action, quite unintended on Tom Merry's part, restored the good humour of the chums.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy groped for his eyeglass, forgetting that he was not wearing it during his sparring bouts. Then he got up and faced Tom Merry.

At least, that is what he intended to do.

But the leader of the Shell was not there. He was sitting on the floor on the other side of the punchball stand.

Tom Merry had been so surprised at what he had done that he had forgotten the return journey of the captive punchball, so to speak.

Remembrance came when it caught him full in the face and hurled him backwards, to sit heavily on the floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors shrieked with laughter.

D'Arcy's indignation vanished.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy," he chuckled. "That was vewy funny, bai Jove! What?"

The junior captain of St. Jim's grinned and rose to his feet.

"Yes, very funny!" he said ruefully, rubbing his nose. "Shove that thing out of the way, Blake! Come on, Gussy—next round!"

And, for the time being, the episode of Mellish's strange enthusiasm was forgotten.

CHAPTER 5.

The Start of the Inter-House Contest!

BUT it was soon to be remembered! From that moment on Mellish became an avowed supporter of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!

That very night he made it known that it was practically certain that D'Arcy would beat Redfern. If enthusiasm for the swell of St. Jim's needed encouragement, Mellish supplied it.

As the days went on and the hour of the fight drew near, Mellish grew more and more insistent.

Gussy was going to win the fight! If he didn't, then he would put up a jolly good attempt!

Then it was, when there were only a few days left to the match, that Mellish, who had covertly passed word to those whom he knew would probably have a little flutter on the boxing, announced that the price on Gussy had considerably shortened, and would shorten still more before long.

It had come down to five to one!

It was, he said, a real sporting chance to pick up a nice win!

Redfern was favourite it was true, but if fellows listened to him they would have a bit at least on Gussy.

Fellows did listen to him!

Mellish collected several bets—amounting to several pounds, in fact. Juniors in the New House plumped for
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Redfern, and these bets Mellish passed over to Mr. Lodgey, together with many of the "savers" on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

But not all!

Mellish "stood" several of the smaller bets on the Fourth Form swell himself—which meant to say that he placed the money in his own pocket and, if D'Arcy won, he would have to pay out at five to one.

"But he won't win," he chuckled to Scrope, the morning of the match, which was to take place in the gym during the afternoon. "He hasn't an earthly. I've never seen such a silly ass in my giddy life. Between you and me, Scrope, Merry, Blake, and that lot are pretty sick."

"Don't they think he'll win?" asked Scrope doubtfully.

"They don't!" said Mellish, with conviction. "I tell you what it is, he funks it. I'll win my ten quid from Lodgey, and I'll have this little five quid I have kept back into the bargain."

And so Mellish hugged himself with delight.

It was as he had said.

The chums of the Fourth and the Terrible Three were very anxious about D'Arcy.

He had not shown the vim and sparkle he ought, and they were feeling decidedly jumpy as the time for the fight approached.

"You're all sixes and sevens, Gussy!" growled Jack Blake, as they prepared to leave the study for the gym. "For goodness' sake, buck up!"

"My deah boy—"

"And," broke in Tom Merry earnestly; "you must hit out with all your might. You've got a scrumptious right, Gussy—but there is no strength behind it."

"Weally, Mewwy, don't wowwy!" said Arthur Augustus. "My might will be just where it'll be wanted—and with some force, bai Jove!"

D'Arcy was the only member of the little knot of juniors who was cool and collected.

One would have imagined that he was about to embark on a sightseeing expedition, rather than on his way to do battle with Redfern—who was acknowledged one of the New House's best boxers.

"That's more than it has been this past three weeks, at all events," said Lowther. "Why, you haven't even given Tom or Blake a black eye, or tapped their thumping claret?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned a steady eye upon him. "No, Lowthah! As I have wepeatedly remarked, I did not desiah to hurt my spawwin' partnahs!"

"Oh, rats!"

In silence the juniors made their way towards the gym, which was packed to overflowing. Arthur Augustus was clad in a heavy dressing-gown, under which he was attired only in boxing shorts and light canvas boots.

He suddenly turned to Blake.

"When the first wound is sounded, I'll hand you my eyeglass, Blake, deah boy. But keep it handy, won't you?"

"Why?"

"Because I shall wequire it duwin' the intahvals."

"There won't be any intervals, Gussy, if you don't show up better than you have—"

Arthur Augustus waved a lofty hand.

"Leave it to me, Blake. In a mattah of this sort, it wequires a fellow of judgment, and I flattah myself that I possess that. I—"

"Rats! Dry up, Gussy!" said Herries nervily.

"Yes. Here we are," said Tom Merry. "Smile, you chaps—look confident, for goodness' sake!"

He pushed open the door. That is to say, he tried to. But for the moment he was unsuccessful, for the crammed juniors on the other side would not allow of its opening.

"Make way, there!" he bawled through the opening.

"Where's the stewards? Here's D'Arcy."

The cry was heard within.

Throughout the building it was taken up.

"Here's D'Arcy! Good old D'Arcy!"

"Hoo-o-o-o-ora-a-a-ah!"

Long before the door was opened sufficiently wide to allow of the swell's entry, together with the juniors, he was being cheered to the echo by his own Fourth Form supporters.

"Make way for the champion!" they yelled.

"Here he comes!"

Holding himself erect, smiling calmly, and glancing this way and that as he came through the narrow aisle made by the prefect who was pushing his way through the juniors near the door, Arthur Augustus reached the passageway between the specially erected seats, and walked towards the ring.

"Good old Gussy!"

"Going to fight in your eyeglass, Gussy?"

"He's goin' to mesmerise Redfern with that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Good-natured chaff crossed and re-crossed the hall over his head. But the swell continued to smile coolly, and eventually with an easy grace, climbed into the ring.

A storm of cheering arose, and he bowed gracefully.

Then, as he took his seat in one of the corners, there came counter-cheering.

"Here's Redfern!"

"The New House for ever!"

"Three cheers for Redfern!"

The New House faction rose and cheered their man lustily.

Third and Second Form fags cheered or hissed as their inclinations led them.

The seniors, in the front rows, just behind the Head and the masters, clapped decorously.

Redfern, a lean, fit-looking youth, smiled at D'Arcy rather pityingly as he climbed into the ring, and took his seat in the corner.

Piggins and Kerr were acting as his seconds, whilst Tom Merry and Jack Blake were seconding D'Arcy.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was the referee.

The whole of the gathering keenly fell to studying the two forms in the ring.

Redfern regarded D'Arcy closely.

D'Arcy, apparently, had forgotten the existence of his opponent already.

He was dispassionately studying the mass of faces round the ring.

His coolness certainly inspired much confidence on the part of the Fourth-Formers, and caused some little comment on the part of the New House juniors.

"Gussy!" said Blake. "Here you are!"

He held out the brand new boxing gloves.

"Eh, deah boy? Oh! Thanks awfully!"

He pulled them on with an air of nonchalance, and allowed the strings to be tied when he had done so.

"Wathah hot in heah, don't you fellows think?" he asked, sniffing the air rather disdainfully. "Do you think we could have some windows opened?"

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "The ass is worrying about the windows!"

"Never mind the windows, Gussy!" whispered Blake earnestly. "You look after Redfern!"

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"He's very useful in feinting, and—"

"Bai Jove! I shall faint if we can't have some more air, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "It's feahful!"

He leaned through the ropes, and called across to Dr. Holmes.

"Do you think we might have a few windows opened, sir?" he asked. "It will be dweadfully hot fightin'!"

The Head smiled, and gave some instructions to one of the prefects standing near. The next moment three of the unopened windows had been raised at the bottom.

"That's bettah!" breathed D'Arcy.

"Gussy, listen!" said Blake desperately. "The gong'll go in a moment. Watch his left, and when he looks as though he's going to smash you—"

"Where's Mannahs?" asked D'Arcy, suddenly looking around him. "Is Mannahs there?"

"Bother Mannahs! I—"

"Hallo! There you are, Mannahs! Have you got your camewa with you, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"That's wight! Don't forget to take us at the moment of the knock-out!"

Tom Merry and Blake gasped helplessly.

"What can you do with a silly chump like Gussy?" growled Blake. "I don't believe he realises what he's up against!"

"Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "Listen!"

"Pway don't wowwy, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus easily. "I have listened to what you are goin' to tell me for the past three weeks. I—"

"Kildare's announcing!" snapped Blake. "Good luck, Gussy!"

He gripped the padded glove, and looked into D'Arcy's smiling face.

"Bai Jove! Thanks, deah boy!"

Tom Merry gripped in his turn.

"Gussy, keep your pecker up, and watch that giddy left of old Redfern's!" he said. "All the best, old man!"

The genuine, true friendship that existed between the juniors was very apparent as D'Arcy's two seconds prepared to leave the ring.

"Seconds out!"

"Time!"

The gong went.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, threw off his wearied attitude, and prepared to meet his adversary.

A sudden, forced whisper from Blake, standing by the ring corner, arrested his progress.

"Gussy, you ass—your monocle!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

D'Arcy stopped, took his eyeglass, which, for once, was minus its cord, from his eye, turned back and handed it down to Blake.

"I vewy neahly forgot that, deah boy!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can you see all right without it, Gussy?"

"Mind you don't hit the ref!"

"Don't fall out of the ring, Gussy!"

Smiling serenely, Arthur Augustus touched gloves with Redfern, and then—

The New House fellow jumped around, head down, his left arm at the half-hook, his right raised before his face.

Before D'Arcy had got into position—before he had his right raised to fight—Redfern planted two blows, hard and full.

One caught Arthur Augustus upon the left shoulder, the other full upon the nose.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

With a gasp of surprise, D'Arcy sat down.

The crowded gym resounded with laughter.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Blake. "It's started, Tom! The ass is going to let us down, after all!"

CHAPTER 6.

The Winner of the Feathers!

THE Terrible Three and the chums of the Fourth gazed anxiously across the floor of the ring to the sitting Gussy, who looked rather dazed at the suddenness of Redfern's onslaught.

The Fourth Form contingent in the gym groaned as one man, whilst the New House juniors shrieked with delight.

"Oh, Gussy!"

"Wake up, man!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"One—"

Kildare, watch in hand, was counting.

"Gussy, get up, you ass!"

"You'll be counted out!"

"Two—"

"Bai Jove! I wasn't weady!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get up and be knocked down again, Gussy!"

The New House juniors were frantic with joy.

It seemed certain that when Gussy did rise it would be to go down again. Nothing, surely, could stop it.

"Three—"

Arthur Augustus gazed up at the figure of Redfern standing over him, fist raised, ready to strike.

D'Arcy's brain commenced to work then. He suddenly realised the true position. He knew that if he were to get up in the ordinary way his number was indeed up.

"Four—"

"He's going to sit it out!" roared Fatty Wynn. "It's all over!"

"Bai Jove, Fattay! You're all w'ong, deah boy!" murmured Arthur Augustus, preparing, all unnoticed, to make a sudden leap to his feet. "Vewy w'ong!"

His eye caught that of Jack Blake, who had broken out in a cold perspiration at the realisation that their man had failed dismally without striking a blow, and D'Arcy deliberately winked.

"Five—"

Jack Blake started violently.

"Great Scott! The maniac winked at me!" he gasped.

"What!" Tom Merry exclaimed. "Winked at you? Oh, the absolute chump! He—"

"Oh, my hat!"

The last remark came from Herries, who was standing at the ringside.

For he saw D'Arcy's muscles suddenly tauten, and then, with a lightning spring, the swell leaped to his feet.

Swish!

Round and down came the fist of the waiting Redfern, to strike D'Arcy back to the canvas once again.

But D'Arcy's head wasn't there!

With an eel-like twist, he wriggled beneath that swinging blow, and, regaining his feet, turned in a flash and lashed out at Redfern, who for the fraction of a second was off his guard.

Thud!

"Oh, some punch!"

"Good for you, Gussy!"

"Smart move!"

A roar of applause went up as Redfern staggered back from the blow, which caught him on the cheekbone.

Jack Blake and Tom Merry silently gripped hands in the shadow of the ring.

Both had honestly thought that Gussy was done for, and

the clever manner in which he had regained his feet brought words of appreciation to their lips.

"I believe the chump was rotting all the time!" said Merry.

"I wonder if the silly ass was?" said Blake. "He'll have to stop it. He'll do it once too many times, and then—"

"Look at Gussy!" almost yelled Digby. "Oh, good man!"

Smack!

Arthur Augustus had waited for Redfern to come back after that hefty push on the cheekbone, and as the New House junior returned to the attack, the swell looked for all the world as though he was simply waiting to be hit.

But he employed one of Redfern's tactics!

He feinted sharply, drew out Redfern's left, and then he put his head round it and hit hard.

Redfern again went back from a blow on the same cheekbone!

"Good old Gussy!"

"What price Redfern now!"

The Fourth Form juniors yelled themselves hoarse.

"Tom," said Blake huskily, "do you realise that the dummy is putting some beef into those punches?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I do," he replied. "He's hitting now. He was afraid of hurting us, the owl!"

D'Arcy's two seconds watched their man with glistening eyes.

There was no doubt about it. A different D'Arcy was in the ring from that which had entered it.

He may have been wool-gathering when he stopped that first swipe, but he was all out to win now.

Even the Head sat forward in his chair, and watched with some astonishment as he saw D'Arcy following up his advantage.

Mellish, who had started by yelling D'Arcy's praises, seemed to have been smitten by some sort of dumbness as the fight progressed.

He ceased to shout, his eyes began to protrude from their sockets, whilst he made queer noises in his throat. It was fortunate for him that everyone else was shouting himself hoarse.

Never had the gym seen such an astonishing fight.

Redfern, the New House fighter, seemed nonplussed.

He was now absolutely on the defensive, and D'Arcy got in two more punches, after jockeying his opponent into a suitable position. Then—

"Ah!"

Redfern seemed to be stung into a sharp spasm of attack. His right landed upon D'Arcy's solar plexus, and smartly following it came the left, clean upon the chin.

The second of the two blows shook D'Arcy up terribly, and, looking a trifle dazed, he gave ground.

"Time!"

The gong terminating the first round sounded, and, amid a storm of shouting, both juniors walked to their corners.

"Good old Gussy!" said Tom Merry, as he and Blake set to work with the towels. "Splendid work, old son!"

Gussy nodded.

"Have you my monocle, deah boy?" he gasped languidly.

Blake dragged it feverishly from his pocket, and handed it to the swell, who jammed it into position.

"Keep it up, Gussy," said Blake, working away with a will. "Do that a few more times, and he'll be all in. But don't stop many more to the chin!" he added warningly.

"No, wathah not, deah—"

"Shut up! Don't talk! We'll do all that!" snapped Merry.

Scrope leaned across to Mellish.

"Doesn't look much like the walk-over you gassed about!" he said, with a sarcastic grin. "What price Gussy now?"

Mellish ground his teeth.

"Shut up!" he growled. "Wait for the second round."

They had not long to wait.

The gong sounded, D'Arcy handed back his monocle, and once again the two juniors took the centre of the ring.

A gasp went up almost at once.

D'Arcy had opened with a slashing attack that drove Redfern back towards the ropes.

The New House junior tried a series of hooks that were more theatrical than effective, for D'Arcy dodged them and they went behind his neck.

On the other hand, the swell of St. Jim's was hitting out straight and hard, and, gasping, Redfern attempted some in-fighting.

How it happened only a very few actually saw. In attempting a clinch, Redfern was driven back by a full blow to the solar plexus, and the follow-up to the chin was a lightning stroke with all D'Arcy's strength behind it.

Crash!

Redfern went down.

"One—"

A howl went up from the New House juniors—a howl that was drowned by the delighted shouts and cheers of the Fourth-Formers.

"Two—three—four—five!"

For the first five of the count Kildare's voice was not heard. The din was too terrific.

But, as it became increasingly apparent that Redfern was continuing to stare up placidly at the ceiling above, and making no effort to get up, the New House fellows were gradually frozen into silence.

"Six—seven—eight—nine!"

Redfern stirred and raised his head.

"Go on, Redfern! Get up!"

"Redfern! Redfern!"

George Figgins and Kerr howled themselves hoarse with entreaty.

"Redfern, old man!"

"Out!"

It was over!

The inter-House for the Feathers was lost and won in two rounds!

And the winner was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth!

Pandemonium loosed itself as Kildare placed his watch in his pocket and turned to shake hands with D'Arcy cordially. Yells and shouts of all kinds nearly lifted the roof as the Head was seen to shake D'Arcy by the hand through the ropes.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake clambered up into the ring, followed by Digby, Herries, Monty Lowther, and Harry Manners. They descended upon D'Arcy like a young avalanche, and bore him delightedly aloft.

"Hip, pip, pip!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bai Jove!"

Round and round the ring they carried him in triumph, whilst George Figgins & Co. ruefully helped Redfern to his feet, a dazed and utterly bewildered junior indeed.

"How do you like it done, Figgy?" grinned Tom Merry.

"What about that pound of butter, Fatty?" chuckled Herries.

"What's Gussy's chance at Aldershot, Kerr, old son?" chortled Monty Lowther.

Figgins & Co. grinned a trifle sheepishly. But they were sportsmen all.

"Put it there, Gussy!" said Figgins, holding up his hand and gripping D'Arcy's.

Kerr and Wynn followed suit, and so did Redfern.

"You were a better man than me, Gussy," he said warmly. "I take off my hat to you. My hat, you gave me a wallop!"

His action was seen, and the cheering redoubled.

It was a moment of severe agitation for D'Arcy, who, now that the match was over, felt curiously nervous.

"My monocle, my monocle, Blake, dear boy!" he said pleadingly. "And, for goodness' sake, put me down, you silly asses!"

D'Arcy had won the inter-House!

Mellish sat staring before him into space. The roaring going on around him sounded miles away.

He was picturing the angry Solomon—he was thinking of the small bets, amounting to a fiver, he had "stood" on Gussy. Stood them at five to one! He not only had to find Solomon's money, but pounds in addition!

And what was Lodgey going to say to him when they met?

Mr. Lodgey would have to pay out a very considerable amount on Gussy.

Mellish rose to his feet as the horrible realisation of the true position forced itself home in his whirling brain.

"Hang Gussy!" he savaged to himself, as he fought his way to the door and out into the quad. "What the dickens am I going to do now? The lucky beast! He simply fluked all through! Confound him! Hang him!"

And as bitter gall to his discomfiture, there came to his ears the song of the delighted Fourth Form juniors as they swarmed around the ring:

"For he's a jolly good fellow!
For he's a jolly good fellow!"

CHAPTER 7.

Mr. Solomon Turns Up!

THE wave of boxing enthusiasm that swept over St. Jim's after the D'Arcy-Redfern fight was almost overwhelming.

There was no doubt about it, D'Arcy's win was most popular, although few in their heart of hearts really thought he would win.

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In the past Arthur Augustus had often proved that he could use his fists; in fact, he was looked upon as a useful man in a scrap. But the inter-House!

A chap who could beat Redfern with such apparent ease was, surely, a champion to rally round.

And his example was one to be emulated into the bargain.

Thus it was that in study, Common-room, quad, gym, and playing-field even, impromptu boxing bouts were held at all times of the night and day, when the enthusiasts were not in Form.

Even Skimpole succumbed to the lure—Skimpole, the pacifist and crank.

He bought a large and exhaustive work on Boxing, with numerous descriptive plates showing correct attitudes under all circumstances.

Skimpole was a junior with a large head, containing mountainous ideas, and his eyes, which blinked upon the world through huge, goggling glasses, were wise, like unto those of an owl.

In fact, he often was called an owl, but not at all in the complimentary sense. A descriptive adjective usually preceded the word owl.

But there was one thing about Skimpole; if he took up a thing he went into it thoroughly, until something else more important chased it away and occupied his massive brain in its stead.

There was only one junior in the school who had taken a sudden distaste to boxing, and all to do with it, especially the betting side.

That was Mellish.

Mellish's life during the next few days was a nightmare to him.

He spent it in dodging those from whom he had accepted the saving bets on D'Arcy at five to one.

Mellish was in the very unenviable position of having to pay out twenty-five pounds within the school, and he hadn't got twenty-five shillings.

From this fact, however, it must not be thought that St. Jim's, as a whole, was addicted to betting. Few juniors betted, but, as in all large schools, there was a sprinkling who did, and it was from some of this sprinkling that Mellish sought to steer clear.

For a time he was successful. Then came the reckoning, in the shape of Aubrey Racke and his crony Crooke, both of the Fourth.

Racke and Crooke between them had backed D'Arcy for a pound, and they were after Mellish's blood to the extent of five pounds.

They came face to face with him in the quad two days after the match.

"Ah!"

Aubrey Racke grabbed Mellish by the collar as that worthy turned with the intention of taking to his heels.

"What about our five quid, Mellish?" demanded Aubrey Racke. "Isn't it about time you paid out?"

Mellish began to quake.

"I—I haven't had it from the—the chap I laid it with!" he spluttered. "A—a bookmaker took the money, and—and he hasn't paid me yet!"

"Liar!" snapped Racke. "I saw Lodgey yesterday evening, and he told me that he had paid out his obligations. Incidentally he's thirsting for a sight of you, you worm!"

"Me?" gasped Mellish, going white about the gills.

"Whatever does he want me for?"

Racke grinned.

"He doesn't seem to remember having my name on the list you gave him, and he's got an idea that you double-crossed him. He doesn't mind about the D'Arcy bets, but he thinks it likely you kept back some of those on Redfern."

Mellish shivered.

"I—I didn't keep back any on Redfern—only on D'Arcy!" he said. "I didn't, really!"

Aubrey Racke chuckled.

"So you did keep some back, then?" he said. "Hear that, Crooke? Ho-ho! Mellish, my lad, trot out the winnings!"

"I can't!" almost wailed Mellish. "I haven't got it yet! My pater—"

"Never mind your pater! What about our money?" asked Crooke darkly.

"I haven't got it, I tell you!"

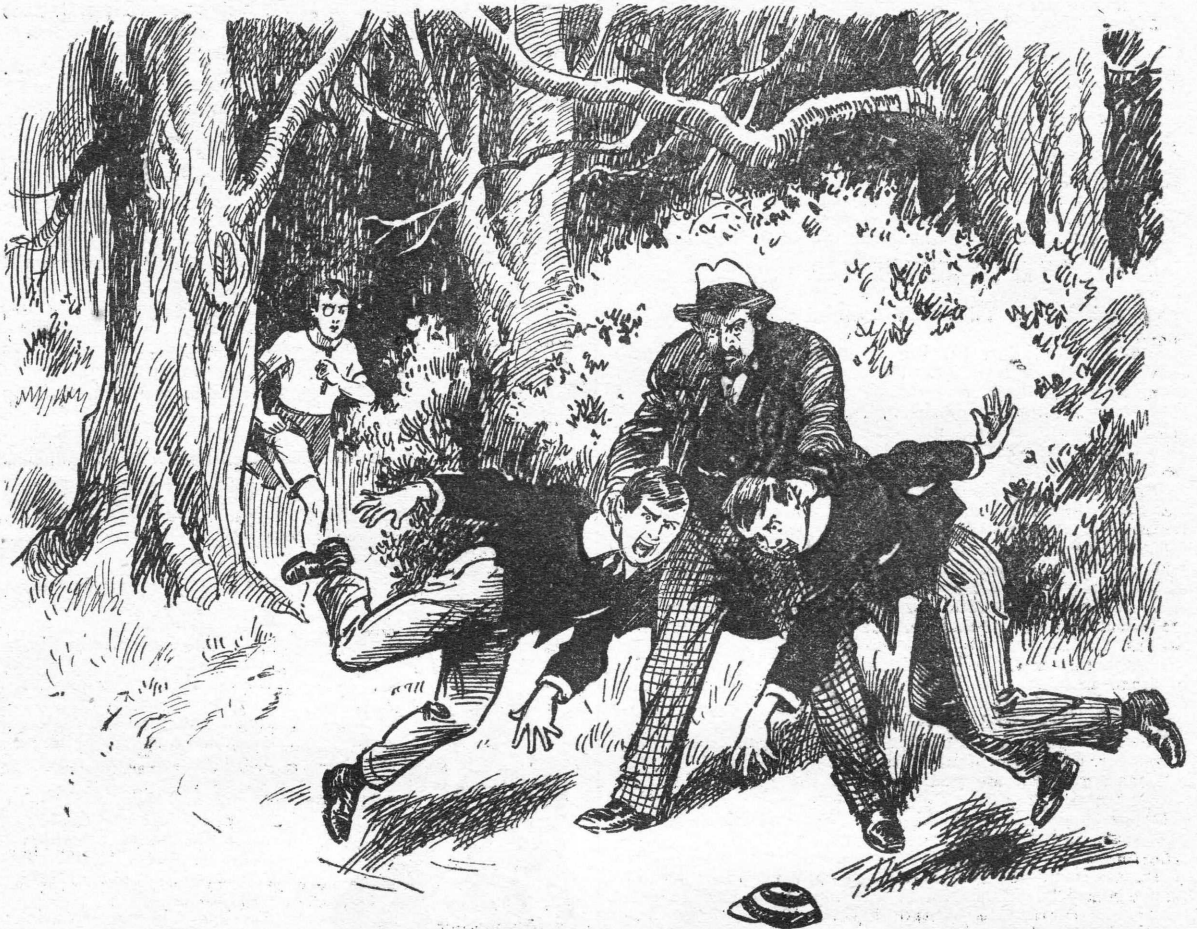
"He hasn't got it, Crooke!" said Racke meaningly.

"Paste the cad!" said Crooke grimly. "Scrag the rotter!"

"Here, chuck it!" yelled Mellish, backing away. "You leave me alone! I—Ow!"

Racke's fist shot out and caught Mellish on the cheek, Crooke let out at the same time, and caught Mellish's head upon the rebound.

"Yarr-oooh! You rotters!"



"You young rips!" snarled Mr. Solomon, grasping Scrope and Mellish firmly by their collars and bringing their heads together with a resounding crack. Bump! "Yarooooop!" yelled Mellish. "Help!" "Ow!" wailed Scrope. "Ooooooh!" "All wight, deah boys! Hang on, bai Jova! I'm comin'!" It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. (See Chapter 7.)

Mellish ducked, and put his hands up before his head protectingly.

It was at this moment that Skimpole, deep in the study of "Boxing, and How to Learn the Noble Art!" by Basham, the Bruiser, turned a corner of the school, and came upon the distressing scene.

Skimpole came to a halt, studying Mellish's attitude with something akin to horror. Then, with a loud, protesting shout, he hastened forward.

His eyes blinked knowingly behind the huge glasses.

"Mellish!" he said chidingly. "Your position is distinctly wrong, if you mean it for an attitude of defence. Both hands and arms thrust forward in that manner not only obscure the vision, but leave the body open to many points of attack."

Aubrey Racke and Crooke paused and gazed at Skimpole in a way that should have warned that worthy to make himself scarce. But he was deep in his book.

He rapidly turned over many of the pages until he found the one he was seeking.

"Here it is!" he said triumphantly. "'Covering up in face of overwhelming attack!'" he read.

He placed the book upon the ground.

"Watch me, Mellish!" he said. "This is the correct attitude."

Skimpole crooked his left arm, lowered his head, and placed his right against his chest. Then he faced Racke, his eyes blinking rapidly.

"When Racke attacks you, this should be your position," he went on. "Now, Racke, if you were to hit me I should be—Ow!"

Skimpole staggered back as stars sprang from all points of the compass and passed bewilderingly before his vision.

He sat down.

"What—what was that?" he gasped.

Racke and Crooke grinned.

"That," said Racke, "was a straight left, stopped by you on the point of your chin. There was something wrong in your attitude of defence, Skimpole."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of juniors had collected, and roars of laughter arose.

"Good old Skimmy!"

Skimpole rubbed the point of his chin reflectively, then rose to his feet. He retrieved his book and again studied the page.

He shook his head dubiously.

"I am almost sure that I was correct. I am almost sure. I must go and practise that!"

He walked through the grinning crowd and made his way to the School House entrance.

In the meantime, Mellish had made his escape from Racke and Crooke and scuttled up to the study, where he found Scrope with a note in his hand.

"Hallo! What's that?" asked Mellish suspiciously.

"For you!" said Scrope. "Boy from the village brought it. I happened to be at the gate when he gave it to Taggles and offered to bring it to you. It's from old Solomon."

Mellish started and went white.

"From—from Solomon!" he muttered dully, as he took the note and read it. "Oh, my hat! The old money-grabber is in Rylcombe, and wants to see me in the wood path nearest the village as soon as I get this. The beast knows that it is a half!"

Scrope nodded.

"I know—I read it. What are you going to do?"

Mellish squirmed.

"See the beast, I suppose," he said uneasily. "He'll come up to the Head if I don't. What the dickens am I going to tell him?"

"Blowed if I know!" answered Scrope. "I wonder if he's seen Lodgey?"

"Oh crumbs!" moaned Mellish. "I wonder!"

He stood looking round the study helplessly.

"Look here," he broke out suddenly, "Gussy only won by a fluke the other day. There was something the matter with Redfern. Gussy will never win at Aldershot. I'll tell

old Solomon that I'm going to win a good bit over that match and that I'll pay him right up afterwards. You back me up," he added desperately.

Mellish was in a state of funk. He was beginning to wish that he had never had anything to do with Mr. Lodgey and the inter-House betting.

At the same time he did not see how D'Arcy could possibly win at Aldershot, and he felt that if only he could arrange it he could get back all he had lost by betting against the swell.

How he was going to arrange it exactly he did not at the moment know. But the need of the moment was to get rid of Solomon. Perhaps something would turn up later on.

Mellish brightened a little.

"Come on!" he snapped to Scrope. "We had best get along."

The pair left the school and tramped off in the direction of Rylcombe.

Ten minutes later, turning from the road into a path that ran through Rylcombe Woods, they espied a thick-set man, whose features were distinctly Hebraic, waiting by a stile some hundred yards through the trees.

"There's the brute!" muttered Mellish. "Now for it! Don't forget to back up what I say. We mustn't have him going to the Head!"

They approached the man, who, as his small, beady eyes fell upon them, took his hands from his coat pockets and began to rub them gently together.

"Ah!" he said, as they reached him. "Here we are, young gents. I thought that letter would fetch you. Now, Mister Mellish, what about it?"

He rubbed a finger and thumb together suggestively.

Mellish was never renowned for pluck. Neither, for that matter, was Scrope.

They both stood speechless for a moment or two, watching in dread fascination the slow movements of that finger and the thumb.

Then Mellish found his voice.

"I—I am sorry, Mr. Solomon—" he began.

But Mr. Solomon cut him short.

"Don't you tell me you ain't got the spondulicks!" he snapped nastily.

Mellish shook his head, whilst his knees shook an accompaniment.

"I am afraid I haven't," he stammered. "You see—"

Mr. Solomon plunged his hands into his coat pockets, turned abruptly, and began to walk down the path towards the road.

Mellish gasped.

"Oh, my hat!" he groaned to Scrope. "He's going up to the Head!"

He ran after the retreating man.

"Look here, Mr. Solomon, I will pay you—I will really, but—"

The thick-set man paused and turned.

"But what?" he snarled. "It's been 'but' for the past six months, my lad. I've finished. My patience has all gone, like the money I lent you. No; pay up, or up I goes to the school!"

Mellish caught at his arm.

"Look here," he pleaded, "listen to what I've got to say! You must listen!" he added desperately.

Mr. Solomon's heavy face scowled.

"Must! See here, young man, there ain't no must about it! I want my money. I ain't here to listen to promises!" he barked.

"I shall be able to pay you in a fortnight's time," said Mellish. "Shan't I, Scrope?"

"Y-yes!" said Scrope, looking longingly towards the road.

"Ho-ho! And if you can get the splash in a fortnight's time, why not now?"

Mr. Solomon pushed his bull-neck forward truculently.

"And what's the security?" he asked.

Mellish spoke quickly and softly for a few moments.

Mr. Solomon's beetling eyebrows contracted as he listened.

Breathlessly Mellish finished.

"That's true, isn't it, Scrope?" he asked.

Scrope nodded vigorously.

"Oh, yes, it is true—quite true!" he stammered.

Mr. Solomon slowly took both hands from his pockets. Then, with a sudden dart, he gripped both boys by their collars.

"You young rips!" he snarled. "What do you take me for? Comin' to me with a cock-an'-bull story like that! You monkeys!"

He opened wide his arms as he finished, then brought them together before him, bringing the two juniors staggering round within them.

Crack!

"Ow! Wow!"

"Ouch!"

Their heads came together with a resounding crack. Then

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they staggered back again as the man opened his arms once more.

"Oh! Help! Don't!"

Scrope squealed out the words in a panic-stricken tone, as he felt himself being brought round again in a sickening quarter-circle.

Bump!

"Yarooooop!" yelled Mellish. "Help!"

"Ow! Ooooooooh!"

"All wight, deah boys! Hang on, bai Jove! I'm comin'!"

It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and it proceeded from the direction of the roadway.

And through the trees came the bounding form of the swell of St. Jim's, clad in running slippers, shorts, and shirt!

CHAPTER 8.

More Preparations!

MR. SOLOMON dropped Mellish and Scrope as though they had suddenly become red-hot.

He faced about and glared at the slim, running figure.

"Bai Jove!" panted Arthur Augustus. "You feahful



CAMEOS OF S THE CYC

THE winter air is crisp and keen,
The trees are hung with
icicles;

Six cheery schoolboys may be
seen

Riding abreast on bicycles.

We speed along, in dashing style;

Down the familiar highways;

And gaily ride, for mile on mile

Through hard and frosty byways

O'er hill and dale, with ne'er a stop.

We pedal fast and faster;

Until there comes a sudden "POP!"

Denoting dire disaster.

"Punctured!" says Gussy, with a

groan,

And halts in consternation;

A sharp and jagged piece of stone

Escaped his observation!

"Just like old Gussy!" grumbles Blake.

"He won't look where he's going!

This is a nuisance, no mistake,

And—help, it's started snowing!"

The flakes come whirling thick and fast

At this most awkward juncture!

And everyone exclaims, aghast,

"Bother the beastly puncture!"

wuffian, settin' about St. Jim's fellows! You wuff wottah!
Take that—and that, bai Jove!"

Thud!

Smack!

Before Solomon could pull himself together, Arthur Augustus had planted a heavy blow on the man's nose, and another to the chest.

Mellish and Scrope staggered apart, rubbing their craniums dazedly.

"Great Scott! It's Gussy!" muttered Mellish.

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped the swell. "I heard you callin' for help, deah boys!"

"You blinkin' fop!" roared Mr. Solomon, recovering himself, and making a bull-like rush at Arthur Augustus. "I'll smash yer for that!"

Swish!

Round came his great fist with terrific force.

It was aimed at D'Arcy's head. But it failed to find its billet.

Arthur Augustus ducked, and, with delightful ease, planted another full on the man's prominent nose. This time, Mr. Solomon's claret was "tapped."
 "You young 'ound!" he roared, clutching at the injured organ convulsively. "You—"
 "Come on, you wotten wuffian!" gasped D'Arcy. "Come on, and I'll give you anothah!"

Every ounce of Arthur Augustus' blue blood was up. Inspired as he was by the boxing fever, he was ready to fight an ox, if necessary.

Mr. Solomon did "come on"; but his tactics were different this time.

Instead of trying to thrash D'Arcy, he suddenly let fly with his foot.

But the swell of St. Jim's was ready for him. With a quick downward dive, he caught the boot and pulled.

Bump!
 With a crash, Mr. Solomon's heavy bulk struck the ground. "Ouch!" he grunted.

He lay there for several moments, with Arthur Augustus standing over him.

"Do you want any more, you wuffian?"

WHEEL LIFE!

THE RACE.

The bike is tilted upside-down, And Blake and Harry Manners with many a snort, and many a frown, Get busy with their spanners. The puncture is repaired at last, We then speed helter-skelter through blinding snow and wintry blast, In quest of friendly shelter!

The cosy farmhouse comes in sight: "Hurrah!" we chant in chorus; And in the parlour, snug and bright, A tea is set before us. The thrills and spills upon the road Are banished from our minds, We demolish quite a load Of cakes of various kinds!

Refreshed and rested, off we go, Light-hearted and elated; The fast and furious fall of snow Has by this time abated. Over the powdered roads we skim, A happy band and cheery; The feeling sound in wind and limb, Though just a trifle weary!



Mr. Solomon glared up at the monocolled junior, dabbing his crimson nose with a dirty handkerchief. Then he caught sight of Mellish standing behind D'Arcy. And Mellish was making violent signs to him—signs that he understood.

He waved D'Arcy aside. "No; I've had enough for the moment!" he snarled. "But I'll remember yer, my lad—I'll remember yer!"

He rose slowly to his feet. Arthur Augustus bowed.

"Wemembah me, by all means!" he said frigidly. "Perhaps my name will help you to wemembah me. It is D'Arcy—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's. And now I should strongly advise you to cleah off. Wuffians of your type are not wanted wound heah."

A sudden light came into the eyes of Mr. Solomon as D'Arcy told him his name. He seemed, for the moment, as though he were about to say something to Mellish and Scrope.

Then, changing his mind, he turned and walked away through the trees. But behind D'Arcy's back, he signalled to Mellish, who nodded.

"Bai Jove, Mellish," said Arthur Augustus, as the man disappeared, "what were you two doin' to allow that bwute to sewag you like he was?"

Mellish grinned sheepishly. "We had no chance," he said. "I—I think he mistook us for someone else. He came up behind, and started bashing our heads together before we knew where we were. Thanks for doing what you did!"

"Oh, that's quite all wight!" beamed the swell. "Excuse me now, you fellows, I'm on a pwactice wun, and I must not stand still long. I shall catch a beastlay cold, y'know."

Arthur Augustus had sprinted away as though nothing had happened, leaving the precious pair staring after him.

"He banged into that blighter, didn't he!" muttered Scrope.

Mellish grunted.

"Oh, that was nothing, really!" he said.

"But, if he can knock a great chap like that about, what is he going to do at Aldershot?" asked Scrope.

"Oh, rats! Solomon is out of condition and too big to move quickly, and anyone could biff him out, anyway!" Mellish said.

Scrope sneered.

"I noticed you didn't try!" he said.

Mellish reddened.

"You didn't tumble over yourself about it, either!" he snorted. "Anyway, just because Gussy plonked Solomon down, it isn't to say that he will do it at Aldershot. You can bet your life that that eye-glassed fathead will catch it in the neck in the first round."

"Well, if he doesn't, it'll be pretty rotten for you!" muttered Scrope.

"Come on!" said Mellish impatiently. "That beggar Solomon made signs for us to follow him. Let's go and see what he wants. He won't biff us again. I believe the beast's got a wheeze by the way he looked when he found that it was Gussy who knocked him down."

Mellish was right.

Mr. Solomon, whom they came upon a little farther along the path, had got a wheeze, and one which caused Mellish and Scrope to turn pale when he confided it to them.

"Your part'll be dead easy," he concluded. "Whoever he's to meet at Aldershot I'll back heavy. This lah-de-dah D'Arcy young feller-me-lad won't win—that's my side of it, if you do yours."

He felt his nose, then rubbed his chest.

"I'll give him knock me about!" he muttered savagely.

"The young rip!"

"But, I say," said Mellish, "what will you do to him when you've got—"

Mr. Solomon pulled his mouth sideways and glanced apprehensively over his shoulder.

"Shut your mouth!" he snarled. "Never mind what I'll do to him! You know what you've got to do. If you don't—"

He shrugged his shoulders significantly, and jerked his thumb in the direction of St. Jim's.

"I'll let you off what you owes me, an' I'll settle this twenty-five you want fer the school."

Mellish started.

"You—you know about that!" he said.

"I do! Now then, will you do it? It's your only chance. He's hit me, and it's a case of getting me own back now!" growled Mr. Solomon. "An' I'll make a nice little sum in doin' it!"

Mellish turned away suddenly.

"All right! I'll do it!" he muttered. "Come on, Scrope!"

The two juniors walked away through the wood, leaving the beetle-browed bully staring after them, with a brutal grin.

"Little brat!" he growled to himself. "What a nerve, standin' those bets himself! He deserved to win, blow me, if he didn't!"

In the meantime, Arthur Augustus sprinted back to St. Jim's, and had entered Study No. 6, where Jack Blake was busy rubbing him down.

"Bai Jove, Blake, deah boy!" suddenly exclaimed D'Arcy. "I have had an encountah in the wood!"

"Had a what?" grunted Blake, rubbing away.

"An encountah! An encountah with a wuffian!"

Blake ceased to rub, and stood upright.

Tom Merry & Co., and Herries and Digby, who had been watching the operations, stared.

"A ruffian! What do you mean, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

(Continued on page 17.)

SIX DELICIOUS TUCK HAMPERS AWARDED TO READERS THIS WEEK!

Do you know a good story, chum? Of course you do! Would you like a ripping Tuck Hamper? What-ho! Then send your joke along, as these other chaps have done. All efforts should be addressed: Special "Tuck Hamper Competition" No. 6, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

PRESENCE OF MIND!

After a fire alarm was given at an hotel, one of the guests joined a group of other guests outside, who were watching the fire, and reproved them for their excitement. "There was nothing to be excited about," he said. "I took my time while dressing, lit a cigarette, didn't like the set of my tie, so undid it and knotted it over again. That's how cool I was." "Fine!" remarked one of his friends. "But why on earth didn't you put your trousers on?"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Master Arthur Phillips, Smiley Cottage Hospital, Larne, Co. Antrim.

MUSIC HATH CHARMS!

A company parade was ordered by the sergeant-major at the local barracks. When all were in position, the N.C.O. called out: "All men who are fond of music take two paces to the front." Instantly half a dozen soldiers, with visions of playing in the regimental band, stepped forward. "Now," he roared, "you six men look smart and bring that piano down from the officers' quarters on the fourth floor to the sergeants' mess in the basement!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to G. Fillery, 48, Warwick Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham.

Each Hamper contains:

An Iced Cake, Chocolates, Biscuits, Jam, Sardines, Honey, Sweets, Figs, Lemonade, Etc.



SAME OLD FEET!

In a bootshop a stout man appeared to have some considerable difficulty in finding just what he wanted. After showing a dozen more pairs, the salesman observed: "Now here is a pair that I think will suit you to perfection." After examining the boots, the stout man exclaimed: "I don't like them. They are too narrow and too pointed." "Ah," returned the shopman, "but they are wearing narrow-pointed boots this season." "Possibly," returned the stout man, "but I am still wearing my last season's feet."—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to J. Kearney, 57, Ship Street, off York Street, Belfast.

Owing to the interest taken by readers all over the world in this Weekly Joke Competition a Delicious Tuck Hamper will be awarded for EVERY joke published on this page. Cut out the coupon below while you are of the mind to win one of these NOVEL PRIZES. Editor.

THAT PIPPED HIM!

A grocer, named Berry, met a man who had not paid for his groceries. Berry stopped the man and asked him for the bill money. But the man replied: "I am not going to pay that bill, Berry, so you needn't look so black, Berry. Your father, the elder Berry, would not have been such a goose, Berry; so in future I shall get my groceries from Logan, Berry!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to G. Cutler, 62, Manchester Old Road, Middleton, Lancs.

TOO SOON TO TELL!

Tommy had been playing truant from school, and had spent a long, beautiful day fishing. On his way back he met one of his young cronies, who accosted him with the usual question: "Catch anything?" Fully conscious of his guilt, Tommy quickly responded: "No, ain't been home yet!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Montague Marston, 58, Vaughan Street, Coalville, near Leicester.

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A GAME FOR TWO!

The American sightseer was boasting about his country and the subject had worked round to game. "Why," said he, "in my li'le old country across the 'Herring Pond,' one has only to shoot into undergrowth and he has enough food for a week." "Snothing," said his English host; "when I was in Kent I had to kick the rabbits out of the way before I could set my traps!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Thomas Wood, 94, Byrkley Street, Burton-on-Trent.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

THE GEM LIBRARY. No. 6.

No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.



(Continued

from
page 15.)

"Do you mean a rough started on you?" demanded Blake. "Oh, deah no! While I was wumin', you know, I heard a cwyr for help. I dashed into the wood and found Mellish and Scrope bein' scawgged by a huge blightah of a wuffian."

Arthur Augustus failed to see the sudden alarm and concern that came into the faces of his chums.

"Mellish!"

"Scrope!"

"Being scragged!"

"What was he like, Gussy?"

"What was the game?"

"What did you do?"

Arthur Augustus looked round in surprise. Considering all the questions had been hurled at him simultaneously from the juniors, he had not the remotest idea of what had been asked him.

"Bai Jove! One at a time, deah boys!" he remonstrated gently.

"What did you do?" repeated Jack Blake, impatiently resuming his brisk rubbing, for D'Arcy was hot after his run.

"I biffed him, Blake!"

"You what?"

"I biffed the beastly, wuff bwute. He was nearly swanglin' Mellish and Scrope, and banging' them togethah. I went to their wescue, and wouted the wottah!"

Arthur Augustus spoke quite naturally, without the slightest sign of bragging.

The juniors gasped.

"You silly ass!" said Blake sternly. "He might have half killed you!"

"Fat lot of good you'd have been for Aldershot, then," said Digby.

"That's lettin' him out alone!" said Herries.

"All for the sake of those rotters, Mellish and Scrope, too!" remarked Monty Lowther, with a sniff.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Tom Merry got up from the chair near the window in which he had been sitting, and paced the study in sudden agitation.

"My hat, you chaps!" he said soberly. "There's more in this than meets the eye!"

"What do you mean, Tom?" asked Blake. "You think—"

"I think that we have got to look after this image here—"

"Bai Jove, Mewwy—"

"Or he'll be getting himself crooked before the Aldershot match," went on Tom Merry seriously. "We all know the hole that cad Mellish has got himself into over the inter-House. What does it look like, being discovered in Rylcombe Woods, being scragged by a man? What was he like, Gussy?"

"Well, Mewwy, to disweward your wude wemarks for a moment—"

"Blow my remarks!" snapped Merry. "Answer my question. This is serious, Gussy."

"He was a big, fat man, with a wed face, and heavy, black eyebrows that neatly met in the middle, deah boy," answered D'Arcy. "But I don't see—"

"You wouldn't, fathead! That's why we've got to look after you!" said the leader of the Shell. "I tell you what it is, you chaps, and it doesn't take a genius to work it out. Mellish was up to a game, as we thought, when he lent Gussy the punching-ball."

"Wanted to keep an eye on his training," said Blake.

"Exactly," answered Tom Merry. "So that he would have a pretty good idea how Gussy was going to shape. He, like us, thought the ass—"

"Weally, Mewwy, I—"

"Shut up, Gussy! He thought the fathead would be sure to lose, on the form he showed at his sparring bouts with us. So he put some of the bets on Gussy in his beastly pocket. Now the bookie is after him, and wants

to know all about it. You can be sure that this bookie was hit up fine and large, for Mellish is sure to have told him that Gussy was bound to lose."

The juniors whistled.

"But," said Blake, "surely the bookie bounder wouldn't mind how many bets on Gussy that Mellish put in his pocket?—All the less for him to pay out."

"That's true," said Tom Merry. "All the same, the whole thing's fishy, and as I said when that cad Mellish put his nose in this study nearly a month ago, I don't like it!"

"I think you are wathah severe on Mellish, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus mildly. "He—"

"Is an outsider, a cad, and a beastly rotter!" finished the junior captain of St. Jim's severely. "And just you keep away from him until after Aldershot, Gussy."

"Yes. Otherwise, we'll have to put you in irons and keep you in tow," said Monty Lowther.

"But why?" asked D'Arcy, completely mystified. He could not follow the juniors' train of thought at all. "Why must I keep away from Mellish?"

Tom Merry frowned.

His mind was full of vague doubts. He didn't think that any harm could befall D'Arcy actually at the hands of Mellish and Scrope, even if they were cads enough to try to harm him. But when a fellow was in the hands of a rascally pair of bookmakers—

Tom Merry shrugged.

"Because we say so, Gussy," he answered firmly. "We've got to see that you go to Aldershot fit, for you've got to win that fight. You've got to come back the giddy champion of St. Jim's. In the meantime, it's up to us—and it's up to you to do as we tell you!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face suddenly broke into a beaming smile.

"Bai Jove! Wathah, deah boy!" he said enthusiastically. "And it's awfully decent of you chaps to take the interest in me. I'll obey ordahs, Mewwy—twust me!"

"Good!" said the leader of the Shell. "Now for a little bout, and let's have a few of those punches you reserved for Redfern!"

CHAPTER 9. At Aldershot.

IT seemed that all St. Jim's was at Aldershot a fortnight later, when the Public Schools' Competitions were to be held.

The familiar caps were everywhere, and the avenue in which the roomy gymnasium stood was thronged. For in this gym the boxing was to be held after the gymnastics had been disposed of.

In the dressing-room at the rear of the gym Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat, and round him were grouped his study-chums and the Terrible Three.

In the minds of the latter six was relief—sheer relief that the past fortnight had passed uneventfully enough, and that now, D'Arcy, as fit as a fiddle and trained to the minute, was safely lodged in the dressing-room.

D'Arcy himself was as cool as a cucumber.

He sat gazing round at the numerous photograph studies hung upon the wall—photographic studies of past combatants.

"Bai Jove!" he said suddenly, starting up in alarm. "I hope they won't hang my beastly photogwaph up here!"

Monty Lowther laughed.

"They will, Gussy," he said.

"Then I shall pwotest—pwotest, most wigowously!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I distinctly wefuse to have my photogwaph exhibited like some—some actor in a beastly film!"

The juniors shrieked with laughter.

The concern in D'Arcy's expression was ludicrous in face of what was before him.

He was meeting one of the most formidable feather-weights, so they understood, that had visited Aldershot for many years—a boy from a North Country school—who had carried all before him. He came from a boxing family. Everybody knew about the Pearsons!

D'Arcy would have had every excuse for being in a state of funk at the prospect of the fight before him. Yet here he was, getting excited at the prospect of having his photograph hung in the time-honoured gymnasium.

"But it's an honour, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "Lots of chaps would give no end to have their giddy photos here."

"I shall distinctly wefuse to fight if my photo goes up, heah!" said D'Arcy resolutely. "I am sure my pawth would most stwongly object!"

Jack Blake laughed.

"I don't think!" he said. "Besides, it won't go up, if you win."

He winked at the others.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy looked relieved. "Do you mean that Blake?"

Blake nodded.

"Yes!" he replied. "If you win, your face won't go up there you know."

"Then, that's all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "I'll win all sewene, deah boys!"

There was not the slightest trace of bragging in the swell's tones. He meant to win, that was all, and he fully thought he could.

The door opened and into the room walked Skimpole, his valuable book on boxing in his hand.

"Ah!" he said, as he blinked at D'Arcy. "Here you are!"

"Yaas! Here I am, deah boy!"

"I have just discovered," went on Skimpole, blinking importantly, "that there is a knock-out called the delayed knock-out!"

"Weally?"

"Yes! You hit your man just here!"

He placed his skinny, bony knuckles against Monty Lowther's face, at a spot midway between the jaw and the left eye.

"If you continue to hit him here, like that—and that—What's the matter, Lowther?"

"Yaroooooh! Ow, you frabjous maniac! What's the game?"

Intent upon his object, lesson to D'Arcy upon the delayed knock-out blow, Skimpole dealt Monty Lowther two quite useful punches on the face, sending that junior staggering back.

"You babbling idiot!" he roared, making a rush at Skimpole. "What do you think you are playing at?"

"My dear Lowther I was only demonstrating—" began Skimpole.

But, by that time, Monty Lowther had recovered, and he rushed at Skimpole like a whirlwind.

The book on boxing was sent flying one way, and Skimpole the other.

"Lowther!" gasped the bespectacled junior, blinking up at him from the floor, where he had taken a hurried and forceful seat. "What are you doing? I—"

"I was only demonstrating!" howled Lowther, dancing up and down, holding his hand to his face. "Get up, and I'll continue the demonstration. I'll show you something prime in the way of a sudden knock-out! You silly ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled with laughter.

"But," went on Skimpole, retaining his seat, "if you keep hitting your man on the same spot, he'll gradually weaken and then suddenly collapse!"

"You'll suddenly collapse if you get up, you priceless chump!" growled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think I will remain here, for the moment, then," said Skimpole. "I only wished to give D'Arcy a valuable hint."

Monty Lowther's good-humour returned.

The funny side of the situation suddenly appealed to him.

He grinned.

"I'll give you a valuable hint," he said, stooping and yanking Skimpole to his feet. "Open the door, Tom!"

Tom Merry opened the door.

Monty Lowther raced Skimpole towards it. Then, releasing him, he raised his foot.

"Get!"

He pushed suddenly and, with a run, Skimpole shot through the doorway.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ta-ta, Skimmy!"

"Don't trouble to shut the door!"

The dressing-room rang with laughter as, with a bewildered and hurt look upon his serious face, Skimpole vanished from sight.

Deep in his cogitations, for his mind had almost at once returned to the noble art, he passed out of the back entrance of the gym into the fast-gathering dusk. Two figures, standing back against the wall, under the trees quite escaped his notice.

They were Scrope and Mellish, and as they saw him emerge, they flattened themselves against the brickwork.

They need not have worried.

Skimpole was deep in the delayed knock-out!

"Phew!" muttered Mellish. "The silly ass! I wonder if he saw us?"

Scrope shook his head.

"No; I don't think he did! Hallo! Who's this?"

A bulky form loomed up out of the gloom, and approached the waiting juniors, after glancing carefully in every direction.

"It's Solomon!" muttered Mellish. "Hang him!"

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He was right!

It was Mr. Solomon, the bookmaker. He espied them almost at once and grunted in satisfaction.

"Here you are, then," he said. "I thought you'd be here, somehow."

Mellish scowled.

"Buck up!" he snapped. "What do you want, now that we are here?"

He was nervy—very nervy!

Mellish was not a rogue so much as he was a sneak. He delighted to indulge in petty acts of caddishness, but he drew the line at what he felt was coming.

It had been in his mind to refuse whatever Solomon wanted him to do. And then had come the realisation that he would be exposed to the Head for a certainty and expulsion would follow!

He shuddered to think of that!

What would the pater say? He had been very near to being expelled before. No! It could not be faced! He would have to go on with whatever was in store for him at Solomon's hands.

"I don't want very much," said Mr. Solomon softly. "It is now seven o'clock. At eight o'clock, D'Arcy takes the ring. In the meantime, I want to spend a little half-hour with him."

He chuckled.

"When he takes the ring he'll be feeling more like going to sleep!" he went on, rubbing his hands together.

"What I want you to do is to get him outside here as soon as you can. That's all. Leave the rest to me!"

Mellish felt a cold chill running up and down his back.

"What are you going to do with him?" he asked. "Not—"

"I'm goin' to take him for a little motor ride, that's all! I'm goin' to see that he's a very tired starter. You'd be surprised the amount of money I've taken on him. I've had touts out all over the country at all the big schools."

Mr. Solomon chuckled evilly.

"Oh, no, don't worry! I'll see that no real harm comes to him. Now then—get inside and do your part. The car's just across the road!"

Mellish felt a great relief. D'Arcy was not going to be hurt—just abducted for an hour or two, so that he could not turn up for the fight.

But if Mellish could have foreseen the terrible danger into which his act was to send D'Arcy, even he would have drawn back at the last moment.

He turned into the building, with Scrope at his heels.

How he was to get D'Arcy out of the gym without arousing the suspicion of Tom Merry and Blake & Co., he did not know. But it would have to be done.

He skulked about in the corridor for a few moments; then suddenly he started.

"I've got it!" he said briefly. "You stop here, Scrope, and keep out of the way."

Five minutes later an Army orderly visited the dressing-room with a sheet of paper upon which was written the names of Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners, Blake, Digby, and Herries.

"Your headmaster wants to see you in the hall, young sirs," he said. "One of your fellows gave me the note to bring—said the Head was in the reserved seats on the north side of the hall!"

Tom Merry and Blake hesitated for a moment.

"Do you know what it's about?" asked Blake.

"Something about the seconding, I believe," was the reply. "So the chap that gave me the note said. You're supposed to have Army seconds, y'know."

The juniors were satisfied. They left D'Arcy in the dressing-room, but he was not alone, for there were several boys from other schools preparing for their various matches.

But when they eventually found the Head only to discover that he had not sent the message, their fears arose.

It was true, he said, that they should have Army seconds, but he had arranged that Merry and Blake should second D'Arcy. He certainly had been about to send a message, but up till now he hadn't dispatched it.

What could it mean?

It seemed strange, to say the least of it, and the juniors hurried back to the dressing-room.

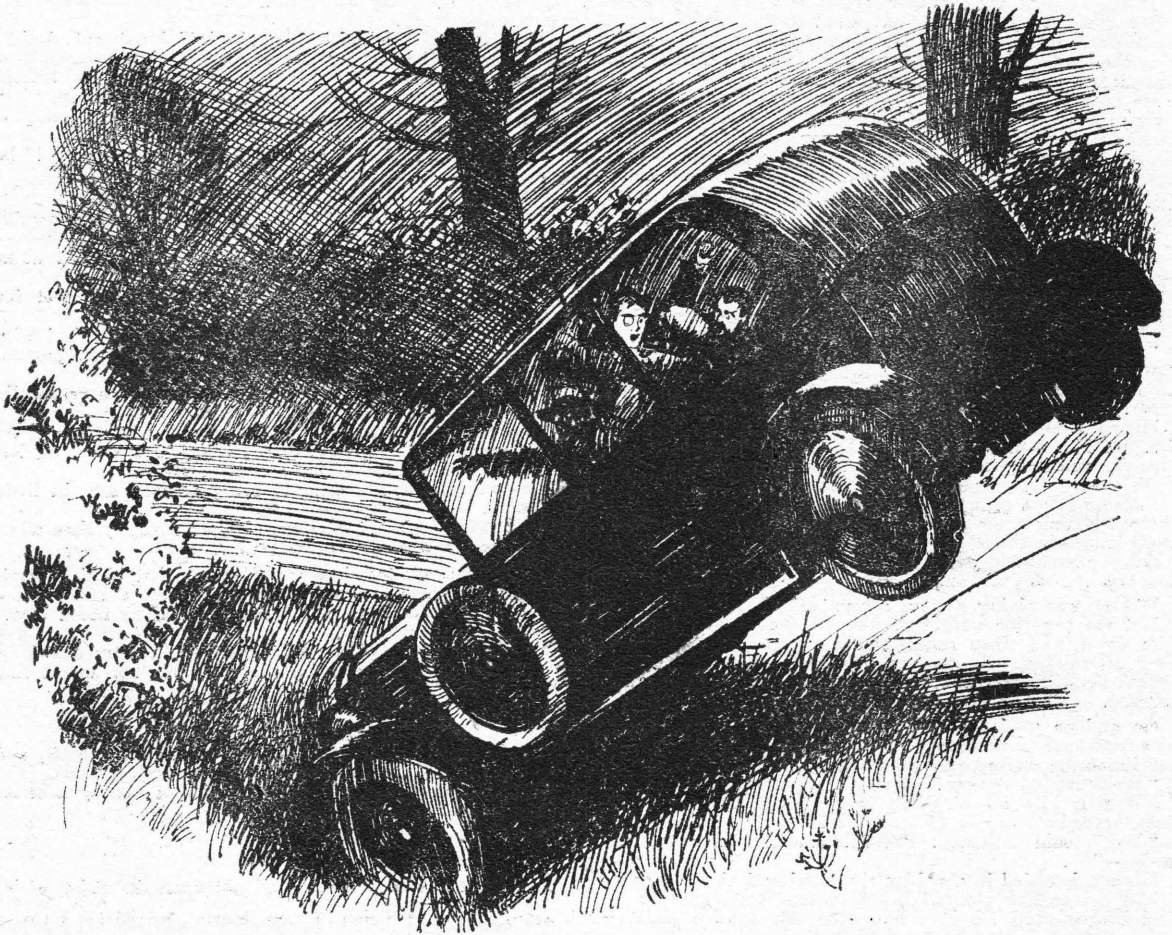
When they arrived there no sign of D'Arcy was to be seen.

The swell of St. Jim's had disappeared, and in answer to their anxious inquiries, they were told that a junior had come in just after they had left and told D'Arcy that he was wanted at the athletes' entrance.

Tom Merry groaned.

"It's some monkey-business, you chaps, I'll bet! Come on, we've got to find where Gussy is and get him back to this room as quickly as we know how!"

But when they reached the rear entrance used by the competing athletes, it was to find the tree-lined roadway



With a quick wrench the driver endeavoured to steer the car back on to the roadway. But he was too late! Crash! Into the ditch-like hollow the front wheels dropped, and the car tilted dizzily. There was a roar as the engine was freed by the rear wheels leaving the ground, and the next instant the great limousine turned turtle. (See Chapter 10.)

deserted. In the distance, however, along the military road, a red light gleamed ominously.

To the juniors' ears came the steady drumming of a high-powered motor-engine.

A form that moved by the wall attracted Tom Merry's attention.

He sprang forward, and the next moment Mellish was squirming in his grasp.

"Quick, you chaps!" shouted Tom. "That's Scrope who's just buzzed round the corner. Collar him!"

Herries, Digby, and Manners dashed round the corner of the gym, and, in a couple of minutes, returned with Scrope.

"Now, you worms," said Tom Merry sternly, "what's the game? What are you skulking here for?"

Instinctively Tom Merry felt that the presence of Mellish and Scrope denoted trouble for D'Arcy. He sensed that they had been responsible for his disappearance from the dressing-room.

"Where's Gussy?" he demanded, shaking Mellish. "Have you seen him?"

Mellish cringed. He was thoroughly frightened and in a state of abject funk.

"Yes, Merry!" he whined, his nerve gone. "Two men collared him as he came out and dragged him into a motor-car. It's gone off that way!"

He pointed in the direction of the now vanishing red rear light.

"And you were the cad who lured him outside!" snapped the leader of the Shell. "Tell the truth!"

"I—I—" stuttered Mellish. "The men said they wanted to see D'Arcy, and—and I went in and told him! I—"

Tom Merry's fist flew out and caught Mellish a crashing blow on the face.

"Take that, you traitorous cad!" he said, through clenched teeth. "My only aunt, if we don't get D'Arcy back in time for that fight, fit and well, I'll just about pulverise you!"

Mellish cowered tremblingly against the wall.

"Come on, you fellows!" called Tom Merry over his shoulder. "We'll have to get a car and follow that red light! Oh, my hat, if we should be too late!"

CHAPTER 10. Gussy in Peril!

WHEN Mellish entered the dressing-room and informed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that a friend of his wished to see him in a car outside the rear entrance, the swell of St. Jim's suspected nothing.

His pater, Lord Eastwood, had written to say that he would be present, so it was quite on the cards that some friends had arrived in addition.

He walked out of the door and approached the limousine fearlessly, quite imagining it to be what Mellish had said—the car of a friend.

The door was open, and he could see three shadowy forms sitting inside—two in the rear seat, and one at the wheel.

Arthur Augustus leaned forward slightly to obtain a better view, and—

"Got yer!"

A couple of hands seized him under the arms and hoisted him bodily into the car.

For the moment he was far too surprised to call out.

A coarse hand was clapped over his face and mouth, rendering this impossible, the next moment.

He heard the door slam and the sudden speeding up of the car's engine.

There came a jerk, and then he knew that he was being carried away from the gym.

Into D'Arcy's brain came the realisation of what it meant.

He was being collared!

Someone evidently did not wish him all the good that they might!

D'Arcy boiled with sudden anger and indignation. It was quite bad enough to be subjected to this sort of rough treatment. But to deprive him of the opportunity of winning the feathers and returning to the old school a champion was more than his blue blood could stand.

He lashed out.

Squelch!

His fist landed with all his force upon something soft, and by the snuffling yell that arose he rightly guessed that it had caught one of his attackers full upon the nose.

Quick as thought, he lashed out again in the same direction.

This time his fist crashed to harder stuff, and prickly at that. It was the chin of Mr. Solomon, who had jerked his face back after receiving the welt upon the nose.

His yell must have been heard had anyone been passing, but he cared not for that. Mr. Solomon was in pain, and he was a bad sufferer.

"Shut up!" growled his companion. "If you make that row we shall be stopped by the Military Police in a moment! Grab the little brute's arms!"

Mr. Solomon found that easier said than done.

His confederate was hanging on to D'Arcy's legs for dear life, but Mr. Solomon found that D'Arcy's arms were rather elusive, especially as he had to keep one hand over the swell's mouth to prevent him from raising shouts for help.

Lapsing into a grim silence, the man struggled to encircle those whirling arms and fists which, from time to time, were landing painfully upon his anatomy.

Gasps punctuated the fight. Grunts of pain burst from the two rogues ever and anon.

D'Arcy was giving a good account of himself.

But the superior weight of his attackers began to wear him down, and when suddenly the car gave a lurch, and they all fell into the bottom of it, a fighting, struggling heap, the wind was knocked from the junior, and he was secured.

On and on sped the car, mile after mile being covered at a high speed. Suddenly the lights were switched off, and the limousine dashed on through the darkness.

"We're well out now!" growled the man at the wheel. "It'll take him all his time to get back, and when he gets there, he won't be fit for much!"

"Yes," said Solomon. "We'll chuck him out here, and—"

His words ended in a sudden surprised and alarmed gasp.

The driver had glanced briefly over his shoulder as he had spoken, and his eyes had been taken for a fleeting moment from the road he could but dimly see in the gloom before him.

It had been long enough, however, to deflect the steering, and the car was now bumping over the grass at the side of the road.

With a quick wrench, the man endeavoured to steer it back again. But too late!

Crash!

Into a ditch-like hollow the front wheels dropped, and the car tilted dizzily down.

There was a roar as the engine was freed by the rear wheels leaving the ground.

Then the great limousine completely turned turtle and lay upside-down, a derelict, with the engine still racing madly.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was thrown, with the other three, on to the roof of the car, and the force with which his head met the wooden top—which, of course, was now undermost, the wheels of the car being in the air—dazed him a little.

He had a confused idea that the three men were climbing out through the window, the glass of which was shattered. Then he became aware that the engine was still roaring.

Then he crept from the wrecked motor and stood up on the grass of the hollow without, with a deep sigh of relief.

"Bai Jove!" he muttered. "What's happened?"

Slowly his head cleared, and his first action was to grope for the switch and turn off the engine.

He knew only too well the risk of fire, for the petrol was pouring from the carburetter.

"Gweat Scott!" he muttered. "That was a neah shave, bai Jove! I wondah where I am?"

He climbed to the top of the hollow and looked about him.

All was silent around him, and there was nothing to be seen save a glow away, to the right, which denoted Aldershot.

"Bai Jupitah! I'm miles and miles fwm the gym! And the woad goes wight wound in a circle, judgin' by the divection fwm which we have come!"

He had gained the road and was looking back along it, and certainly it did wind away at right angles almost to

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that glare in the sky which told D'Arcy that Aldershot was many miles away.

"Bai Jove! The utter soundwels!" burst out Arthur Augustus, as the full realisation of the position came over him. "They have done this to keep me out of the match, or, wathah, so that I shall awwive absolutely done up!"

He looked at his luminous wrist-watch. It was half-past seven.

"Oh ewumbs! And I am due in the wing at eight!" he groaned. "I wondah if I can do it? I wondah—"

He braced himself with sudden determination.

"Bai Jove! I will do it! I'll take a short cut across this way! It can't be more than four miles, and I can wun—wan like anythin'! I'm not goin' to let St. Jim's down now, if I can jolly well help it!"

He commenced to run, and kept up a steady trot for about ten minutes.

Abruptly he came upon some barbed wire—barbed wire that formed an effective barrier. For a moment he paused, irresolute.

Then, stepping back, he took a short run, rose gracefully in the air, and cleared the obstacle in fine style.

"Government pwoerty!" he muttered. "I suppose I am not allowed heah. Pwobably get shot if I am caught, bai Jove! But I can't afford the time to go wound!"

How near he was to come to being actually shot he little dreamed.

He ran on, and then he stopped more abruptly than when he had come upon the barbed wire.

As he stopped, too, he became aware that blazing headlights from some car were sweeping along a road to his right. But it was only subconsciously that he noted that.

And it is no wonder!

For into the air before him rose streak after streak of what looked like fire to D'Arcy—for all the world like rockets being fired.

Up, up, up! they went.

Plop! Plop! Plop!

One after the other came muffled reports from aloft, and the countryside was bathed in a rich, green radiance.

Simultaneously there issued from a spot nearby a series of stern commands, and—

Whiz!

Bang!

Cr-r-r-r-r-ack!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood not upon the order of his going.

He turned and fled, as bomb after bomb hurtled through the air and fell uncomfortably close to him.

In a flash he realised what he had done!

That barbed wire evidently enclosed a bombing area, and troops even now were engaged in night bombing practice. The rockets were Verey lights!

The swell of St. Jim's flew over the ground with winged feet, as bang after bang announced the arrival of the bombs behind him.

Away on the road, in safe distance, of course, from the bombing, Tom Merry & Co., in a fast car, were closely watching on either side of the motor as they raced along.

They saw the Verey lights going up; saw them burst, making the night light as day.

"My aunt!" almost shouted Tom Merry, pointing to a running figure. "Look at that chap sprinting for all he is worth! He—"

There came a great shout from Blake:

"It's Gussy! Oh, my hat! It's Gussy! Look at the barbed wire! Look—"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Herries. "Look—they're bombing! He's in the bombing area!"

With a jerk the car was stopped, and the juniors poured out on to the road.

They could see Arthur Augustus closely as he pounded towards them in the glare of the lights in the air. They saw the bombs bursting what looked to them close behind him.

Then, with dramatic suddenness, they saw the swell fall—just as a frantic order floated across to them from the trench in which a squad of night bombers were concealed. Gussy had been seen!

But had he been seen too late?

Regardless of regulations, the juniors leaped the high fencing of barbed wire and tore towards the spot where they had seen D'Arcy fall.

Tom Merry led, with Blake just behind.

Had Gussy been hit?

The terrible question hammered at their hearts as they ran on. It had looked for all the world as though that last bomb had exploded just behind him.

They found him lying breathless and panting in a hollow.

"Gussy! Are you all right?"

"Did that last one hit you?"

"Gussy! Gussy! Speak, old chap!"

The juniors' voices were rather husky, and they can well be excused if their feelings overcame them a trifle.

Their delight when the swell of St. Jim's voice answered them knew no bounds.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys!" he said breathlessly. "But that last one was fwightfully near, bai Jove! I twipped, othahwise I am afwaid I should not have been so lucky!"

He sat up and gazed at the anxious-faced juniors.

"No time to explain, deah boys," he said. "We'll have to stop an' do a tewwible lot of jawin' to the officer in charge of that party, if we don't cleah in time. Besides, I have only anothead ten minutes!"

He was gazing anxiously at his wrist-watch as he spoke.

The juniors were amazed at D'Arcy's sublime coolness, but they refrained from saying anything just then. What he said was true. They had ten minutes in which to get D'Arcy into the ring miles away. They sprinted for the wire again, with Gussy in their midst.

Again they all cleared it, and then, with a stern voice from the bombing field calling to them to stop, they clambered into the car. It was turned, and the next moment, with its engine purring into a high note, they were racing for the great gymnasium in which D'Arcy was due to take the ring in a matter of ten minutes' time!



Flop! Flop! Flop! One after another came muffed reports from above, and the countryside was bathed in a rich green radiance. Then from a spot nearby there issued a series of stern commands, and—Whiz! Bang! Cr-r-r-r-ack! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood not upon the order of his going, but fled, as bomb after bomb hurtled through the air and fell uncomfortably close to him. (See Chapter 10.)

CHAPTER 11.
The Fight!

"WHERE'S D'Arcy?"

"Buck up, Gussy!"

"Gussy! Gussy!"

The yells of the St. Jim's juniors rang through the great gym at Aldershot as the clock's hands quivered past the hour of eight.

In the ring was seated Pearson, the boy from the North Country school, whom Arthur Augustus was to meet. But of the swell of St. Jim's there was no sign.

The referee even now was consulting his watch.

Where was D'Arcy?

The St. Jim's crowd was getting uneasy. No word had as yet reached the hall that Arthur Augustus was missing from the dressing-room, for Tom Merry and the rest of the Shell and Fourth Form chums had not stopped to make explanations when they had dashed off in pursuit of D'Arcy.

Anxious eyes watched the referee, and the door leading from the dressing-rooms. What on earth could be the matter? What was Gussy up to? If he wasn't quickly in the ring, the fight would be awarded to Pearson!

The clock pointed to a full minute after the hour, when, suddenly, the door was swung open violently and into the gym poured Tom Merry, Harry Manners, and Monty Lowther; Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby followed, and in their midst, calm, unflustered, and dignified, walked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, ready for the fray. His chums had literally dragged his clothes off him, and rushed him into shorts, singlet, etc.

He was in time!

"Here he is!"

"Good old Gussy!"

The rafters shook with the shout that ascended as the swell of St. Jim's walked to the ring.

Only his chums among that assembly knew what Arthur Augustus had just been through, and certainly none would have guessed even remotely that he had been as near to death during the past half-hour as he had ever been in his life.

Good wishes were hurled at him from juniors and seniors

alike, as he clambered into the ring and took his corner. There was little time to spare. The referee was impatient and remonstrated with D'Arcy sharply for being late.

Before he really knew what had happened, Arthur Augustus found his gloves fixed and heard the gong striking, announcing the first round.

He rose and advanced towards Pearson, to grip his gloved hand.

Pearson's lips moved, and D'Arcy heard him say quietly: "A fight to a finish, old man—and may the best of us win!"

"Bai Jove—wathah!"

"Stop that talking!" snapped the referee sharply.

"Wats!"

A roar of laughter arose as Arthur Augustus' reply was heard quite plainly.

Then the fight had started, and the packed gym settled down to witness what everyone hoped would be the fight of the evening.

Both of the juniors looked remarkably fit. D'Arcy, if anything, was the smaller of the two boys, but he was trained to the minute.

The St. Jim's supporters, who knew nothing of the events of the past hour, fully expected big things from Arthur Augustus.

But, as the round proceeded, a wondering silence fell. What was the matter with D'Arcy?

For he had seemed to go to pieces with the very opening of the match!

Pearson seemed to be playing with Arthur Augustus—playing with him! Surely, this was not the Gussy who had shown such magnificent form in the inter-House?

D'Arcy was stopping blow after blow, and never seemed to touch his adversary at all.

"Poor old Gussy!" groaned Tom Merry. "He's feeling the strain!"

Blake nodded.

"Wait until I get hold of that cad Mellish!" he gritted.

"Buck up, Gussy!" urged Monty Lowther.

"He'll never last the round!" said Digby gloomily.

An apprehensive silence had fallen on the St. Jim's contingent.

Pearson's supporters commenced to yell. It was to be easy work for their man!

Pearson himself was not sparing D'Arcy, but was hitting out good and hard.

There was a feeling everywhere that the end must come—and soon at that.

Pearson jockeyed Gussy round, having to use very little skill in the endeavour.

Arthur Augustus seemed to rally a trifle and Pearson allowed him to get close. Then he side-stepped smartly and delivered a clean left.

The swell of St. Jim's grunted and sagged to the canvas. The ref began to count.

"One—two—three—four—five—six—"

A rustling went through the packed gym.

Someone groaned audibly.

D'Arcy was going to be counted out in the first round. He was through. He was—

The gong went!

A sudden delirious yell went up from the St. Jim's juniors and seniors alike—a yell in which the rest of the audience joined.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been saved from defeat in the first round by the gong!

Feverishly Tom Merry and Jack Blake dragged him to the corner and set about him with sponge and towels.

"Gussy!" said Tom Merry urgently. "Buck up, old chap! Remember St. Jim's! For the honour of the old school, Gussy!"

The swell of the Fourth opened his eyes and blinked stupidly at the two juniors who were working against time to revive him.

"Bai Jove!"

He muttered the words, then suddenly sat bolt upright.

"Sit back, Gussy!" ordered Blake. "Back against the post, old boy. You—"

"Gweat Scott!"

D'Arcy did not lean back. He continued to sit upright.

"Bai Jove! I was nearly out that time, deah boys," he said.

Tom Merry forced him back and plied the sponge and water freely.

"You were!" he said grimly. "If it hadn't been for the gong, it'd all be over now!"

"What was up, Gussy?" inquired Herries, through the ropes.

Gussy's reply came in a curious voice.

"Do you know, deah boys, as I gwipped that chappie's hand in the wing I suddenly remembered that I came vewy near to-night to nevah gwippin' anybody's hand again," said D'Arcy soberly. "I hadn't thought of it like that before, and I went sort of jolly funny."

"What did he say to you when you shook, Gussy?" asked Digby.

"That it would be a fight to a finish, deah boy!" gasped D'Arcy. "And, bai Jove, it's goin' to be! That's the stuff, Mewwy—you're cweatin' a delightful dwaught!"

The junior captain of St. Jim's and Jack Blake both worked on D'Arcy against time, and with such good result that when the gong sounded for the second round, the swell stepped out of his corner looking almost entirely recovered from that gruelling first round.

It was this wonderful recovery that took Pearson off his guard.

He went down almost immediately from a sharp swing to the jaw; he was up on the instant, however, and a spell of in-fighting ensued.

Arthur Augustus played warily all through the round after that first punch. He fought on the defensive and gave Pearson all the running about. As a consequence, at the conclusion of round two he was as fresh as a daisy.

Ralph Reckness Cardew smacked Levison of the Fourth heartily upon the back, nearly sending him hurtling from his seat.

"Good old Gussy!" he shouted. "He's goin' to pull it off yet!"

"You silly ass!" laughed Ernest Levison. "That was my shoulder."

"Jolly good shoulder, too!" said Cardew approvingly, giving it another bang. "We're going to take a thumping champion back with us to St. Jim's, my lad!"

"Give him a cheer to buck him up!" yelled George Figgins loyally. "Let it rip, you chaps!"

"Hip, hip, hip, hoo-o-o-o-ray!"

With the cheers ringing in his ears Arthur Augustus D'Arcy took the centre of the canvas floor as the gong sounded for the third round.

There was the light of strong determination shining in his eyes and from the onset he showed quite plainly that he meant business.

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He gave Pearson a jolting tap to the face, and followed it with a sharp left to the heart—and it got home!

Pearson gave ground, fainted, then tried a short-arm jab as D'Arcy followed up. The swell of St. Jim's stepped smartly back, and as the other lunged forward in an attempt to land a full and straight left, Arthur Augustus met him with a pretty jolt to the chin.

The North Country junior staggered a little!

He had been receiving punishment that surprised him not a little. Arthur Augustus had started like a novice. But he was shaping like a professional now.

"Gussy! Gussy!"

"St Jim's for ever!"

"Great pip! Who said Gussy can't fight?"

The third round ended in thunders of delirious applause. Mellish, hanging about outside the hall, heard them and gritted his teeth.

"Hang the ass!" he growled. "Who would have thought he'd get back like that? Confound him—it sounds as if he's winning!"

He squirmed in the dusk.

Thoughts of what would happen to him if Gussy won the fight were beginning to take shape in his mind. He remembered that he was only to be released from his obligations to Mr. Solomon if D'Arcy failed to win the fight!

"Gussy's going to win!"

Scrope, his thin face twisted into a grin, whispered the words into Mellish's ear.

Mellish swung round with a cry of rage. His fist flew out and the next moment Scrope, his grin vanished, was lying upon his back studying the branches of the tree under which they had been standing.

"Hang you—and Gussy!" snarled Mellish, as he slunk away.

Round four!

The gym fairly pulsed with excitement as the two juniors who were fighting for the medal that went with the Feathers, and for the prestige of their schools, met once again.

Arthur Augustus bore down upon Pearson with grim intent, and before the latter reached the centre of the ring, Gussy was at him. The gruelling he had received in the previous round was apparent, and his breath was getting a little short and sharp.

Pearson saw D'Arcy's intention and endeavoured to keep him off. But the swell of St. Jim's would not be denied. He was fighting now like a machine, his blows falling just where he wanted them to.

Pearson dodged, fainted, clinched—anything! But it was of no avail.

The crowd in the gym roared and roared again. Juniors were getting hoarse—but still they croaked.

It was a wonderful fight!

The pep and punch that D'Arcy was putting behind his blows surprised even Tom Merry and Jack Blake, who watched him delightedly from the ropes.

"Pearson's down!" breathed the leader of the Shell suddenly.

A sudden hush fell as the North Country boy went to the canvas from a beautiful right to the body followed by a left to the jaw.

He fell into a neutral corner against the post.

There was no need for the referee to push back Arthur Augustus. As Pearson regained his knees, and then his feet, the swell stood waiting. He did not attempt to deliver the finishing blow even then.

The whole gym shrieked approval of this sporting action on D'Arcy's part.

Pearson staggered to the centre and made the first attack.

Arthur Augustus easily put his head round it, and then—

Thud, thud!

Pearson sagged again to the floor of the ring—in its centre this time!

"One—two—three—four—five—"

The referee was counting him out, slowly and relentlessly. The whole audience was frozen into silence. Would he get up?

"Six—seven—eight—nine!"

Pearson had said to D'Arcy at the start that it was to be a fight to a finish.

It was!

Pearson did not move as the referee counted out the last of the fateful seconds.

"Out!"

Like tautened elastic that has been suddenly cut, the juniors in the gym burst into frantic yells.

"St. Jim's for ever!"

"Gussy's won!"

"Good old Gussy!"

"The champion of St. Jim's!" roared Tom Merry, scrambling up into the ring.

(Continued on page 28.)

FRIENDS WITH A "GREASER!" Trouble stares young Tom Holt in the face the moment he is human enough to talk to a "Greaser." But Tom and trouble are old acquaintances!



WHITE EAGLE!

A Grand Story of a young Britisher's Adventures with a Tribe of Apache Indians in New Mexico.

Told By

ARTHUR PATTERSON

Hunks Makes Friends!
"HES my dog right enough," said Tom. "I suppose you don't know that he saved your life?"
 Miss Chapin frowned. Ladies of her age expect to be taken seriously; and this boy had not even lifted his hat.

"What nonsense! Why, he scared my horse most to death," she retorted.

Tom glanced round, and nodded wisely.

"Jolly clever of him. In two streaks, if he had not, you would have been dragged off among those trees."

"I went off, anyway. I am very much hurt."

The girl's manner entirely changed. She turned away, and put her hand to her head, with a deep sigh, and limped slightly.

Tom felt remorseful.

"I say, I am awful sorry. Sit down and let me see what is the matter."

But she waved him off.

"Oh! You can't see anything. It's inside."

A handkerchief now appeared and she dabbed her eyes. Tom melted.

"How far off do you live?" he asked earnestly. "By Jove! It must have been an awful strain."

The handkerchief dropped from her fingers and she whisked round.

"Say! You must be an Englishman!"

Gone were the tears, if there had ever been any. Gone, also, all signs of distress and fatigue. Her eyes were bright with curiosity; her lips all smiles.

"Do say it again—just as you did then," she exclaimed.

Tom drew himself up stiffly and went very red.

"I didn't say anything—" he began.

But she only laughed at him and clapped her hands.

"There! The same tone! Aren't you an Englishman? Tell me at once."

She was the autocrat now, she-who-must-be-obeyed; and Tom, offended as he was when he perceived that the sigh and the handkerchief were all humbug, could not gainsay her.

"Yes, I have only been in this country five months."

"By Jove!" she exclaimed, with a little shriek. Then she

recovered her dignity. "I guess you think I am very rude. But, say, what is your name?"

"Tom Holt."

"That's British, too. I never thought I should see a real Britisher till I grew up. I am going to Europe when I am eighteen, to see the Tower of London. But I knew you were an Englishman, for no one in America says 'By Jove!' Don't look so ugly. I'm having the time of my life. To think I'd meet an Englishman away out here! You aren't a lord, are you?"

She spoke quite seriously, and Tom, though he still felt ruffled, could not help grinning as he answered her.

"I hardly expected it," she said with a sigh. "Guess that would be too much luck for one day. Well, now, I guess I'll pull for home. He's not lame or anything, is he?"

She went cheerfully up to her horse, and Tom had another shock. The child did not know what fear meant. She actually put up her hand to stroke the beast's neck, though it viciously showed its teeth.

"Peeved, are you?" she remarked coolly. "I don't wonder." Then she turned to Tom. "Will you snoop that rope off and put me up, please?"

But Tom was taking no chances.

"We will keep the lariatte where it is," he said.

"We will not!" the girl exclaimed, with a toss of her head, stung by his tone. "I have no need of you any more."

"That's kind!"

Tom's tone was as short as his temper.

"But having winded my horse and lamed my dog"—Hunks had a thorn in his paw, and was now holding it in the air with the expression of a martyred saint—"I have had enough for one day. I shall see you home, thank you!"

At his words Sadie looked up quickly, glanced at Malinka, then at Hunks, and turned away. So used was she to being waited on hand and foot, especially by men, that any sense of obligation, even to give thanks, seldom occurred to her. Now for the first time in her life she felt ashamed; and Sadie, when she felt anything, had to express it. She thought, first, of saying she was sorry, but her pride was in the way. Besides, words were silly things. There was that poor dog. In an instant the girl was kneeling before Hunks.

"You suffering thing!" she said, taking his paw in her hand. "What have you done to it?"

Hunks looked at her with astonished eyes. He bore no grudge for the whipping; but he had never met a woman before, and had firmly made up his mind that he did not like this one at all. Then he growled, and Tom felt sick.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

TOM HOLT, a sturdy young Britisher of seventeen, lands in New Mexico—at the invitation of some friends of his father's—to start business on the Doggett Ranch.

He finds the place in a deserted and dilapidated condition, and from a letter left by a former employee, learns that his two friends have died. Tom's in a quandary, for he knows nothing about ranching, but he buckles to and makes the ranch-house shipshape. In the course of this general clean-up he comes across a dog, with whom he makes friends instantly. Hunks, as he names the dog, proves a real pal.

Shortly after his meeting with Hunks, Tom falls in with a wandering tribe of Apache Indians. Their chief is Black Hawk. Unknown to Tom, the chief cherishes the hope of wiping out the "whites" in the country, and to help him to collect the necessary knowledge before a successful raid can be made on the white settlements, he offers to take Tom on the trail and show him how to become a successful rancher.

Knowing nothing of the sinister motive underlying all this, and keen to learn the ways of the country, Tom accepts the offer. He proves a most efficient pupil. Then, to further his scheme, Black Hawk tells Tom that he hopes one day to make him a chief—perhaps the greatest honour that could be paid a peeface. In return Tom is requested to tell the white men that the Indians are their friends; that he himself has lived with them for months and found them hardworking and peaceful. It is then that Tom begins to feel suspicious, but he undertakes the job of "ambassador" for all that. A stride Malinka, a fine upstanding mare presented to him by Black Hawk, and accompanied by the faithful Hunks, Tom sets out for Servita. On route Hunks falls foul of a pet spaniel belonging to Miss Sadie Chapin. The spaniel squeals; Sadie's horse bolts; and Hunks, acting to Tom's orders, races to head the terrified animal off. This the sagacious Hunks does, but Miss Sadie comes a cropper in the process. More enraged than hurt, she thrashes Hunks with her riding-crop. Then, turning to Tom, who has galloped up and secured Sadie's horse, she asks him if the dog belongs to him.

(Now read on.)

When Hunks bit he bit like lightning. But Hunks did not bite. Those blue eyes fascinated him. The touch of the fingers upon his paw was delightfully soothing. His growl changed to a whine, and as Sadie lowered her head to examine the hurt, he licked her forehead.

"You old darling!" the girl cried. "Ah, there it is! What a horrid thing!" She turned to Tom. "Please pull it out. I'll hold him for you."

The joke of anyone holding Hunks nearly made Tom laugh. But he saw that this would have been a grave offence; and, kneeling by her, he took hold of the thorn and eliminated it with neatness and despatch.

"Can he walk now?" Sadie inquired anxiously, putting the paw gently down and stroking the pup's head. "Perhaps I had better have him on my saddle."

This idea made Tom choke; but Hunks settled the question himself by performing a little dance upon the grass, and then, sidling up to his new friend, he saluted her impertinently on the lips.

Sadie hugged him.

"You're just a lovely dog!" she exclaimed. "To think I whipped you! I shall break that horrid switch and throw it away!"

And this she did forthwith.

Tom now put her in the saddle, and, without a word of protest, she allowed him to tie one end of the rope to the horn of his own, her own horse being securely haltered with the other.

They chatted away together now, and Tom was distinctly sorry, though he would not have admitted it, when they came in sight of Sadie's home, a large ranch situated in a bend of the river a mile or two from the track of Servita, and just below the place where Hunks had found the spaniel. He was invited to come in and meet her father. But Tom was too shy. The child had told him all about herself, and it became clear to him that this father of hers, Colonel Chapin, was a very big man in these parts.

Miss Chapin was most expensively dressed. The whip she had carelessly demolished for Hunks' sake had a solid silver knob, and was the best of its kind. Now he knew that his own dress was a very shabby one, and he had a mistaken notion that these rich Americans would patronise him. As he was as proud in his own way as Sadie was in hers, such a thought was unbearable.

So, the horse being quite subdued and only anxious to get back to its stable, Tom shifted the rope and said good-bye.

Sadie was very much annoyed. She had taken a fancy to Tom in her high and mighty way. She was uncomfortably conscious that she had not made amends for her cavalier treatment of him in the beginning, and, most of all, she wanted her father to hear him talk. He had not said "By Jove!" again, but he might by-and-by. It would have been such fun to introduce to them a real live Englishman.

When they parted, therefore, Sadie was not cordial in her manner; and Tom, as he rode away, made up his mind very resolutely that American girls were not to his taste, and that he did not want to see this one any more.

This feeling did not last, however, as he jogged along the Servita track—a regular road now. Home-sickness came upon him again, and the sense of loneliness which had oppressed him so acutely when he first arrived at the Doggett Ranch.

This girl, after all, was a link with old times and familiar people. How delightful it would have been to sit at a table and use a knife and fork and feel clean! Besides, why had it not struck him before? Colonel Chapin was just the kind of man he ought to interest in the cause of the Indians. He had forgotten all about them in his wretched silly pride. Now it would be impossible. They might meet, Sadie or he—Sadie! What a pretty, funny little name she had! Just like her, too. But she was so offended because he had

refused her invitation that she would be sure to cut him dead. Serve him right! What a fool he had been! He had missed a chance thrown by Fortune slap in his way. He would never get as good a one again.

Tom groaned, then set his teeth and went doggedly on his way. Well, he would try to do better next time. That was all. There was the town. He could see rows of houses as he mounted a rise in the prairie. A railway-station, too. He had to keep his word to Black Hawk, and play the game. He would, if it were in him.

And, with this resolution, Tom spoke to Malinka, whistled to Hunks, and dashed into Servita at the lope.

On His Lonesome!

HE found little trouble in establishing his identity at the Servita Bank. Pim Bolland, the keeper of the Store, a place where everything was sold—from needles to Winchester rifles, had been, it appeared, a friend of the Todd Brothers. Job Todd had described Tom to him in writing, and the storekeeper had recognised him at once when he came out in the spring.

This discovery made Tom feel limp.

"Why, you told me you did not know the Todds!" he exclaimed, as they walked across the road to the bank.

The storekeeper, a thin, dry pippin of an American, with colourless eyes and a nose as sharp as a knife, gave a jerky laugh.

"Cyan't just remember that. But we was all kind of queer in the boko them days, 'cos so many fellows had been dyin' for nothin'. You was rather too curious, I reckon. So I had to put you off some way. But you got to Doggetts', didn't you, now? Jem Suter told me next day he'd landed you right at the door."

"On the prairie," Tom rejoined shortly.

He could have said more, for the misery and distress of that wretched day had never been forgotten. But he remembered in time that it was his business to make friends with people, so he kept his tongue between his teeth. When the papers had been signed, and he had received a cheque-book from the bank, and found that with interest accruing he had an account of \$7,350, he handed Mr. Pim Bolland a fee of fifty dollars for his trouble on the suggestion of the bank manager, and parted on civil terms.

But Tom was not happy. There was no more feeling in the man than in one of his own boots. He offered no hospitality; no information, even, where Tom could find lodging. The only thing he was interested in was Tom's clothes, which he wanted to replace with a new outfit from the Store—at an exorbitant charge.

Tom found it most difficult to get a home. This was the fault of Hunks. There was an hotel—of sorts—a smartly-painted, ramshackle thing built of boards, kept by a fat man with a strong German accent. But though he was ready, though not anxious, to put Tom in a dirty little room with a cracked mirror and no washbasin for five dollars a night, he said gruffly that no dogs could come into the place.

Now, as Hunks would have broken his heart unless he had slept with his master, nothing was doing there. In the end Tom went to the drinking saloon—the finest building in the place—and arranged with the proprietor, a jovial ex-prize-fighter from the Bovey, New York, to rent a disused stable for five dollars a week. Here at last he settled down, with Malinka to sleep in one stall and Hunks and himself in the other. He bought cooking utensils and bedding from the Store, firewood and an axe, and made camp on his own, independently of hotel keepers and other harpies.

Tom was rather proud of this achievement. He was free; his two best friends were made perfectly happy, and he was saving up his money. It did not occur to him that to live in a stable was not exactly the best way to make friends with the responsible citizens of Servita, or to establish a proper relationship with the daughter of Colonel Chapin, whom he now found to be the largest breeder of cattle in that part of the county, and the owner of the finest racing-stables in the State.

His arrangements made, Tom left his purchases in the care of Malinka, knowing they were as secure under her heels as if they had been in a safe, and sallied forth to see the town.

There was not much to see. Servita was the terminus of a branch railroad, the owners of which had not enough capital to extend the track any farther, and were at the time trying to sell the property to the company owning the main line, which ran north to Santa Fe, a hundred miles away.

As a consequence, Servita was a town at a loose end, and its only business, as far as Tom could make out, was to provide a centre for ranchmen in the neighbourhood to market their stock and purchase the necessities of life; and for their men, mostly cowboys, to amuse themselves. Bill

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With a movement as swift and as silent as any Indian, Tom shielded Hunks with his body, faced the cowboy with his own pistol, and at the same time thrust the muzzle of Mick's revolver hard into his ribs. "If you fire," cried Tom, "so do I!" (See page 27.)

Punt, the saloon-keeper, not only kept a drinking-shop, but a dance-hall as well, and as evening drew on, the place, which had been very quiet during the day, filled up in a surprising manner. Its inhabitants were a hard-faced crew of riding-men, wearing the clumsy brown leather "chaps" on their legs, huge spurs at heel which they clinked as they swaggered along the wooden side-walks, and gaudy-coloured handkerchiefs slung round their necks.

Servita had one main street, and Tom, loitering there, found the crowd all going toward the saloon and the dance-hall. As he had nothing to do, and his loneliness was upon him, he followed them, though neither drinking nor dancing of the sort he knew went on there attracted him in the least. Entering the saloon, he presently found himself in a big square room filled with small tables and a liquor-bar. There he met Mr. Bill Punt in his shirt-sleeves, serving drink at express speed to a crowd of thirsty customers, aided by two muscular barmen, who ran about in bare feet like sailors on the decks of a sailing-ship.

Bill recognised Tom with a broad grin, and a negro immediately asked him for his order, upon which Tom chose a modest pint of lager beer and retired to a corner with Hunks, who, very much subdued among such a crowd of humans, crouched quietly between his knees.

Looking for Trouble!

HUNKS was not afraid of the crowd in the saloon, but it made him watchful and quiet. He was eighteen months old now, and had come into the fullness of his strength. He feared nothing, and though a good-tempered dog underneath a stolid exterior, he had a hereditary inclination to pugnacity. Woe to dog or man who might do him an offence. Men he liked, but there was only one he feared, and that because he loved him.

The saloon filled up. Drinks went the round of many throats; cards made their appearance, and the enjoyments of the evening began. The place was very different, Tom

noticed, from an English public-house. It was much quieter. There was so little conversation that the strains of a band consisting of a fiddle, a concertina, and a very ancient piano, could be heard distinctly coming from the dance-hall next door, accompanied, and sometimes drowned, by the drumming of booted feet, for most of the dancing men performed in their ordinary footwear. Pumps were unknown.

The taciturnity of these stockmen was caused by the life they lived. You don't want to talk much when you are riding eighty miles a day after cattle with one companion, and you can't talk at all, except to yourself, when you herd sheep alone. So you get out of the way of talking at all. These chaps just smoked, and drank, and played euchre, poker, or loo, as the case might be, as solemnly as if they were at a whist-party in the days of Mr. Pickwick.

While Tom watched them all with interest, Hunks dozed, then of a sudden became wide awake. A man pushed open the swing-door, hesitated a moment, came in very gently, and then sat himself down at a table close by Tom, and following this man was a dog. It was about half the size of Hunks, a slender little thing, with a collie's head, big tail and long coat, and a terrier's body and nose. A mongrel, if you like, but a very pathetic and intelligent one. It had bright, timid, dark brown eyes, and was thin as a fox, and not unlike one except for the gentleness of its expression.

The master of the dog was rather of the same type—a small, brown-faced man, with very black hair and eyes, dressed in shabby canvas overalls and Indian moccasins. He carried no pistol, as the rest of the crowd did, but the handle of a long knife stuck out of a broad leather belt. He was a Mexican—half Spanish, half Indian—a race whose general employment in New Mexico was sheep-herding, an occupation looked down upon with infinite scorn by the cow-punching fraternity.

Hunks rose to his full height as the dog approached, and Tom saw the Mexican glance at him apprehensively as he called his dog to heel. But the dog did not obey. She

was a female, and with the intuition of her sex she read the pup's nature and disposition at a glance, so she went straight up to him and calmly licked his nose. She was the first lady Hunks had met, and though he was surprised he was not displeased, and promptly returned the compliment, at which Tom laughed.

"Love at first sight," he said to the man.

The Mexican's reply was a gleaming display of white teeth and a bow as courteous as if he had been a Hidalgo of Old Castile.

"Si, si, señor. Much fine dog, yours. But very, very bravo. No?"

He looked expressively at Hunks' lower teeth, now bared in what he intended for an amiable smile.

"Only to an enemy," Tom replied. "You pat him."

The Mexican did so without hesitation. Hunks politely responded, and they were friends at once.

Then the dogs, after further mutual investigation, lay down side by side, and Tom entered into conversation. It seemed the natural thing to do. But he noticed that the cowboys near them—the saloon was now crowded—turned and looked at him in a surprised way, and then glanced at one another with a shrug of the shoulders, and laughed unpleasantly.

The Mexican saw this, too, and drew his chair away.

"Senior should not talk to me," he whispered.

"Why?" asked Tom bluntly. He did not whisper.

"Ah!" the other said—his voice was bitter and sarcastic—"I am dirt, because my colour is not white. They call me 'Greaser.' I should not be here, but that Bill Punt my friend."

Tom frowned, and his face reddened.

"What does your colour matter? You have as much right here as anyone else."

He spoke distinctly, and the cow-punchers turned and stared at him. Tom stared back, and, as if by accident, let his hand fall upon the Mexican's shoulder. At this one of the cowboys, a big, stout man older than the rest, gave a rasping chuckle, and said in a voice which could be heard through the saloon:

"Blamed if we ain't got a Britisher here! Only that kind of skunk 'd touch pitch this way. What'll we do to him? We'll have to do somethin', sure!"

The speaker had a loud, harsh voice, and as he spoke he brought a red fist down upon his table with a bang which turned the attention of the men at a score of tables upon himself and Tom. There was a loud laugh, the grinding sound of chairs pushed back, and men rising to their feet. The man was evidently a well-known character, for now there were shouts of—

"Go for him, Mick!"

"Make him dance the buck-trot!"

"Here's how for the nigger man!"

The stout cow-puncher responded to this encouragement with a jocular wave of the hand. Then he slowly left his table and confronted Tom.

"Hear that?" he sneered. "Get busy! Start by climbin' on that table!"

Tom did not move. He did not even stand. He was cool now, every nerve set hard. The life he had lived since the spring had given him the lissomness and activity of a cat, and since the Apaches had been his friends they had taught him all they knew of fighting as Indians fight, the first principle of which is to take an enemy by surprise. Tom had looked upon it as a jolly game. White Cat had shown him how to leap when sitting on level ground, with one motion of the limbs, up to a rock four feet in height, fire his revolver, and then spring backwards under cover so swiftly that he would be out of sight in an instant. And he had learnt many other things.

As the Japanese in Ju-Jitsu are masters of the art of wrestling, so Apaches in training—and Black Hawk's party were always in training—have applied the science of movement to fighting as no other race on earth has done. They are, for this purpose, acrobats of the first water, and Tom, though he could never be as quick as they were, had learnt his lesson well.

So he kept still, and only his eyes moved, running swiftly over the body of the bully, noting his breadth of shoulder and powerful limbs, also, that like many such men, he was clumsy in shape and over-confident. Tom had another reason, however, for his self-control. If there were a thing he ought to avoid, it was a row over the question this brute had raised. The party of Indians were due at Servita to-morrow. They would get a poor sort of reception if he, their friend, started with a fight.

The big stockman stamped his foot.

"D'ye hear?" he yelled, in a tone which stopped all the card-playing and brought every man in the saloon crowding round that corner. And as he spoke he clenched two enormous fists, and, with one hand close to his revolver, advanced upon Tom like a thunder cloud.

"I hear," Tom replied, his voice as quiet as the other's was furious. "May I ask a question?"

"Ask it, curse you!"

"Are you the boss of this saloon?"

A quick, hoarse laugh went round. Cowboys are sportsmen, and already Tom's coolness had made an impression. He had a friend, too, for as the big man, for answer, drew his revolver half-way out of holster, a heavy hand fell on his shoulder, and the voice of the saloon-keeper said roughly:

"Put up, Mick Mander! No shootin' here!"

The man sulkily obeyed, but he stood his ground, and turned upon the saloon-keeper savagely.

"Sarvint to yew, Bill! But I didn't know you favoured Greaser trash. Next thing we know you'll fill your place with Apache Indians."

The saloon-keeper laughed good-temperedly. He did not want to offend Mick Mander, who was a valuable customer, being the thirstiest man in town. He was popular, too, in his way, as he had money, and treated his friends liberally at the bar.

"All right, you Mick," he answered. "If any Apaches come around, or any friend of theirs, plug all you can see. That do you?"

A laugh from the boys followed which made Tom feel sick. Perhaps he showed it; perhaps it was mere chance, but as the men were going back to their tables, believing the rag over, Mick Mander said loudly:

"A man who'll touch a Mexican 'ud be friends with a Redskin. Britisher, have you ever had your paw on them? Answer like a little man!"

The words were a challenge, and every man turned to hear the answer.

Tom's breath came short. Ought he to put the question off? But what about to-morrow? Besides, he could not. His temper was at boiling point, and there was something in the very look of this man, let alone the sneer in the last words, which made his fingers itch.

"I have just been five months in camp with a party of Apaches," he said, and his clear young voice rang out all over the saloon. "They are friends of mine, every one!"

He expected a yell from the cowboys, and he rose quietly from the chair to get his back against the wall. But the room was very still. Those nearest to the place were engaged in watching Mick Mander; men farther away only looked at each other, and more than one grinned with an appreciative oath.

As for the stockman, this answer fairly took him by surprise. He was not a person of great perception, though sharp enough in some ways. He saw that Tom was very young; he believed he had cowed him, and that his question would bring a weak denial. At the reply he received his eyes, which were small and very near together, narrowed until they nearly disappeared, and with one swift stride forward he pulled his revolver, as a snake strikes, to shoot.

Whether he meant to kill Tom, or merely, as he declared afterwards, to give him a scare, it is impossible to say. The outcome was entirely unexpected by all concerned, for as he stepped forward he trod hard and heavily upon the tail of the Mexican's dog. The little thing gave a sharp yell of pain, and wriggled away without daring to retaliate. But Hunks took up the cudgels for her, and before anyone knew what had happened Mick Mander's revolver lay on the floor, and he was staggering around in a half-circle with the pup's front teeth firmly fixed in his right wrist.

Hunks made no sound as he went into action; he had been crouched, ready, during the last two minutes. Only the fact that his master kept still prevented him from leaping at the stout man's throat when he spoke first. The cry of his lady friend settled the question. But Hunks' rage did not blind him to danger. He knew as well as anybody what a pistol could do, and when he saw Mander's slip from the holster he changed his point of attack from throat to hand, and so Mick was disarmed.

The effect on the immediate vicinity was electrical. Cowboys have no knowledge of such dogs as the pup. Dogs are not used in any way for cattle, and the general run of those to be found in Western towns are curs of the first water, which, if they obtrude themselves on a cow-puncher's notice, are promptly kicked into the gutter. Such a beast as Hunks was as strange and almost as alarming to these fellows as a timber wolf; and in a moment a space of some yards was cleared round Mick, and several men climbed

on to the table out of harm's way. What Mick said first of all need not be repeated. But as oaths had no effect on Hunks except to make him bite the harder, the man staggered against a table and made an agonised appeal to Tom.

"Take him off! I ain't touched you! He's crushin' me arm to pieces! Oh!"

His voice rose to a shriek. Then Tom spoke and Hunks let go. As he did so the hands of the men on the tables flew to the hip, and the poor old pup, as he stood in the centre of the open space, was the mark of a dozen pistols.

But Tom had foreseen this. Even as Mick Mander appealed to him he swept up the dropped revolver with his left hand, and drew his own with his right. Now, with a movement as swift and silent as any Indian, he shielded Hunks with his body; faced the boys with his own pistol, and at the same time thrust the muzzle of Mick's revolver hard into his ribs.

"If you fire," he said, looking up at the tables, "so do I!"

He spoke quietly enough. There was no heat or fury in him now. His face was white and drawn.

The result of his action was overwhelming. As Mick Mander felt the hard steel strike him he yowled like a whipped kitten, and threw both his hands into the air.

"Hold up! What I said just now I take right back. Apache bucks are straight goods. I swear to it."

The cowboys drew a long breath and lowered their pistols. They had seen many queer things, but nothing to beat this. So amazed were they that for an instant one could hear a pin drop in the saloon. Then a laugh came from somewhere, another, and then the whole crowd followed suit, and Tom found himself the centre of a friendly group of men who shook him by the hand, slapped him on the back, and ended by dragging him up to the bar and calling for every kind of liquor known to man, that they might drink his health—and Hunks'.

Something in the Air.

AFTER all, therefore, Black Hawk and the party came into Servita to find that Tom had kept his word. No man, except perhaps a sailor, is so impulsive as the cowboy of the plains. Those in the saloon that night had felt contempt and loathing of all Apache Indians until Tom turned the tables on Mick Mander. But, after this, anyone but that gentleman himself, expressed keen interest and sympathy when Tom, making hay while the sun shone, told them something of his experiences in the last five months.

Popularity of this nature, however, does not endure. The Apaches were well treated by everyone on their arrival, and for a week found themselves in better repute than they had ever been before; while Black Hawk, and others he deputed for the purpose, began a brisk trade with the storekeeper, the bank president, and certain representatives of commercial interests who happened to be in the place for the disposal of their skins.

At the end of this time, however, most of the cowboys who had been there to begin with, had left Servita, for the fall was near, and all those who wanted work began to scatter among the ranches for the autumn round-up. Those who did not want work, or could not get it, were not the men Tom liked. Almost without exception they were friends of Mick Mander, and men of his type.

It was true that a new lot of boys came in, for Servita was a pleasure resort for miles round; but Tom was soon to learn that poisonous tongues were at work, and a plot brewing which would cost him very dear. News of this came from Bill Punt, the keeper of the saloon.

The ex-prizefighter had taken a real liking for Tom, which was to his credit, for no persuasions could induce the boy to spend his substance either in strong drink or in the pleasures of the town. Tom had seen the effects of such indulgence when he was at sea. He had tasted it once himself, and his motto was: "Never again!"

But this made no difference to Old Billee, as Punt was called by the boys. In his position he heard all news, and one day when Tom was making bread outside his stable, the old pug strolled up, and with a significant wink went into the stable. Tom, who had White Cat staying with him, thereupon set his friend to watch the fire and the cooking outside, followed Billee, and shut the stable door.

"How soon, now, young Eagle," Punt began, using the nickname the cowboys had given Tom—for the story of the coming chieftainship had leaked out from the lips of White Cat—"do you intend to quit these parts?"

"A week," was the reply. "The party will go by that time. Then I get work."

The innkeeper granted in a way which made Tom look at him inquiringly.

"Yes," Billee said. "You may look! If I told you what I know— But that would do no good, and might do harm. See here now. Make your week twenty-four hours, boy—just that! It's noon now, ain't it? We-ell, you finish to-day; sell your outfit, or leave it with me. I'll store it for nothing. Then to-morrow, sun-up, jest naturally light out, quick as you can put spur to your little mare, to Colonel Chapin's ranch. He'll give you work. He told me so to-day; and don't you come near this one-horse town again till I send you word."

The saloon-keeper was fat and had an asthmatic voice, and what with the exertion of keeping it down to a wheezy whisper, and his earnestness and agitation, he was breathless and red as a beet by the time he had finished.

Tom was not surprised at the news, though touched that Old Billee should take so much interest. He had felt that there was something in the air. Cowboys who used to give him a cheery good-day now turned their heads away when he met them in the road, or passed him with a cold stare. Mick Mander, on the contrary, went out of his way to be effusively polite; but Tom did not trust Mick. He could however, take Bill's advice.

"You see it's like this," he said. "I have made a promise to Black Hawk. Between ourselves, the bucks like your drink too much. Queer I should tell you that, but you'll understand. It seems I can keep 'em straight because they see I don't take it. So I have told the old man I will not get away until he is through with his trading. I can't break my word, but I am heaps obliged to you." And he gripped the Pug's big paw.

Old Billee looked aghast.

"D'yew mean to say—I reckon I must be gettin' deaf!—that to keep a promise to a Redskin—a rotten Apache buck—you'll put yourself in danger of yer life? Boy— Why Mick Mander, there! I've shot it! Never mind. He means killin'. Black murder. You have to clear out!"

Tom shook his head.

"I have to keep my word," he said.

"Then you're clean crazy," Billee grumbled, "and should be shut up. I tell you again—"

But he didn't, for at that moment both men heard something which sent Tom flying out of the stable at a bound, and Old Billee, fat as he was, not far behind.

It was that most ominous of sounds in a Western town—the bellowing of an infuriated bull, and accompanying it they heard the shouting and yelling of a crowd of men.

(Tom is booked for another thrilling adventure, chums, so look out for next week's grand instalment.)

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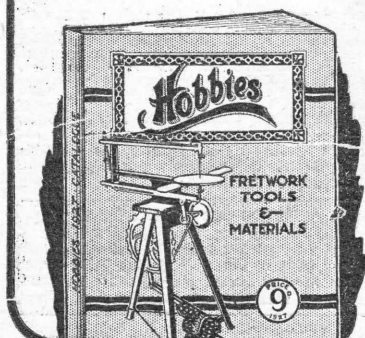
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THE CHAMPION OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 22.)

The cry was taken up, and outside Mellish heard it with a feeling something akin to horror.

Arthur Augustus had won!

What was he going to do now? What would it mean? Had his part in the shady business of the evening become known?

It would mean expulsion!

Solomon would go up to the school to see the Head. There would be an investigation, and his—Mellish's—guilt would be proved!

Inside the gym Arthur Augustus was being hoisted shoulder high, and borne in triumph from the ring!

The Feathers' Medal would go to St. Jim's. D'Arcy was the giddy champion!

He wore his eyeglass with a complacency that became him, beaming on all and sundry.

He shook hands with Dr. Holmes, Kildare, and a host of others, the while requesting that he should be put down.

But as soon as Tom Merry and Blake put him down, Figgins and Kerr hoisted him aloft again.

It was of no use. He had to go through with it! Wasn't he a champion?

"I didn't think you'd pull it off, Gussy," said Tom Merry later, when they had escaped to the dressing-room.

"You're a thumping bruiser, Gussy!" chortled Monty Lowther. "That's what people will call you!"

Arthur Augustus straightened up in the act of removing his singlet.

"Weally, deah boy!" he cried.

"I don't know about other people, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "But we're going to call you the best of all names. You're a right-down hero! I don't want to waste words. You're a brick, and St. Jim's is proud of you!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted Digby. "Where are you going, Tom?"

Tom Merry had turned away towards the door.

"I'm going to find Mellish!" he said grimly.

"I'm coming with you, then," said Blake.

"And me," put in Lowther.

"Same here!" growled Herries.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, what are you goin' to do?" asked Arthur Augustus, pausing in his brisk rub-down. "Wait for me. I—"

"You're not on in this act, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "You've had your turn—Mellish's going to have his now."

And Mellish did!

There was no mistake about it. Tom Merry punished him severely.

But it was the only punishment he had, save for the few days of torment that ensued; torment, wondering when Mr. Solomon would appear. As it happened, however, that worthy kept silent. Perhaps he thought it as well.

He had lost heavily all through, and it cost him a large sum to get his wrecked car away without too many questions being asked.

The Army authorities never found out who the intruder was in the bombing area. But, as D'Arcy said later on:

"Bai Jove, Hewwies, they would have, though, if you hadn't bowwowed your patah's car like you did! What a lucky thing he happened to turn up to see me fight!"

"Thumping lucky, Gussy!" grinned Herries, who didn't add that he had taken French leave of it. It was sufficient to know that his action had been the means of bringing Gussy back to the gym in time to become the champion of St. Jim's!

THE END.

(Next week's topping yarn, dealing with your old favourites, is entitled: "SKIMPOLE'S TELESCOPE!" by Martin Clifford. Make sure you read it, chums.)

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