

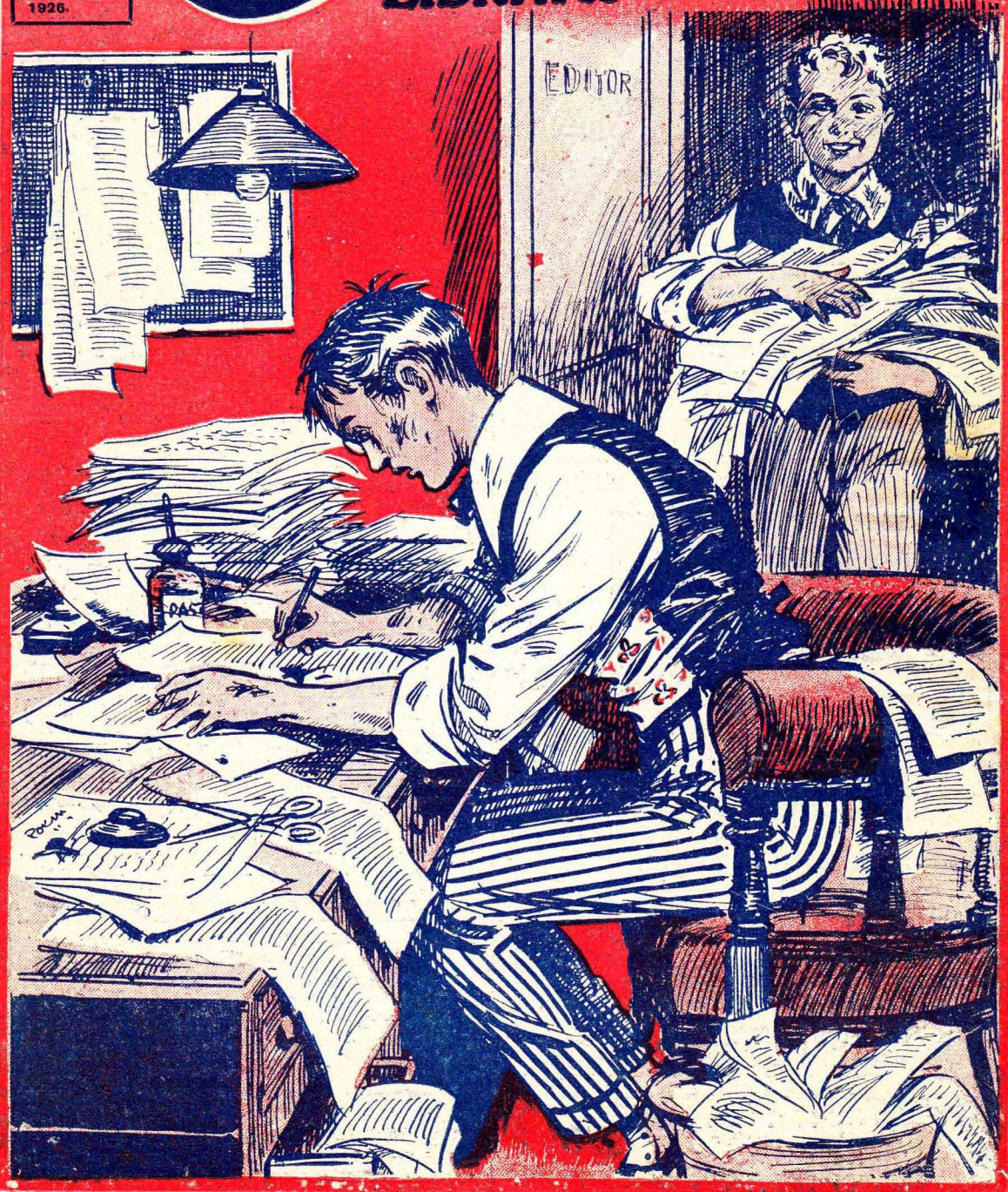
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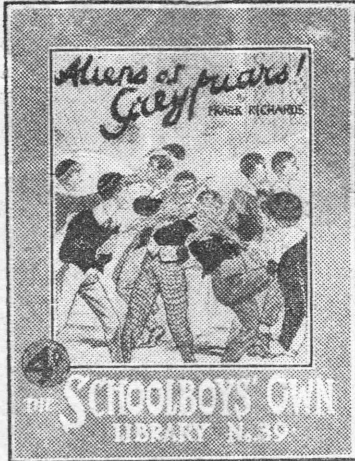
No. 978.
Vol. XXX.
Nov. 13th,
1926.



GUSSY IN THE EDITORIAL CHAIR!

(Arthur Augustus D'Arcy finds editing a paper more difficult than choosing a new fancy waistcoat—and he finds that difficult enough in all conscience! Read "Gussy's Newspaper!"—this week's fine school yarn.)

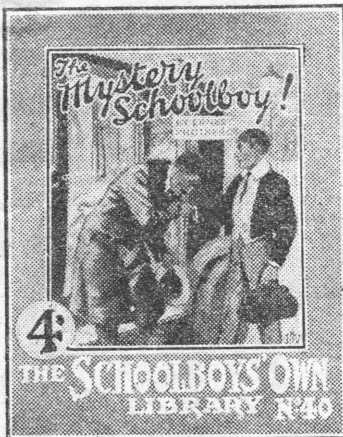
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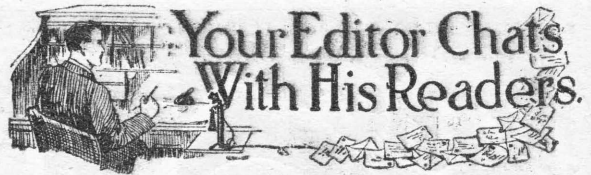
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WELL DONE!

GEMITES, obviously, have been doing a fair amount of recruiting, so to speak, just recently, for this week's mail is marked by the extraordinary number of letters I have received from new reader chums. This is a good sign, and my thanks go out to you chaps who have been doing your little bit. In particular do I want this par to catch the eye of I. Wells, of Walthamstow, for he writes and tells me that he has enrolled twenty new readers. Splendid, my Walthamstow chum. I don't want to appear greedy, but I do hope you continue to introduce the GEM to your pals. And you other chaps, I know, will pile in when you come across a non-reader of your favourite paper. Remember, we want to "tell the world" that the GEM is the greatest story paper on the market, and we can do it, too, if we pull together.

HE TALKS IN HIS SLEEP!

A loyal chum from Wales tells me that although he leads a "steady and regular" life he is told by his young brothers that he is continually talking in his sleep. Why is this, he asks? Talking in one's sleep is unquestionably due to a highly excited condition of the brain, and this may be due to any number of causes. A common one is the habit of eating a heavy meal last thing at night, but as my correspondent declares that he leads a "steady and regular" life, I don't think this cause applies to his particular complaint. It may, however, be due to worry, or it may be due to the fact that, just prior to retiring to rest, my chum's mind has been concentrated upon some absorbing and interesting topic. I do not, in any case, know of a remedy for it, neither do I think there is one. Perhaps the only palliative is to avoid reading exciting books, or taking part in heated discussions for some time before going to bed.

"THE TREASURE HOUSE."

A Book that will Explain the World.

One of the very finest books for boys and girls ever published, has just appeared. Its title is "THE CHILDREN'S TREASURE HOUSE." It is edited by Arthur Mee, and is being issued in fortnightly parts.

It will describe in simple language all the things most beautiful and most wonderful in Nature, history, and art. It will give little lives of famous men and their work, tales of distant lands and past ages, miracles of science, and secrets of Nature, and will include the most remarkable collection of "explaining pictures," running to over 20,000, that have ever been brought together.

Butterflies, moths, birds, fish, flowers, fruit, etc., will all be superbly illustrated in their full natural colours, and many pages will be richly printed in photogravure. A more inspiring or more instructive book to put into the hands of boys and girls it would be impossible to find.

Part 1, packed with fascinating reading and containing 750 pictures, is on sale everywhere to-day, price 1s. 3d.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME:

"STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE!"

By Martin Clifford.

That's the title of the next extra-long complete story dealing with the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. Mind you read it, chums!

"WHITE EAGLE!"

By Arthur Patterson.

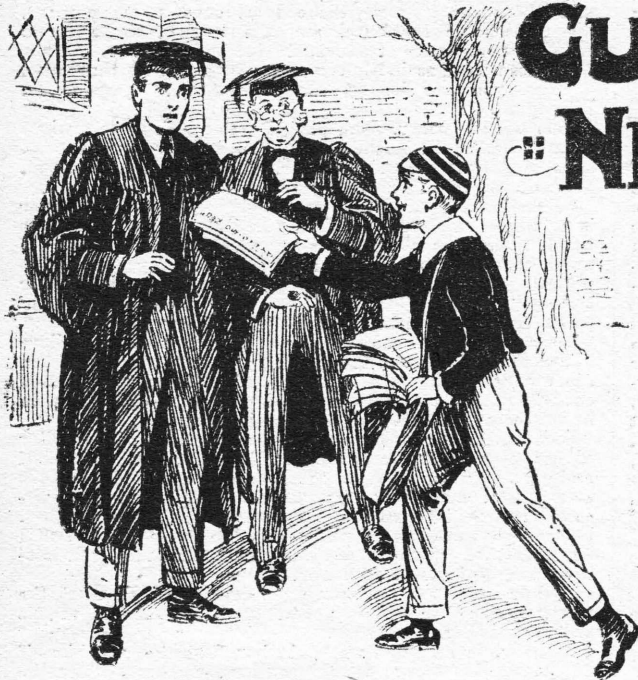
There will be another ripping instalment of this popular serial, boys, next Wednesday. Look out for it!

THE TUCK HAMPER.

And don't forget to send your jokes along, for there's still a number of delicious Tuck Hampers waiting to be won. Order your GEM early, chums! Cheerio, till next week,

Your Editor.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS' NEW VENTURE! When the swell of St. Jim's learns that a newspaper, complete with printing plant, etc., is for sale, he conceives the idea of becoming its proprietor! More than that, he actually buys it, and the surprise of the year is sprung upon St. Jim's in the shape of—



GUSSY'S NEWSPAPER!

A Magnificent New Long Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, featuring Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in a new role.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Newspaper For Sale!

"WANT to buy a noospaper, Master D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the shining light of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was sauntering down the village street of Rylcombe, when he was suddenly hailed by young Grimes, the grocer's boy.

Arthur Augustus stopped, and stared.

Grimes, with a few of his friends of the errand-boy fraternity, was standing in front of the window of the "Rylcombe Recorder" office.

In the window appeared a large auctioneer's poster, which Grimes & Co. had been perusing.

"What a remarkable question, Gwimes!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I do not wish to buy a newspaper—that is to say, such a notion has nevah occurred to me. But why do you ask?"

Grimes jerked his hand towards the poster in the window. "They're sellin' up, Master D'Arcy," he said. "The 'Recorder's' gone smash, an' old Pilkington, the editor, is clearin' out."

Grimes had spoken carelessly enough—quite cheerfully, in fact. The sudden failure of the little local newspaper did not greatly concern him. In his thoughtless, happy-go-lucky way, Grimes did not stop to reflect that the winding-up of the "Rylcombe Recorder" was one of life's minor tragedies.

Arthur Augustus, however, saw the serious side of the situation at once. He screwed his celebrated monocle into his eye, and perused the auctioneer's poster, and his face became grave.

"This is feahfully wuff on poor old Pilkington!" he said. "I knew he was havin' an uphill stwuggle with his papah, but I nevah thought it would come to this. Sellin' up, bai Jove! I am vewy sowwy for Pilkington."

Grimes gave a grunt.

"Pilkington's an ass!" he said disrespectfully. "He's a bald-headed old buffer—"

Arthur Augustus silenced Grimes with a frown of disapproval.

"Weally, Gwimes, I wegard those remarks as opprobvious! Mr. Pilkington is a vewy sharnin' an' amiable person."

"That may be; but he can't edit a paper for toffee," said Grimes. "How could he expect the 'Recorder' to sell when he filled it with a lot of tommy-rot that nobody wanted to read? Instead of reportin' footer matches, an' glove-fights, an' runnin' a cowboy serial, he's been cramming his blessed paper with articles on 'Sussex in the Stone Age,' an' 'How to catch butterflies,' an' all that sort of tosh. Bah!"

Grimes spoke with supreme contempt for Mr. Pilkington and all his works.

Perhaps the grocer's boy had reason to feel a little sore.

Only a few days before he had written a thrilling description of a local football match, in which he—Grimes—had covered himself with glory, and taken three goals. He had submitted the report to Mr. Pilkington for publication in the "Rylcombe Recorder," and the editor had kindly rejected it on the spot.

But Arthur Augustus knew nothing of this incident, and he considered that Grimes was being rather hard on Mr. Pilkington.

"You have no wight, Gwimes, to set yourself up as an authority on how a newspaper should be wun," said the swell of St. Jim's sternly. "I considah the 'Wecordah' was quite a decent wag—though I admit there was woom for improvement. A few articles on male fashions, for instance—"

Grimes grinned, and covertly nudged one of his companions. Arthur Augustus saw the grin and the movement, and he frowned.

"Kindly welfwain frowm tweekin' my wemarks with widicule, Gwimes!" he said. "You ought to be weally sowwy for Mr. Pilkington, in the present cwisis. I certainly am. I will go in an' oflah him my condolences!"

So saying, Arthur Augustus glared at Grimes—whose expression was now as solemn as an owl's—and stepped into the dingy little building.

The offices of the "Rylcombe Recorder" were anything but palatial. The editor's room was at the back, shut off from the sunshine, and about as cheerful as a dungeon.

A roll-top desk, at which the editor was seated, was the only thing which lent a touch of dignity to the apartment. For the rest, there were a couple of rickety chairs and a small, lop-sided table on which stood a prehistoric typewriter—a machine of the "invisible" type, which ought to have been pensioned off long ago as unfit for further service.

Mr. Pilkington looked up as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy knocked and entered.

The editor of the "Rylcombe Recorder" was a stout, florid-faced gentleman of about fifty. The cares of editorship had deprived him of most of his locks, for he was nearly bald. Normally, his eyes were keen and bright, but now they had a tired, lack-lustre expression.

"Good-afternoon, Master D'Arcy!" said Mr. Pilkington.

He had a nodding acquaintance with the swell of St. Jim's, for Arthur Augustus had sometimes called on him with advertisements for insertion.

"Good-aftahnoon, Mr. Pilkington! I have just seen the postah in your window, announcin' the sale by auction of your newspaper an' pwintin' plant. I am vewy sowwy you have got to close down the papah."

"There is no alternative, Master D'Arcy," said Mr. Pilkington wearily. "I have struggled against the stream for a long time, hoping that things would improve; but they

have grown steadily worse. The paper has been a dead loss, and it would be folly to persevere with it any longer."

Arthur Augustus nodded sympathetically.

"When I came here after the War," went on Mr. Pilkington, "and launched the 'Recorder,' I believed it would prove a paying proposition. Rylcombe is a growing village, and there is a wide network of villages round about, in which I hoped my paper would circulate freely. But I have been up against fierce competition, and it has beaten me."

"Are you wewefwin' to the 'Wayland Gazette'?"

Mr. Pilkington nodded.

"The 'Gazette' is a very old-established paper, and it has made this corner of Sussex quite a stronghold," he said. "People won't look at any rival newspaper. When I have tried to coax them into buying the 'Recorder,' they have told me that the 'Wayland Gazette' was good enough for their grandfathers, and their fathers, and it's good enough for them. They are a very conservative crowd in this district, Master D'Arcy. They don't take kindly to innovations."

Mr. Pilkington paused, and sighed.

"I have worked like a galley-slave to bring my paper into prominence," he said. "I couldn't afford a staff—except for a printer and a compositor—and I've done all the donkey-work myself. I have been editor, advertisement manager, reporter, and office-boy rolled into one. I've stuck at it early and late, always hoping that the tide would turn; but the circulation has never exceeded a few hundred copies, whereas that of the 'Wayland Gazette' runs into many thousands. It would be madness to go on flogging a dead horse. So I must sell up and clear out."

Arthur Augustus was deeply concerned.

"I can only wepeat, Mr. Pilkington, that I am dweadfully rowwy," he said. "Does this mean wuin to you?"

Mr. Pilkington's gloomy brow cleared somewhat.

"Happily, no," he said. "My formidable rival, the editor of the 'Wayland Gazette,' has proved not only a rival, but a true friend. He has offered me a situation on the staff of his paper."

"Bai Jove! How jolly decent of him!"

"It is, indeed; though it will involve a swallowing of pride on my part, Master D'Arcy. It is not easy for a man who has been his own master for many years to have to take a subordinate position with a rival editor. However, I must not be churlish about it, for without this kind offer I should indeed be stranded."

Arthur Augustus glanced round the dingy little room, and in that moment he realised something of the hard and lonely struggle which Mr. Pilkington had undergone. Practically single-handed, he had got out his modest little news-sheet week by week, only to see it being slowly strangled by that mightier organ, the "Wayland Gazette."

"Do you think you will find a purchasah for your papah, Mr. Pilkington?" inquired Arthur Augustus.

"I am not very sanguine, Master D'Arcy. Money is tight in the country to-day, and people don't go around buying a pig in a poke. To be quite frank, the 'Recorder' is not a tempting proposition to a prospective purchaser. The printing plant is of a nearly obsolete type; the furniture was second-hand in the first place, and is now about fifth-hand. The offices are to be let at a very nominal rental, but, as you can see, they are the reverse of sumptuous. However, the auction is on Wednesday afternoon, and then we shall see what we shall see. It would be a great piece of luck for me if some wealthy American dropped into Rylcombe, and conceived the notion of running a newspaper for his own amusement. But I am dreaming dreams. Wealthy Americans never penetrate to Rylcombe."

Arthur Augustus, seated on one of the rickety chairs, appeared to be wrapped in thought. He scarcely heard what Mr. Pilkington was saying. Already the germ of an idea was beginning to take shape in his mind.

Presently his eyes gleamed, and he sprang to his feet with a suddenness that quite startled Mr. Pilkington.

"Master D'Arcy—"

The swell of St. Jim's brought his hands together with a crack like a pistol-shot.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed excitedly. "I've got a perfectly stunnin' wheeze! I will buy up this papah myself! I will be its editah an' pwoprietah, an' my pals at St. Jim's will help me to wun it!"

Mr. Pilkington looked amazed, as well he might.

This sudden and amazing decision of Arthur Augustus almost took his breath away.

After all the disparaging things which had just been said about the concern—the old-fashioned printing plant, the ramshackle furniture, and the lack of scope for a village newspaper—it seemed incredible that Arthur Augustus should seriously contemplate buying up the paper. "You—you are joking, Master D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Pilkington.

"On the contwawy, deah man, I was nevah more sewious in my life," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, I shall have to get my patah's permish, before buyin' the papah, but I do not think he will waise any objection."

"But—but I have already explained to you that the paper is a white elephant," said Mr. Pilkington. "It is not worth having as a gift. As a speculation, it is scarcely worth consideration. Although it is not in my interests to say so, you will be throwing good money away, Master D'Arcy."

But Arthur Augustus was not to be discouraged.

True, the "Rylcombe Recorder" had been a failure under Mr. Pilkington's editorship; but the swell of St. Jim's believed that a newspaper, staffed by schoolboys, and edited by his noble self, would sell like hot cakes in Rylcombe and district—if only for its novelty.

Besides, Arthur Augustus would change the whole policy of the paper. Its contributions, hitherto, had been dull and dry. Under Gussy's editorship they would be light and bright, snappy and sparkling. Articles on butterfly-catching would be replaced by something more exciting. Learned disquisitions on "Sussex in the Stone Age" would be superseded by racy reports of football-matches, and boxing-bouts, and sports generally.

Arthur Augustus had a very shrewd idea of what the newspaper public wanted; and he felt confident of his ability to deliver the goods.

Already, in his mind's eye, Arthur Augustus saw himself enthroned in glory as the editor of the "Rylcombe Recorder." In the revolving-chair which Mr. Pilkington now occupied, the swell of St. Jim's would sit in state, monarch of all he surveyed. His chums of the Fourth, and Tom Merry & Co. of the Shell, would rally round him—hanging on his lightest word, so to speak. And the "Rylcombe Recorder," from being a dull weekly sheet which nobody wanted to read, would blossom forth as a real live, full-blooded newspaper, bang up-to-date, and in touch with all topical events.

It was quite an entrancing prospect to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He turned to the astonished Mr. Pilkington.

"My mind is quite made up," he said. "I am goin' to buy your papah, Mr. Pilkington—unless, of course, I am outbidded at the auction. But if I can secuah the papah at a weasonable figgah, I shall jump at it."

Mr. Pilkington smiled.

"The precocity of youth is amazing," he said. "I have told you that the 'Recorder' is a pig in a poke, and a white elephant—I am mixing my metaphors, but no matter—yet you seem to think you can make something of the paper. I ask you, Master D'Arcy, how can you reasonably hope to succeed where an experienced editor has failed?"

"I shall twy a diffewent policy," said Arthur Augustus. "If you will pardon my sayin' so, Mr. Pilkington, I think the 'Wecordah' has been watah dull an' stodgy. I shall atah all that. I shall infuse plenty of life an' sparkle into the papah, an' I have no doubt it will take the little world of Wylcombe an' Wayland by storm!"

"Brave words!" said Mr. Pilkington. "But you will find yourself up against a brick wall. You cannot hope to compete with the 'Wayland Gazette.'"

"I hope not only to compete with it, but to go one bettah, an' dwive it off the market!" said Arthur Augustus blandly.

"Bless my soul! The boy's enthusiasm is running away with him!" gasped Mr. Pilkington.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"I will not twespass upon your time any longah, Mr. Pilkington," he said, extending his hand. "I shall be at the auction on Wednesday, an' I hope the papah will pass into my possess. I will telephone to my patah without delay in order to obtain his sanction."

Mr. Pilkington shook hands in a dazed sort of way with the swell of St. Jim's, and Arthur Augustus took his departure.

Outside the "Recorder" office, Grimes, the grocer's boy, was still loitering. Arthur Augustus smiled at him indulgently.

"Gwimes," he said, "I am glad you dwew my attention to this auction sale. I have had a chat with Mr. Pilkington, an' I have decided to buy up his newspapah, an' take contwof of it."

"Great pip!" ejaculated Grimes.

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"Five pounds I am offered for the entire property of the 'Rylcombe Recorder,'" said the auctioneer contemptuously. "Any advance on five pounds?" "Ten!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I would like to ask you, sir, where could you hope to buy a newspaper for ten pounds?" "Haah!" said Arthur Augustus promptly. The auctioneer poised his hammer and frowned his disapproval at the St. Jim's junior. (See Chapter 3.)

"Pway tweat this in confidence, Gwimes, an' do not mention it to any of the St. Jim's fellows. I wish to spwing a surpris on them."

And Arthur Augustus nodded to the grocer's boy, and passed on down the village street, leaving Grimes staring after him and tapping his forehead significantly.

"Mad!" muttered Grimes. "Mad as an 'atter, or a March 'are! Master D'Arcy—noospaper proprietor! If that ain't altogether too rich!"

And Grimes laughed aloud as he strolled away at last with his basket.

CHAPTER 2.

A Sin of Omission!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY did not allow the grass to grow under his feet.

Within a couple of minutes of leaving Mr. Pilkington, he was in the post-office putting through a telephone call to Eastwood House.

It was a trunk call, and there was rather a long delay. But at last a deep and fruity voice sounded over the wires. It was the voice of Bingham, the butler.

"Eastwood House here. Who are you, please?"

Arthur Augustus disclosed his identity, and the voice of Bingham, the butler, became deeper and fruitier, and profoundly respectful.

"You wish to speak to his lordship, Master Arthur?"

"Yaas, please!"

"One moment, sir; I will put the call through to his lordship."

There was a brief pause, and a sudden buzzing in his ear which made Arthur Augustus give a yelp and a jump; and then Lord Eastwood's pleasant voice became audible.

"Is that you, Arthur? What is it, my boy? It is very unusual for you to ring me up on the telephone. I trust nothing is amiss?"

"No, wathah not, patah! I wang you up in ordah to

ask your consent to a little scheme of mine. I have a gweat desiah to turn newspapah pwopwietah."

"W-w-what!" gasped Lord Eastwood, wondering if he had heard aright.

"As a side-line to my studies at St. Jim's, of course," added Arthur Augustus hastily. "I should not allow the wunnin' of a newspaper to intahfeah with my education."

"But—but I do not understand, Arthur. Pray be more explicit!"

Arthur Augustus enlightened his lordship at once.

"There is a newspapah for sale in the village—the 'Wylcombe Wecordah,'" he explained. "It is to be sold by auction on Wednesday, an' it stwuck me that, as it is goin' cheap, I might take advantage of this wippin' opportunity of becomin' a newspapah pwopwietah."

"Bless my soul!"

"I have just had a chat with Mr. Pilkington, the editah, an' he tells me that the pwintin' plant is vevy old-fashioned, an' that the furniture will go for a mere song. He does not think there will be many biddahs at the auction. It is the chance of a lifetime, patah, an' I feel sure you will guawantee me the necessary funds, so that I can go ahead an' buy up the papah."

"Well, well!" Lord Eastwood laughed softly over the wires. "This is very sudden, Arthur! I had no idea you had any aspirations in the journalistic line."

"I have w'ritten special fashion articles for the 'St. Jim's News'."

"Yes, yes; but this is a very different proposition. Supposing I give my consent to your purchasing this newspaper, what will you do with it?"

"Make a business entalpwise of it, patah," said Arthur Augustus promptly. "It will be a hobby an' a source of income at the same time."

"H'm! I cannot see you making your fortune out of a village newspaper, my dear boy. Without wishing to damp your ardour, I am afraid you would lose money over the venture."

Arthur Augustus pooh-poohed his suggestion. True, Mr. Pilkington had lost money hand over fist; but then, in Gussy's estimation at least, Mr. Pilkington was not a business man. He had not "pushed" his paper as he might have done. He had not canvassed the tradespeople in Wayland and Rylcombe for advertisements. There was a ready revenue to be derived from this source, and Mr. Pilkington seemed to have overlooked it. Perhaps he had been too busy in other directions.

At all events, Arthur Augustus felt confident that he would be able to make a glorious success where Mr. Pilkington had made a ghastly failure.

The swell of St. Jim's talked to his sire on the telephone at great length, and with much eloquence. His enthusiasm was red-hot; he was full of his new project. He urged his father to finance the venture, and he brushed aside all the obstacles which Lord Eastwood raised, as if they were the merest trifles.

Lord Eastwood listened to his son's eloquence, and he was influenced by it, for Gussy's enthusiasm would have infected anybody at that moment.

Having pondered the matter at some length, Lord Eastwood spoke.

"Very well, Arthur," he said. "I will give you your head in this matter."

"Thanks aw'fly, patah!"

"I confess I am rather dubious as to the outcome of your experiment," said Lord Eastwood. "Your youth and inexperience are stumbling-blocks to its success. But you shall at least be given the opportunity of showing what you can do in this direction. It may be that, with the co-operation of your friends, you will be able to run a newspaper of the modest dimensions of the 'Rylcombe Recorder,' and make it pay. But it will take up nearly all your spare time—"

"We sha'n't mind that a bit, patah," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "At least, I sha'n't mind, an' I don't suppose my pals will."

"Quite so. Well, if you can manage to run the paper at a profit, all well and good. But if you lose money over it, you will have to abandon the enterprise. You clearly understand that, my boy?"

"Yaas, patah. But you can set your mind at rest on that score. We are not likely to lose money ovah it."

"You say the auction is on Wednesday?"

"Yaas."

"Then I will post you a blank cheque, bearing my signature, and the amount can be filled in by you at the auction. I will leave it to your discretion as to how far you should go in the bidding; but you are not to pay an inordinate sum for the newspaper. If the printing plant is the worse for wear and tear, and the furniture is dilapidated, you should be able to buy up the whole concern at a reasonable figure. Now, what of the offices?"

"They are bein' let at a pound a week, patah."

"Then I will make myself responsible for the first month's rent," said Lord Eastwood.

"You are vewy kind, patah."

"Not at all, my boy. You did me a service some time ago, when you managed one of my seaside hotels during a strike of the staff, and you may look upon this as a return for your help on that occasion. I wish you luck with your venture, Arthur; but I confess I find it difficult to picture you as a newspaper proprietor! But if you are as efficient an editor as you are an hotel manager, all will be well. Good-bye, my boy, and let me know how you get on. I will put the cheque in the post without delay."

"Thank you most aw'fly, patah!" said Arthur Augustus quite gleefully. "Good-bye!"

The swell of St. Jim's replaced the receiver on its hooks, and strolled out of the post-office.

He had worked the oracle successfully, and his heart was very light as he set out for St. Jim's.

With his hands in his pockets, and with his shining silk topper perched at a rakish angle on his noble cranium, Arthur Augustus sauntered up the lane to the school.

He was deep in thought—planning what he would do with the "Rylcombe Recorder" when that paper was under his supreme control. He had taken it for granted that he would have no serious rivals at the auction, that the paper would pass automatically into his hands. And then—and not until then—he would let his chosen chums into the secret, and offer them jobs on the staff.

Jack Blake and Tom Merry, he reflected, would make a useful pair of sub-editors, provided they were prepared to toe the line, and accept the editor's decision as final on any point that might arise.

Manners of the Shell knew something about printing. Manners owned a small printing press, and he had often printed copies of the "St. Jim's News" on it. With a little practice Manners would soon be able to print a newspaper, and Arthur Augustus mentally decided to appoint him

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foreman printer. Herries and Digby, Gussy's chums in the Fourth, could serve under Manners as compositors.

There were other posts to be filled, scarcely less important. An advertisement manager would be required, and a number of reporters, and possibly a competition editor; for Arthur Augustus believed that a weekly competition, with attractive prizes, would be a good thing.

Then there would have to be some general assistants, and a printer's devil. For the last-named post, young Wally D'Arcy, the minor of Arthur Augustus, was an ideal choice.

The swell of St. Jim's was debating these matters in his mind, when he was suddenly hailed by three stentorian voices.

Jack Blake and Herries and Digby were standing in the roadway outside the gates of St. Jim's. They made megaphones of their hands, and bawled to their elegant chum as he approached.

"Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus came out of his cogitations with a start. His chums eyed him very grimly as he came up.

"Where have you been, you dithering ass?" hooted Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You're half an hour late for tea!" snorted Herries. "Did you have to wait while they baked the blessed cake, or what?"

"The—the cake!" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, the cake!" roared Digby. "You went down to the village hours ago to buy something extra-special in cakes. What's happened to it? Is it under your coat, or have you scoffed it on the way back?"

"Oh 'ewmubs!" stammered Arthur Augustus.

In the excitement of recent events, he had clean forgotten the object of his errand to the village.

It had been arranged that Arthur Augustus should call at the bunshop, and buy one of their very best plum cakes, in honour of a distinguished guest who was coming to tea in Study No. 6.

Ernest Levison was bringing his charming sister Doris to tea, and a handsome spread had been prepared. Only the cake was wanted to crown that royal repast; and the cake was not visible! Arthur Augustus had arrived—very belatedly. But of the cake there was no sign.

So absorbed had Arthur Augustus been in his latest and greatest "wheeze," that he had forgotten the cake, and the tea, and the distinguished guest—everything, in fact, which he ought to have remembered.

The swell of St. Jim's blinked at his chums in blank consternation.

"I—I say, deah boys—" he faltered.

"Produce that cake!" said Jack Blake in sulphurous tones. "If you've given it away to a tramp by the roadside, or let the Grammar School chaps raid it, we'll jolly well bump you!"

"I—I—"

"Where is it?" roared Herries and Digby in unison.

Arthur Augustus passed his hand over his brow.

"I—I'm feahfully sowwy, deah boys! To tell you the twuth, I forgot it!"

"What!"

It was a positive howl from Blake, and Herries, and Digby. They glared at Arthur Augustus as if they would eat him.

"You—you forgot it?" shouted Blake. "You've got the awful nerve to turn up half an hour late for tea without the cake you went expressly to fetch?"

"My mind has been occupied with more important mattahs, Blake."

"More important! Oh, my hat! What could be more important than that extra-special cake from the bunshop, you champion ass?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, if this isn't the absolute giddy limit!" ejaculated Herries. "You mean to say you never went to the bunshop at all, you duffer?"

"I did not, Hewwies. I fully intended to call at the bunshop, but my attention was suddenly—distracted by—"

"By what?" demanded Digby.

Arthur Augustus was silent. He was resolved to "keep mum" about his projected purchase of the Rylcombe newspaper.

"Oh, bump him!" said Jack Blake impatiently. "He's held up tea for half an hour, and kept Miss Doris waiting, which is dashed bad manners. And now he's turned up empty-handed!"

"I shall apologise to Miss Levison," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Yes, you will; but not before we've given you a record bumping!" said Blake. "Collar him!"

There was a sudden rush of feet towards Arthur Augustus, and he was collared and whirled off his feet, and bumped with great vigour and heartiness in the school gateway.

Bump!

"Yawwooh! Hands off, you uttah wottahs! You are wumplin' my clobbah—"

The arrangement of his clothes was always a sore point with Arthur Augustus. He minded it much more than the shock to his anatomy which a bumping entailed.

Three times in succession the swell of St. Jim's smote the flagstones. Then he sat up, gasping. His silk topper was bowling away through the quadrangle; his collar and tie were streaming loose; his hair looked as it might have looked if he had just encountered some fearsome apparition.

"You wuff wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I shall have to change my clobbah now, befoah I can pwesent myself to Miss Levison."

"Serves you jolly well right!" grunted Blake. "Buck up and change, for goodness' sake, and we'll get a cake from the tuckshop! It won't be the sort we wanted, but it will have to do."

Arthur Augustus tottered to his feet, and limped painfully away to make himself presentable. And the avengers trooped off to the tuckshop.

A few moments later they all met again in Study No. 6, where Levison and his sister were waiting.

Doris had made herself comfortable in the armchair, and was deep in the "Holiday Annual." She pretended not to have noticed the long delay, and she quickly cut short the profuse and humble apologies of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tea was decidedly late, but it was a merry meal. The autumn dusk had fallen, and the lights were lit and the curtains drawn. It was very cosy and cheery in Study No. 6, and in that genial atmosphere Jack Blake & Co. thawed towards Arthur Augustus, and soon ceased to banter him about his sin of omission.

CHAPTER 3.

Under the Hammer!

ON Wednesday afternoon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy slipped quietly out of gates after dinner.

There was a junior football match on Little Side, but it was not an important affair, the visitors being a weak team from Abbotsford.

Arthur Augustus had found no difficulty in persuading

Tom Merry, the junior captain, to play somebody in his place, as he was called away on urgent business.

The nature of that "urgent business" was a mystery to Gussy's chums in the Fourth and the Shell. They knew that Arthur Augustus was nursing a secret of some sort. More than once during the last day or two he had been on the verge of divulging it. But always he had checked himself in the nick of time.

Ever since the afternoon when he had returned cakeless from the village, Arthur Augustus had been in a state of restless excitement. Mr. Lathom had come down heavily on him for allowing his thoughts to wander. Out of class the swell of St. Jim's had been oddly preoccupied.

Pressed by his chums to explain what was in the wind, Arthur Augustus had smiled enigmatically, but said nothing.

And now he was on his way to the auction sale.

Lord Eastwood, true to his promise, had posted the blank cheque, and it reposed in the wallet of Arthur Augustus.

The auction was being held in the editor's room at the "Rylcombe Recorder" offices. It was not making much of a stir, apparently. A few inquisitive villagers had drifted into the newspaper offices to inspect the printing plant and the rickety furniture, and to speculate how much it was likely to fetch. But there seemed to be no prospective buyers; for which Arthur Augustus was duly thankful.

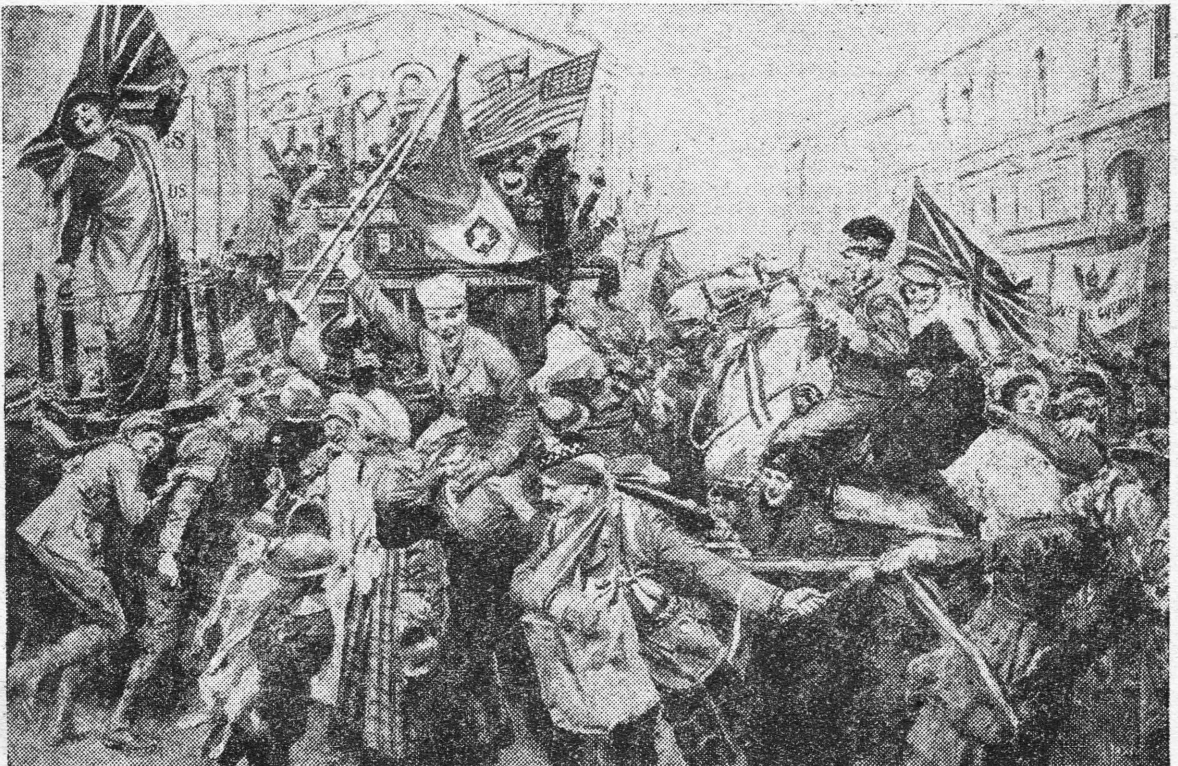
On Gussy's arrival, the auctioneer's clerk handed him a catalogue; and the swell of St. Jim's wandered around with the rest of the sightseers and inspected the stock. It was to be sold collectively.

Certainly the furniture and effects of the "Rylcombe Recorder" seemed anything but attractive; but this only increased Gussy's hopes of securing the property at a very modest figure.

After his tour of inspection, he went back to the auction-room.

The auctioneer had arrived, and was standing at the editor's desk. The members of the public were seated on chairs, and among them was Mr. Pilkington. He nodded genially to Arthur Augustus—though he must have been feeling his position keenly.

(Continued overleaf.)



VICTORY! The amazing scene at Piccadilly Circus on the morning of the first Armistice Day. A remarkable reproduction in full colours, after the original black and white sketch by F. Matania, is presented Free with every copy of this week's UNION JACK—2d.

"Still as keen as ever on becoming a newspaper proprietor, Master D'Arcy?" he asked, with a smile.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You have seen the printing plant? What do you think of it?"

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"I should say it was the original pwintin' pwess invented by Caxton!" he replied. "It is certainly vevy ancient. But it will answer my purpose."

"You seem to be the only prospective bidder," said Mr. Pilkington, glancing round the room. "Those people are locals, drawn here by mild curiosity. If you have no opposition you ought to get the property for next to nothing. There is no reserve on it."

Arthur Augustus, however, was not destined to have matters all his own way. Opposition arrived, just as the auctioneer was about to get to business; and it arrived in the person of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, of the St. Jim's Fourth.

Lumley-Lumley was a millionaire's son, and the assembly might have gathered as much from the rather patronising way in which he lounged into the auction-room.

Then he caught sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

What was Gussy doing here? Had he come to the auction out of idle curiosity, like the others, or did he propose to bid for the newspaper?

Lumley-Lumley scented a rival at once.

Like Arthur Augustus, it was Lumley's ambition to buy up the "Rylcombe Recorder," and take over the editorship, with a few fellows to back him up in his enterprise. He had not expected to come up against a rival bidder from St. Jim's, and Gussy's presence in the auction-room gave him quite a shock.

Arthur Augustus, for his part, received an equally unpleasant shock. He had just been congratulating himself that there would be no opposition—that he would have the field to himself.

Lumley-Lumley's sudden appearance at the sale could mean only one thing. He had come with an eye to business. That was evident from the dismay he showed on catching sight of Arthur Augustus.

"What's the little game, Gussy?" he murmured.

Arthur Augustus turned his monocle upon his school-fellow.

"I do not undahstand you, Lumlay—"

"Cut it out! Are you here as a spectator, or as a bidder?"

"A biddah!" said Arthur Augustus promptly.

Lumley-Lumley's frown deepened. His fears were confirmed.

"You're going to bid for this miserable rag of a newspaper?"

"Yaas!"

"What on earth for?"

"I am eagah to twy the expewiment of wunnin' a newspaper of my own," said Arthur Augustus.

"Same here," said Lumley-Lumley, rather grimly. "It seems that our ambitions run in the same direction. I've thought all along how ripping it would be to become a giddy newspaper proprietor. Of course, the 'Recorder' isn't a real newspaper; it's only an apology for one. It's like the newspapers they used to sell during the strike—a scrappy sheet of stale news. Still, it's the only sort of newspaper I shall ever have the chance of owning. A schoolboy could hardly buy the 'Times' or the 'Morning Post.'"

"Hardly!" agreed Arthur Augustus, smiling.

"But I shall buy the 'Recorder,' and turn it into a real, live, go-ahead newspaper," said Lumley-Lumley.

"That is pwecisely my own intention, deah boy!"

"Ass! You've got about as much journalistic ability as a sheep!"

"Weally, Lumlay—"

"You'd only make a fearful hash of the paper, if you bought it," went on Lumley-Lumley. "Anyway, we can't buy it—unless," he added, with a sudden inspiration, "we join forces."

"That is quite imposs, Lumlay," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I could not think of takin' a partnah."

There was a pause. The auctioneer was tapping impatiently on the desk with his hammer. It was time to set the ball rolling—past time, in fact.

"Look here, Gussy," muttered Lumley-Lumley desperately. "Why don't you cluck this harebrained scheme of yours, and drop out? Running a newspaper isn't in your line. Now, if it was a hosiery business, or a hatter's, you would be in your element."

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"I wegard your remarks as impertinent, Lumlay. I have no intention of dwoppin' out. I am quite wesolved to purchase this newspaper."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 978.

"I guess we'll see about that!" said Lumley-Lumley, clenching his hands.

The millionaire's son had come to the auction with his pockets well-lined. He did not know the extent of his rival's resources, but he was hopeful that he would be able to outbid Arthur Augustus. He wished, however, that Gussy had not put his finger into this pie. With two fellows bidding against each other, the newspaper was bound to realise a higher figure than would otherwise have been the case. And Lumley-Lumley, although rolling in money, did not believe in spending it foolishly or recklessly.

"Gentlemen," said the auctioneer, "we will now get to business! You have had an opportunity of viewing this property, which is to be sold entire. I will not enlarge upon the merits of it"—possibly the speaker could find no merits to enlarge upon!—"but will proceed with its disposal forthwith. Now, gentlemen, what am I offered for the printing plant, the furniture, and the other effects, as detailed in the catalogue?"

"Five pounds!" said Lumley-Lumley.

The auctioneer turned to the St. Jim's junior.

"You are a humorist, sir," he said. "Are you sure you don't mean five pence?"

"I said pounds," said Lumley-Lumley doggedly. "A five'er's a very sporting offer for this useless lumber."

"Really, really!" protested Mr. Pilkington, who was sitting near.

"Five pounds I am offered," said the auctioneer, contemptuously. "Any advance on five pounds?"

"Ten!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"That offer is a little less farcical than the first," said the auctioneer. "But I would ask you, sir, where could you hope to buy a newspaper for ten pounds?"

"Heah!" said Arthur Augustus promptly.

And there was a chuckle among the onlookers.

The auctioneer poised his hammer and frowned disapproval at D'Arcy.

"A niggardly ten pounds I am offered," he said. "What advance on ten pounds?"

"Thirty pounds!"

Lumley-Lumley's voice rang through the auction-room.

He hoped, by suddenly trebling the amount of the bid, to take the wind out of Gussy's sails, and to secure possession of the newspaper before Arthur Augustus had time to recover from the shock.

There was a buzz of excitement among the audience. Mr. Pilkington elevated his eyebrows. All eyes were focused upon Lumley-Lumley. That junior sat cold and impassive.

"Ah!" said the auctioneer. "Now we are beginning to talk business! After a little preliminary jesting, we are getting down to brass tacks. Thirty pounds I am offered for this newspaper and its accessories. Any advance on thirty pounds?"

"Guineas!" drawled Arthur Augustus.

Lumley's little ruse had not dismayed him in the least. The swell of St. Jim's was serene and unruffled.

The millionaire's son bit his lip. He had not expected this.

"Thirty-five pounds," he said.

"Guineas!" said Arthur Augustus.

Things were warming up, and the spectators looked on with evident enjoyment.

"Forty pounds!" said Lumley-Lumley.

He had an idea that Arthur Augustus would now begin to get alarmed at the lengths to which the bidding was going. But the swell of St. Jim's did not turn a hair.

"Guineas!" he said; and his calm, drawing tone considerably nettled his rival.

The auctioneer smiled benignly upon the schoolboy bidders. "Forty guineas I am bid," he said. "If there is no advance upon that sum, the newspaper becomes the property of the young gentleman with the monocle."

He raised his hammer and brought it down upon the desk—once, twice.

"Going for forty guineas! Going—going—"

Lumley-Lumley staked everything upon a final throw. It was his limit, and he hoped against hope that it would put his rival out of the hunt.

"Fifty pounds!" he exclaimed dramatically.

There was a tense pause. All eyes were upon Arthur Augustus, to see how he would take it.

Arthur Augustus hesitated a moment. Lumley-Lumley was watching him closely, with an anxiety he could not conceal.

Then, just as the auctioneer was about to bring his hammer into play, Arthur Augustus capped his rival's offer.

"Fifty guineas!" he said.

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders and scowled.

"I'm finished!" he muttered. "Dashed if I'm going to blue a fortune on a lot of silly old lumber. My pater wouldn't stand for it."



"There you are, sir," said Cardew, submitting a number of slogans for Mr. Chapple's approval. The greengrocer's surliness gradually vanished, and he became infected with Cardew's enthusiasm. "These slogans are quite clever," he said. "How did you manage to think of them?" Cardew tapped his forehead with his forefinger. (See Chapter 6.)

The hammer came down, while the auctioneer uttered the usual formula.

"Sold!" he concluded. "Sold for fifty guineas to the young gentleman with the monocle."

Arthur Augustus beamed. His cherished ambition was realised, and he was now the owner and proprietor of the "Rylcombe Recorder."

The small assembly dispersed; and Jerrold Lumley Lumley rose to his feet and swung out of the auction-room in a huff. He bestowed a rather baleful glare upon Arthur Augustus from the doorway.

The swell of St. Jim's saw the hostile glance, but it did not disturb him. He strolled up to the auctioneer's desk and produced Lord Eastwood's cheque from his wallet and made it out for the requisite sum.

The signature of Lord Eastwood made quite an impression on the auctioneer. He addressed Arthur Augustus quite deferentially as he handed him a receipt.

Mr. Pilkington had lingered in the room, in order to fix up with Arthur Augustus about the renting of the offices. An agreement was drawn up and signed; and other formalities were completed.

"Now you can go right ahead, Master D'Arcy," said Mr. Pilkington, with a smile. "The newspaper is yours, to make or mar. I shall be very curious to see the first issue of a paper produced by schoolboys."

"It's goin' to be a weal wippah!" said Arthur Augustus, with enthusiasm. "I am vevy eagah to get busy on it. When I bweak the news to my fwiends at St. Jim's, I wathah think it will come as a surpriswe to them."

Arthur Augustus hurried out of the office and down the village street, the keys of the "Rylcombe Recorder" premises jingling in his pocket. He felt a very important personage, and his gait was more majestic than usual.

On passing the bunshop, Arthur Augustus noticed that Lumley-Lumley was within, consoling himself with tarts and tea after his failure at the auction.

"That's good!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I was wathah afwaid that Lumlay would get to the school first, an' bweak the news. Howevah, I shall have the pleasuah of doin' that myself."

And Arthur Augustus walked on briskly and cheerily.

CHAPTER 4.

Gussy's-Bombshell!

"HERE he is!"

"Here's the giddy wanderer!"

"Come right in, Gussy, and give an account of yourself!"

Arthur Augustus stepped into Study No. 6. Jack Blake and Herries and Digby were at tea; and there were three guests—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, of the Shell.

The juniors were looking a little glum, and Arthur Augustus noticed it at once.

"I twust you wiped up the gwound with Abbotsford, deah boys?" he said.

Tom Merry grunted.

"The boot was on the other foot," he said. "Abbotsford brought over a weak team, and I think we rather underrated them. Anyway, they licked us—three goals to two. I'm sorry I let you off playing now, Gussy. Julian came in in your place, but he wasn't up to your form."

"I am sowwy, deah boy—"

"Bless your sorrow!" growled Jack Blake. "Where have you been all the afternoon? You've no business to cut a footer match, unless it's for something jolly important."

"It was extremely important, Blake."

"No use asking you what it was, I suppose?" said Herries. "You've been mighty mysterious the last day or two—hugging some secret or other. Why can't you confide in your pals?"

"I am about to do so," said Arthur Augustus, with a smile. "I attended an auction sale this afternoon—"

"Somebody selling up his wardrobe?" hazarded Monty Lowther. "How many gross of silk toppers have you bought, Gussy?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Have you bought anything at all?" asked Tom Merry curiously.

"Yaas, deah boy." Arthur Augustus smiled at his chums across the tea-table. "I have bought a newspapah."

Having made that tremendous pronouncement, Arthur Augustus expected his schoolfellows to be fairly staggered. The result was disappointing. They just stared at him.

"Why the merry dickens should you buy a newspaper?" asked Blake. "Was it a very special edition—a War-time copy, or something of that sort?"

"You do not compwehend, Blake. I have not bought a copy of a newspapah; I have bought an actual newspapah, togethah with the pwintin' plant, the furniture, an' the entiah stock!"

"What!"

It was a sudden and unanimous shout from the juniors.

The secret was out now, and the effect which Arthur Augustus had hoped to produce was now achieved.

If the swell of St. Jim's had suddenly dropped a bombshell in the study, the effect could not have been more electrifying.

The juniors jumped to their feet, wide-eyed with wonder.

"You—you've bought a newspaper?" gasped Tom Merry incredulously.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ye gods and little fishes!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "How many thousands of quids did it cost you, Gussy?"

"I bought it for fifty guineas," said Arthur Augustus.

His chums gaped at him.

"Fifty guineas!" echoed Jack Blake. "Well, I knew you could get a second-hand car at that price, but I've never heard of a newspaper going for such a sum. Are you having us on toast, Gussy?"

"No, deah boy. I wepeat, I have purchased a newspapah

for fifty guineas, an' if you cannot take my word for it, heah is the weceipt."

Arthur Augustus flourished the document, and his chums crowded round to inspect it.

"Why, it's the 'Rylcombe Recorder' that Gussy has bought!" exclaimed Manners.

"Pweicely!"

"But—but what's the bright idea, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry. "What on earth induced you to buy up the village newspaper?"

"I am goin' to wun it, deah boy. With my patah's permish, I have bought up the papah, an' wented the offices, an' I am now a full-blown newspapah chief. I thought it would be a wippin' wheeze to have a newspapah wun by schoolboys. I shall expect you fellows to wally wound, of course, an' back me up in my entahpwise."

"This is too sudden!" gasped Jack Blake. "I can't quite realise it—yet. Gussy, a giddy newspaper proprietor! Oh, my hat!"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and glanced severely at Blake.

"Do you not considah me capable of wunnin' a newspapah, Blake?"

"I consider you capable of doing anything that would qualify you for a lunatic asylum!" was the reply. "So this is the deep, dark secret you've been nursing these last few days?"

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Yaas. An' unless you address me in a more respectful mannah, Blake, I shall not offah you the post of sub-editah. I was thinkin' of appointin' you and Tom Mewwy my first lieutenants."

"A jolly good wheeze!" said Tom Merry heartily.

The occupants of Study No. 6 were quite excited now. Having digested the amazing information which Arthur Augustus had imparted, they proceeded to ply him with questions.

"When do we make a start, Gussy?" asked Herries.

"Who's going to do the printin'?" inquired Manners.

"You'll be wantin' a comic column, of course?" queried Lowther.

"How much are you going to charge for the paper?" interrogated Digby.

Arthur Augustus held up his hand.

"All these mattahs will be settled in due course, deah boys," he said. "I think our best plan will be to hold a special meetin' in the Common-woom this evenin', an' appoint the staff, an' go into all the details."

"Hear, hear!" said Jack Blake. "Gussy's talking quite sensibly for once!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I can see plenty of fun looming ahead," said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "Life has been pretty tame just lately. Something is needed to put some pep into it, and Gussy has found the something. Running a newspaper will be great sport!"

Arthur Augustus rubbed his hands.

"I anticipated that you would all be keen on this venture, deah boys," he said.

"We're keen as razors!" said Tom Merry. "Dash it all, there's no reason why experienced journalists like ourselves shouldn't make a success of a local newspaper. The 'Rylcombe Recorder' has been rather a wash-out in the past, but we'll jolly soon alter all that. We'll cut out all the tame stuff, and deliver the real goods."

"Yes, rather!"

Arthur Augustus frowned slightly.

"You will kindly undahstand, Tom Mewwy, that I am in contwol of the newspapah, an' that all questions of policy must be weferred to me?"

"Oh, quite!" said Tom, with a grin.

"Whilst I shall be glad of your help, I shall bwook no interferehce from any of my subordinates," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I wish to make that perfectly cleah at the outset."

"The king has spoken!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "Remember, you fellows, that Gussy is the editor, proprietor, president, board of directors, and Lord High Everything! We are merely his serfs and vassals. To hear him is to obey."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus glared at the humorous Monty.

"I wegard you as a cwass ass, Lowthah!" he exclaimed.

"I was always your devoted disciple," agreed Lowther simply.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" said Tom Merry. "What about this meetin'? The sooner we get busy on this stunt the better."

It was arranged that Arthur Augustus should post up an announcement on the notice-board at once, convening a special meeting in the junior Common-room at seven o'clock.

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All were cordially invited, and Arthur Augustus was to do the chin-wagging, as Monty Lowther put it.

The School House was already buzzing with excitement, for Lumley-Lumley had returned from the village and acquainted all and sundry with the news that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had bought the "Rylcombe Recorder."

The news created a big sensation, and when seven o'clock came the Junior Common-room was crowded.

Fellows had rolled up in dozens to attend the meeting. Figgins & Co. had trooped over from the New House, and the School House—or, rather, the junior section of it—was present to a man.

Wally D'Arcy & Co., the scamps of the Third, had squeezed themselves in, and the Common-room was buzzing like a beehive.

Arthur Augustus, flushed and smiling, mounted the table. He received quite an ovation.

"Three cheers for the St. Jim's newspaper magnate!" called Monty Lowther.

"Hurrah!"

Some of the cheers were ironical, but the majority were sincere.

Arthur Augustus waited patiently for the applause to subside. Then he cleared his throat, and proceeded to address the meeting.

CHAPTER 5.

Choosing the Staff!

"GENTLEMEN!" began Arthur Augustus. "I do not propose to deliver a long-winded oration—"

"Thank goodness for that, anyway!" murmured Jack Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus glared at his chum.

"Pway wefwain fwom intewwuptin', Blake! As you are doubtless aware, gentlemen, I have to-day taken over the village newspaper, the 'Wylcombe Wecordah.' I believe it is the first time on record that a schoolboy has become the editah an' contwollah of a weal newspaper. It is a big responsibility, an' I look to you, deah boys, to give me your hearty an' unanimous support in this venchah!"

"Rely on us, Gussy!" came a chorus of voices.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Lumley-Lumley.

Arthur Augustus looked surprised. Lumley-Lumley was sitting in the front row, smiling amiably. The millionaire's son had parted from Gussy in high dudgeon after the auction, and his present attitude was surprising.

Arthur Augustus had half expected that Lumley-Lumley would make trouble at the meeting. Having been outbidden at the auction, it was only to be expected that Lumley would be disappointed and resentful. Instead of which he was quite cheerful about it, and was actually offering to back up Arthur Augustus in his enterprise.

It seemed that Lumley-Lumley had decided to take a philosophical view of the matter, and, having failed to secure the newspaper himself, was willing to offer his services to his successful rival.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle, and beamed at the assembly.

"It is my intention, deah boys," he said, "to make the 'Wecordah' a weal, live, go-ahead newspaper—spicy, an' sparklin', and stimulatint'!"

"Sounds like a ginger-wine advertisement," said Levison major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We are goin' to smash all opposition," went on Arthur Augustus, with a glare at Levison. "The 'Wayland Gazette' has had the field to itself too long. We are goin' to challenge its supwemacy, an' gwadually win all its weadahs ovah to us."

"My hat!" ejaculated Redfern of the New House. "That's a tall order, Gussy!"

"It can be done, an' it will be done!" said Arthur Augustus, with spirit. "Aftah all, the 'Wayland Gazette' is a wathah feeble sort of newspaper!"

"Feeble!" gasped Dick Redfern. "Why, you duffer, the 'Gazette' is one of the finest papers in the county! I worked on it once, as a reporter, when I bunked from St. Jim's, so I ought to know!"

"Opinions diffah," said Arthur Augustus. "An' my own opinion is that the 'Wayland Gazette' is a vewy feeble wag. The only reason why it has flouished so much is because it has nevah had any sewious opposition. We are goin' to pprovide the opposition wight now."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo, Gussy!"

The swell of St. Jim's surveyed his audience with glistening eyes. He began to wax eloquent.

"The 'Wylcombe Wecordah,' deah boys, is goin' to be the gwreatest papah evah!" he declared. "It will circulate

fwely thwough Sussex—in mansion an' cottage, in factory an' farm! On buses, twains, an' twams, you will see people eagahly pewusin' it."

"What-ho!" said Monty Lowther. And he added:

"And every landlord, every boarder,
Every prisoner, every warder,
All will revel in the 'Recorder'—"

"Silence, please! You're called to order!" said Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"We shall go gweat guns, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I pwopose to stick to the pwesent title of the papah—the 'Wylcombe Wecordah'—an' to intwoduce a numbah of sub-titles, such as the 'Wayland Wondah,' the 'Abbotsford Argus,' the 'Wapshot War-Cwy'—"

"And the 'St. Jim's Siren'!" suggested Talbot.

"And the 'Fourth Form Foghorn'!" chuckled Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Pway wefwain fwom asinine fwivolity, Lowthah!" he said sternly. "An' now, gentlemen, havin' appwised you of my intentions with wegard to the papah, I will pwocceed to select my staff."

There was a buzz of excitement in the Common-room. "If you're looking for a first-rate editor, Gussy," said Tom Merry, "I'm your man!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! I have already told you that the 'Wecordah' is goin' to be undah my supweme contwol. You an' Blake may become sub-editahs, if you wish. If not, I do not suppose I shall lack for volunteahs—"

"No, rather not!"

"I'll be a sub-editor, Gussy!" shouted a score of voices.

Certainly, there was no lack of keenness to rally round Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in his new enterprise.

"We'd better bag the subs' jobs while we've got the chance," said Jack Blake to Tom Merry.

Tom nodded.

"We'll be your right-hand men, Gussy!" he said.

"All sewene, deah boy! Now I shall be wantin' an advertisement managah—a keen, bwainy fellow, of supewiah intellect, an' not afwaid of hard work."

"That's a life-like description of me!" said Lowther. "You must have had me in mind, Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

(Continued overleaf.)

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"I was not thinkin' of you, Lowthah. A perverted sense of humah is not one of the qualifications of an advertisement managah. I was wondahin' if Levison would care to fill this post?"

"Like a shot!" said Levison.

"Good!" murmured Arthur Augustus; and he jotted down Levison's name.

"You'll need some support, old top," said Cardew, turning to Levison. "Clive an' your humble servant will give you a hand with the advertisement bizney. Are you agreed, Sidney?"

"Rather!" responded Sidney Clive.

Arthur Augustus added the names of Cardew and Clive to his growing list.

"With wegard to the pwintin' of the newspapah," he said. "I think Mannahs knows somethin' about pwintin'."

"He does," said Lowther. "Printing and developing are just in his line."

"Ass! I am not alludin' to photogwaphic pwintin'," said Arthur Augustus. "I distinctly mentioned the newspapah. Would you care to accept the job of foreman pwintah, Mannahs?"

Manners grinned.

"Well, if there's no chance of bagging the editor's job, I suppose the foreman printer's is the next best thing," he said. "Put me down, Gussy."

"He'll want a couple of compositors," said Herries.

"What about Dig and myself?"

Arthur Augustus nodded his approval.

"I say," remonstrated Figgins of the New House, "you're filling your blessed staff with School House fellows, Gussy! Where does the New House come in? We've got all the talent and experience in our House, and yet you're giving us a miss! What about Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, and myself, and Dick Redfern? Reddy ought to be editor, really. He knows more about running a newspaper than you would ever learn in a month of Sundays!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"If you want a column of 'Tuckshop Topics' every week, Gussy, I'm your man!" said Fatty Wynn.

"And if you want expert advice, from a fellow who has been there before, you can't do better than appoint me your adviser-in-chief!" said Dick Redfern.

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"I am sowwy," he said; "but I have quite made up my mind that this is to be a School House concern. I disagree with Figgins when he says that all the best bwains are in the New House. My own House is simply bwimmin' ova' with bwainy people, an' I shall not need to look any farther."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry heartily. "When it comes to intellect, the New House has to be graded C3. They are not in the same street as our noble selves. It's a jolly good idea, Gussy, to make this a School House stunt!"

There were shouts of approval from the School House juniors, and groans and boos from the New House contingent.

George Figgins glared at Arthur Augustus.

"How can you run a newspaper without having New House brains on your staff?" he demanded. "Why, you'll go bust in a week!"

"Wats!"

"If you say 'Rats!' to me, you blessed tailor's dummy—" began Figgins truculently.

"Order, please!" rapped out Jack Blake. "Let's get on with the bizney! The New House is dead in this act. We don't mind them attending the meeting, so long as they behave themselves, but they're not going to be given jobs on our newspaper!"

"My newspapah, Blake!" corrected Arthur Augustus. "Kindly undahstand, you New House fellows, that I have no animosity against you personally. I simply feel that we can get along quite well without your assistance."

Figgins showed his disgust by getting up and walking out. The door of the Common-room slammed behind him.

The rest of the New House fellows remained, curious to see who would be chosen to fill the other places on the staff of Gussy's newspaper.

"We shall want some reporters," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "There will be lots of local events to write up."

After a good deal of wrangling, three reporters were chosen. Monty Lowther, Bernard Glyn, and Harry Noble were eventually selected by Arthur Augustus.

"Where do I come in, Gussy?" asked Lumley-Lumley. "I've had no previous experience of newspaper work, but I'm steady, sober, and industrious. Don't leave me out in the cold!"

Arthur Augustus rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I am afwaid all the important jobs are filled, Lumlay," he said.

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"Then bring me in as a spare man, so that if one of your sub-editors gets whooping-cough, or comes out on strike, I can step into his shoes."

"That is quite a good notion," said Arthur Augustus. "You can be our weserve man, Lumlay."

"What about me?" demanded Wally D'Arcy, of the Third. "Dash it all, Gussy, you can't leave your own kith and kir out of it!"

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"I have already awwanged to give you a job, Wally."

"What as?"

"Pwintah's Mephistopheles."

"Eh?" gasped Wally. "What the merry dickens does that mean?"

Everybody looked mystified for a moment, until enlightenment dawned upon Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha! Gussy means printer's devil!" he roared.

"I wegard the use of that word, Lowthah, as indelicate," said Arthur Augustus, "so I substituted anothah. You are to be the pwintah's Mephistopheles, Wally."

"Do I have horns and a tail?" inquired Wally, with a chuckle.

Arthur Augustus ignored that flippant query.

"I think my staff is complete now, deah boys," he said. "One moment, though. We shall pwobably wequiah a competition editah, for I am thinkin' of wunnin' a weekly competition, to make the papah more populah."

"I vote for Talbot!" said Tom Merry promptly. "He's got just the right headpiece for that sort of job."

Several other fellows asserted their claims, but Talbot was finally chosen as the competition editor.

The business of the meeting was now concluded. Those who had obtained jobs on the staff of Gussy's newspaper were in high glee. Those who had been "turned down" were not quite so happy. But disappointments were inevitable, in a case of this sort, and it was not possible to please everybody.

Arthur Augustus was more than satisfied. He had got some good men round him, and he ordered his staff to report for duty on Saturday afternoon.

Saturday was to be quite a field day at the offices of the "Rylcombe Recorder." Luckily, there was no football fixture in the afternoon, so the schoolboy pressmen would be free to devote all their energies to the novel task of preparing the first issue of Gussy's newspaper.

CHAPTER 6.

Getting Easy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, editor and proprietor of the "Rylcombe Recorder," was seated at his desk.

His coat was off, and his shirt-sleeves rolled up, yet he was perspiring profusely. And no wonder! For young Wally D'Arcy, printer's devil and general factotum, had banked up a tremendous fire in the grate.

Even with the windows flung wide, the editor's room was like a furnace.

Arthur Augustus was busy! There were manuscripts to right of him, manuscripts to left of him, manuscripts piled on the desk in front of him. The swell of St. Jim's, in fact, resembled a human island in a sea of manuscripts!

It was Saturday afternoon. In the outer offices, the school-boy staff of the "Rylcombe Recorder" was hard at work. They had been busy, as a matter of fact, since the night of the meeting; and this accounted for Arthur Augustus being snowed under with manuscripts.

Every fellow had put his shoulder to the wheel, and written something for the paper.

The manuscripts covered a wide range of topics, from Gussy's dignified editorial down to Wally D'Arcy's "Hints on Tadpole Catching."

Arthur Augustus was now attacking that mountain of manuscripts, with the object of sorting out the wheat from the tares.

Presently he paused, and touched a push-bell on his desk. The summons was answered with alacrity by Wally D'Arcy. The fag came into the room, clicked his heels, and stood smartly to attention.

"You rang, sir?" he murmured respectfully.

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus. "Send the advertisement managah in to me."

Wally bowed, with mock gravity, and withdrew. He returned in a few moments with Ernest Levison, whom he ushered into the editor's sanctum.

"Hallo, old nut!" said Levison cheerily. "You seem very much in the toils—up to your giddy eyebrows, in fact. How are things going?"

Arthur Augustus eyed the advertisement manager reprovingly through his monocle.

"Things are goin' quite well, an' they will go even bettah if you will kindly wefwain fwom addressin' your editah as



Satisfied that everything was in order, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Tom Merry and Jack Blake gathered up the pile of papers and rushed them out into the street, where the Third-Formers pounced upon them eagerly. Then mounting their machines the fag newsboys pedalled briskly away. (See Chapter 8.)

"Old nut"! I cannot countenance such familiarity from a subordinate."

"My hat!" gasped Levison.

"You will please wemambah, Levison, that a newspaper chief is entitled to be tweated with wespect."

Levison grinned.

"Do you want me to grovel at your feet, and lick your boots, Gussy?" he asked.

"I do not want fawnin' servility, Levison, but pwopah wespect. I sent for you to inquiah what you are doin'."

"I was just giving Lowther a hand with an article he's writing—'How to Dress Smartly on a Beggarly Thousand a Year,'" said Levison.

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"It is not your place to assist Lowthah with his asinine articles," he said. "You are the advertisement managah, an' in that capacity you should now be wunnin' a'round, collectin' adverts for the papah. I want you to pop ovah to Wayland an' intahview all the pwincipal twadespeople, an' persuade them to advertise their goods in our columns."

"Right-ho!" said Levison. "I'll take Cardew and Clive along with me, and we'll get busy. What are your advertising charges, by the way?"

"I have decided to charge a shillin' per inch," said Arthur Augustus. "That is a vevy weasonable wate to kick off with. Latah on, when our circulation wuns into thousands an' thousands, I shall inwease the scale of charges. I look forward to the time when a full-page advertisement in the 'Wecordah' will bring us in about five hundred quids!"

Levison chuckled at the sublime optimism of his chief.

"You've got a priceless imagination, Gussy," he said. "I can see the Wayland tradespeople laying out five hundred quids a week on advertising—I don't think! It's going to be a job to squeeze a few bobs out of them, to begin with."

Arthur Augustus looked severe.

"If you are not keen on your duties, Levison, I can soon find anothat advertisement managah," he warned him.

"Oh, I'm keen enough," said Levison. "I'm ready for any amount of work. But I can't share your rosy dreams of the future, that's all. We'll collect the bobs first, and the quids will take care of themselves."

"Cawwy on!" said Arthur Augustus.

And he dismissed his advertisement manager with an airy wave of the hand.

Levison collected Clive and Cardew from the outer office, and the trio tramped over to Wayland.

"We're booked for a busy afternoon, dear men," drawled Cardew. "Canvassin' for advertisements is a job after my own heart. We'll trot into all the giddy shops an' emporiums, an' impress upon the rather phlegmatic tradespeople of Wayland that it pays to advertise. Leave the chin-waggin' to me, Ernest. When I turn on the tap of eloquence, the adverts will come rollin' in!"

"I'm not so sure," grunted Levison.

The trio tramped on together. Their first place of call was the Wayland Stores—one of the busiest establishments in the High Street.

Cardew asked to see the manager, and a stout, bald-headed man came waddling up.

"Good-afternoon!" said Ralph Reckness cheerily. "We represent the advertisement staff of the jolly old 'Rylcombe Recorder.' As you are probably aware, the paper is now owned an' controlled by a St. Jim's fellow."

The manager nodded and smiled.

"There is a paragraph about it in the 'Wayland Gazette,'" he said. "It states that a number of St. Jim's boys are experimenting with a newspaper; and it gives the 'Rylcombe Recorder' exactly one week to live!"

"My hat!" said Clive.

This did not sound at all encouraging. Evidently the "Wayland Gazette" had a poor opinion of the journalistic abilities of the St. Jim's juniors:

"One week to live, eh?" said Cardew. "Of all the dashed impudence! Why, the 'Recorder' will still be alive an' kickin' when the 'Wayland Gazette' has been relegated to the limbo of the what's-a-name! Now, sir, we will come to business."

Cardew glanced round the stores. A few customers were making purchases at the long counter.

"You don't seem so busy as you might be," he observed. "You must advertise, my dear sir! In these hustlin' times,

a business man can't afford to stand still. Unless he keeps his name an' goods constantly before the public, the grass will start growin' on the floor of his shop. His business will go to rack an' ruin. Advertisin', sir, is the dynamo an' the drivin' force of a successful business. The Americans realised this long ago; in this country we are just beginnin' to tumble to it. Have you heard the little ditty which runs:

'He that whispers down a well
About the goods he has to sell,
Won't reap the golden, gleamin' dollars
Like he who climbs a tree, an' hollers!'

The manager smiled. "I have not heard it before, but it is certainly sound horse-sense," he said. "I am not such an old stick-in-the-mud as you seem to think, my young friend. I advertise every week in the 'Wayland Gazette.'"

"The 'Wayland Gazette,'" said Cardew, "is shortly goin' to be hustled off the market by our own newspaper. It gives us one week to live. We will be more charitable an' give the 'Wayland Gazette' a month. By the end of that time, we shall have totally eclipsed it!"

"Hear, hear!" said Levison and Clive loyally. The manager of the Wayland Stores was not unimpressed by Cardew's eloquence; though he smiled at the junior's optimism.

"What do you wish me to do?"
"Take a full page in our first issue to boost your goods," said Cardew promptly. "You can have the front page, if you like, without extra charge."

The manager laughed. "I am not so selfish as to wish to monopolise a whole page of your newspaper," he said. "Suppose we try a six-inch advertisement, for a start?"

"Six inches?" said Cardew reproachfully. "Why, that's a mere drop in the ocean! The advertisement will be tucked away among a crowd of others, an' it won't be noticed."

"Nevertheless, six inches will suit me very well," said the manager. "If the results are satisfactory, I will take increased space next week."

"Very well," said Cardew, who saw that the manager was not to be moved by any further eloquence. "Our advertisement rates are a shillin' per inch."

The manager produced six shillings from his pocket, and Levison took the money and scribbled out a receipt.

"Thank you, sir!", he said. "Now what about the 'copy'?"

"I'll send it along to your office," said the manager.

And Levison and his chums quitted the Wayland Stores, very well pleased at the start they had made. Six inches was not a full page, but it was something. Had it not been for Cardew's persuasion, it was doubtful if there would have been anything doing at all.

"Now for the butcher's!" said Cardew briskly. "Old Bonner, the butcher, is a decent sort. I'm sure we shall squeeze a quarter-page out of him. I shall suggest an advertisement to him, somethin' on these lines:

"WHY DID THE PRODIGAL SON RETURN TO WAYLAND?
"BECAUSE HE KNEW HE'D GET A BETTER FATTED CALF AT BONNER'S THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD!"

"Ha, ha! That's not too bad!" said Clive. "Just an impromptu effort, Sidney," said Cardew modestly. "Let's hear what Bonner thinks about it."

And they marched into the butcher's.

Mr. Bonner was a genial soul, with a florid face and twinkling eyes. He listened to Cardew's stream of eloquence with great patience and fortitude, and he needed very little pressing to take a quarter-page in the 'Rylcombe Recorder.'

"We're getting along famously!" said Cardew, as he and his chums emerged from the butcher's. Levison nodded.

"Much better than I hoped," he admitted. "The funny part of it is that you are doing all the donkey-work, Cardew, while I—the giddy advertisement manager—am merely a looker-on."

"That's all right, dear man," said Cardew. "Leave the chin-waggin' to me, an' all will be plane sailin'. I'm beginnin' to enjoy myself on this stunt. Let's call next door an' interview Chapple, the greengrocer. He's supposed to be rather a surly beggar, but I fancy we shall win him over with our eloquence."

Mr. Chapple, who was fruiterer and florist as well as greengrocer, was standing in the doorway of his shop, surveying the High Street with a jaundiced eye.

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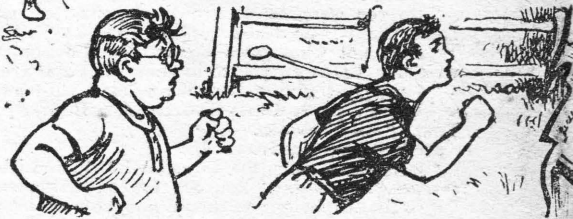
Cardew greeted him cheerily. "How d'you do, Mr. Chapple? Toppin' afternoon, what?"

Mr. Chapple gave a grunt. "What can I get you?" he asked, without enthusiasm. "A pencil an' paper, please," said Cardew, "an' I'll write you out some rippin' advertisin' slogans. How's this for a start?"

"Eat more fruit, more plums an' apples!
But mind you get the goods from Chapple's!"

Mr. Chapple stared. "What's the game?" he inquired suspiciously. "Are you trying to pull my leg?"

"Perish the thought!" said Cardew. "Fact is, we're engaged on an advertisin' campaign. We're runnin' the 'Rylcombe Recorder'—as I expect you know—an' we want to give the Wayland tradespeople a golden opportunity of treblin' their takin's. Advertise with us, an' it will do your



CAMEOS OF ST

THE PAPER

A WAY we go, o'er dale and hill,
Through coppice, glen, and
bracken;
Running together with a will,
Our efforts never slacken.
Stretching before us, as we race,
Is a white trail of paper.
We are the hounds; our eager chase
Proves quite a merry caper!

Merry and Manners, Blake and Glyn,
Are members of our party;
Figgins, and Kerr, and Fatty Wynn,
Good sportsmen, gay and hearty!
Gussy has joined the chase, of course,
His monocle is streaming;
Over the wide expanse of gorse
He gallops, eyes a-gleaming!

Somewhere ahead, beyond our sight,
The hares are nimbly streaking;
Leaving behind their trail of white,
Their whereabouts we're seeking.
Talbot and Noble are the hares,
Fleet-footed, cool, and clever;
To pounce upon them unawares
Will be our keen endeavour!

business a power of good. People will come flockin' to your shop, like moths attracted to a candle. A few spiczy slogans, like the one I suggested, will be sure to fetch 'em!"

"H'm!" grunted Mr. Chapple. "You could call yourself the Cabbage King," suggested Cardew, "or the Potato Potentate. A really fetchin' advertisement will turn the whole town into vegetarians. You'll have such a boom in your business that you'll be able to retire in a few months. Now, I'll just scribble down a few slogans that will catch the eye."

In a rather dazed sort of way Mr. Chapple handed Cardew pencil and paper, and Ralph Reckness got busy. He invented a number of slogans on the spot, and submitted them to the greengrocer for his approval.

Mr. Chapple's surliness gradually vanished, and he became infected with Cardew's enthusiasm.

"These slogans are quite clever," he said. "How did you manage to think of them?"

Cardew tapped his forehead with his forefinger. "My upper storey is well furnished—with grey matter," he said. "I was born to be an advertisin' specialist. Shall we book you for a full page, Mr. Chapple?"

"Tut, tut! I'll take an odd corner by way of a begin-
ning," said Mr. Chapple.

It was quite an achievement to extract even an odd corner
out of the surly Mr. Chapple. Even the "Wayland Gazette"
had never been able to do that. Cardew and his chums were
well satisfied; they hoped it would lead to bigger business.

"Now for Harvey, the hatter!" said Cardew. "He does
a big business with St. Jim's fellows, so he won't need much
pressin' to advertise with us. Now, Sidney, think out a
spicy slogan as we go along!"

Clive laughed.
"I'm not much good at that game," he said. "but I'll
have a shot. How will this do?"

'HARVEY'S HATS GIVE YOU A PERFECT FIT!'

Cardew and Levison chuckled.
"I don't think that would quite fill the bill, Sidney," said
Cardew. "It can be taken in two ways. If Harvey's hats

SCHOOL LIFE!

ER CHASE!

"Follow the trail!" Tom Merry cries,
Across the fields we scramble;
From muddy ditches we arise,
We force our way through bramble.
The cunning trail winds in and out,
We follow it, excited;
Then Gussy gives a joyous shout:
"Deah boys, the hares are sighted!"

Over the brow of yonder hill
Their forms are disappearing;
We race ahead with right good will—
The struggle's end is nearing!
"Captured at last!" we cry with zest,
And close around our quarry;
Then, weary of the gruelling quest,
We board a passing lorry.

Back to St. Jim's we wend our way,
Then hares and hounds join forces
Over their tea at close of day—
A feed of several courses!
And Fatty's face is beaming bright,
And Gussy's eyes are shining;
And every schoolboy heart is light—
No room for wails or whining!



give you a perfect fit, then your slogans give a fellow con-
vulsions! How's this for a neat, rhymin' slogan?

"Bowlers, trilbies, caps, an' toppers,
HARVEY'S serve to queues of shoppers!"

"I've never seen a queue outside Harvey's," said Levison.
"No? But we have to exaggerate a little for purposes of
advertisin'. Here's Harvey's—an' here's Mr. Harvey him-
self, sunnin' himself in the doorway."

And Cardew promptly buttonholed the hatter, and talked
to him like a Dutch uncle, and got a quarter page out of
him without much trouble.

The Wayland tradespeople were entering into the spirit
of the thing, and purchasing space in the "Rylcombe
Recorder" to advertise their wares. Some of them were
rather dubious as to whether a newspaper run by school-
boys would be a success; but they were willing to give it
every chance.

Levison and Cardew and Clive canvassed the High Street
from end to end. Cardew acted as spokesman at each
interview, and his eloquence was irresistible. From all of

the tradespeople advertisements were obtained, varying
from a humble inch to a half-page.

The theatre, and the cinema, and the Cafe Royal, were
visited in turn; and Cardew scarcely needed to impress
upon their proprietors the value of advertising. They cut
short the oratory of Ralph Reckness, and readily agreed to
take space in the newspaper.

The juniors even went so far as to call at the Town Hall
and try and persuade the local authorities to take a full-
page advertisement, drawing attention to the attractiveness
and beauty of Wayland as an inland holiday resort.

This mission proved a failure—the only failure of the
afternoon. The town-clerk pointed out that it was not
necessary to boost the beauties of Wayland in a village
newspaper; but he was very kind to the juniors, and wished
them luck with their enterprise.

"A very successful afternoon, dear men!" drawled Car-
dew, as the three chums emerged from the Town Hall.
"We've only drawn blank at one place, an' that was only
to be expected. Come to think of it, it was awful nerve on
our part, to beard the local bigwigs in their den. But the
tradespeople have turned up trumps. We've enough
adverts, to fill a whole issue almost, an' Ernest's pockets are
bulgin' with lucre."

"Good business!" said Clive. "Our chief ought to be
jolly pleased with us when we toddle back to make our
report."

"If he isn't," grinned Levison, "we'll bump him!"

Cardew pointed out that newspaper editors did not come
in the category of bumpable beings. Arthur Augustus
D'Arcy now occupied a position of lofty eminence, where
vandal hands must not be laid upon him.

"An' now," said Cardew, "before homeward ploddin' our
weary way, I suggest we drop into the bunshop for tea.
We've earned it."

And the three chums trooped into the bunshop with
cheery faces, and the feeling that they had deserved well of
their country.

CHAPTER 7. On the Carpet!

"HALLO!" ejaculated Ralph Reckness Cardew,
glancing over his shoulder. "Here are the merry
reporters!"

Cardew and his chums were making their way
back to the offices of the "Rylcombe Recorder," when three
bicycle-bells suddenly clanged behind them, and three
cheery juniors dismounted. They were Monty Lowther,
Harry Noble, and Bernard Glyn—the special reporters on
the staff of D'Arcy's newspaper.

"Hallo, old tops!" said Levison. "Had a busy after-
noon?"

"Not so you could notice!" grinned Monty Lowther.

And Noble and Glyn chuckled.
"Where have you fellows been?" asked Clive.

"Over to Burchester," said Lowther. "We weren't a bit
keen on going; in fact, we tried our hardest to wriggle out
of it. But he-who-must-be-obeyed—meaning Gussy—flatly
refused to let us cry off. He wouldn't be argued with, so
finally we jumped on our jiggers and biked over to Bur-
chester. And we're glad we went—as things turned out."

"What was on over at Burchester?" inquired Cardew.
"Did you go to report a weddin', or a funeral, or some
other cheery function?"

"Not at all!" said Bernard Glyn. "Our orders were to
proceed to the Town Hall, and report a speech. A chappie
called the Honourable Cuthbert Coxcomb—a fearful swell,
and a great authority on male fashions—was to give an
address on 'What Boys Should Wear.' And Gussy wanted
us to take down his words of wisdom for publication in the
'Recorder.'"

"Which you did, of course?" drawled Cardew.

"Which we jolly well didn't!" chuckled Harry Noble.
Cardew started.

"You didn't report the speech?"

"No. We had every intention of going to hear this
priceless dandy, but when we got to Burchester we found
there was a League footer match on. It was a big tempta-
tion, and we fell to it. We had to choose between duty
and pleasure—between being bored stiff by the Honourable
Cuthbert Coxcomb, and watching an exciting game of
footer. Which would you fellows have chosen?"

"The path of duty, of course!" said Cardew. "We
should have carried out the orders of our chief, and let the
footer match go hang—I don't think!"

Monty Lowther laughed.

"Gussy will be fearfully waxy about this," he said. "We
shall be on the carpet as soon as we get back."

"He may even go as far as to sack us for neglect of
(Continued on page 17.)

SEVEN DELICIOUS TUCK HAMPERS AWARDED TO READERS THIS WEEK!



Each Hamper contains:
An Iced Cake, Chocolates,
Biscuits, Jam, Sardines, Honey,
Sweets, Figs, Lemonade, Etc.

If at first you don't succeed,
Try, try, try, again!

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. 9, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

POOR GEORGE!

Jack: "How did George happen to break his legs?"
Tom: "Well, do you see those steps that go down to the station?" Jack: "Yes, I see them." Tom: "Well, he didn't!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Ral. Gadd, 38, Garfield Terrace, Man-ningham, Bradford.

AN INNOVATION!

Workmen were fixing up electric wires in a boys' school when a little fellow who happened to be passing by peeped through the open door. "What are you doing?" he inquired anxiously. "Fixing up a new electric switch," was the reply. "Gosh!" exclaimed the youngster, feelingly. "Thank goodness I'm leaving this term!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to E. Allson, 72, Howe Street, Derby.

SORRY HE SPOKE!

Two Irishmen, belonging to opposite political camps, came to blows. The trouble progressed to the extent that each forgot the original cause of the quarrel; and they were utterly oblivious of the fact that a crowd had gathered, until a very superior, pompous-looking person tried to pour oil on the troubled waters. "Come, come, my man," he said to one of them, "you don't want to fight! I can tell by your looks. Your face is too benign—" "Two be nine, is it, ye spalpeen?" bellowed Pat. "Me face is two be nine, is it?" The next moment the peacemaker found himself sitting in the gutter.—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Ernest Irwin, 99, Holmlea Road, Cathcart, Glasgow.

IN SAFE HANDS!

"Are you very, very old, grandfather?" asked little Tommy. "Yes, Tommy," answered grandfather. "And have you got any teeth?" asked the little one. "No, I haven't any left now." "Then," said Tommy, his eyes sparkling, "will you please hold my nuts while I play football?"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Albert Corbett, c/o Mrs. E. Beck, Church Green East, Redditch.

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ECONOMICAL!

Mother: "Willie, isn't it rather extravagant to eat both butter and jam on your bread at the same time?" Willie: "Oh, no, mother, it's economy. You see, the same piece of bread does for both!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Victor N. Hulme, 74, Cornwallis Street, Stoke-on-Trent.

WIDEAWAKE WILLIE!

"Now, Willie," said the generous father, as he and his little son were gazing in a tailor's shop window, "I am going to buy you a new pair of trousers, and you shall choose them. Which pair do you want?"

After a moment's hesitation the little boy said: "Please, father, can I have those marked 'Cannot Be Beaten'?"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Kenneth Prince, 10, Fleet Street, Crewe, Cheshire.

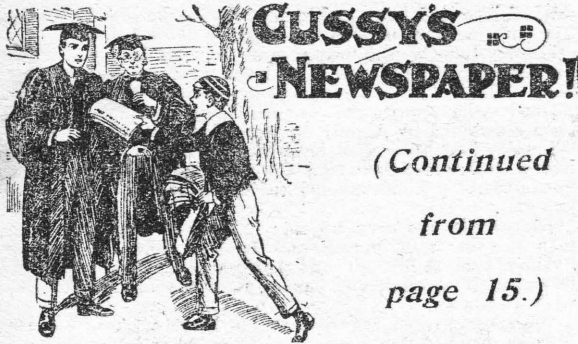
A BID FOR FREEDOM!

Wild-eyed and dishevelled of appearance, he burst into the dentist's consulting-room and addressed the man of molars in gasping tones: "Do you give gas?" "Yes," replied the dentist. "Does it put a man to sleep?" "Of course." "Then could you break his neck or jaw without him feeling it?" "My dear sir," began the dentist, "of course I—"
"Right!" said the other. "You're the man for me!" And he began pulling off his shirt. "Now," he said, "get your gas ready and then pull this porous-plaster off my back!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to E. Mostyn, 50, Culme Road, West Derby, Liverpool.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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



(Continued
from
page 15.)

duty," said Bernard Glyn. "You see, he was frightfully keen on getting this fellow Coxcomb's speech."

Cardew looked thoughtful.

"Well, you needn't disappoint him," he said slowly.

"Ass! We've already disappointed him!" said Lowther. "Instead of collecting the Honourable Cuthbert's views on what boys should wear, we went and saw a footer match. And now there will be the dickens to pay! Gussy will go for us baldheaded. He'll gnash his teeth, and tear his hair, and probably throw a fit!"

Cardew chuckled softly.

"I think it would be a jolly shame to disappoint Gussy," he said. "Lend me a notebook and pencil, one of you, and I'll scribble down the Honourable Cuthbert's speech."

The three reporters stared at Cardew in amazement.

"But—but you weren't there to hear it!" protested Harry Noble.

"True, O King. But I can guess the sort of sentiments that the Honourable Cuthbert would have expressed. I can't record his speech word for word, of course; but I can give you the gist of it, and you can pass it on to Gussy."

"My hat!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "You're going to concoct a speech, Cardew?"

"Certainly! And Gussy, like the simple soul he is, will never know it's a concoction. He'll take it to be the genuine article. Hand over your notebook, and I'll get busy."

Lowther obeyed, and Ralph Reckness Cardew seated himself on a stile in the lane, and started to scribble as if for a wager. His schoolfellows watched him curiously.

Evidently Cardew was not at a loss for inspiration, for he wrote without a pause.

When he was finished he returned the notebook to Lowther.

"I think that will fill the bill, dear man," he said. "Can you read my handwritin'?"

Lowther grinned.

"Looks like Chinese 'or Greek," he said. "But I can just about decipher it."

"Jolly good speech, what?" chuckled Cardew. "Precisely the sort of sentiments that the Honourable Cuthbert Coxcomb would have spouted."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Lowther doubtfully, as he perused Cardew's scrawl. "According to this speech, the Honourable Cuthbert is all against fellows dressing like dandies, and looking smart and spruce. But he's not against it at all, actually; in fact, he's very much in favour of it. He's a fearful knut himself, and he expects all schoolboys to dress like knuts."

"He might have changed his views," suggested Cardew. "Anyway, I'm not writin' that speech over again. It will have to stand. I think Gussy will swallow it all serene, and take it to be the actual speech of the Honourable Cuthbert."

The three reporters seemed a little doubtful on that point; and so did Levison and Clive. But a concocted speech would be better than no speech at all; and, as Cardew had said, it would be a shame to disappoint Arthur Augustus.

When the party reached the "Recorder" offices, they found the schoolboy newspaper proprietor very much in the toils. He was still in his shirtsleeves, and his desk was still piled high with manuscripts. Indeed, articles and stories and poems had been pouring in all the afternoon. They bestrewed the desk and the floor as thickly as leaves in Vallombrosa. A couple of waste-paper baskets were filled to overflowing with rejected contributions. Evidently Arthur Augustus was going to be very particular as to what appeared in his newspaper.

The swell of St. Jim's glanced up wearily as the three reporters came in. Cardew and Clive and Levison hovered in the doorway. They were curious to see whether Gussy would "swallow" the concocted speech.

"Hallo, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Back from Burchestah?"

Monty Lowther salaamed respectfully, and Noble and Glyn followed suit.

"Pwaw don't wot!" said the newspaper magnate sternly. "I twust you have bwrought the Honourable Cuthbert's speech?"

Lowther nodded.

"Shall I type it out, Gussy?" he inquired.

"Yaas; but I should wathah like to heah it first. Will you wead it ovah to me?"

Monty Lowther pulled out his notebook; and Glyn and Noble stood by, waiting in some trepidation. The deception they were about to practise on Arthur Augustus was quite a harmless one, but they were rather dubious as to its success.

Cardew, lounging in the doorway, nudged Levison and Clive expectantly.

"Buck up, Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy keen to heah what the Honourable Cuthbert said."

Monty Lowther cleared his throat, and started to recite the concocted speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "I am delighted to have this opportunity of addressing you on a subject in which I take the keenest interest—namely, "What Boys Should Wear—""

Lowther paused. Arthur Augustus motioned him to proceed.

"In our public schools at the present time, I regret to observe a tendency, on the part of boys in all Forms, to dress themselves like tailors' dummies—"

"What!"

There was a sudden incredulous shout from Arthur Augustus. He blinked at Monty Lowther through his monocle as if he could scarcely believe his ears.

It seemed to Gussy that the Honourable Cuthbert Coxcomb had opened his address in a very unusual, not to say remarkable, manner. He disapproved of schoolboys dressing like tailors' dummies, when he himself had the reputation of being the best-dressed man in Britain!

Before Arthur Augustus could get over the shock, Lowther went merrily ahead.

"There are certain articles of male attire which I should love to see abolished. Fancy waistcoats and purple socks should be the first to go. They merely dazzle the eye, and are an affront to good taste!"

"W-w-what?" gasped Arthur Augustus faintly.

"As for the top-hat, this is an antiquated relic of Early-Victorian days, and ought to be consigned to the dust-heap!"

"B-b-bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus grew more and more astonished. Silk topers were his pride and joy, and it was incredible that the Honourable Cuthbert—whose own shining topper was the envy of the Society swells—should want to see them consigned to the dust-heap. It was equally incredible that he should condemn fancy waistcoats and purple socks. Why, the man would be condemning silk spats next!

And he was!

"A few misguided schoolboys seem to be under the delusion that a pair of silk spats improves their personal appearance. Silk spats are not an improvement; they are an eyesore!"

"Stop! Stop!"

Arthur Augustus was on his feet now, waving his arms excitedly.

"I wufuse to heah anothah word, Lowthah! I wufuse to believe that such asinine wemarks were uttached by the Honourable Cuthbert Coxcomb. You are pullin' my leg, you uttah wottah!"

Monty Lowther stopped reading. He restored the notebook to his pocket, and made a grimace at Cardew, who was grinning in the doorway.

Arthur Augustus glared through his monocle at the three reporters.

"I sent you fellows to Burchestah to wewort a speech at the Town Hall," he said. "I have a vewy stwong suspicion that you nevah went neah the Town Hall—that the speech which Lowthah has just wead to me is nothin' more or less than a concoction!"

"Oh!"

Lowther and Glyn and Noble looked very sheepish. It had not been so easy, after all, to pull the wool over Gussy's eyes.

"I will soon find out whethah my suspicions are justified," said Arthur Augustus.

He pressed the push-bell on his desk, and Wally D'Arcy appeared.

"I want you to wun wound to the newsagent's, an' get me an evenin' papah," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Monty Lowther in dismay. "The game's up now, you chaps!"

And Glyn and Noble nodded. The evening paper would probably contain the actual speech made by the Honourable

Cuthbert Coxcomb—a vastly different speech from the one which Cardew had concocted! The fat was in the fire now, and the three reporters would certainly be "on the carpet."

Wally D'Arcy hurried out, and he was back within a couple of minutes, armed with a London evening paper. He handed it to his major, who turned over the pages with a grim expression on his face.

Presently he gave a violent start. His eye, scanning the columns, lighted upon the following paragraph:

"BURCHESTER DISAPPOINTED!"

"Owing to indisposition, the Honourable Cuthbert Coxcomb was unable to appear at Burchester Town Hall this afternoon to deliver his address on 'What Boys Should Wear.' The Burchester folk are keenly disappointed, but they hope to have the pleasure of hearing the Hon. Cuthbert's discourse in the near future."

Arthur Augustus fairly bristled with wrath. He thrust the newspaper under the noses of the three reporters, and pointed out the paragraph.

"You feahful wottahs! You have twied to deceive me! Look at this pawagwaph!"

The reporters looked at it, and groaned in chorus. Their little deception was completely unmasked.

Arthur Augustus glared at them. Like the Ancient Mariner, he held them with his glittering eye.

"There was no speech made at all!" he exclaimed. "The Honourable Cuthbert Coxcomb is indisposed, an' did not appear at Burchestah. The speech which Lowthah wead out to me was faked! I considah you have behaved disgracefully, an' you deserve to be sacked frow your jobs!"

At this juncture Ralph Reckness Cardew lounged forward.

"It's all my fault, Gussy," he said. "Don't be ratty with these fellows. It was I who faked that speech; and it was my suggestion entirely."

"Weally, Cardew—"

"I didn't do it with the idea of pullin' your leg; I did it so as not to disappoint you," explained Ralph Reckness.

"But never mind the Honourable Cuthbert. Let's give him a rest. Your enterprising, go-ahead advertisin' staff has had a very busy afternoon—and a very successful one into the bargain. Come forward, Ernest, and disgorge the bullion we've collected from the local tradesmen!"

Levison came forward with a grin, and turned out a pile of notes and silver on to the desk; while Cardew produced a list of the tradesmen who had promised to advertise in the "Recorder." It was quite a lengthy list, and the "takings" were considerable.

Thanks to the tactfulness of Cardew, the wrath of Arthur Augustus was banished in a moment, and he quite forgot that he had been about to punish the reporters for neglect of duty.

"You have done splendidly, deah boys!" he exclaimed, his face beaming. "I congwatulate you, Levison, as the advertisement managah—"

"Wrong shop!" said Levison. "It's Cardew who should come in for the congrats. He talked to the tradespeople like a Dutch uncle, and coaxed no end of adverts out of them."

"Yes, rather!" said Clive.

Arthur Augustus rubbed his hands in great satisfaction as he surveyed the advertisement takings; and Monty Lowther, and Harry Noble, and Bernard Glyn took advantage of the opportunity to slide out quietly. The schoolboy editor did not see them go, and he was soon busy again with the mountain of manuscripts which had accumulated on his desk.

Cardew had undoubtedly saved the situation!

CHAPTER 8.

Lumley's Little Joke!

LUMLEY-LUMLEY of the Fourth cycled briskly out of gates.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and a "half." It was a very important afternoon for the schoolboy staff of the "Rylcombe Recorder." For it was press day.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his satellites had been working like niggers, and it was hoped that the first edition of Gussy's newspaper would be on sale by tea-time. It was also hoped that it would sell like hot cakes, and take the little world of Rylcombe and district by storm.

If energy and enthusiasm counted for anything, the venture was certain to prove a huge success.

Tom Merry & Co., and Jack Blake & Co., and the other members of the staff had cheerfully given up their leisure, and their recreation, to assist Arthur Augustus in his enterprise. On Monday and Tuesday, after lessons, they had

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worked long and late; and to-day was the busiest day of all. The little newspaper office was buzzing like a beehive.

Lumley-Lumley, the "spare man" on the staff, had pulled his weight with the others, and had been as busy as anybody. He had lent a hand in all sorts of ways, and he seemed to have quite got over his disappointment at having been outbid by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at the auction.

Lumley had just called upon Kildare of the Sixth, to collect a footer article which the captain of St. Jim's had good-naturedly condescended to write for Gussy's news-¹ paper.

The article was very urgent; in fact, Manners, the foreman printer, was fuming and fretting about it. It was holding everything up; and Lumley had been instructed to collect it at once, and convey it to the newspaper office with all speed.

With the article reposing in his breast-pocket, Lumley-Lumley drove at the pedals, and he scorched furiously down Rylcombe Lane.

With a clear road, and his machine in perfect running order, Lumley went like the wind.

On nearing a sharp bend in the road, he should certainly have rung his bell, to give warning of approach; but, like most speed-merchants, he took it for granted that the road would be clear, and that no vehicle or pedestrian would be round the corner.

Lumley whizzed round the bend in a flash; then he gave a gasp of dismay.

The road ahead was not clear. A pedestrian, in a black sober suit and a top-hat, was walking jerkily in the direction of the village. And he was walking on the crown of the road.

The pedestrian was Mr. Horace Ratcliff, the unpopular master of the New House. Lumley divined as much, from the momentary glimpse he had of the pedestrian's back. But he was travelling at such a reckless speed that he had no time to sound his bell—no time, even, to swerve to one side.

A collision was inevitable. And it came!

Crash!

Mr. Ratcliff was aware of a whirring of wheels behind him; and the next instant he found himself wondering what had hit him.

Something hurtled violently into the unfortunate Housemaster from the rear, bowling him over like a skittle.

"Whoop!"

Mr. Horace Ratcliff sat down suddenly in the roadway with a bump and a roar.

As for Lumley-Lumley, that hapless youth pitched clean over the handlebars and went sprawling. Luckily, he landed on the grass at the wayside. His fall was softened; but it hurt, nevertheless.

"Ow!" gasped Lumley.

"Wow!" panted Mr. Ratcliff.

They sat up and blinked at each other. The Housemaster linked in wrath; Lumley in trepidation.

When Mr. Ratcliff had sufficiently recovered from the shock, he spoke, and his voice was like the rumble of thunder.

"Boy! Lumley! How dare you run me down in this outrageous manner?"

"Oh, crumbs! I—I'm awfully sorry, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff gave a snort. He passed his bony hands over his anatomy, as if to make sure he was still in one piece. Presently, satisfied that he had no hurts beyond bruises, he tottered slowly to his feet.

Lumley rose also. He was about to retrieve his machine, which had travelled a dozen yards down the road of its own volition, when Mr. Ratcliff stayed him with an angry gesture.

"For this unparalleled outrage, Lumley, you will take a thousand lines!" he snapped.

"Oh!"

Lumley looked rebellious. A thousand lines was a very stiff imput, though he could scarcely have expected less. Housemasters do not get bowled over like skittles with impunity.

But it was from Mr. Railton, Lumley's own Housemaster, that the imput should have come. Mr. Ratcliff had no jurisdiction over a School House fellow, and he had no right to take the law into his own hands. He should have reported the matter to Mr. Railton, instead of dealing with it himself. But Mr. Ratcliff was feeling too sore and savage to bother about such formalities.

"A thousand lines!" he repeated. "And see that they are delivered to me by the end of the week."

Lumley was about to make an angry protest, but he thought better of it. He was smarting under a sense of injustice, but he realised that, Housemasters were not to be argued with. To tell Mr. Ratcliff that he was exceeding his duty would only make matters ten times worse.

So Lumley collected his bicycle—which was none the worse for the mishap—and pedalled on his way. He rode slowly

now, and thoughtfully. And presently his eyes sparkled, and he gave a chuckle.

"I've hit it!" he ejaculated. "It's a topping stunt!"

A brain-wave had occurred to Lumley, and it seemed to afford him an impish pleasure, for he chuckled over it all the way to the newspaper office.

Arthur Augustus was awaiting him with impatience. Manners was waiting with even greater impatience.

"Got it?" he jerked out.

Lumley nodded, and produced Kildare's article from his breast-pocket.

"You've been jolly long-winded about it!" growled Manners.

"I was hung up on the road," explained Lumley. "I happened to run into old Ratty—literally, I mean. I collided with him amidstships, so to speak, and bowled him over like a ninepin!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Was Watty watty, deah boy?"

"I've never seen Ratty rattier!" grinned Lumley.

"He gave me a thousand lines, and he'd have made it a million, if there was any chance of 'em being written. But never mind Ratty. How are things going?"

"Fine!" said Arthur Augustus with enthusiasm. "My newspaper will burst upon the world about five o'clock. There is only Kildare's article to be set up in type, and one or two advertisements which came in wathah late."

"Good!" said Lumley. Then he turned to Manners. "You're looking a bit played out, old chap."

"I feel just about whacked," said Manners, mopping his perspiring brow. "I've been on the go ever since morning lessons. In fact, I cut dinner, so as to get here early. So did my two compositors—Herries and Digby."

"Yaas, wathah! I must say Mannahs is vewy conscientious about his job," said Arthur Augustus.

"He mustn't overdo it," said Lumley. "Dash it all, we can't have our foreman printer on the sick-list the very first week. Look here, Manners, why don't you and your comps pop out for a breath of fresh air and a snack at the bunshop? If it's simply a matter of setting up Kildare's article, and a few odd adverts, I can see to that all serene."

"Can you set up type?" asked Manners doubtfully.

"Can a duck swim? If Gussy is agreeable, I'll relieve you for a bit."

Arthur Augustus nodded his approval, and Lumley-Lumley went into the composing-room, where he found Herries and Digby looking very fagged. They were apprentices in the art of setting up a newspaper, and although the "Recorder" was only a double sheet, it had taken a great deal of time to print.

"Lumley's going to relieve us, you chaps," explained Manners.

And the tired trio departed together, in quest of fresh air and food, leaving Lumley in sole occupation of the composing-room. Which was exactly what Lumley wanted.

He closed the door, and turned the key to guard against interruption. Then, peeling off his jacket, he set to work to print Kildare's article.

This done, Lumley set up the few advertisements which had come in late. They nearly filled the advertisement column, but there was still enough space for one more to



Gerald Knox flourished the "Rylcombe Recorder" in front of the astonished D'Arcy. "Who wrote this report saying that I played a putrid game and let the school down, and that I muffed half a dozen chances in front of goal?" he roared. "It says that I was easily the worst player on the field." "Fair comment, toe!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "I did not write the article myself, but it was published with my full sanction." (See Chapter 9.)

be squeezed in, and Lumley, chuckling softly, proceeded to complete the column with an advertisement of his own.

It was a rather remarkable advertisement, and it looked oddly out of place among the ordinary trade announcements. It was worded as follows:

"A philanthropic gentleman, possessed of ample means, is willing to give financial assistance to any respectable ladies and gentlemen in the locality who may be financially embarrassed through no fault of their own. The advertiser is not a moneylender, but a genuine philanthropist. Applicants for monetary assistance should call without delay upon Mr. Horace Ratcliff, at the New House, St. James' College, Rylcombe."

This extraordinary advertisement put the finishing touch to the first edition of the "Rylcombe Recorder." The paper was now complete, and Lumley-Lumley surveyed his handiwork with great satisfaction.

"That's that!" he exclaimed. "Now, it won't take long to turn out a thousand copies of the rag. This printing-press is pretty antiquated, but it's good enough for my purpose."

It was not Lumley's job to run off the requisite number of copies. He had merely volunteered to set up Kildare's article and the advertisements. But he had very good reasons of his own for wanting to do the whole thing. If Manners ran off the copies he would very likely examine the original copy first, and would discover the advertisement which Lumley had smuggled into the paper. That would squash the whole thing. But if the advertisement was not discovered until all the copies were printed, it would then be too late to withdraw it. The advertisement would have to stand, and Mr. Ratcliff would have to suffer the resultant annoyance and inconvenience.

Lumley set the printing machine in motion, and the sheets were rapidly thrown off.

The whirring of the machinery reached the ears of Arthur Augustus, in the editor's room, and quite startled him.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "Sounds as if Lumley is

wunnin' off all the copies! He has no business to do that until I have inspected the original. There might be a whole crop of pwintah's errahs. I must stop the silly duffah at once!"

Arthur Augustus made hurried tracks for the composing-room. He was astonished to find the door locked.

"Lumlay!" he shouted through the keyhole.

"Hallo!" said Lumley cheerily.

"What are you doin'?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"Eh? Printing the jolly old paper, of course!"

"But—but that is Mannah's job—not yours!"

Lumley chuckled.

"What does it matter who does the job, so long as it's done?" he said. "It's going along famously. Better tell your newsboys to stand by, ready to fly round on their bikes with the copies."

"But this is uttably widic!" almost shouted the school-boy editor. "I have not yet seen a copy of the papah! There may be lots of things that need cowvection."

"Rats!"

"Unlock this door, Lumlay!"

"More rats!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard. It was really unheard-of cheek for Lumley to run off all the copies of the newspaper without the editor's authority; and to lock his chief out of the composing-room was adding insult to injury.

"Let me come in, you feahful wottah!" demanded Arthur Augustus.

There was no response. The machinery still hummed merrily, and the copies were being thrown off fast and faster. Soon there would be a thousand of them ready for distribution.

Lumley-Lumley would probably be sacked from the staff as a result of his conduct; but that would not worry him much. He would have achieved his object—there would be breakers ahead for Mr. Ratcliff.

The swell of St. Jim's pounded on the door with his fists; and Tom Merry and Jack Blake, hearing the din, came along to see what was going on.

Arthur Augustus, purple with indignation, explained the situation.

"Well, of all the nerve!" gasped Tom Merry. "Lumley's been a jolly useful member of the staff, but he's taking too much upon himself now. Supposing the paper is full of mistakes?"

"That's just what I told him!" said Arthur Augustus excitedly. "Open this door at once, Lumlay, or we will force it!"

"Too late, old top!" came Lumley's cheerful voice from within. "I'm nearly through now. You won't be wanting more than a thousand copies, I take it?"

"You— You—"

"Let's charge the door!" said Tom Merry grimly.

And the juniors hurled their united weight upon the door. It quivered under the impact, but a good many charges were necessary before it finally gave way, precipitating Tom Merry and Blake and Arthur Augustus into the room.

By this time the mischief was done. The old-fashioned printing machine had played up in good style, and had thrown off a thousand copies of the "Rylcombe Recorder."

Lumley-Lumley grinned at the invaders.

"Finished!" he said. "Now, if you fellows want to make yourselves generally useful, you'll see about distributing these copies."

Arthur Augustus glared at Lumley; then he picked up one of the copies, and gave it a cursory examination. One or two printer's errors caught his eye, but they were merely trifling, and the schoolboy editor looked relieved. He did not look very attentively at the advertisement column; and the last advertisement of all escaped his eye altogether.

"All serene, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry anxiously.

"Yaas, deah boy. I have not spotted any vevy sewious blundahs, which is lucky for Lumlay. I would certainly have sacked him on the spot, if he had made a hash of the papah."

"He ought to have a jolly good bumping, anyway!" growled Blake.

"Well, I like that!" said Lumley indignantly. "If I hadn't got a hustle on, this paper would never have been printed to-day. You ought to be patting me on the back instead of threatening to bump me. Where are the giddy newsboys? Are they standing by?"

Arthur Augustus nodded. He had engaged a number of Third Form fags—including his minor Wally, Curly Gibson, Jameson, and Joe Frayne—to act as newsboys, and sell the papers.

The fags were waiting outside the office with their bicycles, and special "rounds" had been allotted to them.

Satisfied that everything was quite in order, Arthur Augustus gathered up a pile of papers, and Tom Merry and Jack Blake followed suit.

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The papers were rushed out into the street, where the fag newsboys pounced upon them eagerly. Then they mounted their machines and pedalled briskly away.

No. 1 of D'Arcy's newspaper was about to burst upon the world! And Arthur Augustus was in great spirits as he strolled up to St. Jim's with the members of his staff.

CHAPTER 9.

The Trials of an Editor!

"PAPER!"

"All the news! Paper!"

The old quadrangle of St. Jim's presented a very animated appearance. The fag newsboys rushed hither and thither, whisking the papers out of their satchels, and disposing of them to a clamorous crowd.

If Arthur Augustus had entertained any doubts as to the success of his enterprise, they were set at rest now. His newspaper was selling like the proverbial hot cakes.

The swell of St. Jim's stood with his chums on the School House steps, surveying the scene with great satisfaction.

"We are doin' a woawin' twade, deah boys!" he said jubilantly.

"Yes, rather!"

"I can see you making your fortune, Gussy," said Tom Merry, with a laugh. "When our circulation reaches the million mark—"

"When?" murmured Blake.

"We shall have to take bigger offices, and increase our staff, and get the Head to let us off lessons, so that we can give our whole time to newspaper production."

"I can see the Head doing that!" chuckled Lowther. "By the way, does he approve of St. Jim's fellows running a newspaper?"

"I nevah asked the Head's permish. I did not consider it neccessawy," said Arthur Augustus. "But I hope to enwolve the Head as one of my constant weadahs. I may even consent to considah contvibutions from his pen, p'wovided they are suitable."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake.

Meanwhile, the fag newsboys were doing a roaring trade.

"Paper! All the latest news and views! Paper!"

The voices of Curly Gibson and Jameson blended in a shrill duet. They had arrived from the village with bulging satchels, which were now being emptied in record time.

Fellows of all Forms surrounded the newsboys, who were doling out papers and receiving pennies as fast as their nimble hands would work.

Everybody was curious to see what sort of newspaper Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had produced. Even the high and mighty men of the Sixth condescended to buy copies. They were quite as curious as the juniors and fags.

Arthur Augustus fairly beamed with delight as he watched the copies of his newspaper rapidly disappearing. It would have done any editor's heart good to see his paper in such demand. Certainly, if Mr. Pilkington, the late editor, could have seen the "Rylcombe Recorder" selling like this, he would have been fairly staggered.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "I knew my papah would go well, deah boys, but I hardly expected such a tewwific wush of business as this! I wondah if there will be enough copies to go woud?"

"If not, we must print a second edition," said Tom Merry.

"And a third, if necessary," said Manners.

The satchels of Curly Gibson and Jameson were speedily emptied.

"Sold out!" panted Curly at length.

"Same here!" gasped Jameson.

And then Wally D'Arcy and Joe Frayne arrived on the scene with fresh supplies, and business became as brisk as ever.

"Paper!" roared Wally. "All the latest sensations, shocks, and scares! All the St. Jim's news! Paper!"

There was a sudden stampede towards the newcomers, who were soon emptying their satchels as quickly as Curly Gibson and Jameson had done.

It was not surprising that the commotion in the quad should bring some of the masters on the scene.

Mr. Railton and Mr. Lathom, both looking very astonished, suddenly appeared in the quad.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Housemaster. "What is the meaning of this disturbance?"

"Paper, sir?" said Wally D'Arcy cheerfully.

Mr. Railton frowned.

"What nonsense is this, D'Arcy minor? It is unheard of, for newspapers to be touted in the quadrangle, by boys of this school!"

"But it's not an ordinary newspaper, sir," said Wally. "It's my major's—a newspaper run by St. Jim's fellows."

Mr. Railton looked astonished. He stared at Wally



"I'll learn you!" cried Mrs. Higgs hysterically, brandishing her umbrella. "I'll learn you to deceive a respectable lady!" Mr. Ratcliff dodged wildly, but without avail. Whack! Mrs. Higgs succeeded in landing a blow across the Housemaster's shoulders. It was a hefty blow, and Mr. Ratcliff acknowledged its receipt with a roar. (See Chapter 11.)

D'Arcy, and at the paper which that bright youth proffered him.

"Why, it's the 'Rylcombe Recorder'!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir. It was up for auction the other day, and my major bought it."

"Good gracious!" gasped Mr. Railton. "I knew nothing of this."

"Nor I," said Mr. Lathom. "I knew that the 'Recorder' was up for sale, but I had no idea that D'Arcy had acquired it. Pray hand me a copy, D'Arcy minor!"

"One penny, please, sir!" said Wally.

Mr. Lathom smiled and handed over the coin, and Mr. Railton followed suit. Then the two masters strolled away with their papers, reading them as they went.

Arthur Augustus had witnessed the transaction, and he rubbed his hands.

"Wippin'!" he ejaculated. "I'm glad the mastahs are takin' an intewest in my papah."

Monty Lowther looked thoughtful.

"I'm afraid old Lathom won't be pleased, when he reads the report of the masters' golf tournament," he said. "Railton won it, as you know, and there was a special booby-prize of a wooden spoon for the master who took the longest time to get round the course. The wooden-spoonist was Lathom, and he won't bless us for advertising it to the world!"

"Hardly!" grinned Tom Merry.

But Arthur Augustus was not perturbed.

"I fail to see why the report should cause Mr. Lathom annoyance," he said. "Aftah all, it is fair comment. A newspaper can say what it likes—within' weasonable limits!"

"Not when the newspaper editor happens to be a junior in the Fourth, and the subject of the comment his own Form master!" said Blake. "I'm afraid old Lathom will get his rag out when he reads that report."

Blake's fears were well founded. Mr. Lathom's eye lighted upon the offending paragraph, and he fairly bristled with indignation when he read the following:

"The wooden-spoonist of the tournament was Mr. Lathom, who took a hundred-and-twenty strokes to complete the course, and was badly bunkered on several occasions. Mr.

Lathom therefore qualified for the booby-prize. We advise the gentleman to give up golf and start keeping rabbits."

The effect of this paragraph upon Mr. Lathom was quite alarming. His face grew purple, and he seemed to be on the verge of an apoplectic fit.

"Railton!" he exclaimed, turning to his colleague. "This is monstrous! These young rascals have had the audacity to criticise my golf in their newspaper! They have dared to publish the fact that I was awarded the wooden spoon in the masters' tournament. I was most anxious that the matter should not be made public. As you are aware, I was feeling off-colour when the tournament was played. Had I been normally fit, I should probably have won it with ease!"

"Hm! Possibly!" murmured Mr. Railton.

"I hoped that the regrettable incident would not be broadcast," went on Mr. Lathom. "I relied upon the masters to keep their own counsel, and I hoped the boys would not come to hear of my failure. And now"—the speaker nearly choked—"I find myself exposed to public ridicule!"

"It is certainly rather annoying, my dear Lathom," said Mr. Railton.

"Annoying!" hooted little Mr. Lathom, now thoroughly worked up. "It is outrageous—monstrous! If D'Arcy is going to indulge in personalities in his newspaper, then the sooner it is suppressed the better! I will interview the young rascal at once!"

"I certainly should," advised Mr. Railton.

The Housemaster did not share his colleague's indignation. As the winner of the golf tournament, Mr. Railton had been lauded to the skies by the writer of the article. He therefore had nothing to be indignant about. But had he been the wooden-spoonist, and seen the fact announced to the world, he would probably have felt just as furious as Mr. Lathom.

The latter gentleman stamped away in search of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He caught sight of that elegant youth lounging on the School House steps, and he bore down upon him like a wolf on the fold. The newspaper was crumpled firmly in his grasp.

"D'Arcy!" he thundered.

"Yaas, sir?" drawled Arthur Augustus.

"I understand that you are the editor of this—this juvenile publication?"

"Weally, sir!" protested Arthur Augustus, adjusting his monocle. "With all due respect, I must object to my newspaper bein' called a juvenile publication. It is a weally wippin' wag—I mean, newspaper—"

"Silence, D'Arcy! You have had the effrontery—the unparalleled impertinence—to publish an adverse criticism of my golf! You have announced to all and sundry the fact that I was awarded the wooden spoon in the masters' tournament. You have even had the temerity to suggest that I should give up golf and start keeping rabbits!"

Mr. Lathom paused, purple and breathless. Tom Merry & Co. eyed him rather apprehensively. It was not often that little Mr. Lathom let off steam in this way. He was a mild and inoffensive little person as a rule; but he was very angry now.

"I do not say that you personally are the author of this offending article, D'Arcy," went on the master of the Fourth. "But you, as editor, must take full responsibility for it. Have you anything to say?"

"I wegard it as fair comment, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"What!" gasped Mr. Lathom. "Do you imagine that you can hold up your Form master to ridicule with impunity, D'Arcy? Do you imagine you can say what you like, about whom you like, in your paper?"

"P'provided it is true, sir. An' it is perfectly true that you were awarded the wooden spoon in the golf tournament—"

"Enough!" said Mr. Lathom sharply. "It is now too late to suppress your newspaper, or I should take steps to do so. You will take five hundred lines for having caused that objectionable article to be published!"

"Weally, Mr. Lathom—"

"And you will give me an undertaking, here and now, that my name will not appear in any future issue of your newspaper. If you decline to do so, I will see Dr. Holmes, and have the paper stopped at once!"

"Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus was beginning to feel that the path of a newspaper editor was not exactly strewn with roses. Reluctantly, he gave Mr. Lathom the required undertaking; and the Form master nodded grimly and whisked away.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, staring after Mr. Lathom's retreating figure. "Who evah would have thought that Lathom would have cut up wuff about an article that was perfectly fair comment?"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"The victims of 'fair comment' have a way of regarding it as very unfair comment!" he said. "After all, you could hardly have expected Lathom to take that article lying down. We shall have to be more careful in future, and not put masters in the pillory."

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake suddenly. "Here's somebody else after your blood, Gussy! Mind your eye!"

Knox of the Sixth came striding on the scene. He held a crumpled copy of the "Rylcombe Recorder" in his hand, so it was not difficult to guess what was "biting" him. Knox was looking positively Hunnish as he bore down upon Arthur Augustus.

"You cheeky young sweep!" was Knox's amiable greeting.

Arthur Augustus surveyed the angry prefect through his monocle.

"Are you addressin' me, Knox?" he inquired, with dignity.

"Yes, I am!" hooted Knox. "You are the editor of this wretched rag, I understand. I want to know who wrote the report of the last school match?"

"That is my business," said Arthur Augustus.

Knox flourished the paper furiously.

"It says that I played a putrid game, and let the school down, and muffed half a dozen chances in front of goal!" he roared. "It says that I was easily the worst player on the field!"

"Fair comment!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"W-w-what!"

"The report is perfectly correct. I did not write it myself, but it was published with my full sanction."

"Oh, was it?" said Knox grimly. "If you think you can say what you like about a prefect, you're jolly well mistaken! I've a good mind to haul you along to my study and give you a licking. As it is, you will take five hundred lines, D'Arcy!"

"Still they come!" murmured Monty Lowther. "That's a thousand to be going on with, Gussy. And if everybody takes exception to what appears in the paper, you'll be snowed up with imputs by bedtime."

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Arthur Augustus protested strongly against the imposition; but Knox was in no mood to be argued with. "You'll bring me the lines by the end of the week," he said, "or it will be a licking—and a stiff one, too! Bear that in mind."

And Knox swung on his heel and strode away.

More than ever it dawned upon Arthur Augustus that an editor's lot—like a policeman's—was not a happy one. He began to wonder where the next complaint was coming from; and it was with no little alarm that he caught sight of Mr. Ratcliff walking in the quad. There were some hard things about Mr. Ratcliff in the "Recorder." Perfectly fair comment, of course; but Mr. Ratcliff was not likely to view it in that light. And Arthur Augustus had an uncomfortable feeling that there were breakers ahead!

CHAPTER 10.

A Visitor for Ratty!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS eyed the gaunt figure of Mr. Ratcliff with considerable apprehension. But he remained with his chums on the School House steps—prepared to face fresh trouble if it arose.

Luckily, it did not arise.

Mr. Ratcliff was approached by Wally D'Arcy, but he did not condescend to buy a paper. He snapped at Wally, and warned him against making a disturbance in the quad, and then passed on—greatly to the relief of Arthur Augustus.

But Gussy's relief was short-lived. He was just congratulating himself that there would be no further trouble, when Levison of the Fourth came up. He was very excited.

"Gussy!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Anythin' w'ong, deah boy?" inquired Arthur Augustus.

"I should jolly well say so! How on earth did this advertisement get into the paper? I'm the advertisement manager, but this never passed through my hands! Somebody must have smuggled it in without my knowledge."

"What advertisement are you babbling about?" asked Tom Merry.

"This one of Ratty's. Of course, it isn't Ratty's, really. Some silly ass has been having a lark. There will be the very dickens of a row about this!"

Arthur Augustus looked mystified. So did Tom Merry & Co.

"I was not awah that there was an advertisement in the papah in Watty's name," said the harassed editor. "I looked through the issue wathah huwwidly—"

"Then you must have missed it," said Levison. "Here it is. 'A philanthropic gentleman, possessed of ample means, is willing to give financial assistance to any respectable ladies and gentlemen in the locality who may be financially embarrassed through no fault of their own.'"

"Great Scott!"

"The advertiser," Levison went on, "is not a money-lender, but a genuine philanthropist. Applicants for monetary assistance should call without delay upon Mr. Horace Ratcliff, at the New House, St. James' College, Rylcombe."

A stupefied silence followed Levison's pronouncement. It was broken at length by Arthur Augustus, whose face registered astonishment, indignation, and horror.

"Bai Jove! That feahful wottah Lumlay must have done this! Now I can undahstand why he was so keen to puint the papah. He had a gwievance against Watty, an' this is his way of gettin' his own back."

Tom Merry looked grave.

"There will be a fearful rumpus about this!" he exclaimed. "All the down-at-heel loafers in Rylcombe will be calling on Ratty for financial assistance!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther, quick to see the comic side of the situation. "Ratty a giddy philanthropist! And he's as mean as they make 'em! This is a real scream!"

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not agree. He passed his hand over his editorial brow, and groaned.

"Our only hope, deah boys," he said, "is that nobody responds to his advertisement."

But it was a very forlorn hope. Offers of financial assistance were not made every day, and the chance of getting something for nothing was not likely to be overlooked by the Weary Willies and Tired Tims of Rylcombe. Gussy's newspaper was circulating freely in the village, and at any moment that remarkable advertisement might be responded to in person.

Arthur Augustus glanced apprehensively towards the school gates.

A burly-looking individual, shabbily attired, and with a muffer round his neck, was in the act of pushing his way past Taggles, the porter. The burly-looking gentleman carried a newspaper—obviously the "Rylcombe Recorder." Brushing aside Taggles' protests—and Taggles himself—he marched boldly into the quad.

"Here's the first applicant!" said Levison grimly. Tom Merry nodded.

"We must keep him out!" he said. "He's come for an interview with Ratty, and if he gets it, the fat will be in the fire! Let's go and explain to him that the advert's a spoof."

"He's a tough customer," said Manners dubiously. "It's that lout Joe Pugsley, who is always hanging around the Green Man."

"We can handle him," said Blake. "But I hope it won't be necessary. We ought to be able to persuade him to go quietly."

Mr. Joe Pugsley came on. Taggles was shouting threats and warnings to him from the gates; but Mr. Pugsley took no notice. Tom Merry & Co. were moving towards him, and Pugsley addressed them.

"Which I wants to see Mr. Ratcliff, of the Noo 'Ouse."

"You can't!" said Tom Merry bluntly.

"Hey?"

"If you've come in answer to that advertisement in the 'Recorder,' I'm sorry to tell you that it's all bunkum," said Tom.

"Wot?" shouted Mr. Pugsley.

"Mr. Ratcliff isn't a giddy philanthropist, and he's got nothing to give away," said Manners. "The advert was put in the paper for a lark—see?"

Apparently Mr. Pugsley did not see. His jaw set grimly and he clenched his beefy hands.

"Which I wants to see Mr. Ratcliff," he repeated. "Conduct me to 'im at once!"

"Can't be done!" said Tom Merry.

"Wun away an' pick flowahs!" advised Arthur Augustus.

Mr. Pugsley glared at the juniors.

"Stand aside!" he commanded. "If you won't conduct me to Mr. Ratcliff, I must go an' find 'im meself!"

So saying, Mr. Pugsley attempted to pass on. But his way was barred by a cordon of grim-faced juniors. They were determined to prevent, if possible, a meeting between Mr. Ratcliff and Mr. Joe Pugsley.

"Collar him!" cried Tom Merry.

And the next moment the burly Mr. Pugsley was struggling in the grasp of the Terrible Three and Arthur Augustus and Blake.

"Ands off!" he roared. And he shook the juniors from him as if they were flies on a horse's tail.

But they closed with him again, and clung on grimly, and started to propel Mr. Pugsley towards the school gates.

Mr. Pugsley struggled and roared, but the juniors hung on tenaciously. They had dragged their victim about a dozen yards—Taggles, the porter, shouting his encouragement—when Arthur Augustus suddenly uttered a gasp of dismay.

"Oh, cwumbs! Here's Watty, deah boys!"

"Merry! D'Arcy! Blake!" Mr. Ratcliff fairly barked the names. "How dare you cause a further disturbance in the quadrangle? Release that—er—individual at once!"

The juniors obeyed, and Mr. Pugsley staggered clear of his captors. He blinked at the Housemaster.

"Mr. 'Orace Ratcliff?" he inquired.

"That is my name. What do you want with me?"

"I've come to insult you—"

"What?"

"That is to say, consult you, about my case," explained Mr. Pugsley. "A werry deservin' case it is, sir—a case of real 'ardship an' distress."

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Pugsley came closer to the Housemaster. He became confidential.

"It's twelve months now, sir, since I was thrown out of me job; an' I've been out of work ever since. I've 'unted 'igh an' low for employment, but I can't get the sort of job I'm sooted for. I'm a wine-taster by profession, sir."

Mr. Pugsley's ripe complexion was a sure indication that he had tasted a good deal of wine in his time. In fact, wine-tasting would appear to have been his hobby, as well as his profession.

Mr. Ratcliff looked quite bewildered.

"What has this to do with me?" he asked. "Why have you come to me with a tale of hardship? I am a schoolmaster—not a relieving officer!"

It was Mr. Pugsley's turn to look bewildered.

"You said you was Mr. 'Orace Ratcliff—" he began.

"I am!"

"An' you promised to give financial 'elp to any respectable gents as might be 'ard up—"

"What?"

"Well, I'm that way meself," said Pugsley. "For a whole year, sir, ever since I was thrown out of me job"—Mr. Pugsley did not explain that he was actually and bodily thrown out—"I've been 'ard up against it! Not been earnin' a penny, I ain't! An' I can't get the dole, owin' to red-tane. So when I see your generous offer—"

"My—my generous offer!" murmured Mr. Ratcliff, wondering if he was dreamin'g.

Mr. Pugsley nodded.

"When I see that you was willin' to 'elp the poor an' needy, I thought I'd come an' insult you about my case."

Mr. Ratcliff frowned.

"You have come here to extort money from me?" he demanded angrily.

"Not at all!" said Mr. Pugsley, getting angry himself. "I came 'ere at your invitation, Mr. Ratcliff. I says to my pals at the Green Man, 'Ere's a cove with more money than 'e knows wot to do with. I'll go an' relieve 'im of a fivev.' You can 'and it over as soon as you like! I'm fed-up with all this palaver!"

Mr. Ratcliff fairly bristled with rage.

"You impudent rascal! I should not dream of handing any money to you, in any circumstances! I have a good mind to summon the police and have you placed under arrest for soliciting alms!"

At this Mr. Joe Pugsley fairly boiled over. If this was the way philanthropic gentlemen treated a respectable man who wished to avail himself of their good offices, it was disgraceful. Summon the police, indeed! This sour-faced philanthropist must be taught that he could not threaten Mr. Joe Pugsley with impunity.

Clenching his big fists, Mr. Pugsley squared up to the Housemaster, whose anger promptly gave place to fear.

"Keep off!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "If you dare to assault me—"

Mr. Pugsley would certainly have committed assault and battery upon the hapless Housemaster had not Tom Merry & Co. intervened. They had been standing by, prepared for such a contingency as this; and when Mr. Pugsley showed fight they promptly hurled themselves upon him.

"Chuck him out!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

And the "chucking-out" of Mr. Joe Pugsley proceeded forthwith. It was not an easy matter, and there were several casualties in the process. Monty Lowther went down with a howl when Mr. Pugsley's fist took him on the chin; and Manners and Blake were bowled over like skittles. But Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus clung to their man; and Kildare and Darrell, of the Sixth, came running up to render assistance.

The two powerful prefects were more than a match for Mr. Pugsley, who was not in the best of condition, owing to his wine-tasting proclivities.

After a short, sharp scuffle, Mr. Pugsley went whirling out of gates, with Kildare's boot behind to facilitate his exit.

The burly loafer from Rylcombe collapsed in a sprawling heap in the roadway. The seniors and juniors lined up grimly, prepared for a renewal of the struggle.

Mr. Pugsley had had enough. Slowly he tottered to his feet, and limped away down the lane.

Later in the evening, at the Green Man, Mr. Pugsley had some hard and bitter things to say about philanthropic gentlemen and their very unphilanthropic ways!

CHAPTER 11.

The Head Intervenes!

MR. RATCLIFF retired to his study, very much shaken by his recent encounter with Mr. Pugsley. The Housemaster was very puzzled in his mind as to what had induced the village loafer to call at St. Jim's. Mr. Pugsley had seemed to be under the delusion that Mr. Ratcliff was a philanthropist—a friend of the poor. This was indeed a delusion, for the New Housemaster was a friend of one person only, Mr. Horace Ratcliff!

"The wretched man must have been intoxicated!" murmured Mr. Ratcliff. "Drink and delusions go together. He got the stupid notion into his head that I was a disburser of funds to the poor and needy, and he came up to the school to interview me. I am greatly relieved that he has gone. I trust that I shall be left in peace for the remainder of the evening."

Alas for Mr. Ratcliff's hopes!

When dusk had fallen, and Tom Merry & Co. had adjourned to their studies for prep, there was another visitor for Mr. Ratcliff.

This time it was a member of the fair sex—by no means of the fairest of the sex, however.

It was a middle-aged lady, clad in cheap but showy garments, and clutching an umbrella as if it were a life-preserver, whom Toby, the page, ushered into Mr. Ratcliff's study.

"Lidy to see you, sir," said Toby; and he retired grinning.

Mr. Ratcliff started to his feet and stared at the newcomer.

"Pray what is your business with me, madam?" he inquired, far from graciously.

"You are Mr. Ratcliff?" interrogated the dame.

"I am."

"Well, my name is 'Iggs—Mrs. Martha 'Iggs. I won't take up your vallyble time, sir, 'cos I know that phil—phil—what-you-call-'em—are busy folk. Gents who gives money away for nothing must be simply worried to death by callers. So I'll come to the point at once, Mr. Ratcliff. Ten pounds will do me nicely!"

"W-w-what?" gasped Mr. Ratcliff faintly.

"An' I'll 'ave it in pound Treasury notes, if you don't mind," went on the optimistic Mrs. Higgs. "I shouldn't never be able to cash a ten-pound note in the village."

Mr. Ratcliff stood clutching the table and goggling at his strange visitor. He had not yet fully recovered from the shock of his interview with Mr. Joe Pugsley. This fresh shock was piling Pelion upon Ossa, so to speak.

"Madam, I—I quite fail to understand you!" gasped the Housemaster. "Are you under the impression that I am the treasurer of a benevolent fund?"

Mrs. Higgs frowned.

"You're a philatelist, ain't you?" she demanded.

"Certainly I collect stamps," admitted Mr. Ratcliff.

"But—"

"Nunno; that ain't my meanin' at all. You're a phil—phil—"

"Do you mean a philanthropist, madam?"

Mrs. Higgs nodded vigorously.

"That's the word!" she said. "Not a very easy word to say; it doesn't come tripping off the tongue exactly. Well, Mr. Ratcliff, it's ten pounds I'm wantin'. I won't take offence if you offers me more, but ten will do me nicely."

Mr. Ratcliff compressed his lips and glared at his caller.

"Madam," he said, "you appear to be under a misapprehension. I am not a philanthropist, as you suppose—"

"What!"

"Nor have I any money to disburse. Further, I cannot have my time trespassed upon in this way. If you are in a state of indigence, there is a moneylender in Wayland; or there is the local Board of Guardians—"

Mr. Ratcliff paused. He was checked by the expression on his visitor's face.

Mrs. Higgs came closer to the Housemaster, taking a businesslike grip of her umbrella. Her eyes were gleaming.

"Do you mean to say," she demanded shrilly, "that you've been pullin' people's legs?"

"Really, madam—"

"You advertised in the paper that you was a philanthropist—"

"Good heavens! I did nothing of the sort!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"You advertised," went on Mrs. Higgs grimly, "that you would be pleased to accommodate respectable ladies an' gents who might be in need of funds. An' when a respectable lady calls on you, an' asks you for a paltry ten pounds, you turns round an' says that you're not a philanthropist!"

Mr. Ratcliff passed his hand dazedly across his brow.

"I—I do not understand," he muttered.

"Then I'll make you understand!" cried Mrs. Higgs, now thoroughly truculent. "I 'aven't come all the way from the other side o' Rylcombe for nothink! You'll 'and me ten pounds at once, or else I shall know you done it for a joke!"

"I—I did not advertise," protested Mr. Ratcliff. "I should not dream of advertising in such a manner as you mention!"

"Don't tell fibs!" said Mrs. Higgs sharply. "You advertised in the 'Rylcombe Recorder.' I see it with my own eyes. An' the neighbours 'ave seen it, too, and they've all arranged to pay you a visit—"

"Help!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"But I jumped on a Southdown bus an' got 'ere first," said Mrs. Higgs. "I thought if I left it too late I might be unlucky."

It seemed that Mrs. Higgs was destined to be unlucky in any case.

Mr. Ratcliff blinked helplessly at his visitor.

"I assure you, my dear madam," he said earnestly, "that I did not advertise an offer of financial assistance. If such an advertisement actually appeared, it was inserted without my authority and cognisance. One of the young rascals on the staff of the paper must have played a trick on me—a trick he will bitterly regret!"

This was no consolation to Mrs. Higgs. Furious to think that her quest had proved futile, she suddenly proceeded from words to action.

"I'll learn you!" she cried hysterically. "I'll learn you to deceive a respectable lady!"

And, brandishing her umbrella, the fiery Amazon came round the table towards Mr. Ratcliff.

The Housemaster dodged wildly. He was thoroughly scared. He would rather have faced a couple of Joe Pugsleys than this infuriated and disappointed female.

Whack!

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Mrs. Higgs succeeded in landing a blow across Mr. Ratcliff's shoulders. It was a hefty blow, and Mr. Ratcliff acknowledged its receipt with a roar.

"Yoooop! The woman is mad! Keep off, or I shall send for the police!"

"Help!"

Mr. Ratcliff put all his lung-power into that anguished cry. Luckily, help was at hand.

There was a tramping of feet in the corridor, and Monteith and Webb of the Sixth burst into the Housemaster's study. They were amazed at the spectacle of Mr. Ratcliff cowering against the far wall of the study, and endeavouring to ward off the umbrella blows of the warlike Mrs. Higgs.

"Monteith! Webb! Show this—this woman out!"

Such a task was not to the liking of the two prefects, and they hesitated. Happily, they were not called upon to take a hand. Her paroxysm of rage having spent itself, Mrs. Higgs retired of her own accord, darting a final glare at Mr. Ratcliff.

When she had gone, the Housemaster collapsed into his chair.

"Oh dear!" he gasped. "I have had a most disconcerting experience—most nerve-racking! And I am threatened with further visitors. I cannot see them! Nobody must be allowed access to this House, or to my study! Will you take steps, Monteith, to see that I am left undisturbed?"

"Very well, sir," said Monteith.

And he left the study with Webb.

The two prefects spent a very busy evening, but they succeeded; and the callers retired in great chagrin.

Mr. Ratcliff sat in his study in a state of acute apprehension until locking-up time. Then, feeling safe from further interruption, he made his way to the Head's study, to lay a complaint against Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for having caused that mischievous advertisement to be issued in the "Rylcombe Recorder."

"Come in, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus had been sent for by the Head, and he expected a stormy interview. He was relieved to find that Doctor Holmes, although grave, was not angry. On the desk in front of him was a copy of the "Rylcombe Recorder."

"I sent for you, D'Arcy," said the Head, "in the matter of a complaint which Mr. Ratcliff has just laid before me. An advertisement appears in this paper which has caused Mr. Ratcliff the greatest annoyance and inconvenience. I cannot believe, D'Arcy, that this advertisement was inserted with your knowledge and connivance. At the same time, I should like your assurance on that point."

"I assuah you, sir, that I knew nothin' of the advertisement," replied Arthur Augustus. "It was smuggled into the papah without my knowledge."

"By whom?"

"Ahem! I—I'd wathah not say, sir."

The Head eyed Arthur Augustus keenly for a moment.

"Very well, D'Arcy," he said at length. "I will not press you to disclose the name of the culprit. The advertisement was doubtless inserted for a joke, though it is not the sort of humour I appreciate. If the identity of the joker was known to me, he would receive condign punishment. Now, with regard to this newspaper of yours, D'Arcy—"

"Yaas, sir?"

"I was not aware until this evening that you had launched such a venture. My sanction was not sought—"

"I did not considah it necessawy, sir, to appoach you in the mattah," said Arthur Augustus.

"I see."

"Of course, if you have any objection to my wunnin' a newspapah, sir—"

The Head smiled slightly.

"I am afraid there are several objections, D'Arcy. In the first place, you are too young and inexperienced to be a newspaper proprietor. Secondly, the task of publishing a newspaper week by week would encroach too much upon the normal school routine. Saddled with the cares of editorship, you would not do yourself justice either in the Form-room or on the playing-field. But, apart from all this, D'Arcy, I cannot approve of the policy of your paper. I have just perused this issue, and I find it full of outspoken articles, in which personalities are freely indulged in. The masters of this school, as well as some of the public men in Wayland and Rylcombe, have been criticised far too freely.

Arthur Augustus flushed.

"I wegard it as fair comment, sir," he said.

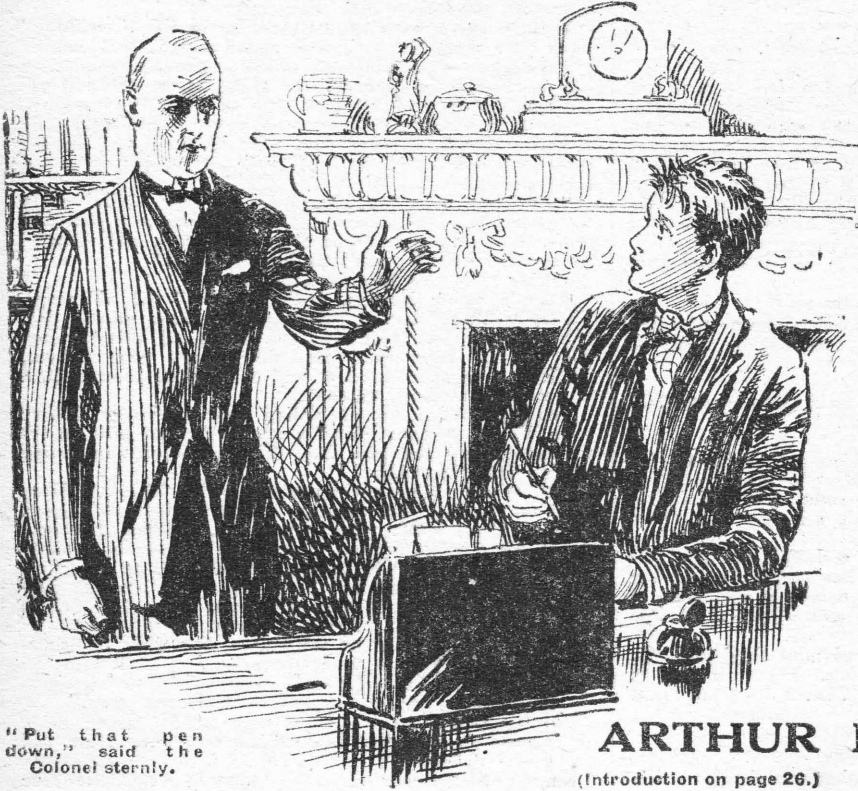
The Head smiled.

"Personally, I think some of these articles rather exceed the bounds of fair comment, D'Arcy. Do you not realise, my boy, that you are laying yourself open to libel actions?"

"Bai Jove!"

(Continued on page 23.)

THE RIGHT SORT OF PUNISHMENT! Colonel Chapin leaves it to his daughter to prescribe Tom Holt's "punishment" and she suggests a good dinner and a musical evening. Reckon Tom wasn't sorry he called on the Colonel. What do you say?



"Put that pen down," said the Colonel sternly.

WHITE EAGLE!

A Grand Story of a young Britisher's Adventures with a Tribe of Apache Indians in New Mexico.

Told By

ARTHUR PATTERSON.

(Introduction on page 26.)

Tom in Luck!

AT this uncompromising beginning Colonel Chapin coughed dryly, and inclined his head without speaking; upon which Tom, taking the movement to be an act of patronising condescension, grew more resolute than ever, and looked it.

Colonel Chapin, for his part, badly wanted to laugh. It had been a habit of his all his life to look upon most things from their humorous side, and this boy, with his flushed face and intense earnestness, amused him greatly. He had not felt so much interested by anyone for years.

Sadie had told him all about her adventures; he had closely cross-questioned the saloon-keeper on the events of the night before, and had told him to send Tom along; and, last of all, the difficulties Tom had met with in the drive were not accidental. Up to the moment of his arrival there, and the lamentations of the spaniel, these deer-hounds had been reposing at their master's feet. It was a favourite hobby of the colonel's to put young men to the test. It did not make him popular.

He now settled down in his armchair prepared to amuse himself.

"I had to come, sir," Tom repeated, "because a man will be murdered in Sevita to-morrow morning unless you prevent it."

The colonel moved uneasily. This was not amusing.

"Who is the man?"

"His name is White Cat. He is the son of an Apache chief, Black Hawk."

The listener leaned back in his chair, and Tom saw his lips twitch.

"Oh, yes, I know the boy," he said quickly. "He is only an Indian. But he saved my life, and that is why they are going to hang him."

His hands were clenched now and his eyes fiercely defiant. But the colonel saw that his lips were trembling with emotion.

"Tell me the whole story." He spoke gravely now. "Leave nothing out," he added.

Tom obeyed. He made his statement as brief as he could, and confined himself to a bare narrative of facts, and wasting no breath upon abuse of anyone. But he took care that Colonel Chapin should know all that had happened, and what was going to happen.

By the time the story was told the colonel seemed to have returned to his original state of detachment.

"A bad mix-up. Your friend, White Rat—is that his

name?—must be tried to-morrow. There is no way out of that."

"But the jury's verdict has been given," Tom said bitterly. "I told you what that cowboy said."

"Why did you not put down that money?"

Tom looked up. Was his leg being pulled? No. The colonel's face was as solemn as three owls.

"You see, Mr. Holt," he continued in a grave, judicial tone, "judges are poorly paid out West. Juries get nothing. They must make what they can. I have known Jim Holland quite a while. I guarantee that he shall keep whatever contract he may make."

His tone and manner turned Tom cold.

"You advise me to pay, then?"

Colonel Chapin frowned.

"I never give advice. What I want to know is—how much is that Rat-cat's life worth to you?"

"All I've got," Tom answered promptly. "If there is no other way."

The colonel rested his chin on his hand.

"Do you mean that if I make a guarantee that this young Indian shall be reprieved, and his people recompensed for any loss they may have suffered, you would pay me, as guarantor, the sum of seven thousand dollars?"

"Yes."

"You have a singular regard for Indians, Mr. Holt." The colonel's tone was mildly sarcastic.

Tom's face grew hard.

"They are my friends," he said shortly. "The only friends I have."

He rose to go, but did not offer to shake hands.

"I will accept your guarantee, colonel, and pay that sum into your hands when the bank opens to-morrow morning."

The other bowed gravely.

"It shall be arranged," he said. "But don't go yet." Tom was half-way towards the door. "There is a more serious matter. You say you disarmed two officers of the law, and shut them up in a stable a while ago?"

"I shouldn't be here if I had not."

"Did they produce a warrant for your arrest?"

"No."

"What reason did they give for your detention?"

"None, sir."

"They will get you to-morrow, I fear."

Tom frowned.

"I had not thought of that. I had better give you a cheque now to make sure."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 978.

He took his cheque-book from a breast-pocket and spread it upon a writing-table.

"May I use your pen, sir?"

He took it up, and the colonel left his chair.

"Put that down!"

The voice was so stern that the pen fell from Tom's fingers. Now a hand was laid upon his shoulders, and the colonel's eyes looked down into his face with an expression which made him catch his breath.

"So you did believe that I meant to take your money. Thunder! I ought to have you tied up to the snubbing-post and whipped. You deserve I should. Do you think, you young Britisher, that there is no honour in the United States? What did Billee tell you?"

He had put out the other hand by this time, and Tom was gripping it, his face on fire.

"He said you would see justice done, sir!"

Tom's voice rang high in his relief, and someone who had peeped into the room gave a little exclamation, came in, and shut the door behind her.

The colonel chuckled.

"And so you reckoned my idea of justice was Pin Bolland's?"

He turned round.

"Oh, you, Sadie! Come here. This man is going to give me all his money to save an Indian's life. What shall we do to him for it? There is not a doubt about his guilt—see that cheque-book? But I won't sentence him. You must."

The child came forward, smiling, and Tom started. She was all in white, as he had seen her in his dream; her neck and arms bare, and now, even as she had done in this fancy, she held out both hands and slipped them into his.

"Why, daddy, he looks hungry, and most tired to death. I guess we'll give him a good dinner. Then I'll play to him, and he shall stay with us. That'll be punishment enough."

The Guest of Honour!

TOM never forgot that first evening at Calumet Ranch. It was fairyland with just one fairy in it. He did not want another. A very active managing fairy she was, whose motto in life seemed to be to think of a dozen different things at the same time, and then do every one in turn.

The greeting over—far too soon—Sadie pursed her lips and observed him at a distance, her hands now clasped behind her back.

"Say, your clothes!"

She advanced and touched his shirt with one finger.

"Oh, they're nice!" she exclaimed, as Tom frowned at them ruefully. "I'll never like any other clothes as well, for I saw you in them first; but they weren't just made for dining in. Whatever can we do about it?"

She ran to her father, whispered, and came back.

"I've fixed that. Now I want to see my dearest Hunks, and Malinka, too. I haven't forgotten their names. Come, quick, and take them to the stable. I'll show you. Oh, Tom!"—they were in the dark by this time—"I was a beast! D'you know, I cried myself to sleep that night. I did! It was dad. When I told him just what happened, he said you'd saved my life—you and dear Hunks. Now I never dreamt any such thing, you see. I thought it was all play, and that made me kind of scratchy, like a nasty

little cat. And I laughed at you, 'cos you said 'By Jove! Tom, will you forgive me? Say you will!'"

He had no opportunity just then, for by this time Hunks' paws were upon her shoulders, and she made him execute a war-dance on his hind-legs, which so gravely scandalised the doerhounds that they retired to the house. Then it was Malinka's turn, and all four, two of them hand-in-hand, went to the stables. There was a great stir here. By lantern light a score of men were saddling up. In the centre stood a short, stocky, bearded man, giving orders right and left.

"See your cartridge-belts are full, boys. Mind every man packs a Winchester. Git to the storehouse if you want some. The colonel takes no chances. Ready, all? Smart! Be smart, now! We ain't no time to waste!"

Sadie's hand was holding Tom's hard.

"That's Sandy Bowker, dad's foreman," she whispered. "They're off to Servita. Say, but you have stirred dad. I have never seen him look just as he did this evening. I'll want to know every last thing about your Indians. We'll have them all here, and give them the greatest time that ever was. Now, watch!"

The men had mounted, sitting their horses as if they were U.S.A. troopers. Half a dozen who had been to the storehouse now fell into line. The little foreman swung himself into the saddle.

"All here?" He silently counted them. "Right! Now, catch on to this: First, the saloon; but we don't stop there, mind." There was a grin at the hint. "When I've seen Old Billie, we git around where they've put the Apache buck, and camp there, or thereabouts. There'll be no trouble—not one little mite. But"—he raised his voice impressively—"every man will keep his trigger greased, and shoot to kill if I give word. Now, boys, vamoose at the lope."

There was a clatter on the stones, the clink of bridle-chains, and they were gone like a flock of birds into the night. Tom drew a long breath.

"Your father," he said to Sadie, "is a great man."

She laughed easily.

"I guess so, too. But he's not the only one. Now, will this do for the dears?"

She opened the door of a stable, a negro groom attending with a lantern, and lo, here was a loose box with a manger full of hay, and bedding of the finest straw, and in a corner a great basin filled with meat and bones and another with water.

While Tom admired and Hunks devoured, Malinka was rubbed down by the groom, and given a big measure of corn. As for Hunks, the events of the day had so wrought upon him that he was almost too drowsy to lick Tom's hand. Before the door was closed he was fast asleep.

"Come to your room!" Sadie commanded. "See whether I have done right."

This room fairly took away Tom's breath. It was a real boy's room. On the walls were photographs of groups of Harvard collegiates—a baseball team, a rowing four, and a likeness of one lad alone.

"My brother," Sadie said in a low voice. "He died last year. Dad won't have the place changed any. All Sam's clothes are here. He comes—dad, I mean—nearly every day. No one has slept in that bed since. But you will. I settled that with dad, because"—her voice fell lower still—"just because you saved my life, Tom dear!"

She turned away swiftly. But in a flash she was laughing at the expression of his face as he caught sight of a suit of dress-clothes.

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, and becomes the fast friend of White Cat, Black Hawk's son. Later, when Tom is in Servita he falls foul of a bullying desperado named Mick Mander. Tom stands up to the bully, however, and publicly declares his friendship for the Indians amongst whom he has been living. This enrages Mick Mander's cronies, for a

Redskin is regarded as dirt. Thus, when Black Hawk's tribe arrives at Servita, Mander's cowboys drive a "rogue" bull into that section of the town where the Indians have pitched their market. The infuriated bull does great damage amongst the valuable skins belonging to the Indians, before Hunks seizes the animal by the nose and hangs on like grim death. Whilst Tom is trying to get Hunks to release his grip of the stricken bull, Mick Mander draws his revolver and attempts to shoot Tom. At the critical moment, however, White Cat springs forward and buries his knife in the would-be murderer's ribs. Instantly White Cat is surrounded by the infuriated cowboys and marched off to gaol on the charge of attempted murder, and Tom, with a sickening at the heart, realises that his red friend is a doomed man before even he is tried. Billie Punt, who has taken a great liking towards Tom, advises the young Britisher to proceed to Colonel Chapin and lay all the facts before him. Tom, who has met Sadie Chapin, the colonel's daughter, thinks there is a sporting chance of saving White Cat's life and agrees to do as Billie proposes.

On his way to the colonel's house Tom bumps into two sheriff's officers who have come to arrest him. With scant ceremony Tom imprisons them in a stable and resumes his journey. But his reception at Colonel Chapin's house is a distinctly cold one. "Excuse me," says Tom, "but I had to come."

(Now Read On.)

"You'll just have to wear them, by Jove you will!" she cried wickedly. "A hot bath is waiting next door, and Uncle Eph will see to everything. And I must fly."

And fly she did, while Tom dropped limply on the bed, and pinched himself to see whether he was not dreaming still. But there was no illusion in that hot bath; a luxury beyond all dreams, nor in Uncle Ephraim's cheerful face, as he entered at the moment when Tom was struggling in helpless despair with a high collar that was just a shade too small.

"Young Marse Sam, seh, he was a fine young gen'leman," the butler remarked, as his deft fingers ended Tom's agony, tied his black tie, and then helped him on with waistcoat and coat. "My sakes, now, you be the double-blossom of Marse Sam! You have his berry figure, seh. What you say—dis waistcoat tight two inches? Dem trousers three too short? De coat be spittin' in de shoulders? Well, well! You wait. I got thread and needle. But I say you just same make as Marse Sam, though p'r'aps a few sizes bigger. A berry fine young gen'leman he was, upon my soul, seh!"

With which declaration—his unwritten apology for past mistakes—Uncle Eph went to work so cleverly, that by the time the gong had sounded twice Tom was in comparative comfort.

He succeeded, chiefly because he forgot all about them. There were so many other things to think about. A spoon—fancy using a spoon again! For six months he had lapped up all liquid nourishment from the plate. Table-napkins—ye gods! The food itself, and wine—the colonel's lightest claret—and last and best and all the time, Sadie and her father, who was the most courtly gentleman, Tom thought now, he had ever met.

The evening passed in no time. Sadie could play marvelously well, and Tom, it turned out, had a voice. He made a bad shot at the college songs Sadie selected for him, but when challenged to choose his own, and he sang "Hearts of Oak," "Forty years on," and that old sea ditty the "Union Jack of Old England," he brought down the house.

They all retired early, at which Tom wondered, for he was expecting to hear something about the steps to be taken at Servita the next morning. But the colonel said not a word. Nevertheless, Tom went to his soft spring bed, to sleep as he had not done for a very long time, with a mind free from care. Those twenty cowboys were to camp round the prison, after seeing Old Bilke, and to keep their triggers greased! White Cat was safe!

Early hours were kept at Calumet Ranch. Breakfast was at sunrise, and in less than an hour afterwards Tom was in Malinka, side by side with Colonel Chapin, riding a thoroughbred, pacing along the Servita road. Hunks trotting leisurely behind. Still not a word on business from the colonel. He talked a little, and made Tom talk a great deal, but it was about England.

The town came in sight. How well Tom remembered the last time he had ridden this way, a weary wayfarer.

Now the colonel spoke at last. "I have had word from Pim," he said briefly. "The trial starts in two hours. They expect to finish up about noon, so we'll be home for lunch. You'll be with us, I hope. Sadie is reckoning on a ride this afternoon."

Tom glanced round with a solemn face. "I thought, sir, I should have to lunch with those sheriff's officers?"

"That is so," the colonel rejoined with equal gravity. "The question is, are they still alive? I told Sandy to be mighty careful not to break the law, but there's no moon, and in a mix-up men get short-sighted, so I don't just know what their present address may be."

"I am not reckoning upon anything I know, but we may have big trouble."

"With sheriff's officers?" Tom could not help asking. The colonel smiled.

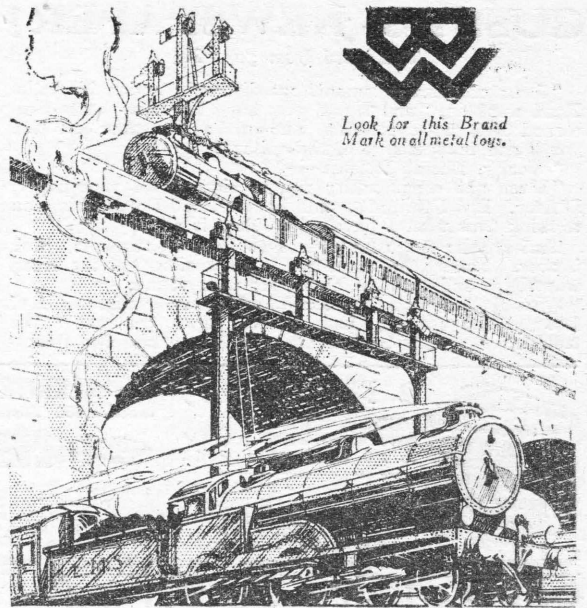
"I guess I had better tell the truth in future. The Sheriff of Servita cannot act without my authority. He made a mistake yesterday. No, I was thinking of the ranchmen of this settlement. You have seen one side of the great Apache nation. We settlers see another. Black Hawk, for instance, is the most accomplished liar I know. I have met a few. He is not as big a tough as Badger Head, leader of the tribe. For one thing, he has better brains. But he would kill us all to-morrow if he could."

"Four years ago they raided a township twenty miles from here, and—roasted babies! What happened to their mothers I shall not tell you. That is no reason, you will say, to hang a lad who saved your life. I guess not. But he is the son of a chief. He'll be a chief himself some day. My neighbours will say—just like your big cowboy—he's a Redskin; which means to them about the same as vermin to your British gamekeeper."

(Be sure and read next week's exciting instalment of this fine serial, chums.)



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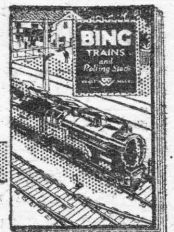


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GUSSY'S NEWSPAPER!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Some of these statements are distinctly actionable," the Head went on, "and I can only hope that the people concerned will be charitable, and make allowance for the youth and inexperience of the editor."

"Weally, Doctah Holmes—"
"I am not commanding you to close down your paper, D'Arcy. But I think it would be wise, and I will leave you to think over what I have said. That is all, my boy."

And Arthur Augustus retired to his own study to think it over. Finally, he came to the conclusion that the Head was right, and that his objections were sound.

Already there had been considerable trouble over No. 1 of D'Arcy's newspaper; and if the paper continued, the trouble would only be increased. It would be quite impos-

sible, in a schoolboy newspaper, to refrain from personalities. And the Head's hint of possible libel actions was very disquieting.

Taking one consideration with another, Arthur Augustus decided that a continuance of his newspaper would not be worth while. Already the cares of editorship sat heavily upon him, and he was anxious to be rid of them.

And so, after a consultation with his staff, Arthur Augustus announced that he had decided to close down; and the newspaper perished in its infancy, so to speak.

And Lumley-Lumley, the joker, will remember for many a long day the record ragging he received at the hands of his fellow "journalists" for tampering with Gussy's newspaper.

THE END.

(Look out for another ripping yarn, dealing with Tom Merry & Co., next week, entitled: "STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE!" by Martin Clifford. Your favourite author is in tip-top form in this great story.)



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