

The

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EVERY
WEDNESDAY.



"SAVED, SIR!"

A shock for the bookworm of
the Shell.

(See the grand school story of St. Jim's—inside.)

A SPLENDID EXTRA-LONG SCHOOL STORY FEATURING—

"Standing by a Rascal!"

by Martin Clifford

CHAPTER 1 Left Behind!

"W E'D better run for it!" said Jack Blake.
"Yes, rather!" agreed Tom Merry. "Put it on, chaps!"

"Bai Jove! Pway hold on, deah boys!"

"What's the matter now, Gussy?"

"It is impossible for me to win, Jack Blake."

"Why, fathead? Got a pain?"

"Not at all. Pway do not be wedie, Blake."

"Then why can't you run?" said Blake impatiently.

"We'll miss that train if we don't. Come along!"

"Quite imposs, deah boy. I am thinkin' of my twousahs. In the pwsent state of this w'etched woad it is uttably impossible for me to win. I should get them splashed feahfully; also my spats and shoes."

"But we'll miss the train, you awful ass!"

"I refuse to be called an awful ass, Blake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity. "And I wepeat that it is out of the question for me to win, even if we do miss that twain. I have no intention of appeahwin' in Wayland lookin' like a disreputable twamp."

"Oh, you—you—"

"I warned you about bringing it out in this weather," said Monty Lowther, eyeing Blake severely. "Why didn't you leave it at home? We had to wait an hour while it dressed, and now—"

"Bai Jove! If you dare to wefer to me as 'It,' Lowthab—"

"Cheese it, Monty, you ass!" laughed Tom Merry. "Come along, Gussy. Never mind your trousers!"

"Weally, deah boy, I must mind my twousahs!" said Arthur Augustus heatedly. "I cannot possibly win in—"

"Can't you?" exclaimed Blake, with a snort. "We'll see about that. Collar him, chaps!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Come on, Gussy!"

"Heah—what— Gweat Scott! Welcase me, you feahful— Oh, bai Jove!"

The next moment Arthur Augustus discovered he could run quite well. Blake and Herries took one arm each, and with Lowther helping from behind, the quartette started off like sprinters on a cinder-track.

Protesting vigorously and wrathfully, Arthur Augustus went along Rylcombe Lane at a great speed. Unfortunately his fears for his trousers were only too well founded. Snow had been followed by frost, which had been followed in its turn by a thaw, and the roads were in a shocking state.

As Arthur Augustus thudded along in the ruthless grasp of his chums' slush and mud and water splashed around and about him in miniature torrents.

"You feahful wuffians!" shrieked the raging swell of the Fourth. "Oh, bai Jove! Welcase me! Oh cwumbs! My clobber! Stop, you wottahs! Stop!"

"Sorry, old man. Got to catch that train," gasped Jack Blake. "Your own fault, you know. We shouldn't have had to run if you hadn't taken two hours to change. Put it on, Gussy!"

"Ow! Oh, gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus "put it on." He found he was obliged to do so. His desperate attempts to stop only resulted in his having to take enormous strides, which tended to splash him even more than before.

In this wise Rylcombe Lane was negotiated, and by the time the station hove in sight Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in a terrible state.

His aristocratic features were red with wrath and exertion when his chums finally released him outside the little station.

"There you are, Gussy!" said Jack Blake, panting. "I knew you could run, if you only tried."

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"Never say die!" gasped Lowther. "You see what you can really do when you try, Gussy—and when we help you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—" Arthur Augustus got back some of his breath at last. "You—you feahful outsiders! You weckless wuffians! But for the fact that we are in a public street I would thwash you all wound, bai Jove! Look at my twousahs!"

"They are a bit splashed," admitted Blake, eyeing them critically. "Never mind, people won't mistake you for a tailor's dummy, now."

"You—you— And my spats! Oh, gweat Scott! Look at them—covahed in mud! And my shoes are feahful, and even my coat is mudday! The moment we get back to St. Jim's, this evenin'," vowed Arthur Augustus in trembling accents, "I shall insist upon givin' you wuffians a feahful thwashin' all wound!"

"Good! It'll give us a bit of entertainment to look forward to," said Blake. "But we've got to catch a train, though I'm not sure that we ought to allow Gussy to accompany us, considering the state he's in."

"Bai Jove! You uttah wottahs!"

"Oh, let him come," said Lowther kindly. "We can easily make him walk behind us. People won't dream we own him, then. I'll tell you what, Gussy—"

"Train's in. Buck up!"

The warning came from Tom Merry, and perhaps it was just as well it did come just then, for Arthur Augustus was on the point of committing assault and battery on Lowther—public street or not.

But the interruption sent the juniors racing into the station, and Arthur Augustus followed, trembling with the wrath that consumed him.

Tom Merry got the tickets, while Blake, Herries, Digby, Lowther and Manners raced for a compartment and swarmed inside. Arthur Augustus, not deigning to hurry, walked with stately strides towards it.

"Come on, Gussy!" bawled Blake. "Get a move on!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus did not hurry; he pursued his stately way with his noble eyes gleaming. He had no intention now of waiting until they returned to St. Jim's for his revenge. He meant to bestow the thrashings in the seclusion of the railway carriage.

But Arthur Augustus hadn't counted on accidents.

"Hurry up there, please!"

The ancient porter came along, closing the carriage doors. Just then Tom Merry dashed up with the tickets at top speed, for the guard was already waving his flag. He arrived at the carriage door, just as the stately stride of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy brought him there.

"In you go, Gussy, you ass!"

There was a sudden scrimmage at the door as Tom Merry tried to bustle the dignified Arthur Augustus in, while Blake and Lowther lent a hand from inside.

Unfortunately, Gussy's silk hat got knocked off during the scrimmage, and went rolling over and over on the platform.

"Oh, bai Jove! My toppah!"

The swell of St. Jim's gave a gasp of dismay, and immediately sprang back on to the platform to regain his precious "toppah."

"Gussy, you idiot!"

"Look out there, young gents!"

It was a case now of losing the train, or leaving the silk hat behind. Arthur Augustus chose the former as the lesser evil.

Ignoring the fact that the train was moving, he jumped after the rattling hat and grabbed it up.

"Come on!" shrieked Blake. "Oh, you—you—"

It was too late, however. The porter had slammed the door, and as Gussy tore after it he made a grab at the junior.

"Too late now, young gent! 'Old on! No, you don't!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

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



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's tender heart is a byword at St. Jim's, although a soft head might, in the opinion of his chums, be a better name for it. And judging from the disastrous position in which Gussy finds himself as a result of his trusting nature they would certainly seem to be right!



"Good-bye, Gussy! See you this evening!"
"Wottahs!"

The grinning faces of D'Arcy's chums vanished with the train round the curve, and Arthur Augustus glowered after them with feelings too deep for words. He had been roughly handled, he had been forced to rush to the station in a most undignified manner, with fearful results to his clothes. And now, to crown everything, he had missed the train, after all.

Arthur Augustus left the station, breathing hard, his aristocratic features scarlet with wrath and indignation.

CHAPTER 2.

Gussy's Adventure!

"YAH! College chump!"

Arthur Augustus frowned and eyed the little crowd of villagers rather apprehensively.

There were half a dozen of them—three at least were bigger than Arthur Augustus himself. They came slouching along Rylcombe Lane in a noisy group, one or two of them with cigarettes hanging loosely from their lips.

At first the swell of the Fourth had scarcely noticed them, but when they drew nearer he could not help noting the fact that they were eyeing him with significant grins on their grubby faces. Arthur Augustus did not like the look of them at all. They were far from being respectable, clean, and healthy-looking fellows like Grimes and Pilcher & Co., of the village; in point of fact, they were the riff-raff of Rylcombe.

As there was still plenty of sloppy, dirty snow lying about on the grass by the roadside, Arthur Augustus had good reason, perhaps, to feel distinctly uneasy in the circumstances.

It was, quite obviously, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's silk hat that was attracting the attention of the villagers. Gussy's glimmering "toppers" always did have an irresistible fascination for street urchins. When snow lay about, the temptation to knock it off was undoubtedly very great.

On this occasion Arthur Augustus realised very quickly that he was booked for trouble. Pride forbade him to turn and run for it, though such an undignified proceeding would certainly have been wise. As he drew level with the village louts there was a yell.

"Yah! Colleger!"

"My heye! What a swell!"

"Knock 'is tile orf!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus eyed them warily, and hurried his steps. His wariness did not save him, however. Evidently the

crafty youths had their ammunition hidden behind them, for scarcely had he passed when—

Whizz! Whizz! Whizz!

A lump of slushy snow missed Gussy's ear by an inch; a second burst in a wet shower on his shoulder; a third hit the target, sending the silk hat sailing from his head.

Flop!

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

There was a howl of laughter. Arthur Augustus went redder still with wrath, and made a rush after his rolling headgear.

But the villagers were by no means satisfied with their quick success. As Gussy bent to recover his muddy hat, a perfect fusillade of lumps of half-frozen slush burst round and about him.

"Oh, deah! Oh, you feahful wuffians! Stop, you beastly wottahs! Yawwoooooogh!"

A lump of icy wetness burst under Gussy's left ear. He hastily jammed on his recovered hat, and leaped to escape. As he did so another lucky—or unlucky—shot sent his hat spinning away again.

There was a fresh howl from the village louts, and then they set about their luckless victim with a will, amidst an uproar of yells and laughter.

They surrounded him, and Arthur Augustus ducked and dodged desperately, but in vain.

Finding escape hopeless, Arthur Augustus thereupon turned at bay, and began to give as well as receive. He had a strong arm and a sure aim, and soon the village louts found it necessary to duck and dodge.

A particularly well-aimed snowball—if it could be called that—burst full in the face of the leader of the gang, and he took it far from sportingly.

"Orlright!" he howled viciously, spluttering out the wet snow. "Us'll make you squirm for that! Down 'im, mates! Roll 'im in the ditch!"

He led the way himself with a rush, and his companions ceased their bombardment, and joined him in the attack on the unfortunate St. Jim's junior.

Arthur Augustus defended himself nobly and desperately. The ditch was half full of melted snow, and the thought of being rolled into it made him fight like a Trojan. It was very rare indeed that villagers dared to attack a St. Jim's fellow like this; but they were six to one, and intended to carry out their threat if they could.

It was evidently a surprise to the louts to find such an elegant youth as Arthur Augustus putting up such a stout resistance. But it only served to increase their rage. Hitting out right and left, the junior backed before the villagers amidst an uproar of angry yells.

"Oh, gweat Scott!" panted Arthur Augustus. "Wescue! Wescue, St. Jim's!"

He was near the grass bordering the lane now, and Arthur Augustus shouted desperately for aid, realising that unless help came he would soon be in the ditch.

Help did come—from an unexpected quarter.

There sounded the swish of cycle tyres in the mud, followed by the sudden application of brakes. Next moment

a ruddy-featured youth flung himself from a tradesman's bicycle and threw himself into the fray with a will.

It was Grimes, the Rylcombe grocer's boy, and an old friend of D'Arcy's. Arthur Augustus got no chance to see him, however.

Just at that moment an ugly spear-cut from the leader of the roughs—a youth of at least seventeen—caught the hapless Arthur Augustus clean under the chin. At the same moment D'Arcy's heel stumbled over a stone, and the blow, catching him off his balance, sent him head over heels backwards.

He went crashing down, and as he fell his head struck a milestone by the wayside with terrific force.

What happened next the swell of the Fourth never knew, for the world seemed to end in a sudden blaze of light, and all became blank.

Grimes, who had witnessed the incident, was on the rough in a flash. A hefty right sent him staggering back in his turn, and all but floored him.

The leader didn't wait for another. His companions were already in hasty flight, and he followed them, ducking and dodging desperately as Grimes followed him up with a will.

Then, just as Grimes was about to pull up to return to Arthur Augustus, the gallant errand-boy sighted something that filled him with sudden alarm.

While in flight, one of the young rascals had grabbed up his machine and was now riding away on it, a grin of malicious triumph on his features.

"Here, bring that there bike back!" howled Grimes.

Ignorant of the fact that Arthur Augustus had not risen, Grimes pelted away after his bike for all he was worth. The bike, the roughs, and Grimes vanished round the bend, and in a matter of seconds from the time of Grimes' arrival, the lane was deserted—save for Arthur Augustus.

That hapless youth lay where he had fallen, his face white, his eyes closed. How long he lay there Arthur Augustus himself never knew, but when he did recover consciousness at last it was to find a stranger bending over him.

He was a shabby-looking individual of between twenty and thirty, and he had a rather crafty face and shifty eyes. Arthur Augustus opened his eyes and blinked up at him dazedly.

"Oh deah!" he gasped, holding his head, which was throbbing madly. "Oh, bai Jove! My head! What—what— Oh, I wemebah! That w'etched wough knocked me down, and I—I must have banged my head against somethin'. Oh, gweat Scott! My head—"

"It must 'ave bin this here milestone as did it," said the shabby individual. "It was a tidy knock, I'll bet on that. You was jest lyin' agen this here stone, and—"

"I twipped ovah a stone," said Arthur Augustus faintly, his hand caressing the back of his throbbing head. "I twipped when that wuffianly wottah stwuck me and knocked me down. Bai Jove! It was you, of course, who came to my wescue! Thank you vewy much indeed. Those vascals intended to woll me in that feahful ditch!"

Arthur Augustus blinked up gratefully at the shabby individual. Not having seen Grimes at all, he naturally imagined his rescuer was the fellow he found bending over him when he opened his eyes. As a matter of fact, the shabby gentleman had not even seen the villagers at all. He had dropped into the lane from the stile leading into the woods some seconds after they had gone.

But he eyed Gussy's pale and earnest features very craftily now.

"Me? Oh! Ah, yes!" he exclaimed, nodding his head. "You're right, young gent; not as I wants to make a song about it, like! Footpads I reckon they was, but I soon made 'em take their 'ooks!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Good Samaritan!

"**B**AI Jove! They weren't footpads!" said Arthur Augustus, sitting up and holding his head in both hands. "They were young woughs fwom the village, deah boy. Howevah, it was vewy kind of you, and I am vewy gwateful."

"You needn't thank me, young gent! Alf Stiggins ain't a feller as makes a fuss of things like that—not me! And as for draggin' you from beneath the wheels of that there motor-lorry while you lay unconscious like—well, I ain't goin' to make any fuss about that, neither! Now, jest you lay back a bit and rest until you feels better!"

And Mr. Alf Stiggins gently and kindly rested Arthur Augustus with his back against the milestone, having taken off his rather greasy raincoat for Gussy to lean against.

It was really a kindly action, and Gussy was glad of it. His head felt as if it was bursting, and talking was a

painful effort. All he longed for just then was to rest—in silence.

But the good Samaritan's last words were too startling for Arthur Augustus to allow to pass without comment.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated, staring at Mr. Stiggins. "D-did you say you dwagged me fwom undah a motor-lorry, Mr. Stiggins?"

"Now, don't you worry about that, young gent!" advised Mr. Stiggins, with a wave of his rather grubby hand. "It weren't nothing! You jest lie back quiet-like and don't tork!"

This time Arthur Augustus did as advised, and for some moments he lay back with closed eyes, striving to quieten the wild throbbing in his head. But the ground was wet, and, drenched and shivering, the junior strove to rise at last.

"Feeling better now?" said Mr. Alf Stiggins kindly. "That's the style. Here, jest you 'old on to me!"

Arthur Augustus did so—he found it very necessary. The strong odour of spirits which surrounded that gentleman made it a far from pleasant proceeding, however. But Arthur Augustus would have fallen had he not held on.

"Bai Jove!" he panted weakly. "I weally feel vewy wocky, Mr.—Mr. Stiggins! I shall be all wight pwesently, howevah. You are vewy good. Appawntly you have saved my life as well as wescuin' me fwom those young wuffians!"

"Well, I s'pose I did!" admitted Mr. Stiggins modestly.

"Not as I wants to shout about a little thing like that. You'd 'ave been squashed to a pancake, o' course, if I hadn't been pretty slick! The durned lorry—a big 'un loaded with—with timber it was—and it came thunderin' round this here corner—goin' over the speed limit, I reckon. An' the driver never even seed you. I jest 'ad time to snatch you away, and right over the verry spot you was lyin' on it went."

"Oh, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus shuddered at his narrow escape. "I—I should certainly have been killed, deah boy."

"Dead as a doornail!" said Mr. Stiggins, shaking his head. "An' the villain didn't even stop, though I shouted to 'im. I suppose 'e daren't, thinkin' as 'e'd killed you, see? With all them bricks loaded up on it—"

"Bwicks! I thought—"

"Did I say bricks? I meant timber, of course!" corrected the hero. "Big timber baulks, they was! It were a near thing for me, too—not as it would 'ave mattered much if I 'ad bin killed!" ended Mr. Stiggins bitterly. "With no work to be got nowhere, an' a family like mine at 'ome starvin'—well, what would it 'ave mattered?"

"Oh, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus was a very tender-hearted youth—too tender-hearted, perhaps—and he almost forgot the furious hammering in his head in sudden concern for his rescuer. "Bai Jove! Weally, I am vewy sowwy indeed to heah things are so bad with you. If I can do anythin'—"

"You can't do nothin', I'm afraid! An' now my raincoat's ripped I can't go arter that there job in Wayland. Not as you can 'elp that, young gent!" said Mr. Stiggins, holding up his greasy raincoat for Gussy's inspection. "It weren't your fault as that motor-lorry wheel caught it and ripped it like that, were it now? It's 'ard on a man, though, as I ain't got another, and I can't go arter a respectable job with a coat like this!"

Arthur Augustus was feeling a trifle better now, and his head was clearing a little. He eyed his companion gratefully and sympathetically.

"That is wotten, Mr. Stiggins!" he said, in dismay. "Howevah, I shall certainly not allow you to lose by your gwreat kindness and bwavevewy, deah boy. I shall insist upon weplacin' your waincoat with a new one to enable you to apply for that job. I am—"

Mr. Stiggins raised his hand.

"I won't 'ear of it, young gent!" he said firmly. "In any case, it would be too late unless I could go arter it this afternoon, like. Other fellers are arter it besides me, you see!"

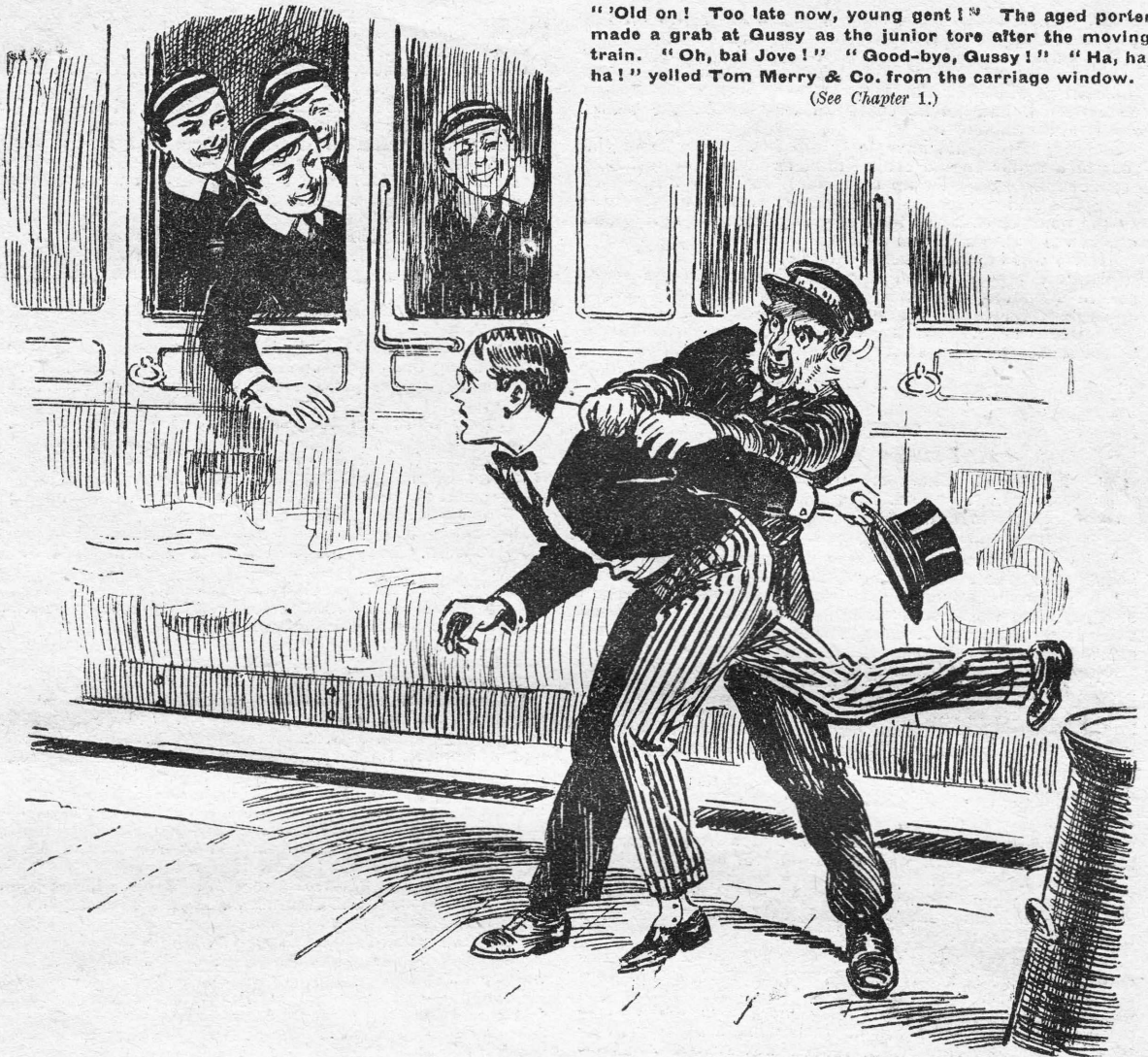
"Bai Jove! Then you must allow me to make the loss good without delay, deah boy; I insist!" said Arthur Augustus, groping into his pocket. "It is only wight that I should. One moment, Mr. Stiggins!" He fumbled in his inner coat pocket, and producing his pocket-wallet, Arthur Augustus took out three Treasury notes and handed them over. "Heah you are, deah boy! Pway accept these, and if you will call at St. Jim's and ask for D'Arcy major, I will do my vewy best to help you furthah. Yaas, watah!"

"I won't 'ear of it, Master D'Arcy—"

"I insist! Pway do me the vewy gwreat favah of acceptin' the money, Mr. Stiggins," said Gussy earnestly. "If only for the sake of your family you ought to accept it in the spiwit I am offewin' it, deah boy. You have done me a vewy gwreat service, and I should be wantin' in decency and gwattitude if I failed to wepay you in the onlay way I cau at the moment."

"Old on! Too late now, young gent!" The aged porter made a grab at Gussy as the junior tore after the moving train. "Oh, bai Jove!" "Good-bye, Gussy!" "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry & Co. from the carriage window.

(See Chapter 1.)



"Oh, well, if you insist, young gent—"

"I do insist, deah boy!"

"Then I'd better accept them, I s'pose!" said Mr. Stiggins, his greedy, gleaming eyes belying his modest, reluctant words and expression. "For the wife and kids' sakes I s'pose I oughter. Thank you kindly, Master—Why, what—"

"Bai Jove! My watch!" interrupted Arthur Augustus, in alarm. He was feeling in his waistcoat pocket as he spoke. "I have lost my gold wepeatah, Mr. Stiggins. How vewy—"

"You—you've lost your watch, Master D'Arcy?" exclaimed Mr. Stiggins, in great concern. "Blow me, I see it now! I remembers seeing one of them young footpads bendin' over you, and I wondered if—"

"You saw—"

"Yes; I saw one of 'em bendin' over you, and when I rushed to your rescue he bolted 'ard! Well, the—the young villain!" said Mr. Stiggins indignantly.

"Bai Jove! But—but weally," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, frowning, "I cannot believe the young wuffians would go so far as to wob me. I know the wottahs quite well by sight, and I am suah they would nevah dare to wob me, or would dweam of doin' so, deah boy. It must have been w'enched loose duwin' the stwuggl—pewwaps it is in the woad somewhere!"

Arthur Augustus began to scan the ground closely, and Mr. Alf Stiggins started to help in the search. Very industriously he searched the roadway, and then he scanned the grass and slush between the road and the ditch. But the hunt came to nothing. There was no sign of Gussy's gold repeater.

Reluctantly, Arthur Augustus had to admit that it looked very suspicious against the village youth who had attacked him.

"He daren't sell it, though," said Mr. Stiggins comfort-

ingly. "Not if it 'as your initials on it like you say, Master D'Arcy. You jest offer a reward and he'll bring it back, you see! Was it worth a lot?"

"Yaas, wathah! It is worth twenty pounds at least. But it was also a pwesent ffrom my patah, and I should be vewy upset indeed if I could not wecovah it!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, it is no good searchin' any more I am afraid, Mr. Stiggins. Pway do not bothah! I must weally get back now as I am dwenched through, and I am feelin' vewy wocky indeed."

"Very well, young gent! I'll get along to Wayland now arter that there job, and whether I gets it or not, I'll come straight back here and 'unt, and 'unt for that watch—though I thinks myself as you'll only get it back by offerin' a reward for it!"

"I shall certainly do so, deah boy. I will offah a fivah, and possibly the young wascal will return it then—if he has taken it. And if you should succeed in findin' it, Mr. Stiggins," ended Arthur Augustus, "I shall certainly insist upon your acceptin' the weward."

"I won't 'ear of it—"

"Wubbish! I shall insist! Howevah, I weally must go now, Mr. Stiggins. Pway excuse me! I shall be vewy glad indeed to heah that you have obtained the job you are aftah. And once more—thank you vewy much indeed for the vewy great service you have wendahed me!"

He shook hands warmly with the modest Mr. Stiggins, who touched his greasy bowler hat, and departed in the direction of Wayland, Gussy having gratefully but firmly declined his kind offer to help him to St. Jim's.

As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus was feeling he couldn't stand another second of Mr. Alf Stiggins' conversation—deeply grateful as he was feeling towards that humble and modest individual. He was only too thankful to be

alone, for his head was humming like a hive, and talking was more than he could bear.

But before he had gone far towards the school Gussy began to wonder if he wouldn't have been wiser to accept the offer of aid after all. He was really feeling worse than he expected, and all he could do was to struggle along, slowly and drunkenly.

Luckily, he did not have to tramp far. There came the roar of a motor engine behind him, and suddenly a motorcycle combination drew up alongside. In it was Darrell of the Sixth, and the senior had evidently seen that Gussy was on the point of collapse, for he sprang from the saddle and was at the junior's side in a flash.

"Here, what the dickens—Hallo, hold up, kid!"

Arthur Augustus reeled into the startled senior's arms, and in a matter of seconds Darrell had him safely tucked up in the sidcar and was speeding towards St. Jim's. And ten minutes later the junior was between the sheets in the school sanatorium, his afternoon's adventures at an end.

CHAPTER 4.

Doubting Thomases!

"LET'S see! There are six of us," said Jack Blake solemnly. "That's six fearful thrashings for old Gussy to dish out when we get in. The prospect makes me shudder, you men!"

"The thought of it spoils my enjoyment all the afternoon," said Monty Lowther. "Let's hope he'll be merciful."

"The slaughterfulness will be terrific, as that Indian chap at Greyfriars would say," laughed Tom Merry. "I think we'd better keep out of Gussy's way until after prep if we can."

"What about us?" grinned Blake. "We've got to do our prep in the study, haven't we? I tell you what, we'll pretend he's let us down—that he missed the train intentionally. See the idea? Before he's got the chance to start on us, we'll start on him. Thrice armed is he who gets his blow in first!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze!"

Tom Merry & Co. roared as they tramped along the muddy Rylcombe Lane. They had had a very enjoyable afternoon, having seen Wayland Ramblers beat Abbotsford United, with tea after the match at a teashop in Wayland. It was now, when homeward bound, that they had suddenly remembered Arthur Augustus and his fearful threat of a thrashing all round.

Needless to say, Gussy's chums were not quite so terrified of the prospect of a thrashing from the indignant Arthur Augustus as they pretended to be. Arthur Augustus was never taken very seriously. They knew him too well to believe that his great wrath would last long. A very good-hearted and forgiving youth indeed was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Yet it was quite possible that his anger still consumed him, and Blake's suggestion that they should pose as the injured parties was generally approved.

"Mind you don't laugh, though," warned Blake, "or the fat will be in the fire. We'll all start on him at once—give it him hot and strong before he can get a word in. We'll insist upon an instant apology from him for letting us down."

"Ha, ha, ha! That's the idea!"

On arrival at St. Jim's the six juniors made straight for Study No. 6, fully expecting to find Gussy nursing his dignity there.

But Arthur Augustus was conspicuous only by his absence. "Isn't here, and doesn't look as if he's been in," said Blake, picking up a letter from the table. "Here's a letter for him—from his pater, I expect. If there's a fiver in it, then the sooner we bring him round the better!"

"Yes, rather—Hallo! Seen Gussy, Levison?"

Ernest Levison, who was just passing the study door, stopped and looked in.

"Gussy!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "Why, don't you fellows know? He's in the sanny!"

"Wha-ah?"

"Fact!" said Levison, with a nod. "Was mobbed by a gang of young hooligans in the lane, and got his head knocked somehow. Don't think it's serious, though."

"Oh, great pip!"

The juniors looked at each other with sober faces. Levison nodded, and walked on.

"Well, my only hat!" said Blake, in deep concern. "Poor old Gussy! It's our fault for losing sight of him! Oh, great Scott! Let's go over to the sanny and inquire, chaps!"

He led the way with a rush out of the room, his chums

at his heels. In the passage Blake almost collided with Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House.

"Oh! Sorry, sir!" gasped Blake, pulling up just in time. "I—I say, sir—about D'Arcy. Is he badly hurt?" he added breathlessly.

"No, Blake! He has had a nasty knock; but it is, fortunately, nothing serious. The heads of junior boys are generally very thick," said Mr. Railton, with a grim smile. "However, there is nothing to worry about. The doctor has seen him, and I believe has given him permission to leave the sanatorium just when he feels like doing so."

"Oh, good, sir!"

Mr. Railton nodded and passed on, leaving the juniors in a very relieved frame of mind. At that moment Digby gave a shout on sighting a junior approaching along the passage.

"Here he is! Gussy, old man——"

"Oh, good!"

The juniors surrounded Arthur Augustus as he came slowly along the passage. His head was bandaged, and he was looking rather pale. He gave his chums a rather cold glance.

"Kindly allow me to pass, Blake!" he said, with icy politeness.

"Hold on, Gussy! I say——"

"I refuse to hold on, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus coldly; and he stalked into Study No. 6 with his head high.

Obviously Arthur Augustus was on the "high horse."

But Blake & Co. scarcely noticed his attitude in their deep concern. They followed him in a crowd into Study No. 6.

"Gussy, old man!" exclaimed Blake anxiously. "What's happened? Tell us about it, for goodness' sake, old man!"

Arthur Augustus gave them a frigid look.

"What has happened to me," he said, "is entirely owing to your wuffianly behaviah!"

"Gussy, old man——"

"I refuse to discuss that mattah, however, at the moment," went on Gussy, with dignity. "My only wegwet is that I am unable just now to thwash you all wound, as I had intended. I must ask you to wait until I am feelin' fit enough to do so."

With that the swell of the Fourth seated himself in the armchair, apparently to end the discussion. But his chums did not intend it to end there. They had already forgotten their intention to "start on him," in their deep concern.

"Look here, Gussy!" said Blake contritely. "We're awfully sorry now for this afternoon. After all, you would have missed the train even if we hadn't rushed you—you must admit that!"

"I do admit it, Blake. None the less, I should not have been alone to face those wuffians, and this would not have happened."

"But do be reasonable, Gussy," put in Tom Merry mildly. "It would have been rough on us to have missed the train just because you were afraid to splash your trousers, wouldn't it now?"

"Well, I—— Pewwaps it would," agreed Gussy, unbending a little. "I—I——"

"We can only apologise," said Blake, following up swiftly.

"We apologise sincerely, old man!"

"We apologise, Gussy!" It was a chorus.

Arthur Augustus melted still more.

"If you—you weally mean it, deah boys——"

"We do, old man! Honest Injun!"

"Very well, deah boys, I—I will accept your apology," said Gussy graciously, "and I will say no more about the thwashin's! The mattah is closed as far as I am concerned, and I weally hope," ended Gussy, frowning severely at his faithless chums, "that what has happened will be a lesson to you youngstahs!"

"But what did happen, Gussy?" demanded Blake. "How on earth did you get hurt like this?"

Arthur Augustus was himself again now, and in a few moments he had related his adventure in the lane. The juniors listened, and then they looked at each other.

"Sounds rummy!" was Blake's grim comment. "What sort of a merchant was this chap Stiggins, Gussy?"

"Well, he was wathah shabby, and I feah he was also vevy dirtay and untiday in his person," said Arthur Augustus hesitatingly. "Still, one cannot considah that in view of his wavewy and kindness to me! I feel vevy sowwy for him, and deeply gwateful to him. I do twust he gets the job he was aftah. If he does not, then I intend to do whatevah I can for the poor chap."

"H'm!" Blake frowned and looked meaningly at Tom Merry. "But how d'you know he did save you from a motor-lorry, Gussy? He may have been spinning the yarn to get something out of you!"

"Just what I was thinking!" agreed Tom

Arthur Augustus looked with some indignation at his chums.

"Weally, Blake, that is wathah a wotten suggestion to

make. I am surprisid at you. Didn't Mr. Stiggins tell me so himself?"

"Yes; but was there anything to prove it, old chap? Did you squint round to see if you could see any traces of lorry wheelmarks in the mud, for instance?"

"Bai Jove! Wathah not! I nevah even dweamed of suspectin' Mr. Stiggins of such wotten twickewy, Blake! Wubbish! I uttally wufuse to considah such a suggestion for one moment!" said Gussy indignantly. "I see no weason whatevah to doubt the word of Mr. Stiggins. He was weally vewy kind indeed, and because he happens to be down on his luck is no weason why one should suspect him. He undoubtedly saved my life, and I feel deeply gwateful to him."

"And he accepted the three quid you gave him, did he?"

"Oh, yaas! Though I had to insist upon his acceptin' the money. I considahed it was the least I could do. He even wufuses to accept the weaward if he should happen to find my watch and return it."

"That's another vey queer thing about it," said Tom Merry, frowning. "You don't think he took the watch himself, Gussy—while you were lying unconscious?"

"Gweat Scott! Certainly not! I am surprisid at your makin' such a wotten suggestion, Tom Mewwy. Why, he searched the woad, and even the ditch, himself. Weally, I think you fellows—"

"I don't believe for one moment that the chap who knocked you over pinched it, anyway," said Tom Merry bluntly. "I know the chap by sight; he's a young hooligan, but I don't believe he's a thief, Gussy."

"I do not believe so myself," said Gussy quickly, "though Mr. Stiggins did see him bendin' ovah me. My opinion is that the watch was dwaggid loose dwin' the stwuggle, and that it is lost in the woad somewhere. Mr. Stiggins has vewy kindly offahed to search again on his return from Wayland, and if he finds it I shall certainly give him the weaward I pwapose to offah."

"It was his suggestion to offer a reward, wasn't it?" sniffed Blake.

"Oh, yaas. He was vewy concerned indeed wegardin' it. I weally hope he does find it, for the sake of his wife and childwen. He is evidently on the wocks."

"Oh, he'll find it all right," said Blake grimly. "You see if he doesn't turn up with it to claim the reward. He's the only merchant who ever will find it, anyway!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I think so, too," said Lowther. "I'm afraid the chap's a spoofer, Gussy. Can't you see he pinched it himself, and knowing he daren't pawn it, suggested you should offer a reward for it?"

"I can see nothin' of the kind, Lowthah, you suspicious wottah!" said Arthur Augustus somewhat heatedly. "I wufuse to allow my fwiend Mr. Stiggins to be suspected in this wotten mannah. Haven't I already told you that he wufuses to accept my weaward if he does find the watch?"

"H'm! He accepted the three quid, anyway. Doesn't seem to want much persuading, Gussy."

"Wubbish! I cannot undahstand why you should be so unjustly pwejudiced against my fwiend," said Arthur Augustus with great indignation. "I wufuse to listen to your wotten suggestions and suspicions."

"But look here, Gussy—"

"I uttally wufuse to discuss the mattah with you," snapped Gussy, his features pink now with indignation. "You are a lot of suspicious, unjust and ungenerous wottahs!"

With that Arthur Augustus rose from his chair and stalked to the door.

"Here, hold on, Gussy, old man!"

Slam!

Arthur Augustus was gone. His chums looked at each other in exasperation.

"This comes of letting the awful ass out of our sight!" said Blake. "The merchant was a spoofer, of course."

"May not have been," said Tom Merry doubtfully. "But—but it sounds jolly queer. I shall be interested to see if that watch does turn up again, anyway."

"It will," said Blake emphatically. "And Mr. Alf Stiggins will bring it, you see. I don't believe the chap saved Gussy from the motor-lorry at all, and I'm pretty sure that he's lifted Gussy's gold watch. It's jolly serious."

"No good telling Gussy that, though; might as well talk to a mule," said Tom Merry, shaking his head gloomily. "Anyway, we'll have to start prep now. I'd like to see this Mr. Stiggins, I must say, though."

"You'll get the chance, never fear," growled Blake.

And Blake proved to be right. They were fated to get more than one chance of seeing Mr. Alf Stiggins in the vey near future.

CHAPTER 5.

On a Good Thing!

"I SAY, Gussy, you're wanted, old chap. He, he, he!"

"Gussy's wanted, is he?" echoed Jack Blake.

"Well, who wants him, and what's the joke, you cackling fat worm?"

Baggy Trimble, whose fat, grinning face had just appeared in the doorway of Study No. 6, came into the room. The fat member of the Fourth Form of St. Jim's was evidently highly entertained.

"Yaas, wathah!" added Arthur Augustus, starting in surprise at Baggy Trimble. "Who wants me, Twimble, and what is the mewwy joke?"

"He, he, he!"

"It's a licking for you, Gussy," sniffed Herries.

"Trimble enjoys the thought of somebody getting licked. I vote we lick him and see if he still cackles."

Baggy backed hurriedly, but he was an instant too late. Herries grabbed him by the collar and hauled him into the room.

"Here, leggo!" howled Baggy, ceasing suddenly to

cackle. "I say, it's not a licking; there's a chap at the gates asking for D'Arcy. Fact!"

"Then where does the joke come in?" demanded Herries, releasing the fat youth.

Baggy backed into the doorway again, ready to bolt if necessary.

"It's a chap asking for Gussy," he grinned. "He asked for Major D'Arcy; but I expect he meant D'Arcy major, you know."

"Ha, ha! That's it!"

"Old Taggy wouldn't let him in, and he threatened to dot Taggy on the nose," went on Trimble. "What a lark! I say, better not let Railton see him, Gussy. He's an awful-looking blighter—looks like a low-down bookie's hanger-on, you know. If Railton spots him, and knows he's after you—"

"Oh, dwy up, you fat wottah!" said Arthur Augustus, frowning in puzzled wonder. "Bai Jove! How vewy swange, deah boys. Who can the individual be, I wondah?"

"Phew! I know," said Blake suddenly. "It's that chap

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—Mr. Alf Stiggins, or whatever the merchant's name is. He's brought your ticker. Better get that fiver ready."

"Oh, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus suddenly remembered. He frowned at Blake. "Weally, Blake, I stwongly pwotest against the wotten aspersions in that remark. If Mr. Stiggins has bwrought my tickah, I shall be vevy glad indeed, and I shall certainly pay him the weward. It is vevy fortunate indeed that I did not bweak into the fivah my pater sent yestahday. Yaas, wathah!"

"Better buck up, Gussy," chortled Baggy Trimble. "If your dingy pal starts kicking up a shindy at the gates—"

"I am comin' now, Twimble!"

Arthur Augustus reached for his hat. Blake jumped up from the tea-table.

"You burbling ass!" he exclaimed. "You're not going to hand over that fiver without making inquiries first, I hope?"

"Wats! Pway mind your own bizney, Blake."

Arthur Augustus hurried out. Since the previous evening Blake and the others had had quite a lot to say regarding Mr. Alf Stiggins, and as Arthur Augustus flatly refused to hear a word against his "fwiend," a slight coolness had resulted between him and his chums in consequence.

"Better go and have a look at the merchant," said Blake grimly. "Come on, you fellows! We're not allowing Gussy to be swindled, if we can help it."

"Rather not!"

Leaving their tea, Blake, Herries, and Digby rushed from the study, bowling Baggy Trimble over as they went. Trimble picked himself up and howled "Rotters!" after them; then he entered the study and began to help himself to what remained on the table. Baggy was ever an opportunist!

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus had reached the school gates. He scarcely expected, as a matter of fact, that Mr. Stiggins had brought the lost watch; he imagined that brave and kindly gentleman had merely called to tell him he had obtained the job he was after.

It proved to be Mr. Stiggins right enough, and he was arguing, in a husky and heated voice, with Taggles, the gate porter. Gussy frowned slightly as he noted that Mr. Stiggins was still wearing the torn, greasy raincoat.

"It is all wight, Taggy!" called Arthur Augustus, hurrying up to the two. "This gentleman has called to see me. I am vevy glad to see you, Mr. Stiggins!"

Taggles scowled at Mr. Stiggins and went back into his lodge, slamming the door noisily. Taggles didn't at all approve of dingy-looking gentlemen like Mr. Stiggins, making calls upon St. Jim's fellows. Possibly Taggles was a better judge of character than was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Good-afternoon, Master D'Arcy!" said Mr. Stiggins, glaring after Taggles. "That there old fool wouldn't let me in, blow 'im! You asked me to come, didn't you, young gent?"

"Certainly I did," said Arthur Augustus, greeting Mr. Stiggins warmly. "I am vevy glad indeed to see you heah, Mr. Stiggins. I twust you have called to tell me you obtained that position you were affah?"

Mr. Stiggins shook his head sadly.

"Too late!" he said gloomily. "I feared as I should be late to get it, Master D'Arcy. A feller from Wayland got there fust and got the job. It's 'ard, arter me rushin' off arter it like I did, and me needin' it so badly. I knowed as you'd— Is these young gents your friends, Master D'Arcy?"

The man looked rather suspiciously at Blake, Herries, and Digby, who had just come along in time to hear his last remarks.

"These are fwiends of mine," said Arthur Augustus, giving Blake & Co. a far from friendly look. "Kindly wetiah, Blake! This is not a mattah that concerns you fellows."

"Yes, you shove off!" said Mr. Stiggins, taking his cue from Arthur Augustus. "What are you fellers shovin' your noses in for?"

Evidently Mr. Alf Stiggins neither liked the looks of Blake & Co., nor did he seem pleased at their presence. Possibly Mr. Stiggins noted the fact that Gussy's chums were not quite so innocent as Gussy himself.

But Blake did not move. As he eyed the shabby gentleman over, Blake's suspicions became almost certainties. He did not like Mr. Stiggins' slinking attitude, nor his crafty features, nor his still craftier, close-set eyes.

"All serene, Gussy!" said Blake blandly. "We're anxious to know if this merchant's brought the watch. Have you brought the lost watch, Mr. Stiggins?"

Mr. Stiggins gave him an almost vicious look. Arthur Augustus reddened with indignation.

"You—you wottah, Blake!" he exclaimed angrily. "How dare you insult my fwiend in this wotten mannah? If Mr. Stiggins has found my watch—"

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"That I have, Master D'Arcy," said Mr. Stiggins, still glaring at the juniors. "And that's jest what I've come about. But I never expected as I'd be insulted by your friends like this, Master—"

"I don't know that we've insulted you yet, my man," said Blake coolly. "You've evidently got a guilty conscience! So you've found the watch? I thought somehow—"

"Blake, will you be good enough to wetiah at once?" stormed Arthur Augustus. "I wufuse to allow you to stand heah and insult my fwiend with your wotten aspersions. Wathah not! Mr. Stiggins, I am vevy sowwy that these—these wottahs should annoy you like this. Will you come with me, and we will discuss mattahs in pwivate?"

He started towards the gates, with Mr. Stiggins at his heels. That gentleman seemed only too glad to follow. Blake started after them, and then Gussy stopped and turned.

"Blake," he said, his voice trembling with indignation, "if you insist upon followin' us, I will cease to wegard you as a fwiend. I shall wufuse to speak to you again!"

"Oh, go and eat coke, you footling ass!"

Blake stopped, evidently losing patience with his chum.

"Let the fathead rip!" he snorted, turning back to Herries and Digby. "If he wants to chuck away fivers, let him! I'm fed up! Let's get back to our tea. Though I don't like to see that merchant—"

Blake hesitated again. He was quite certain now that Mr. Alf Stiggins was a spoofer, that he was imposing on the innocent Gussy's good-nature. And Blake was not the fellow to allow his chum to be swindled if he could help it.

On the other hand, it was certainly hardly their business, and Gussy was obviously determined to go his own way. As a matter of fact, Blake was, indeed, "fed up" with trying to make Gussy see that it was possible Mr. Alf Stiggins was not quite so kindly and honest as he pretended to be. And at that moment, while he hesitated, Digby suddenly remembered Trimble.

"Oh, my hat!" he said. "Let's get back—quick! We left the fat rotter in our study! He'll scoff the cake and everything else!"

"Come on!"

At top speed the three chums raced back for the School House, leaving Arthur Augustus to go on his own way for once.

Both Arthur Augustus and Mr. Stiggins watched them go with relief—Mr. Stiggins in very great relief.

"I don't like the looks of them blokes," he said confidentially to Arthur Augustus. "Why, they looked at a feller as if they thought he wasn't honest, even—looked at me as if I was dirt, too! Well, you'll be glad to know as I did find that there watch, Master D'Arcy. A tidy old 'unt I 'ad to find it, too. D'you know where it was?"

"Bai Jove! I do not, Mr. Stiggins," said Arthur Augustus eagerly. "But I am vevy welieved indeed that you have found it."

"It was jest behind that there milestone—a marvel as we didn't see it when we 'unted," explained Mr. Stiggins. "And a marvel as nobody else found it, either. I 'unted and 'unted until dark last night, and then I started the 'unt ag'in this morning. Then suddenly I see something shinin' like, and there it was, behind that there milestone, arter all!"

And taking his hand from his pocket, Mr. Stiggins disclosed to view a gold watch. It was Gussy's handsome repeater indeed!

"Bai Jove! How vevy, vevy lucky!" said Arthur Augustus joyfully, taking it from the grubby hand of Mr. Stiggins. "I am vevy much obliged to you indeed, Mr. Stiggins!"

"You didn't go to the trouble of getting a reward notice out, I hopes, Master D'Arcy?" asked Mr. Stiggins, eyeing Gussy closely.

"Bai Jove! No, I did not. Howevah, I shall keep to my word just the same, of course," said Gussy promptly. "I shall insist upon wewardin' you for the great twouble you have taken, Mr. Stiggins."

"I won't 'ear of it, Mr. D'Arcy," said Mr. Stiggins, waving his hand. "Won't 'ear of it!"

"Wubbish! I insist! If, howevah, you would weally wathah not—"

"Oh, if you insists, Master D'Arcy, then I shall 'ave to take it, I suppose!" Mr. Stiggins' interruption was suspiciously hasty. He became suddenly alarmed. "Yes, for the sake of my starvin' family, I suppose I oughter take it. Thank you kindly, Master D'Arcy. I wouldn't 'ear of it, only the operation—"

"Bai Jove! You—"

"The wife," said Mr. Stiggins, shaking his head gloomily. "An accident it was—fell downstairs, you know. Still, if I can get the money together for the specialist— But that ain't possible unless I gets a job quickly. Still, this five

quid will help; it'll help more'n you thinks, Master D'Arcy. As for the special grub the doctor ordered—well, that 'akes money, and—thank you kindly, sir!"

Mr. Stiggins broke off to accept the crisp note Arthur Augustus handed over gracefully.

"Pway do not thank me, Mr. Stiggins; it is I who should thank you!" said Gussy gratefully. "You have wescued me from those wuffians, you have saved my life at the wisk of your own, and now you have wecovahed my watch, which is of gweat value to me. I weally twust that will help you to waise enough money for the opewation, though I should have imagined that in your circumstances the doctah would not insist upon a large fee. Is your wife at home—"

"In hospital, Master D'Arcy!" Mr. Stiggins gave a heavy sigh as he folded the note and pocketed it. "If only I could get a job! But it's hopeless! I've tramped and

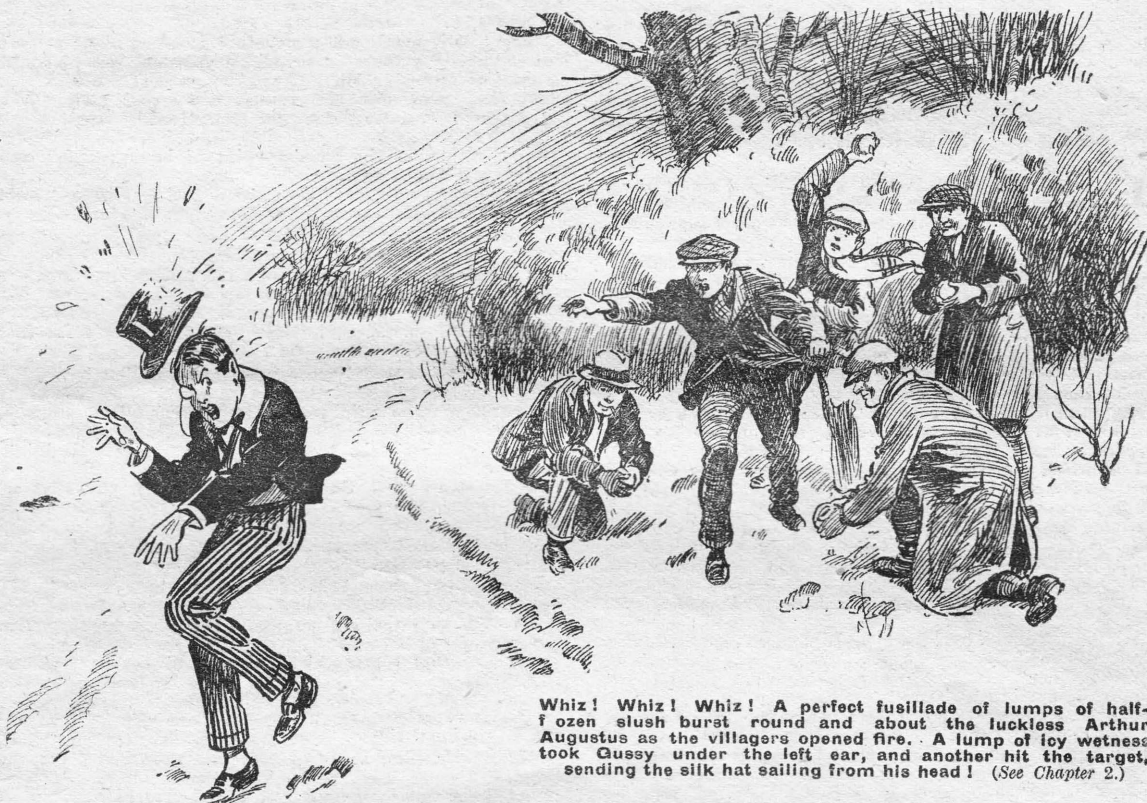
Mr. Stiggins?" Arthur Augustus was looking rather curiously at Mr. Alf Stiggins now. "If she is, how—why—"

"Not now—leastways, she comes 'ome to-morrow for the —the operation. And there's the kids to see to, Master D'Arcy," pointed out Mr. Stiggins, eyeing his benefactor rather narrowly. "Sides, I'm afraid me 'eart wouldn't stand the brushin', an' a lot of walkin' makes me 'eart thump like anythin'—awful, in fact! No, I'm afraid as it wouldn't do. It's 'ard!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was looking somewhat fixedly at Mr. Stiggins. Ursuspicious as he usually was, the good-hearted Gussy couldn't help wondering if Mr. Alf was as keen to get work as he pretended to be.

Mr. Stiggins seemed to sense the change in Arthur Augustus, and he went on hastily:



Whiz! Whiz! Whiz! A perfect fusillade of lumps of half-ozen slush burst round and about the luckless Arthur Augustus as the villagers opened fire. A lump of icy wetness took Gussy under the left ear, and another hit the target, sending the silk hat sailing from his head! (See Chapter 2.)

tramped round these 'ere parts arter jobs. I s'pose you don't know of a job that's going—"

"Bai Jove! Yes, I do, Mr. Stiggins. How weally wippin'! I know of the vevy job to suit you!"

"Oh!" Mr. Stiggins jumped. Apparently he had not expected that a schoolboy would know of a job to suit him; possibly he would not have asked had he expected it. He eyed Gussy with sudden uneasiness.

"You—you knows of a job, Master D'Arcy? I—I 'opes it ain't 'eavy work. My 'eart, bein' weak-like, wouldn't stand it, and the doctor warned me specially not to take on 'eavy jobs. In fact—"

"It is the vevy job for you, Mr. Stiggins! Bai Jove, how vevy fortunate I thought of it! It is at Mr. Wigg's—the outfitter in the village. I was in his shop only this aftahnoon, and I saw the notice in the window. He is in need of a respectable man to bwush out his shop, and take parcels out, and clean windows, and other jobs of that description, I weally think I could get it for you, Mr. Stiggins; I have gweat influence with Mr. Wigg."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" Mr. Stiggins stammered, and then he shook his head sadly. "Now isn't that 'ard?" he remarked bitterly. "If only it was at Wayland, now—"

"Yaas; but, weally, it is not far, Mr. Stiggins," said Gussy, in some disappointment. "And you could cycle ovah. I myself would be vevy glad to help you buy a machine. Yaas, wathah!"

"No go!" Mr. Stiggins shook his head firmly. "I couldn't leave the wife, you see; got to give her med'cine every hour, and grub, and look arter her generally. Now, isn't that 'ard?"

"Bai Jove! But—but I thought your wife was in hospital

"Leastways, perhaps I could try for the job, Master D'Arcy; yes, arter all, I could arrange for someone to look arter the wife and kids. Yes, I'll call an' see Mr. Rigg right away now!" he ended heartily. "And thank you kindly, Master D'Arcy—"

"Oh, good! But I weally must come with you!" said Arthur Augustus, with a glance at the raincoat. "Ahem! You—you see, Mr. Wigg might not take you on if you went alone. It is wathah a pity, Mr. Stiggins, that you apparently have not bought a new waincoat, after all!"

There was still a touch of coldness in Gussy's words, and Mr. Stiggins seemed to sense its meaning.

"I was jest goin' to explain how it is," he said. "I bought a new one yesterday, of course, but I'm keepin' it jest for goin' arter jobs in. See? Don't you bother to come with me, Master D'Arcy. I'll go 'ome and get me raincoat, and then— By George, I'll go 'ome now in any case!"

"Weally, why—"

"The kids; they'll be yellin' for their tea now. I'd better rush off 'ome at once, young gent! Good arfternoon—"

"Pway wait one moment, Mr. Stiggins!" Arthur Augustus was evidently not to be put off. "It can be managed vevy easily, aftah all. I will lend you a bicycle, and after you have interviewed Mr. Wigg, you can wide home on that. You can easily be home before six, and you can weturn my machine to-mowwow."

"Oh! Yes; but— Oh, very well, Master D'Arcy!"

Apparently, Mr. Stiggins decided to raise no further objections. Perhaps he felt that the possibility of his securing the job was very small indeed.

He watched Arthur Augustus hurry away towards the cycle-shed with a curious grin on his face.

The junior was soon back, and Mr. Stiggins' eyes glistened as he saw the glittering new machine Gussy was wheeling.

"My heye! That your bike, Master D'Arcy?"

"No; unfortunately my fivont tyre is punctured," explained Gussy. "This is Blake's jiggah; so I trust you will take gweat care of it, Mr. Stiggins. He is vevy cwoos now, but he is a vevy genowous fellow indeed, weally, and I am quite suah he will not object to my lendin' it to you, in the circumstances. Wathah not! Now let us huwvy!"

"Very well, Master D'Arcy!"

And they hurried, Arthur Augustus pushing the bike and Mr. Stiggins eyeing the machine every now and again. He seemed very pleased indeed at the chance to ride such a machine. Whether Blake was likely to be pleased in the matter was very questionable, however. Blake was not quite so generous as Gussy imagined—or, at least not so innocent!

CHAPTER 6.

Blake Objects!

"YARROOOOP!"

A wild howl floated along the Fourth Form passage at St. Jim's, and it was followed by the sound of heavy thumps, which were accompanied by still further howls.

Baggy Trimble was finding out that the way of the transgressor is hard—very hard.

Baggy had fondly imagined that D'Arcy's strange visitor would keep the owners of Study No. 6 for some time—certainly until he had the chance to clear their study table. He had managed to make a clean sweep of the cake, and it was just as he was starting on the buttered toast and sardines that Blake, Herries, and Digby returned.

They came back with a rush, knowing from past experience that it was as wise to leave Baggy alone with a feed as a hungry wolf. Their fears were realised quickly enough.

So surprised and startled was Baggy when they charged into the room that he nearly choked as he hastily crammed a huge piece of buttered toast into his mouth, and made a wild leap for the door.

But he was unlucky; Blake's hand fell on his collar, and in another moment Baggy's choking changed to a wild howl as he smote the carpet.

"All the cake's gone!" howled Herries. "Smash the fat rotter!"

"All the sardines, too!" added Digby ferociously. "Let me get at him!"

"Yarooooogh!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

Again and again the fat youth's person smote the carpet, and then he was cast out into the passage, with three boots to help him on his way. He departed roaring with anguish.

For a few moments he sat on the cold linoleum, blinking furiously at the closed door of Study No. 6; and then he struggled to his feet, groaning.

"Oh, the beasts!" he mumbled. "Fancy making a fuss like that about a rotten cake and a few measly sardines! Beasts!"

The fat junior rolled along the passage feeling very ill-used indeed. But suddenly he remembered Arthur Augustus and his queer visitor.

Baggy had been very curious indeed regarding him. Being a fellow who never could mind his own business, Baggy was very keen to know what business the shabby-looking individual could have with Arthur Augustus. But the sight of the food on the table of Study No. 6 had banished that problem from his mind for the time being.

Now, however, the feed being a thing of the past as far as he was concerned, curiosity became again the dominant thought in his fat mind.

He brightened up suddenly, and hurried downstairs again and rolled away to the gates at top speed. He found Arthur Augustus and Mr. Stiggins standing talking just outside the gates in the lane.

They did not see Baggy arrive, and Baggy took shelter behind the gatepost. From this hiding-place Baggy heard every word of the conversation between the two. It surprised Baggy very much indeed.

He hid behind a clump of laurels when Arthur Augustus hurried through the gates to get the bike; and he was still hiding there when Gussy returned with Blake's machine and tramped away with Mr. Stiggins towards Rylcombe.

Baggy's eyes were gleaming with excitement when they had gone.

"He, he, he! Oh, the awful idiot!" he cackled to himself. "That chap's taken Gussy for a mug, and no mistake! The—The born idiot! Fancy chucking fivers away on a low-down

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rotter like that! My hat! What will Blake say when he knows he's got his new jigger? Oh crumbs!"

The thought made Baggy almost burst with gleeful excitement, and he dashed away towards the School House and made his way to Study No. 6 again. Baggy always took a malicious delight in breaking bad news to anyone.

But he was still aching from the bumping, and he was very cautious indeed as he opened the door and looked into the study.

"I say, Blake——"

"Get out!" roared Blake. "Well, I'm hanged! Fancy the cheeky rotter daring to come here again! Why, you——"

"Hold on!" yelled Baggy, eyeing the loaf in Blake's hand warily. "I say, Blake, your new jigger——"

"What about my new jigger, you fat rotter?"

"He, he, he! I say, Gussy's gone and lent it to that frowsy merchant to ride home to Wayland on!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Fact! His own's got a puncture or something; so he's lent the outside yours. I say, I bet you don't see that bike again, you fellows! He'll pawn it, you bet! And, I say, fancy that born idiot Gussy—he's given that merchant a fiver! Awful swizzler the beggar looks, too!"

"Phew!"

Blake seemed to be on the point of having a fit; and Herries and Digby whistled in dismay.

"My—my new jigger!" articulated Blake at last. "That swindling scoundrel's gone off with my new jigger?"

"Yes—I saw him!" grinned Trimble. "He's riding home to Wayland. Gussy lent it him, and told him to bring it back to-morrow. I bet you won't see it again, though—unless in a giddy pawnshop!"

"Oh, the—the——" Blake choked.

"Think it's true?" said Digby, eyeing Baggy's fat face suspiciously. "Hang it all, even Gussy——"

"Of course it's true—just the sort of thing that born idiot Gussy would do!" yelled Blake wrathfully. "He'll swallow any yarn, and he thinks everybody's as soft as himself. Oh, the—the——"

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" Tom Merry looked into the room, with Monty Lowther and Manners behind him. "Oh, Trimble again! Shall I kick-him out for you, Blake?"

"Oh, really, Merry—— Yooooop!"

Trimble bellowed indignantly as Lowther twisted him round and planted a boot behind him, sending him sprawling out into the passage.

"That right?" he asked. "What's he been up to? It's always best to kick Trimble first and ask questions afterwards. I always make a point of kicking him on suspicion. Saves no end of bother!"

"Well, the fat rotter did bone our grub—or part of it!" grinned Herries. "But that isn't the trouble now. Old Gussy—— Hallo! Going after him, Blake?"

"Yes, I jolly well am!" snorted Blake, his features red with wrath. "I'll have to borrow your bike, Herries."

Without stopping to say more, Blake rushed from the study.

"What the dickens——" began Tom Merry blankly.

"Better go after him, Herries!" interrupted Digby, frowning. "If he does catch up that merchant and he turns rusty—— Looks a handful, you know!"

"Phew! Yes. Come on; I can easily borrow a bike."

"But what on earth's the matter?" demanded Tom Merry, in great exasperation. "What's happened?"

Swiftly Herries related the news Trimble had brought, and Tom Merry and his chums fairly blinked.

"Well, if that idiot Gussy doesn't take the bun!" breathed Tom Merry. "So that chap did bring the watch, after all. Phew! He's a swindler, right enough! I say, we'll come with you, in case there's trouble!"

"Right-ho! Come on!"

They snatched their caps and hurried downstairs and raced for the cycle-shed. Blake was just getting a bike out, but he decided to wait for them.

They were soon ready—Herries borrowing Levison's machine—and then they made a start.

"We ought to catch the merchant up very soon if Gussy's walking," snapped Blake. "Put it on, anyway; he's got a good start, and Gussy can't be going all the way with him. Pity we didn't find out more from that fat rotter Trimble!"

"Why should Gussy go with him at all?" demanded Tom Merry. "No signs of them in front, anyway! Supposing the fat cad was pulling your legs to get his own back?"

"Rot! My bike isn't in the shed, is it?" snorted Blake. "I tell you it's just the thing Gussy would do, the awful idiot! If it wasn't for the fact that he's still rocky after that bash on the head yesterday I'd—I'd——"

Words failed Blake.

"Here we are at the cross-roads," interrupted Herries. "Now, have they gone through Rylcombe, or by the main road?"

"Bound to have gone by the main road; nobody ever

goes through the village unless they want to call there," said Blake. "Come on!"

They followed Blake obediently. Blake was quite right; it was a roundabout way through the village, and it was unlikely Mr. Alf Stiggins had gone that way. It was there Blake made his mistake; for Mr. Stiggins and Arthur Augustus had, of course, gone through the village. But it was not until the juniors were on the outskirts of Wayland that they realised the fact.

A policeman was on point duty at the entrance to the High Street, and Blake dismounted and approached him.

"Has a man—rather a shabby-looking fellow—come past you on a new bicycle within the last ten minutes?" he asked briefly.

The policeman shook his head.

"No bike's come along this road for the last half-hour," he answered.

"Thanks very much!"

Blake was tempted to report the matter to the constable, but a moment's thought dissuaded him. He returned to his chums, and they started back.

"Must have gone through Rylcombe, after all," said Tom Merry. "We'll meet him—unless Baggy was spoofing you."

"It's beginning to look like it," grunted Herries. "Why did Gussy go with the sweep, anyway? Still, the bike is missing from the shed—no getting away from that!"

The general view, however, was that Trimble had been pulling their legs now. He had sent them off on a wild-goose chase to get his own back, and the juniors were still arranging what they would do to Trimble if it proved to be so, when Tom Merry gave a cry as they were nearing the cross-roads at Rylcombe.

"Hallo! What's wrong?"

"Grammarians!" said the captain of the Shell, his eyes on the group in the lane ahead of them. "Keep your giddy eyes peeled, chaps! I spotted Gordon Gay among them!"

Gordon Gay was the leader of the Grammarians in their rivalry with the St. Jim's juniors, and they never knew what to expect from him. The warning was very necessary as a general rule.

But on this occasion it proved to be quite unnecessary.

The Grammarians proved to be Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, the two Wootton brothers, and Tadpole of the Fourth, and they were not alone.

With them, held in a firm grasp by Gordon Gay and Frank Monk, was a shabby-looking individual in a greasy raincoat and equally greasy bowler-hat.

It was Mr. Alf Stiggins, and he was yelling threats at the top of his voice. Then the juniors saw something else. Harry Wootton was holding by the handlebars a glittering new bike.

"My bike!" gasped Blake, on sighting it. "Well, I'm blown! It was true enough, then! The rotter has got it!"

"Looks as if the Grammarians have it now!" grinned Tom Merry. "This looks interesting."

It proved to be interesting. Gordon Gay grinned as the St. Jim's fellows rushed up and dismounted.

"Hallo! Here's the giddy owner of the bike!" he said cheerily. "Now, my pippin, we'll soon know whether your giddy yarn is true or not! This is your bike, isn't it, Blake?"

"It jolly well is!" snapped Blake. "We were just after that rotter!"

"I thought so!" Gordon Gay chuckled. "This merchant's just offered it me for five quid! Quite a bargain, what? I thought it was a bit too good of a bargain, so I looked it over and found your giddy name and address on the saddlebag, Blake! We were just wondering whether to yank him along to St. Jim's or to the giddy village bobby. You've saved us the trouble by coming along just now. Here he is!"

"Phew!" gasped Blake. "The—the rotter! I was right, you see! He's a swindling thief!"

"He says D'Arcy gave him the jigger!" put in Frank Monk, eyeing Mr. Stiggins a trifle curiously. "How did he know Gussy's name, I wonder?"

"It—it's true enough!" panted Mr. Stiggins, looking round him like a hunted rat. "That, there Master D'Arcy did give it me. You let me go, young gents!"

"Liar!" said Tom Merry curtly. "You've pulled the wool over D'Arcy's eyes, you rotter, but you won't pull it over ours!"

"Yank him along to a bobby," said Frank Monk. "He looks every giddy inch a sneak-thief! Take my tip, you fellows!"

"Here, old 'ard, young gents!" whined Mr. Alf Stiggins, in great alarm. "I'll tell you the truth, I will. That Master D'Arcy lent it me to go 'ome with, and I was goin' to bring it back to-morrow. You can ask him! I swear that's the truth!"

"Then why did you lie a moment ago?" demanded Tom Merry, his lip curling. "You say D'Arcy gave you the bike!"

"I—I—it was a mistake! I lost me 'ead, like. He only lent it me, o' course; you ask him, young gents! It's a fact! I would have brought it back to-morrow!"

"Yes, you're pretty good at bringing things back, aren't you?" said Lowther, with a grin. "Just as you brought that watch back! I believe you pinched that, you sweep, and only brought it back to claim the fiver, knowing you daren't sell it. I vote we collar that fiver from him, you fellows!"

CHAPTER 7.

A Shock for Gussy!

"WE can't very well do that," said Tom Merry, frowning. "If Gussy likes to give him fivers, then I can't see that we're justified in interfering."

"That's right!" agreed Blake, though he obviously did so very reluctantly. "If Gussy wants to be fool enough to chuck fivers away, let him! But I tell you what we can do. We can chuck this merchant in the ditch and teach him a lesson that way. He looks as if he could do with a wash!"

"Good wheeze!"

"Here, don't you dare! Leggo!"

Mr. Stiggins' voice ended in a howl as half a dozen of the juniors closed in on him. He struggled and pleaded, but when he saw they were in deadly earnest he struggled and cursed, his humble, pleading attitude falling from him like a cloak. His little eyes were glittering with fury now.

"You—you young 'ounds!" he roared.

"In with him!" called Gordon Gay cheerily. "This side's the wettest!"

"Yarroooogh! Leggo! Oh, you—you young—"

Splash!

Mr. Stiggins' wild yell ended in a gurgle as he soused into the ditch, which was half full of melted snow and mud. Gordon Gay & Co. were ignorant of the real inwardness of the matter as yet, but they had lent a hand with a

(Continued on next page.)

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will, and they howled with laughter as Mr. Alf Stiggins crawled out of the ditch, water and mud dripping from him.

But he crawled out on the hedge side, and ducking through a convenient gap he bolted away across a ploughed field beyond. He had obviously had as much as he wanted of the combined efforts of Tom Merry & Co. and Gordon Gay & Co.

"Well, that's the last of Mr. Alf Stiggins, I fancy!" grinned Blake, who was feeling much better now. "My hat! Jolly lucky the rotter did stop you fellows. He might easily have given us the slip."

The juniors gave Gordon Gay & Co. the true facts of the case as they knew them, and then they started back, Blake wheeling his borrowed machine and riding his own.

They had nearly reached St. Jim's when they sighted an elegant figure ahead of them.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and by the way he was walking he seemed unusually cheery and satisfied. As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus' interview with Mr. Rigg had been very satisfactory from his point of view.

Mr. Rigg was a very mild and harmless old gentleman, and he had looked with obvious disfavour at Mr. Alf Stiggins. Indeed, he had politely refused to entertain the idea of engaging Mr. Stiggins for a long time during the interview. Mr. Rigg, naturally, wanted references, and Mr. Stiggins' shifty appearance was not at all attractive.

But Arthur Augustus had persuaded him to give that gentleman a trial at last. For one thing, Arthur Augustus was Mr. Rigg's best customer; for another, Mr. Rigg had been advertising for some weeks for a man without avail, and an ordinary errand-boy did not suit Mr. Rigg's requirements. Yet it was only when Arthur Augustus promised to be responsible for Mr. Alf Stiggins that the Rylcombe outfitter had reluctantly agreed to give him a trial.

So it was arranged at last that Mr. Stiggins should start work the next day, and Gussy had led his protege from the village shop in triumph, though Mr. Stiggins himself seemed none too enthusiastic over the success. But he had brightened up when Gussy had told him he intended to rig him out with new clothes, and to do his best to help him raise the money for the "operation." And he had parted from Gussy in the village street on the best of terms, promising to bring the bike over the next day in his dinner hour from Rylcombe.

Arthur Augustus felt he had good cause to be so satisfied, and he was feeling happy in the consciousness of having done something to repay his great debt to his heroic rescuer.

Then Tom Merry & Co. rode up behind him and jumped from their bikes. Arthur Augustus halted in astonishment as he sighted them.

"Gussy, you burbling duffer!"

"You born idiot!" roared Blake. "What the dickens do you mean by it? What about my bike?"

"Weally, Blake— Oh, gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus stared as his eyes fell on Blake's new machine.

"You dummy!" howled Blake, in great wrath. "Who dashed well gave you permission to lend my bike to that thieving scoundrel?"

"Weally, Jack Blake!" Arthur Augustus gasped, and then his face flushed with angry indignation. "How dare you call my friend a thiev' scoundwel, Blake? I lent your bike to my friend Mr. Stiggins, and when you heah my weasons I am quite suah that you will agwee that I was justified in doin' so. I am suah that when I tell the facts of his case you will nevah be so ungenuevous as to—"

"Facts!" almost bellowed Blake. "Facts be blowed! The rotter is a swindling spoofer! We've only just caught him trying to sell this bike to Gordon Gay; he offered it him for five quid. Now what have you got to say?"

"Wha-at?"

"It's a fact, Gussy," said Tom Merry grimly. "Gordon Gay has just told us about it. Stiggins stopped him in the road and offered the bike for a fiver. Luckily Gay spotted it was Blake's, and collared him and the bike."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus appeared to be on the point of collapsing. But he knew better than to doubt his chum's word.

"I can scarcely believe it, you fellows," he stammered. "Can it weally be twue? I had evewy confidence in the integwity of Mr. Stiggins. Didn't he wecovah my watch and return it to me? If he had been dishonest he would not have done so."

"You—you burbling ass! Can't you see he was spoofing?"

"Oh deah! Weally—"

"If it wasn't for the fact that you're still feeling rocky we'd slaughter you, Gussy!" gasped Jack Blake. "You—you ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Good-afternoon, Master Merry and you other gentlemen!"

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A new voice broke in on the discussion—a cheery, youthful voice, and along the lane came Grimes, the grocer's boy, on his bicycle. He hesitated, and then he jumped off, and grinned at Arthur Augustus.

"I got me bike back all right yesterday, Master D'Arcy," he said.

"Eh? What do you mean, Gwimey?" said Arthur Augustus, glad enough of the interruption just then. "Your bike, deah boy—"

"Yes." Grimes gave a broad grin. "I caught that bloke up, and I punched 'is head, and soon made him wish he hadn't taken it. My eye, Master D'Arcy, you looks a bit rocky. I 'ope those cads didn't knock you about afore I come up?"

"Bai Jove! Gwimey—"

"Eh? What's that, Grimey?" said Blake quickly.

"Hasn't Master D'Arcy told you?" said Grimes, in surprise. "I came along and caught some village chaps— worst chaps in the village, they are—mobbing Master D'Arcy. They'd just gct 'im down when I come along, and they bolted when I chipped in among 'em. One of 'em went off with my bike, though, and I had to go after 'im. I came back afterwards to see how Master D'Arcy was goun' on, but he'd gone."

"Well, my hat!"

"I thought as you'd be wonderin' if I got me bike back!" explained Grimes, rather puzzled at the looks of the juniors. "However, I'll get on now."

"Bai Jove! Pway hold on, Gwimey, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus, his features pink. "Was it weally you who chipped in yesterday, deah boy—I mean in the lane when those young wuffians attacked me?"

"Eh?" Grimes looked astonished. "Of course it were, Master D'Arcy. I thought as you'd seen me. I come up just when Bill Megson—the big chap—hit you and bowled you over. I rushed off after them 'cause they'd pinched my bike, and there was groceries on it."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"So that's it!" chuckled Lowther. "What price Mr. Alf Stiggins, Gussy!"

"Oh deah!" Arthur Augustus did not dream of doubting Grimes' word. "Oh, bai Jove! Tha-thank you vewy much for comin' to my aid, deah boy. It—it was vewy good of you, and I am much obliged."

"Oh, that's all right, Master D'Arcy!" said Grimes.

And he mounted his machine again and rode on, looking rather puzzled.

Arthur Augustus went crimson as he noted that six grinning faces were turned towards him.

"Weally, deah boys," he mumbled feebly. "How vewy stwange! I feah that Mr. Stiggins d'd not tell me the twuth in wegard to his havin' wescued me fwom those wuffians."

"Ha, ha! Rather not! Let this be a lesson to you, Gussy—not to believe everything you're told."

"Wats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus frowned and walked on ahead, his head in the air. The sudden discovery that his friend Mr. Stiggins was an untruthful and dishonest scoundrel was too humiliating.

"Well, I fancy that puts paid to Stiggins' giddy account," grinned Tom Merry. "It's just as well, too!"

"Yes, rather! I fancy we've seen the last of that grubby spoofer!" said Blake.

But he was wrong there. Mr. Alf Stiggins was not quite so easily shaken off.

CHAPTER 8.

Mr. Stiggins Makes Himself at Home!

"DEAR me! That is very strange!"

Herbert Skimpole was quite surprised. The scientific genius of the Shell was not interested in sportng matters, and on half holidays he was wont to take a gentle stroll out of doors with a bulky volume to keep him company, and from which he imbibed further scientific knowledce. Sk mpole's head was already bulky with knowledge, chiefly obtained from the famous works of Professor Baimyrumpet, whose humble disciple he was proud to be.

On this Saturday afternoon Skimpole was just starting out with the worthy professor's latest volume on Determinism under his bony arm, when he almost bumped into Mr. Alfred Stiggins.

Skimpole did not know the individual in the torn raincoat was Mr. Stiggins, of course. He was merely surprised to see such a dingy-looking gentleman crossing the sacred quadrangle of St. Jim's.

Skimpole just blinked up in time to avoid him. Mr. Stiggins gave him rather a surly scowl, and called to him.

"Hi, young 'un! I'm looking for a feller named D'Arcy—"

Master D'Arcy major, he is! I wants to see him particularly."

"Dear me!" repeated Skimpole, eyeing Mr. Stiggins in some uneasiness. "You should have asked the gate porter at the lodge, my good man. It is his duty to—"

"I ain't seen no gate porter," grunted Mr. Stiggins. "Leastways, not to-day, though I did see a bloke last time I called. I'm in a hurry, though, and ain't got no time to see no bloomin' gate porter. Jest you tell a man where he can find Master D'Arcy, young feller!"

Herbert Skimpole stroked his bulgy forehead rather doubtfully. Skimmy was a very good-natured junior indeed, and he was always ready to oblige anyone. But he did not quite like the look of Mr. Stiggins. Moreover, Alf Stiggins' voice was somewhat thick, and he seemed none too steady on his feet. He also sounded in rather a bad temper.

Still, now he came to think of it, Skimmy remembered having seen Arthur Augustus talking to the man outside the gates a couple of days ago. And Gussy had certainly seemed friendly with him.

"Ahem! Possibly I can help you," said Skimmy, after a pause. "I will hurry up to D'Arcy's study. He was injured a day or two ago, and I do not think he will be

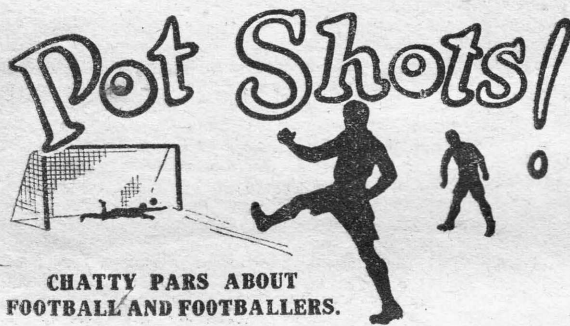
right, don't you worry, young 'un! You run off an' fetch 'im, and I'll wait."

"Oh! Ahem! Dear me, how awkward!" said the good-natured Skimpole, as Mr. Stiggins brushed past him into the study. "I am afraid that Mr. Railton will— However, I had better find D'Arcy, I suppose."

And after a moment's reflection Skimpole hurried away. It seemed the only thing to be done in the circumstances. It was getting well on in the afternoon, and scarcely a soul was about in the corridors at that hour. Skimpole hurried out, and made tracks for the footer field, anxious to get his errand over and get back to Professor Balmy-crumpet.

Meanwhile, Mr. Alf Stiggins was making himself comfortable in Study No. 6. He kicked the door to, and settled down in the armchair, and took out a packet of cigarettes. He lit up, but after smoking a few moments he listened, and then he started to make a tour of the room. When he sat down again his pockets seemed much bulkier than they had been before.

For five minutes or so Mr. Stiggins sat smoking. He was still smoking there when a senior came along the passage outside.



CHATTY PARS ABOUT FOOTBALL AND FOOTBALLERS.

ALBERT MCINROY, the Sunderland goalkeeper, was an outside-left when he played at school. He has now got as far away from that position as possible.

Weldon, the Everton forward, who has played with both men, says that if he were asked to give a gold medal to the best centre-forward in modern football he would cut it in two and give half each to Gallacher and Dean.

Cardiff City got both their present full-backs from the same club—Belfast Crusaders. A Birmingham combination club—Talbot Stead—supplied Southampton with two full-backs in Hough and Bradford.

Jack Hill says that a football captain should have a thick skin. Especially is this necessary when his club is getting a "hiding."

Blackburn Rovers and Aston Villa have supplied the greatest number of English International players—thirty-one each.

engaged on the football field to-day. Pray wait here, my friend."

Skimpole hurried away indoors. Mr. Stiggins followed him promptly—a fact Skimpole did not note at the time. It was only when Skimmy had almost reached Study No. 6 that he realised Gussy's visitor was at his heels.

"Ahem!" he coughed, pulling up and eyeing Mr. Stiggins in some dismay. "You really should not have followed me, my good man. It is necessary for a junior to obtain permission from the authorities before bringing strangers into the school. However, now you are here—"

Skimpole eyed the man very doubtfully, and then he led the way to Study No. 6 and knocked at the door. Receiving no answer, he opened the door and looked in. It was empty.

"Dear me! I am afraid D'Arcy is engaged upon the football field, after all," said Skimmy.

"Is this where he lives?" demanded Mr. Stiggins, jerking a thumb at the door.

"That is D'Arcy's room—a room he shares with three other boys."

"Then I'll go inside and wait for 'im," was the husky reply. "I'm being a great friend of mine, it'll be all

When McCluggage, the Burnley full-back, recently visited Ireland, he was given a strange present—nineteen prize pigeons, all of which have won homing races in Ireland.

It is surprising, but still true, that nine clubs at present in membership of the First Division have never yet won the Cup. Here is the list: Sunderland, West Ham, Leicester City, Liverpool, Arsenal, Derby County, Birmingham, Middlesbrough, and Portsmouth. They still live in hopes, though.

The ground of the West Bromwich Albion Club is in three different townships. Fortunately, the team is not divided.

A manager's life is not a happy one, but there are plenty of people ready to take the risk. When Bristol Rovers advertised for a manager recently, over eighty applications arrived on one day.

Charles Brittain, the outside-right of Newport County, is a member of the town fire brigade. Hence the suggestion which comes from the spectators sometimes, that he should turn the hose on his opponents.

Plenty of footballers have gone from England and Scotland to play in America. But William Phillips, of Rotherham, has reversed the process. He learnt the game in the States.

This paragraph has nothing to do with the preceding one, but is merely to record the fact that one First Division club serves out chewing-gum at half-time for the players who prefer it to lemon. Does the chewing-gum help them to "stick it"?

Tommys, Bills, and Jimmys are very common in football, but the Arsenal player, Hapgood, has an unusual Christian name. It is Edris.

It happened to be Gerald Knox of the Sixth. Though a prefect, Knox was very familiar indeed with the smell of tobacco smoke, and he suddenly stopped and sniffed hard. Then, after looking about him, he made a dive for the slightly-open door of Study No. 6.

Yes; the smoke undoubtedly came from there! Knox's eyes gleamed with triumph. The fellows in that study were the last fellows he could have expected to catch smoking; but they were also the fellows whose apprehension on such a charge would bring him the greatest joy.

For a moment Knox listened, and then he opened the door gently wider, and slipped into the study.

The back of the armchair was towards him, and over the top rose clouds of tobacco smoke.

"Got you!" snapped Knox. "Out of that you come, my pippin! Caught in the—"

Crash! A vicious push sent the armchair over, and a howl arose as the startled occupant was pitched forward on hands and knees across the hearthrug.

It wasn't D'Arcy, or Blake, or Herries, or Digby, however. Greatly to the amazement of Knox, it was an individual who was a perfect stranger to him!

Knox, the prefect, fairly blinked as he looked down at Mr. Alf Stiggins, grovelling on the hearthrug.

"What the dickens—" stuttered Knox. "Oh, great Scott!"

Mr. Stiggins scrambled up, towering wrath in his somewhat heated features.

"Here, what's this game?" he demanded indignantly. "Pitchin' a bloke out of a bloomin' chair like that! Why, I'll knock your 'ead off, you young raskil!"

Mr. Stiggins glowered as he rubbed the back of his head, which had come into violent contact with the fender.

"What— Who the deuce are you?" snapped Knox, backing a little at the glare in the stranger's eyes. "What are you doing here, my man? Who allowed a man like you to come in this school?"

"A man like me, hey?" said Mr. Stiggins, not missing the haughty sneer on Knox's lips. "And who are you to talk to a man like this? You clear out and leave a feller alone!"

"What are you doing here?"

"I've come to see a friend of mine—that's what I'm doin' 'ere!" said Mr. Stiggins warmly. "A feller named D'Arcy—Major D'Arcy!"

"Wha-at!"

"That's it. Now you knows, jest you clear out afore I start on you, my lad! Chuckin' a bloke out of his chair like that there! Out you go!"

Knox pointed to the door, his face red with anger.

"Get off these premises at once!" he snapped. "If you don't clear out I'll have you thrown out, my man!"

"Oh! Will you?"

"Yes, you drunken lout!" snapped Knox, who was never a fellow to mince his words. "The boy who let you in shall be severely punished for this!" Knox flung wide the door and came into the room again. "Out you go, before you— Here, stand back, you rascal!"

But Mr. Stiggins did not stand back. Gussy would have been surprised and shocked had he seen Mr. Stiggins then. He was suddenly changed into a most quarrelsome and pugnacious individual. "It's you as is goin' out, my lad!" he snorted. "Nice thing if a bloke can't call on a friend friendly-like without bein' chucked about like a sack of coke, and insulted like this. Out you goes!"

He rushed at the suddenly alarmed Knox and wrapped his arms about him. Then he did his best to throw the prefect out. Knox, his face livid with rage, struggled furiously, and yelled for aid at the top of his voice.

"Help! Help, somebody—quick! Help!"

The next moment he crashed down on the carpet, with Mr. Alf Stiggins, now thoroughly roused to action, on top of him. They rolled about, struggling furiously. There was a hurried step in the passage, and Darrell, who was not at footer that afternoon, looked in, his face showing his alarm.

He halted in sheer amazement when he saw what was going on.

"Help!" roared Knox. "Don't stand staring there, you fool! Drag this drunken brute off! Help!"

"Oh, great Scott!" gasped Darrell.

But he hesitated no longer. Diving to Knox's aid he grabbed at the pugnacious Mr. Stiggins, and next moment a bigger uproar than before was heard from Study No. 6. Mr. Stiggins filled the air with angry bellows as he struggled with the two seniors—this time in a desperate effort to prevent being thrown out himself.

CHAPTER 9.

The Visitor Departs!

"KEEP it up, chaps!" panted Tom Merry. "Let's have another before half-time! Only a minute to go! Still feeling all serene, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus mopped a heated brow, though a keen wind was blowing across Little Side. "I'm feeling quite all wight, deah boy!"

"Oh, good!"

Tom Merry had been very doubtful indeed about including Gussy in the House match. But he happened to be short of good men, and the gallant Arthur Augustus had insisted upon playing. The nasty knock he had received had healed up well, and he had felt quite fit to play.

He had played up splendidly, indeed, and as yet Tom had no reason to regret the inclusion of Gussy—far from it! For Gussy had notched the only goal in the game so far.

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The ball came swinging across from Blake on the left wing, and the next moment both Tom and Gussy were in the thick of it again.

Backwards and forwards the ball flew, Figgins and his men of the New House working desperately to equalise before half-time. For the next half minute they did manage to keep the ball in the School House goal area; but Herries was in good form that afternoon, and the bombardment came to nothing.

Then the ball came whizzing up-field again, and Tom



Merry trapped it, beat three New House men in swift succession, and then swung the leather over in a beautiful dropping pass to Blake on the left wing.

Blake trapped it, and went like a streak of lightning along the touchline amidst an uproar of shouts from the ropes. Redfern tackled him desperately, but he went round Redfern, leaving that hapless junior standing still dazedly.

"Go it, Blake!"

"Oh, good man! Shoot! Shoot!"

Blake steadied himself, and shot.

It was just then that Herbert Skimpole—reading his bulky tome on the subject of determinism—came into the picture.

Everybody agreed afterwards that it would have been a certain goal had he not done so, for as he leaped forward to intercept the ball, Fatty Wynn, in the New House goal, slipped in the mud and went sprawling on his back.

But, even as the School House fellows were howling in delight, their howls changed to a new note.

"Skimmy, you fool!"
 "Come back, you born idiot!"
 "What the thump——"
 Crash!

The ball, streaking for the New House goal like a shot from a gun, caught Herbert Skimpole amidstships, so to speak, and lifted him up, and deposited him neatly on his back. A wild yell floated over the ground—a yell of pain that was followed by a perfect howl of disappointed wrath from the spectators as Redfern dashed back and sent the ball soaring up-field again.

Then the whistle went for half-time amidst the uproar of the School House supporters. In a few seconds the sprawling, groaning Skimpole was surrounded by a swarm of angry, yelling juniors.

It was just like Skimmy, of course. Skimpole knew nothing of football, and he had imagined it was quite the thing to march across the footer-field and give his message to Arthur Augustus, despite the fact that a match was in progress.

He knew differently now, as he gazed at the red and



"Hallo! Grammarians!" exclaimed Tom Merry, his eyes on the group in the lane ahead. Gordon Gay & Co. were not alone. Held in the firm grasp of Gay and Frank Monk was a greasy-looking individual. And then the St. Jim's juniors saw something else. Harry Wootton was holding by the handlebars a glittering new bike. "My bike!" gasped Blake. (See Chapter 6.)

wrathful countenances of the crowd around him. Had it been anyone else but the guileless Skimpole, he would certainly have been mobbed.

"But what the thump did you do it for, you born idiot?" howled Blake, as he hauled the dazed and grovelling Skimmy to his shaky feet. "What d'you want, you burbling duffer?"

"Ow! Oh dear, me! What was it? Something struck me a most violent blow and caused me to lose my balance!" wailed Skimpole, blinking dazedly about him. "I really do wish now that I had not agreed to bring the message for D'Arcy!"

"A message for me?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Who wants me, Skimmy? Wailton——"

"Ow! No. I do not know the individual at all. He is, I am afraid, not a very pleasant character," explained Skimmy, shaking his head. "I am afraid he has been drinking, and though I asked him to wait in the quadrangle, he insisted upon following me to your study, D'Arcy."

"Gweat Scott!"

"He was very shabbily dressed, and he did not look a nice man; indeed, his appearance was most unfavourable, despite the fact that he stated that he was a friend of yours, D'Arcy."

"Oh!" gasped Blake, eyeing Tom Merry queerly. "That sounds like——"

"Bai Jove! It—it must be Mr. Stiggins!" mumbled Arthur Augustus in some dismay.

"And—and you've shown him into our study?" almost shouted Blake, in great excitement. "You've left that thieving rascal alone in our study, Skimmy?"

Skimpole jumped at the tone of Blake's voice.

"Oh dear! Really, Blake, he followed me, and went into the study of his own accord. It was impossible for me to evict him, had I desired to do so," protested Skimmy mildly.

"Oh, bai Jove! I weally think I had better wush away to see him!" said Arthur Augustus.

"I should jolly well think you had!" gasped Blake, in great alarm. "Why, he'll help himself to anything, I bet! Come on!"

"Yes, rather!"

Herries and Digby followed Blake instantly as he rushed away, Arthur Augustus also breaking into a run. Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners, went after them, and one or two others who overheard the conversation, also followed wonderingly.

They soon arrived at the School House, and Blake led the way upstairs and along to Study No. 6 with a rush. But long before they reached it they heard the uproar that came from that direction.

"Oh, my hat!" panted Blake, increasing his speed. "He's up to something! Listen to the rotter!"

Mr. Stiggins was just beginning to feel that Knox and Darrell were a trifle too much for him to handle, and he was showing his disgust in wild bellows of rage.

The juniors came up to the open door with a rush, and at the same time Mr. Railton, followed by Mr. Lathom, came hurrying along from the opposite direction, their faces showing great alarm. Other people were also hurrying to the scene—Trimble, Racke, and a number of other fellows who had been indoors.

They crowded round the doorway of the study and gazed blankly at the scene of havoc inside. Mr. Stiggins was on his back now, with Darrell and Knox—both showing signs of the terrific combat on their heated faces, while their clothes were dusty and dishevelled—kneeling on him and pinning him down.

"What—what— Bless my soul! Knox, Darrell, what ever is the matter?" ejaculated the Housemaster, entering the room swiftly. "Who—who is this individual?"

"Goodness knows, sir!" panted Darrell. "I found him struggling with Knox in here."

"He—he attacked me! The scoundrel is drunk! I—I found him smoking in here, and—and because I ordered him to leave the school, he—he attacked me!"

Knox, his face bruised and red with rage, fairly panted out the words.

Mr. Stiggins glowered up at him.

"Yes, and I should think I bloomin' well would!" he bawled. "Pitchin' a man out of that there chair like you did, and making 'im bang his 'ead on the fender like you did! Can't a man call on 'is friends without a streak of misery like you chippin' in? Yah!"

There was a chuckle from somewhere in the passage. Mr. Railton frowned, and looked round sternly.

"This is a very serious matter!" he said grimly. "You state that you called on a friend, my man? Who——"

Mr. Stiggins was on his feet now, with Darrell and Knox holding him by the arms. Knox's eyes glinted.

"He came to see D'Arcy, I believe," he gasped viciously.

"He must be a friend of the boys in this study, sir."

"Wha-at?"

Mr. Railton looked thunderstruck, but the next moment Mr. Stiggins himself supported Knox's remark regarding Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, I did!" he snorted indignantly. "I come to see Master D'Arcy, that's what I did. He's a friend of mine, and what I says is, why can't a man call an' see 'is friends? Why, there he is!"

Mr. Stiggins had suddenly sighted the startled Arthur Augustus in the doorway.

The Housemaster's lips set grimly.

"D'Arcy!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "Can it be possible that this—this individual is a friend of yours, boy?"

"Oh—oh, yaas, sir!" stammered the unhappy Gussy. "He—he did me a vewy gweat service. You—you see, sir——"

"That will do for the present, D'Arcy. I will go into the matter later," said Mr. Railton ominously. "Darrell and Knox, will you kindly see this—this man off the premises without a second's delay!"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Look 'ere—" Mr. Stiggins was beginning to protest when Blake came into the room swiftly, his eyes gleaming with excitement.

"Just a moment, sir!" he exclaimed grimly. "Hadn't the man better be searched? I see our study clock—a silver one—is missing, and it looks as if a good many other things are missing, too."

"Good gracious! You are right, my boy. The man must— Hold him!"

The Housemaster's voice ended in a shout of alarm.

But there was no holding Mr. Alf Stiggins after that.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Stiggins was by no means unknown to the Wayland police, and he had no desire, evidently, to renew their acquaintance.

A sudden, unexpected wrench took him out of the seniors' grasp, and there was a yell, followed by a sudden scrimmage round the door as he leaped for it madly.

Like a knife through cheese he went through the staring crowd, scattering them to right and left amidst a scene of wild confusion.

Then everybody was aware that Mr. Stiggins was gone, only his rapidly thudding footsteps were heard.

"After him!" roared Blake.

That silver clock was a present from Blake's aunt, and he valued it greatly. Moreover, the question now was, what else had gone with the slippery Mr. Stiggins?

The juniors surged after him with a rush, Blake leading the way, Tom Merry at his heels, and with the whole crowd, seniors and juniors, swarming behind, hot on the trail.

Blake reached the quad first, and he sighted Mr. Stiggins just vanishing under the old archway leading to the Close.

"This way!" roared Blake.

He pelted in pursuit, and the crowd followed in a yelling, excited swarm. There was no sign to be seen of Mr. Stiggins when they emerged under the archway, however.

"Gone round by the chapel!" panted Blake. "Some of you go the other way!"

"My hat! Yes!"

The crowd broke up into two parties, some following Blake and others Darrell, who was now taking the lead, with Tom Merry at his heels. The two parties met again beyond the chapel, but neither party had seen Mr. Stiggins. That slippery gentleman had vanished completely.

The crowd broke up into parties and searched for some time—in vain. The wood-shed, the Cloisters, the ruins, the cycle-shed, and every part of the school outside was searched, but they had to give it up at last.

"Done, by Jingo!" groaned Blake, his face red with wrath. "The sweep's done us, after all! Let's get back and see what he's taken."

"But the footer—" began Tom.

"Blow the footer! That can wait, Tommy."

"Oh, all right. We can carry on afterwards," grinned Tom Merry. "That chap can't have taken much, though— from a junior's study, at least."

"Oh deah, this is weally w'etched, deah boys!"

"Oh, dry up, you fooling idiot!"

Blake & Co. had not much patience with Arthur Augustus just then, who was not so much concerned with what had been taken, but with the unpleasant thought that his friend was not the kindly, honest individual he had imagined him to be. Arthur Augustus, indeed, was overwhelmed with confusion and dismay at the happenings. He blushed at the look Mr. Railton gave him as he entered Study No. 6 with his chums.

"He got away, sir," reported Darrell. "Slipped round by the rear of the chapel, and I expect he has got clear by way of the playing-fields. At all events, he's gone."

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Very well, Darrell. I will telephone the police at once. Blake, will you kindly examine your belongings and discover what is really missing? Those boys who have studies on this passage had better do the same, I think."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

An immediate search was made. The silver clock belonging to Blake had undoubtedly gone. It was a small affair, and could easily have been put in the rascal's pocket. Blake also missed a fountain-pen and a pocket-knife. Herries reported the loss of a silver photo-frame and a silver pencil-case. Digby found that a silver watch—that wouldn't go—and a pound note was missing from his coat behind the door. Arthur Augustus discovered, to his greater dismay, that several small articles of value had gone that had belonged to him.

But nothing had been taken from the other studies, apparently.

"Very well," said Mr. Railton at length grimly. "I will acquaint the police with the matter without delay; doubtless they will know the man and quickly apprehend him. D'Arcy!"

"Oh deah! Yaas, sir!"

"Did you invite the man to visit you here?"

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"Oh deah! Yaas, sir! That is to say, I told him he could call upon me heah, though I did not dweam of invitin' him up to this study."

"I understand that Skimpole saw the man first, and that he came upstairs on his own accord," said Mr. Railton sternly. "But I am surprised and astonished to learn that you are on friendly terms with such a rascal, D'Arcy. You are perfectly well aware that St. Jim's boys are not permitted to associate with such disreputable characters."

"Oh—oh, yaas, sir. But—"

"I demand to know what business you had with him!"

"Oh deah!" Arthur Augustus was covered with confusion as he felt the curious eyes fixed upon him. "It—was like this, sir. The man—Mr. Stiggins did me a vewy gweat service, and I was sowwy for him because he was out of work, and his wife in hospital and his children starvin'. I—I ofahed to get him a job and do what I could to help him. You—you see, sir."

"Very well. I will accept your statement, D'Arcy," snapped Mr. Railton. "The man has obviously been imposing upon your credulity and good-nature. He is obviously a plausible rascal. None the less, you have broken strict rules in associating with such a man, and you will take five hundred lines as a punishment. Boys, disperse at once!"

The Housemaster hurried away, after giving the hapless Arthur Augustus a searching glance that was not lost upon the swell of the Fourth. The rest of the crowd began to disperse.

"Oh, bai Jove!" groaned Gussy. "I weally hope Mr. Waiton does not suspect that my dealin's with Mr. Stiggins were questionable. Bai Jove! I ought to have told him that Mr. Stiggins was the fellow who saved my life the othah day. I am vewy upset indeed, deah boys!"

"Well, you—you fooling dummy!" yelled Blake. "Do you still believe that yarn—do you still think that rotter dragged you from under a motor-lorry?"

"Bai Jove! Of course I do, Blake. Because this has happened theah is no reason why I should doubt his statement on that mattah. Wathah not."

"Oh, you—you—"

"Pway do not woah at me, Blake! I dislike bein' woahed at. I am vewy much afwaid now that Mr. Stiggins is not honest!"

"Go hon!" said Lowther, with heavy sarcasm.

"Yes, I am afwaid so, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "I am vewy disappointed in him. How-ehah, that is no reason why one should doubt that he has performed a bwave action in wescuin' me fwom that motor-lowwy! Allow me to point out, you fellows, that theah is bad in the best of us, and good in the worst of us. I have often heard of dishonest persons bein' waihah hewoic, you know! I am vewy sowwy indeed to learn that such a kindlay and hewoic person as Mr. Stiggins has stooped to dishonesty, you know!"

"Oh, you—you born idiot!" gasped Blake. "You—you—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh; for goodness' sake let the chap rip!" snorted Tom Merry. "Let's get back to the match. Come on, Gussy, you awful chump!"

"Vewy well, Tom Mewwy!" said Gussy, stiffly. "But I stwongly object to bein' called—"

Tom Merry and the rest were gone, however. And, shaking his head very seriously, Arthur Augustus followed them down to the football field, where Figgins and the rest of the footballers were waiting with all the patience they could muster.

CHAPTER 10.

The Last Straw!

THE House match ended in a draw, greatly to the disgust of Tom Merry & Co. As a matter of fact, the School House were a very strong team that day, and they should have beaten New House easily—according to Tom Merry. But in the second half Arthur Augustus simply went to pieces and could do nothing right. His noble mind was obviously not concentrated on footer. As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus was very upset indeed over the happenings of the afternoon, and his play suffered accordingly. Nor were Gussy's personal chums much better. Blake especially was seething with wrath over the loss of his silver clock, and naturally his play also suffered.

Within five minutes of the resumption of play the New House forwards broke through and scored—an easy goal which Herries should have stopped but didn't. And though no more goals were scored after that, the New House undoubtedly had the best of the rest of the game; a fact that was not at all pleasing to the School House.

They came off the field in a gloomy crowd, Blake telling the unfortunate Arthur Augustus a few home truths on the way.

"Never mind!" said Tom Merry consolingly. "Everyone knows we should have licked them if that rotten affair hadn't happened to muck things up. Thank goodness Gussy's seen the last of that Stiggins merchant, anyway."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" "Oh, dry up, Gussy!" snorted Herries. "We're fed-up! If you'd listened to us in the first place this wouldn't have happened."

"Well, it's over now, and let's hope it'll be a lesson to Gussy," said Digby. "I'm afraid we'll never see our things again, though."

"Hallo! Here's another visitor!" said Lowther, staring towards the gates.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus gave a start as he recognised the man who was talking to Taggles at the gates. "It—it is Mr. Wigg, f'rom Wylcombe!"

"More trouble, I bet!" said Blake, with a whistle. "He's after that Stiggins merchant, Gussy! I expect he's walked off with the contents of his till or something."

"Don't be widic, Blake," said Arthur Augustus; but he looked very uneasily at Mr. Rigg, as he hurried over to that gentleman.

He very soon knew the worst. Blake had spoken half-jokingly; but his suggestion happened to be only too true.

"Master D'Arcy!" said Mr. Rigg, who was obviously very upset indeed. "Something terrible has happened! Have you seen anything of Stiggins since this morning, sir?"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, eyeing the outfitter's agitated features with great alarm. "He was heah earlier this aftahnoon; but he has gone now. Why, what is the mattah, Mr. Wigg? I weally twust that—"

"He has disappeared, Master D'Arcy! I left the man alone in the shop opening some cases of goods at noon, while I was at dinner, with orders to call me as usual if a customer entered the shop. As you know, the house is behind the shop, and, thinking Stiggins was very quiet, I went into the shop, and—and—" Mr. Rigg's voice trembled with agitation—"I found him gone and the till rifled; every penny that was in it had vanished, a matter of more than ten pounds!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus almost fell down in his utter dismay.

"But that is not all, unfortunately," continued the little outfitter tearfully. "He had also rifled the safe; he had obviously done that earlier. Forty pounds is missing from the safe—forty pounds in banknotes, Master D'Arcy!"

"Oh, gweat Scott!" "I have informed the police, but I did not, for your sake, tell them that you had recommended the man to me. I find now that he is a very bad character—he is very well known to the police at both Wayland and Abbotsford. His story to you of a sick wife and starving family is utterly false; he is not even married, and spends most of his time in prison. He is known as Slippery Alf to the police, I believe."

"Oh, bai Jove!" "I did not like the look of the man at first sight," continued Mr. Rigg bleakly. "But as you spoke so highly of him and promised to be responsible for him I agreed to give him a trial. And now—now this has happened, Master D'Arcy! What am I to do?"

Arthur Augustus groaned. The other juniors looked at each other, and then they looked at the hapless Mr. Rigg. If they hadn't any sympathy for Arthur Augustus they felt very sorry for Mr. Rigg. The little outfitter looked crumpled up with misery.

Fifty pounds was undoubtedly a large sum to the little local outfitter, and the loss was a very serious one. Mr. Rigg was getting old, and his business did not keep pace with the times; it was by no means in a flourishing state. Arthur Augustus preferred to deal with the more up-to-date Wayland shops, but he dealt with Mr. Rigg because he liked the meek and kindly old gentleman.

"Oh, bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in utter dismay. "How vevy tewwible, Mr. Wigg! Your news is a vevy gweat shock to me! I am vevy sowwy, Mr. Wigg, especially as I myself wecomended Mr. Stiggins; indeed, I am afwaid I pwessed you unduly to engage him."

"It is more than serious, Master D'Arcy. Business has been bad enough of late, and I need that money to pay certain very pressing accounts next week," groaned Mr. Rigg. "It will put me in a very serious position just now, as I have been unusually pressed for money of late. If the money is not recovered—"

"Pway do not wowwy, Mr. Wigg!" Arthur Augustus had recovered from the shock, somehow now, and he saw
(Continued on next page.)

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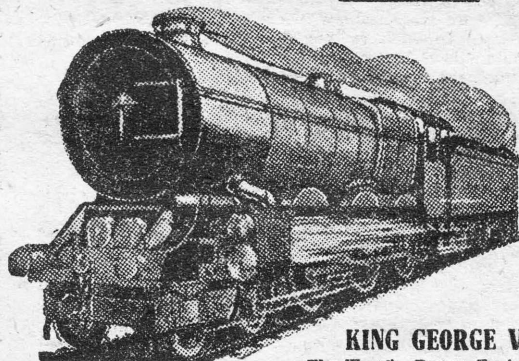
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the only possible course open to him. "It will ge quite all wight! I myself will make good the money."

"Master D'Arcy—" "I undahtook to be wespensible for that—that misguided man," said Arthur Augustus, with great firmness, "and I intend to keep my word. Yaas wathah! I uttahly wefuse to allow you to suffah! You shall not be the losah by one single penny, Mr. Wigg! You engaged Mr. Stiggins chiefly to oblige me, and I could not possibly allow you to suffah for it. I will undahtake to waise the fifty pounds, Mr. Wigg! Do not wowwy!"

"But—but, Master D'Arcy, I—I must have the money by next week!" stammered the outfitter, though he looked not a little relieved already. "If—if you could—"

"You shall have the money by Tuesday, at the vevy latest, Mr. Wigg!" said Arthur Augustus, with determination. "Pway leave the mattah to me. I shall be vevy glad indeed if the money should turn up; but if it does not, then I will make the fifty pounds good! Yaas, wathah!"

"But—but, Gussy!" gasped Jack Plake. "How on earth are you going to raise fifty quid? Your pater wouldn't send along a sum like that, you awful ass!"

"Kindly leave this mattah to me, Blake!" said Gussy, with dignity. "My patah will certainly send the money when I have explained the circumstances to him. Mr. Wigg, I ask you to be good enough to wait until Monday, or Tuesday at the vevy latest, and I will then be in a position to place the fifty pounds in your hands."

"Very—very well, Master D'Arcy!" stammered the outfitter. "I—I am sorry to have to bring the matter to you, but I really cannot afford to lose such a sum of money; indeed, it is a very serious loss to me! I must hurry back now, as I have been obliged to lock up my shop during my absence! But I will let you know the moment I have favourable news from the police."

"Vevy good, Mr. Wigg! I twust that will be vevy soon!" said Arthur Augustus. "Good-afthahnoon!"

Mr. Rigg departed hastily, his face a little brighter now. Arthur Augustus shook his head gravely.

"I am vevy, vevy disappointed in Mr. Stiggins," he said sadly. "He has deceived me vevy wickedly! I can scarcely believe that a man who has pwoved himself so self-sacwificin' and hewic could be so dishonahwable!"

"Fathead!"

"Idiot!"

"Dolt!"

"Weally, Blake—weally, deah boys—"

"You burbling chump!" said Herries, in concentrated tones. "Do you still believe that yarn, after this has happened, you—you footling dummy!"

"I wefuse to be called a footlin' dummay, Hewwies! I cannot see what this has to do with the mattah of my wescue fwom undah the wheels of that motor-lowwy! I am vevy surprisid indeed that you fellows should be so unspwartin' as to wefuse to give Mr. Stiggins cwedit for his bwawewy! I wegwet vevy much to admit that he is dishonest, and that he has deceived me in a wathah dishonahwable mannah! None the less, I cannot forget that I owe my life to him!"

"Oh, you—you—"

"I wefuse to listen to any more of your wotten wemarks, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with some heat; "and I uttahly wefuse to heah you thwowin' doubts on Mr. Stiggins' bwawe act the othah day!"

"Yes, but— Here, where are you going, you ass?"

"I am goin' to wire to my patah for that money, of course!" said Gussy stiffly.

"But, look here, you dummy—"

"Wats!"

"Just a minute—"

"Wats! I uttahly wefuse to discuss the mattah furthah with you wottahs!"

Arthur Augustus walked away, with his head in the air, and went indoors to change before cycling over to Rylcombe to send away his wire to his noble pater. But his chums were looking very concerned as they went indoors to change.

Arthur Augustus seemed very confidant that his pater would send on the fifty pounds; but they felt vevy doubtful indeed in regard to that. Lord Eastwood, Gussy's noble pater, was a very indulgent parent, but he was very unlikely to part with fifty pounds, for all that, to his hopeful son.

CHAPTER 11.

No Go!

"O H, bai Jove! Gweat Scott!" "Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was absolutely "floored."

It was Monday afternoon at St. Jim's. Dinner was just over, and Arthur Augustus had entered Study No. 6, to find a letter waiting for him on the table.

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That week-end had been a very worrying time indeed for the swell of the Fourth. He had sent the wire, and he had fully expected to get an answer that night—on the Saturday night. His pater could very easily have wired the money to the Rylcombe or Wayland Post Office. Gussy had realised that, and he had hoped that he would.

But he hadn't! Strange as it seemed to the hopeful Arthur Augustus, Lord Eastwood was, apparently, not in a hurry to send the fifty pounds needed on to his son at St. Jim's.

Gussy's chums had not expected it for one moment—they did not expect it even now.

But Gussy had, and he was very anxious at the delay. He had spent a very trying and worrying Sunday. So far no news whatever had been received regarding Mr. Alf Stiggins—known to the police and his associates as "Slippery Alf," a name that seemed to suit him very well. Mr. Alf Stiggins was undoubtedly very slippery indeed. At all events, the police could not find him, and the fifty pounds and the rest of the stolen articles were still missing and seemed likely to remain so.

Still, though he could not help worrying, Arthur Augustus had felt supremely confidant that Monday morning would bring fifty pounds from his noble pater. All that Gussy needed to do then was to cycle over to Rylcombe and present the fifty pounds to the unfortunate Mr. Rigg.

But Monday morning came without a letter or anything else for Arthur Augustus.

That morning had been a very trying morning for Gussy—and, in consequence, for Mr. Lathom, his Form master! Still, Mr. Lathom did have the satisfaction of taking it out of Gussy—as Blake put it—whereas poor Arthur Augustus had no such satisfaction.

The morning had ended at last, however, and now, on returning from dinner, Arthur Augustus was delighted to find the letter on the table—a letter bearing the home postmark!

His delight had not lasted long. And now, as he gazed blankly at the letter—which was from his father's secretary—Gussy did, indeed, feel absolutely "floored."

"Well?" demanded Jack Blake, though he could guess the answer. "No giddy fifty quid, of course! Does he say anything about your cheek, Gussy?"

"If I was Gussy's pater, I should say a lot!" grunted Herries. "Still, it's rather rotten—especially for poor old Rigg. What does he say, Gussy?"

"Oh, bai Jove!" groaned Gussy. "How—how feahfully wotten!"

He read the letter through again and groaned deeply.

"Cough it up!" suggested Blake impatiently.

"It is not fwom the patah at all!" gasped Arthur Augustus in great dismay. "It is fwom his secwetawy—Bolsever! He—he says that the patah is on the Continent, and that he is unaware of his pwesent address—that old Conway is also with him, and that they are not expected back for at least a fortnight."

"Oh crumbs!"

"And then he says," proceeded Gussy, with deep indignation, "that my wewquest is most unusual, and that he feahs the patah would not accede to it in any circumstances. The—the cheekay wottah!"

"What did you expect, you chump?"

"I wefuse to be called a chump, Blake! Oh deah! It is weally a towwible blow! I feah I shall have gweat difficulty in waisin' fifty pounds on my own, you fellows."

"Go hon!"

"It is no laughin' mattah, Blake!" said Gussy, indignantly. "I am weally in a most difficult and twyin' position indeed. I have given my word to Mr. Wigg that I will be wespensible for that fifty pounds, and that I will place the money in his hands by to-morrow at the latest. Do you fellows think that the Head would advance me the money until the patah returns?"

"Oh, my hat! Fathead!"

"I see no weason why not," said Gussy coldly. "But pewwaps I had bettah not appwvach him on the subject until all othah attempts to waise the money have failed."

"Ahem! I think so, too, Gussy!"

"Second thoughts are best," agreed Digby, trying to remain serious. "But how the thump do you hope to get it, anyway?"

"I could sell my jiggah," said Gussy reflectively. "That would bring in at least seven or eight pounds. Then if you fellows sold your jiggahs, they would pwobably bring in an awewage of five pounds on each. That would bring it to twenty-thwee pounds, you know."

"Oh, would it? M-my hat!"

"Those Shell fellows might help, too," said Gussy, starting to make notes on a scrap of paper. "H'm! Lowthah's machine is wathah an old cwock, but Tom Mewwy's and Mannah's would easily fetch five pounds each. That makes anothah ten pounds. Pewwaps Mannah's would also sell his camewah. I believe it is wathah an expensive one. Oh,

yaas! I weally believe it will be quite a simple mattah to waise the money aftah all, deah boys!"

"Well—well, isn't he a coughdrop?" asked Blake, addressing Herries and Digby, who seemed to be overcome. "You—you fathead!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"And you think those chaps will sell their jiggers to please you, you footling idiot?" yelled Blake. "And d'you jolly well think we will, either?"

"Bai Jove! I should weally twust so, Blake," said Gussy, staring. "I weally twust you fellows would not be so ungenueous as to wefuse to help in a good cause of this description."

"To get you out of a hole—"

"To save Mr. Wigg fwom acute financial distwess, Blake," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I am weally surprised at you, Blake. Am I to undahstand that you wefuse to sell your bikes and anythin' else that will bring in the necessawy money?"

"Yes, you jolly well are! I'm sorry for Mr. Rigg; but, dash it all, selling one's bike is carrying one's sorrow a trifle too far!"

"My hat! Yes, rather! Gussy, you born idiot—"

"I wefuse to be called a born idiot, Hewwies. If you

"Wha-what?"

"Explain your idea, Gussy," said Blake.

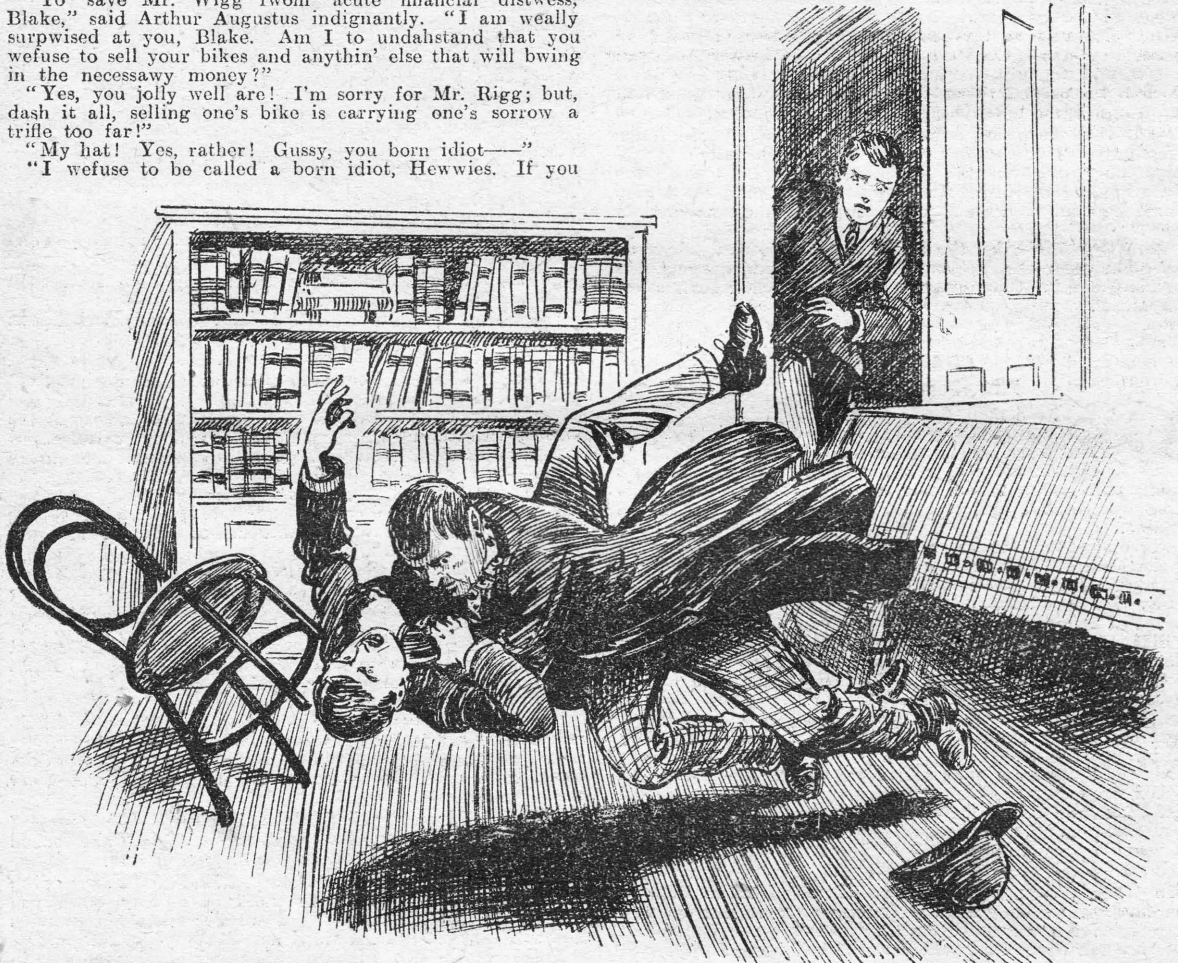
Arthur Augustus looked at Blake keenly and suspiciously. But Blake was very serious, and Gussy felt he must have changed his views, after all.

"That is quite wight, Tom Mewwy," he said innocently.

"My ideah is to hold an auction in the gym or somewhere, though pewwaps it would be bettah to sell some of the things pwivately, so that, if necessawy and possible, we could buy them back again. I should weturn the full value of ewevythin' aftahwards, when the patah weturns and stumps up, of course."

"W-would you?"

"Oh, yaas! That is only wight and pwopah, deah boys.



Darrell halted at the door of Study No. 6 in sheer amazement. Gerald Knox and Mr. Alf Stiggins rolled about on the carpet, struggling furiously. "Help!" roared Knox. "Drag this brute off! Help!" (See Chapter 8.)

wefere to me in those insultin' terms again, I shall be weluctantly obliged to punch your nose, Hewwies!"

"Hallo! Trouble in the giddy family—what?"

"Tom Merry looked in at the doorway, with Manners and Lowther at his heels. Blake grinned as he sighted them.

"Just in time, you fellows," he said. "Gussy has thought of a really ripping wheeze to raise that fifty quid he wants."

"Phew! Hasn't your pater sent it yet, Gussy?" asked Lowther. "I thought he wouldn't!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"But what's the trouble?" demanded Tom Merry. "Haven't you had a reply at all, Gussy?"

"Oh, yaas!"

Arthur Augustus handed over the secretary's brief letter, and Tom scanned it swiftly. Then he whistled.

"I did have a lingering expectation that your pater would stomp up, perhaps, on hearing what it was for. But that puts the tin hat on it."

"Never mind," said Blake. "Gussy's idea now is to sell all our bikes and all our precious valuables. He feels we shall be highly honoured to do so—don't you, Gussy?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Our seven bikes, and Manners' camera, and Herries' bulldog, and your new cricket bat, Tommy, and a few other little things like that, should fetch the required amount, shouldn't it?" said Blake seriously.

I was the fellow who persuaded Mr. Wigg to engage that—that man Stiggins, and I hold myself responsible for the very unfortunate result."

"And—and you think we'll agree to that, do you?" gasped Tom Merry, intercepting Blake's wink.

"Yaas. Natuwallly, I expect my fwiends to wally wound me in the houah of need," said Gussy, with a touch of surprise in his tone. "Bai Jove! I twust you fellows do not pwopose to weject my scheme?"

"What a trusting nature," said Lowther admiringly. "Talk about great expectations! Shall we put in our Sunday suits for the sale, too, you fellows?"

"Bai Jove! This is not a subject for jokin', Lowthah, you feahful wottah!"

"Not really! Why, aren't you, Gussy?" asked Lowther innocently.

"Cheese it, Lowther!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Gussy, you old ass, I'm afraid it's off, old chap! We're sorry enough about old Rigg, and we'd help you quickly enough if we could. But—well, selling our bikes is rather too much to expect."

"Bai Jove! Am—am I weally to undahstand that you wefuse to considah my suggestion?" said Arthur Augustus, going pink.

"Certainly," said Tom. "Can't be done, old chap—as far as we're concerned, at all events."

"The same here," said Blake.

"You—you born idiot, Gussy!" gasped Herries.

Arthur Augustus turned to Herries. He was very wrathful now, realising, as he did, that his chums had not been taking him as seriously as they should have done.

"Hewwies," he said, turning back his cuffs with slow deliberation, "a few moments ago I remarked that I should be obliged to punch your nose if you woked to me as a born idiot! You have done so, despite my warnin'. Kindly oblige me by puttin' up your hands, you wottah!"

"Now look here, Gussy, be sensible, and— Yarooooop!"

Herries howled with surprise and pain as Arthur Augustus rushed at him and tapped his nose. He immediately retaliated on Gussy's nasal organ, and it was Gussy's turn to howl.

But that was as far as the damages were allowed to proceed. Blake & Co. were rather tired of Arthur Augustus of late, and they grabbed him as one man, and sat him down hard on the carpet. Then they lifted him and dropped him again and again until Gussy roared with anguish.

"Let that teach you a lesson, you silly ass!" said Blake wrathfully. "It wouldn't have happened at all if you'd taken our advice in the beginning. You must try some other method of raising the wind, anyway, and we'll help you if we can. But we're not selling our bikes, understand that!"

With that Blake led the others out of the study, leaving the unfortunate Gussy sprawling on the carpet, gasping like a stranded fish. Once again his confidence had been sadly misplaced!

CHAPTER 12.

Fifty Pounds Wanted!

"Gussy, old man!"

Blake spoke gently as he came into Study No. 6 after afternoon classes that day. As a matter of fact, Blake and the rest of D'Arcy's chums were feeling rather sorry now that they had not been more sympathetic and forbearing with their chum in his trouble.

For undoubtedly it was a very grave trouble to the swell of the Fourth. Not for worlds would Arthur Augustus have attempted to get out of his self-imposed obligation to Mr. Rigg. He had said he would "pay the piper," and he meant to keep his word if it was at all possible to do so.

Blake & Co., and Tom Merry & Co. felt very sorry for him—just as they felt sorry for Mr. Rigg. All that day they had hoped, with Gussy, that the police would have succeeded in tracing the rascally Mr. Stiggins. But no news had come—indeed, it was known that the local police were completely baffled. Mr. Alf Stiggins had completely vanished.

In the Form-room that afternoon Arthur Augustus had looked very miserable and worried indeed. Mr. Lathom noticed it, and he asked Gussy the reason for his gloom and preoccupation. All the fellows noticed it also, but they got as much information out of Arthur Augustus as did Mr. Lathom—which amounted to nothing.

In Gussy's view, Mr. Rigg would not wish the state of his finances to be generally known—that it was gravely necessary for him to have the fifty pounds. And Gussy was determined to keep that a close secret, and he had impressed this upon his chums.

None the less, it was known that Arthur Augustus was hard up—that he was badly in need of fifty pounds for some reason or other, and Gussy had become an object of great attention to the Lower School.

How this fact had "got out," Gussy himself least of all knew. But Blake and the rest believed that Trimble had been eavesdropping—a little habit of Trimble's.

As it happened, they were quite right there. Trimble, in point of fact, had been underneath the table in Study No. 6 when Gussy had propounded his great scheme of selling their property in order to raise the fifty pounds required. Trimble had seen the letter brought to their study, and he had followed it up as he usually did when he had good reason to believe a letter held a remittance.

But he had found the study empty, and he was just examining the letter when the chums of the Fourth had turned up. Knowing, from past experience, that he would be "booted" if found there, Trimble had dived beneath the table, hoping for the best. He had remained there until Gussy had gone, and he had hugely enjoyed the interesting conversation. But he had enjoyed spreading the yarn about the House still more.

Not that Trimble understood the real meaning of it all. He only realised that D'Arcy was badly in need of fifty pounds, and that he had tried to persuade his chums to

sell their bikes and belongings to raise the money—a screaming joke, in Trimble's opinion.

The fact that his need was known only added to Gussy's dismay—and to the wrath of Blake & Co. But seeking out Trimble and booting him on suspicion, did not help matters.

"Gussy, old man!" repeated Blake, frowning, as he noted D'Arcy's dejected looks. "Keep your pecker up, old chap! We'll manage it yet!"

I would watah not discuss the mattah with you fellows."

Evidently Arthur Augustus had not yet forgiven them for the bumping—he was still on his "high horse."

"Now, look here, Gussy!" said Blake. "We've been talking it over, and the only way we can think of to raise the cash is to hold a concert. We'll all take part, and heaps of fellows will back us up—especially if we explain that it's for a deserving cause. And if we don't make enough by that—which is scarcely likely—we'll have an auction of our things—not bikes, but things we can really spare. How's that for an idea?"

Arthur Augustus looked up—without much enthusiasm, however.

"It is a vewy good ideah, Blake," he said, slightly mollified. "Unfortunately, there is no time to hold a concert. Mr. Wigg is expectin' the cash to-morrow. I feah that is useless, though, if the worst comes to the worst, we will certainly twy that. I have just thought of anothah possible way, howevah."

"Not—not trying to borrow the money from Railton, I hope—or anything like that?"

"Bai Jove! Watah not! I have already twied Mr. Lathom—"

"You've whatter?" It was a howl.

"Yaas! I twied immediately aftah 'class, deah boys," said Gussy. "I asked Mr. Lathom if he would be good enough to oblige me with the loan of fifty pounds until my patah's return, you know. I have the vewy gweatest objection to bowwowin' money, as you fellows know. But in the circe—"

"Oh, great Scott! And what did he say?"

"What did he do, you mean?" added Blake, eyeing Arthur Augustus in blank amazement. "Didn't he yank you off to the Head?"

"Not at all! He was vewy waxy, though—why, I weally cannot imagine—unless, of course, he shares my own objection to bowwowin' money," said Gussy, frowning reflectively. "He seemed to think I was pullin' his leg, you know. At all events, he didn't even allow me to assuah him that I was not. He just caned me, and ordahed me out. Don't you think he was vewy unweasonable, you fellows?"

"Oh cwumbs! You—you fathead, Gussy!"

"Howevah, it was a vewy unpleasant interview, and I do not think I will twy a master again," proceeded Gussy. "I have just thought of a vewy simple way out of the difficulty, deah boys. Pway excuse me wushin' off; but there is no time to waste."

"Here, hold on!" yelled Blake, in alarm. "Tell us—"

But Arthur Augustus had gone. And when Blake looked out a few moments later there was no sign of him.

"Oh, the—the born duffer!" gasped Blake. "Fancy going to a master and asking for the loan of fifty quid, you fellows! The awful nerve! I wonder what his game is now? He ought to be chained up. I always said that!"

Blake was in two minds whether to stay or rush out in search of his chum, but he decided to let him go his own way again. He knew it was useless to argue with him in any case.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus had merely gone along to the study occupied by Cardew, Levison, and Clive. Cardew was a relative of his, and, though he detested the thought of borrowing from anyone, Gussy felt that he was justified in doing so from Cardew, at all events—if he could manage it. Certainly Cardew was unlikely to have fifty pounds at his disposal—very unlikely indeed. Gussy, in fact, did not dream of such a possibility.

But he knew that Cardew would have a fairly good chance of getting such a sum from his grandfather, Lord Reckness—at least, Gussy fondly hoped so. Gussy could easily pay back the money when his pater returned from abroad.

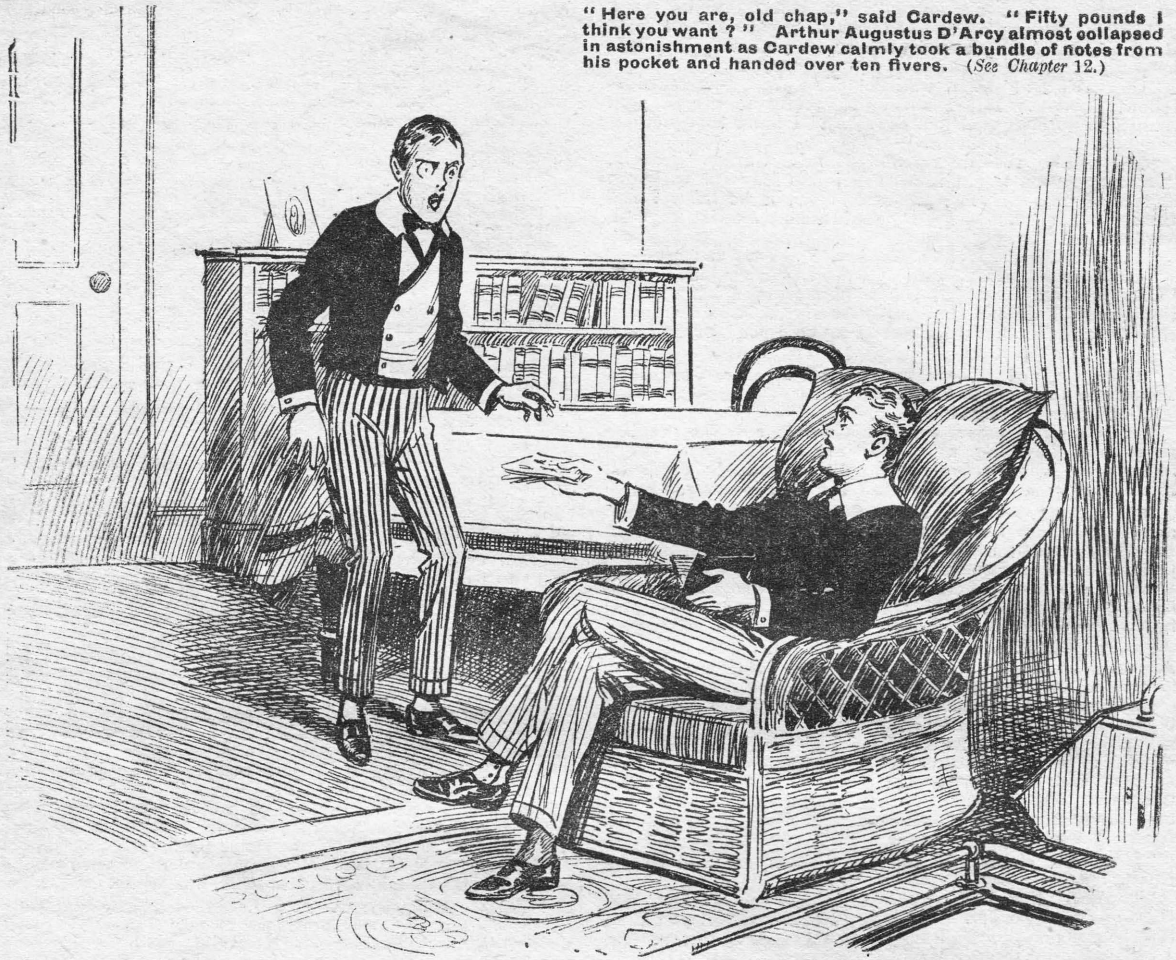
It seemed a very simple way out to Arthur Augustus.

He found the chums of Study No. 9 about to get tea ready—at least, Clive and Levison were; Ralph Reckness Cardew was lounging in the armchair, giving advice and encouragement, which he preferred to actually doing the work.

All three grinned as Arthur Augustus knocked and entered gracefully. They had heard the yarn going round the House, and they eyed Gussy very curiously.

"Try next door!" suggested Clive, before Gussy could speak. "I've got fivepence; I suppose that's no use towards fifty quid, old chap? Still, you're welcome to that. I know Levison here hasn't got that."

"Here you are, old chap," said Cardew. "Fifty pounds I think you want?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy almost collapsed in astonishment as Cardew calmly took a bundle of notes from his pocket and handed over ten fivers. (See Chapter 12.)



"Bai Jove! I suppose that feahful wottah Twimble has told you fellows," said Arthur Augustus, blushing crimson.

"It's come from him, I believe," grinned Levison. "But what's the idea, Gussy? D'you want us to sell our bikes, too?"

"Wats! Pway do not wub it in, Levison! Twimble is an eaves'woppin' little wottah!"

"Then it's true, then?" gasped Levison. "Are you seriously wanting fifty quid, Gussy?"

"Yaas—that is to say, I would pwefer net to answer that question, Levison," said Gussy, blushing again. "I—I wondah if you would oblige me with a few moments pwivate conversation, Cardew, deah boy?"

"Certainly, dear man!" said Cardew easily. "Levison and Clive, old beans, would you mind makin' your presence scarce? You can see from Gussy's noble eye that it is a matter of grave importance and privacy is essential."

"Look here—" Clive was beginning warmly; but Levison interrupted. He had seen the worry in D'Arcy's face, and he was too good-natured to object.

"Come along, old chap," he said quickly. "We can clear out for a few minutes, anyway. No harm in that! Go ahead, Gussy!"

He gave Clive a meaning look, and Clive nodded and followed him out, closing the door as he went.

"Dear old Gussy!" said Cardew affectionately. "I feel highly honoured to be chosen for your confidences, my dear man! You want fifty quid, don't you?"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Cardew, that is what I have come for, to be frank!" stammered Gussy. "I suppose you have guessed it afth what that wottah Twimble has been settin' about. It is quite twue, deah boy; I am in vevy urgent need of fifty pounds to wepay a debt of honour. As my cousin, I feel that I am not ovahsteppin' the bounds of fwiefndship by askin' you to lend me the money."

"You want me to lend you fifty quid, Gussy?"

"Yaas—at least, I have evvey hope that you will do me the vevy gweat service of twyin' to obtain that sum fwom Lord Weckness for me. I will return the sum when my patah weturns fwom abwoad. At present he is on the Continent, and I am quite unable to get into touch with him. If you will do me this gweat favah, I should be vevy gwateful indeed, Cardew!"

"Dear man!" said Cardew blandly. "You shall have the money!"

"Bai Jove! Weally—"

"This very moment!" said Cardew, a curious smile on his rather cynical face. "I will not ask you why you require such a sum, Gussy, because I know Mr. Rigg would not like it to get about."

"Oh, bai Jove; Then you know—"

"Dear man! I've heard Trimble gassing, and I've put two and two together. You were an ass to swallow that swindling merchant's yarns, Gussy; but you were a good ass to stick to your promises to be responsible for the sweep! It does you great credit, old top! I admire a chap who sticks to his guns, and that's why I'm going to lend you fifty quid, Gussy."

"Bai Jove! I twust you are not pullin' my leg, Cardew—"

"Not at all! Here's the money! Fifty pounds, I think you want? Here you are—in fivers! Count them to make sure, old chap!"

"Oh, bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy nearly collapsed in astonishment as Cardew calmly took out a bundle of notes from his pocket and as calmly counted out ten and handed them over. He replaced the remaining two in his wallet.

Arthur Augustus took the ten five-pound notes dazedly. He felt he was dreaming. Cardew smiled up at him.

"There you are, old nut!" he remarked. "Yes, they're good ones, Gussy! I'm loanin' them you on one condition, though!"

"Bai Jove! I am vevy surprised indeed, Cardew. What is it—the condition, deah boy?"

"That you don't ask where they came from, and that you don't breathe a word to a soul that I've lent you the money," said Cardew coolly. "I won't explain my reasons—Oh, no! I came by them honestly enough, old chap!"

"Bai Jove! I would nevah dweam of suggestin' otherwise!" gasped Gussy, horrified at the bare thought. "Only—I was vevy, vevy surprised indeed to find such a sum in your possession. I know your gwandfather is watah genewous at times—"

"Well, you can suppose that this is one of the times, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,042.

old bean!" smiled Cardew. "Now, run away—there's a good chap. Very glad to have been of service an' all that! Relations must rally round each other, y'know! You will keep my conditions, of course?"

"Oh, bai Jove! Yaas, wathah! You are a vewy cuwious fellow, Cardew. But I am quite weady to accept your conditions without question, deah boy. I know that you dislike bein' thought geneuous—"

"That's one reason, certainly," said Cardew gravely. "Another reason might be that Trimble may get to know, and come botherin' me, y'know! Now, if he knew I had these two fivers left—why, he would haunt me like a ghost, wouldn't he?"

"Yaas, wathah! Weally, Cardew, I am vewy, vewy—"

"Consider it said," said Cardew, waving his hand.

"Good-bye, old bean! If you want more you know where to find me. I think I can hear Clive and Levison sharpenin' their teeth in readiness for tea. I suppose you wouldn't care to join us, by the way?"

"Bai Jove, no! I have to wash off at once, deah boy! Thank you vewy much, Cardew!"

"Don't mench! Bye-bye!"

Very politely Cardew waved his visitor out, the peculiar smile still hovering round his mouth. Cardew was a fellow from whom only the unexpected could be expected, and he had certainly lived up to his reputation now.

Arthur Augustus walked away as if he was walking on air. He did not trouble to wonder how Cardew, a school-boy, had come into possession of such a sum of money. Cardew was a very curious fellow indeed, but his grandfather was just as curious. Lord Reckness was as likely to keep his hopeful grandson short of money for a month as he was likely to suddenly send him an amazingly big remittance.

Certainly fifty pounds was a big sum indeed. But Arthur Augustus, knowing his relations as he did, was not as astounded as he might otherwise have been. He did not see any reason for insisting upon knowing where the money had come from, at all events.

Feeling as if a tremendous load had been lifted from his mind, Arthur Augustus hurried back to Study No. 6. Blake, Herries, and Digby were still there, just beginning to get tea ready. They stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's flushed and happy face, and they stared still more as he reached for his hat and coat.

"Here—Hallo! Where the dickens are you off to, Gussy?"

"I wegwet that I am unable to inform you, Blake!" said Gussy quite amicably. "At least, I can only tell you this: that I have managed to waise the money, aftah all, and that I am now goin' to visit Mr. Wigg and hand ovah to him the fifty pounds!"

"What? Who—"

"Pway do not ask any questions, deah boys. The mattah is now as good as ended, thank goodness. You will be vewy welieved, I know, to heah that it is now all wight. There will be no weason to hold a concert or anythin' else. I am now goin' to pay Mr. Wigg the money."

"But—Here, hold on!" shrieked Blake. "You—you mean to say you've actually got fifty quid?"

"Yaas."

"But where in thunder have you got it from—robbed the Head's safe?"

"Pway do not be wedic. I wegwet I cannot tell you where I obtained the money, and I shall be obliged if you will kindly wefwain ffrom askin' me. Good-bye, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus hurried out. Blake, Herries, and Digby gazed at the closed door like three stranded fishes. They were thunderstruck.

"He must have borrowed it from Railton, after all," said Blake at last. "I know the giddy beaks have just had their salaries. Well, thank goodness he has managed it, anyway. Let's hope the whole giddy affair is done with at last."

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors were soon to discover, however, that their fervent hope was a forlorn one

CHAPTER 13.

Staggering!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Get out!"

"But do listen to a fellow!" panted Baggy

Trimble in great excitement. "There's—"

"Get out!" roared Tom Merry. "We know what you're after, you fat cadger! Blessed if anybody can sit down to tea without you butting in!"

"But, listen—"

"Get out!" bellowed Tom Merry. "I'm fed-up with you,

Trimble. What with your rotten eavesdropping and grub-raiding—"

"Oh, really, Merry—"

"I'm going to put a stop to it, though," snapped Tom Merry, calming himself with an effort. "I give you fair warning, Trimble. There was a cake, some sardines, and even some bread and cheese pinched from our study cupboard on Saturday night."

"I tell you I didn't—"

"You never do, you fat rotter!" snapped Monty Lowther wrathfully. "Who did, if you didn't? Though I'm blessed if I thought you'd get to pinching bread, you fat robber!"

"I tell you—"

"You can tell until you're black in the face, Trimble," said Tom Merry, taking up the attack again. "And we aren't the only ones, either. You've been raiding study-cupboards wholesale lately, and it's going to stop!"

"But I tell you—"

"We've had enough—too jolly much. You're getting a lot too thick. And it's going to stop. We've had a meeting about it, and if you're caught at your games again you're going through the mill in real earnest. Understand?"

"I tell you I know nothing about it!" shrieked Trimble, almost tearfully. "Glyn and Dane, and a lot of other rotters have been on to me already—kicked me, the awful beasts! It's somebody else this time—I mean it's somebody else all the time!"

"Oh, yes. Innocent little angel, aren't you?" sniffed Manners. "Though I'm blessed if I know how you managed to raid us Saturday night. The stuff was there when we went to bed, but had gone early the next morning."

"Can't you see?" snorted Lowther. "The fat cad must get up in the night or in the early morning to do it. He's done that before, more than once."

"But—Oh, you rotters!" choked Trimble, his face red with wrath and indignation. "Oh, you—you suspicious beasts!"

"Oh, get out!"

"Yah! I won't jolly well tell you the news, now, you rotters!"

And Trimble departed, just escaping a cushion as he went.

The Terrible Three went on with their tea. Two minutes later there was another interruption; this time, however, it proved to be Blake, Herries, and Digby.

Tom Merry & Co. stared in astonishment at their excited, excited faces. Blake's face, indeed, was white.

"Hallo! What the merry dickens—" began Lowther.

"Is it true?" gasped Blake, closing the door swiftly behind him. "Trimble's just been along with a yarn—"

"If it was Trimble's yarn, then it wasn't true," said Tom Merry calmly. "You ought to know that by this time, Blake. He came here with it, and we cleared him out quickly enough."

"You don't believe it, then?" panted Blake anxiously.

"Believe what? We didn't give the fat cad the chance to tell us."

"Oh! I—I say, you fellows," said Blake, lowering his voice. "It's jolly startling, I can tell you; you'll think so when I tell you, anyway. Trimble says old Linton's been robbed—robbed of about sixty quid!"

"Tell Trimble to trot out one more original," said Tom Merry carelessly. "He's always getting hold of some—"

"But there's something in it, I'm afraid," said Blake.

"We just met Railton hurrying to Linton's study. He looked very upset, anyway. And—and—"

Blake halted and exchanged glances with his chums from Study No. 6.

Blake, Herries and Digby had just received a great shock, and they had by no means recovered from it yet. Only a few minutes ago Arthur Augustus had told them that his trouble was ended—that he had managed to obtain the fifty pounds he had needed; had obtained it in what seemed to them a miraculous manner.

Moreover, he had refused to tell them from where he had got the money. And, now they came to think of it, it seemed quite impossible to believe he had borrowed it from Mr. Railton or any other master. Mr. Railton would most certainly not be likely to lend a junior such a sum without the very strictest inquiries, if he would ever lend the money at all, which was very doubtful indeed. Then where had Gussy got it?

Blake, Herries, and Digby were asking themselves that question when Baggy Trimble appeared with his exciting "news." And Trimble had managed to get his news out in that study; he had also managed, for once, to give Blake, Herries, and Digby the shock of their lives.

They simply could not help noting the amazing significance of the news. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, almost at his wits' end to get hold of fifty pounds, had succeeded at last in a most mysterious manner. And, some moments afterwards, they hear that Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, has been robbed of more than that sum!

It was certainly startling, indeed staggering, news.

They had immediately rushed along to Tom Merry to hear if there was any truth in the yarn, though they felt instinctively that there was.

Only for a moment did Blake hesitate, and then he decided to tell Tom Merry and his study-mates. He knew he could rely on them, and he wanted Tom's steady common-sense at that moment.

He swiftly told him how Arthur Augustus had rushed off to pay Mr. Rigg, and Tom Merry stared at the chums of Study No. 6 aghast.

"What's to be done?" groaned Blake. "If it gets out—"

"We'd better make sure there's truth in Trimble's yarn first," said Tom grimly. "Come along!"

It did not take the juniors long to discover that there was truth in it; it was only too true.

There was a scared group round the closed door of Mr. Linton's study. From inside came a low murmur of voices—several voices. Undoubtedly something serious was amiss.

"What's the matter, Gore?" demanded Tom Merry almost under his breath. "Is it true that Linton's been robbed?"

"I believe so!" Gore eyed Blake, Herries, and Digby very queerly. Indeed, Gussy's chums were all conscious of meaning glances from the crowd of juniors. "Railton's in there with him now—so are Lathom and Kildare! Sixty quid in banknotes have been pinched, so Trimble says."

"He, he, he!" giggled Trimble, trembling with excitement. "It's quite true—I heard Railton talking about it. What do you think about it, Blake?"

"You fat rotter—"

"He, he, he! I say, it's rather queer, isn't it? Old Gussy won't want you to sell your giddy bikes now, will he?"

"You—you fat cad!" hissed Blake, going white. "Why, I'll—I'll—"

He made a swift stride towards the fat junior, but Tom Merry swiftly dragged him back.

"Chuck it, Blake!" he breathed. "For goodness' sake sit tight! Don't let that fat rotter draw you into a row! There'll be one quickly enough. Pshaw! This is frightful!"

Blake breathed hard, his eyes glittering as they rested on Trimble's fat, smirking face. But he held himself in, realising that a row would only bring Mr. Railton out—with possibly disastrous consequences to Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, you leave Trimble alone, Blake," said Gore grimly. "Trimble wants kicking for gloating over the affair like this; but—but—well, everyone knows D'Arcy was wanting fifty quid—goodness knows what for! He asked Lathom to lend him the money, and Lathom licked him for it!"

"You—you rotter!" gritted Blake. "If you dare to insinuate—"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry quietly. "Blake, keep your head, old chap! I think that the less said about this the better, you fellows. It's utter rubbish to make suggestions like you're making, Gore! Chuck it, for goodness' sake! It's just a coincidence that—"

Tom broke off as the door of Mr. Linton's room opened wide. Kildare came out, and a glimpse could be seen of the room. Mr. Railton was there, and with him were Mr. Linton and Mr. Lathom. The faces of all three masters were grave.

Kildare frowned as he noted the little crowd.

"Here, clear away from here!" he snapped. "You kids— Ah, Blake, do you know where D'Arcy is?"

Blake hesitated, his brow grim and troubled.

"I—I believe he's out of gates!" he stammered.

"Oh!" Kildare started. "Out of gates, is he? Right!"

He vanished into the room again. There was a murmur of deep voices within, and then the door opened again, this time revealing Mr. Railton. The Housemaster frowned angrily as he sighted the staring crowd. Then he motioned to Blake.

"Do you know where D'Arcy is, Blake?" he asked curtly.

"I—I think he—he—"

Trimble suddenly interrupted Blake, saving him from replying.

"I say, sir, here he is!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Here's Gussy—I mean, D'Arcy, now!"

It was D'Arcy. The swell of the Fourth came along the passage, his features red and heated. He had evidently been hurrying on his bicycle, for he was wearing trousers-clips.

He stared at the crowd, who eyed him very curiously.

"Bai Jove! Pway what is the mattah, deah—"

Arthur Augustus sighted Mr. Railton just then, and the look on the Housemaster's face sent the satisfied smile from the face of the surprised Gussy very swiftly.

"Ah! You have returned, D'Arcy," said the master in

a strangely curt tone. "I wish to speak to you at once. Come in."

He held the door wide, and the surprised and startled junior passed inside, and the door closed upon them.

"My hat! Gussy's done for now!" grinned Trimble, his little round eyes gleaming with excitement. "Isn't it the limit, you fellows? Fancy old Gussy—a giddy son of a lord—pinching Linton's fifty quid!"

"Shut up, you fat worm!"

"You shut up yourself, Tom Merry! Gussy's swank won't help him now, will it? Wonder what he wanted the fifty quid for? I say, I'll just squint through the keyhole and see what— Here, leggo, you— Yoooop! Oh, my hat! Blake, you— Yarrooooo! Oh crumbs! Help!"

Trimble departed from the scene, roaring. Blake, with one hand on his collar, and with one boot lunging behind his fat person, helped him to depart in a series of convulsive leaps. For the moment Jack Blake had forgotten that Gussy had been to Mr. Lathom and thus made himself conspicuous in the matter; he only knew that it was Trimble's tattling that had spread the yarn round, and he could stand Trimble no longer.

The fat junior vanished, howling still, and Blake came back to wait with anxious face and vague fears for the result of Gussy's interview.

CHAPTER 14.

Another Shock for Gussy!

"NOW, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton, very grimly, "I wish to ask you one or two questions."

"Vewy good, sir!"

Arthur Augustus was quite calm and collected. He had no reason to be anything else—at least, he believed not. He was mildly surprised to have been "collared" by the Housemaster like this, and he was certainly surprised and rather startled at the grave looks of the three masters.

It suddenly came to him, however, that something was wrong, and his noble brow clouded at the thought that he was wanted in connection with the missing Mr. Alf Stiggins.

Only a few minutes before he had been feeling very relieved and happy. He had raced over to Rylcombe, and he had handed over the fifty pounds in banknotes to Mr. Rigg—to the overwhelming joy of that old gentleman. He had hoped—fondly hoped—that the handing over of the fifty pounds would end the whole wretched matter. He was not anxious to see Mr. Stiggins again, and he hoped he would not hear of him again, either.

That hope was not to be realised yet, apparently. He groaned and waited for the Housemaster to begin his questions. The police had quite possibly reported to the school authorities Slippery Alf's treatment of Mr. Rigg—and it had come out about his share in the affair.

That was what Arthur Augustus was expecting to be questioned about. And so he got quite a shock when the Housemaster began to speak again.

"D'Arcy, I wish to question you in regard to a visit you paid, I understand, to Mr. Lathom this afternoon. Mr. Lathom informs me that you—you had the audacity to request him for a loan—a loan of fifty pounds!"

Arthur Augustus frowned. He had already been licked for his "audacity." Was he to be punished again?

"Ahem! Y-yaas, sir!" he stammered. "I did call upon Mr. Lathom for that purpose. I twust, howevah, that Mr. Lathom will take my word that I was not pullin' his leg in the mattah."

Mr. Railton coughed.

"You admit having needed such a sum, and, having made the request to Mr. Lathom, D'Arcy?"

"Oh, yaas, sir! There is now no difficulty in the mattah, howevah. I have managed to waise the money, all sewee—I do not need it now. If Mr. Lathom wishes me to apologise to him—"

"One moment, D'Arcy!"

The Housemaster was eyeing Arthur Augustus very queerly now. That junior began to feel a trifle scared as he looked round him.

"You say you have actually managed to get the fifty pounds you wanted, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir."

"May I ask where you obtained such a large sum from, boy?"

"Bai Jove! I weally cannot tell you that, sir!" stammered Gussy, after a pause.

"You refuse to say where you obtained it?" Mr. Railton's voice was hard now.

"Yaas, sir. I wegwet that I am not in a position to explain that, though, weally, sir, I see no weason—"

"Why did you need such a sum, D'Arcy?"

"I—I feah I cannot explain that, eithah, sir—not without the permission of a certain gentleman."

"Who is that—that person, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus hesitated. There was really no reason why he should not tell the story, and yet— He had promised Mr. Rigg not to gossip over the matter, and Gussy's word was his bond!

"I weally cannot tell you, sir," he said. "But surely it does not mattah much, sir?"

"It matters very much indeed, D'Arcy!" exclaimed the Housemaster sternly. "Are you aware that the sum of sixty pounds has been extracted from Mr. Linton's desk during the week-end?"

"Oh—oh, gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy started back when he heard that bit of news, his features crimson with dismay.

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott! I weally twust, sir," he panted, "that you do not suspect for one moment that I can be concerned in the matter? Weally, Mr. Waitton—"

"I am merely questioning you at the moment, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton, exchanging rather a puzzled look with his fellow masters. "You are known to have been in need, for some reason unknown to me, of the sum of fifty pounds. I understand it has been a matter of some comment in the Lower School, in fact. Now you tell me that that need no longer exists—that you have succeeded in raising the sum of fifty pounds. Cannot you see, boy, that it will be very necessary for you to explain how you came into possession of such a sum of money in the circumstances? It will also be very necessary for me to know why you required it."

"I wegwet that I cannot supply you with the answahs to those questions, Mr. Waitton," said Arthur Augustus.

The Housemaster's face grew dark.

"You refuse to tell me why you needed the money, and from whom, or where, you obtained it, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir."

Gussy's voice was steady, and his words clear.

"Very well."

The Housemaster eyed the junior very grimly indeed now. He could not forget that only a day or so ago the junior had been punished for associating with bad characters. Certainly, his excuse had seemed genuine enough—that he had been helping the rascal in the belief that he was deserving of help. But was his story true? Mr. Railton had accepted the story, but he had been inwardly more than a little disturbed. Now the recollection came to him in a new light. Was it possible that Arthur Augustus was in the hands of bad associates? He could scarcely believe such a thing possible. And yet—

"Very well!" repeated Mr. Railton. "This has come as a great shock to me, D'Arcy. Even now I can scarcely

believe it possible that you, apparently, have no answer to make—or dare not make it. That, unfortunately, seems the only explanation of your refusal to speak. For the last time, will you tell me why you wanted that fifty pounds, and from whom you eventually obtained it?"

"I wegwet that I cannot," said Gussy, his voice trembling with indignant anger. "I will, however, give my word that I know absolutely nothin' of Mr. Linton's sixty pounds. I twust that you will accept that, Mr. Waitton."

"That is impossible, you foolish boy! I insist upon the truth from you here and now, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Railton angrily. "Otherwise, I shall be obliged to take you before Dr. Holmes."

"I am quite weady, sir, to go before the Head," said Gussy. "And I twust, Mr. Waitton, that he will respect my word in the mattah!"

"I am afraid Dr. Holmes will do nothing of the kind, D'Arcy!" snapped the Housemaster. "Kildare, will you kindly escort this boy to the headmaster's study. Mr. Linton, and you, Mr. Lathom, will perhaps accompany me there—I think this matter must be dealt with without delay."

"Very well, Mr. Railton."

Outside in the passage the crowd had waited with scared faces. Now and again words reached them from the room, and almost every word that the dignified Arthur Augustus had said was audible to the juniors. And they had listened almost stupefied at the "cheek" of the swell of St. Jim's.

But that junior had not looked upon it as cheek. He had looked upon Mr. Railton's questions as a deadly insult. For him to be suspected of theft seemed incredible.

Yet he had been. Amazing as it seemed, unheard of as it was, Arthur Augustus was under the shadow of suspicion. Certainly it was his own fault. He could easily have told why he wanted the money, and he could easily have told how he had obtained it. But that would have meant breaking his word—the last thing Arthur Augustus was likely to do. Moreover, that noble youth was fairly on his "high horse," and the chances of Mr. Railton getting the truth from him were extremely remote now—as the dismayed Blake and his friends knew only too well.

With Kildare's hand on his arm, Arthur Augustus vanished in the direction of the Head's study, his noble head held high, his eyes gleaming.

Arthur Augustus—the good-hearted and generous "Gussy"—had certainly got himself into serious trouble through standing by Mr. Alf Stiggins. And the only fellow in the School House who appeared to be unconcerned regarding Gussy's fate was, curiously enough, Ralph Reckness Cardew. He watched Gussy vanish into the Head's study, with a curious smile on his face. A careful observer, however, would have noted that behind Cardew's mask of nonchalance there were traces of uneasiness that even the cool dandy of the Fourth could not altogether hide. In the privacy of his study Cardew paced up and down restlessly, telling himself that he had been a fool, that Arthur Augustus was a bigger fool, and that troublous waters lay ahead. And in that he was right, as events in the near future were destined to prove.

THE END.

POOR OLD GUSSY!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy has cause to rue the day he made the acquaintance of Slippery Alf, but it takes a long time for some things to sink into Gussy's noble napper.

Yet Arthur Augustus does have a brain-wave now and again, and his latest thoroughly puts the kybosh on the rascal who has deceived him all along the line.

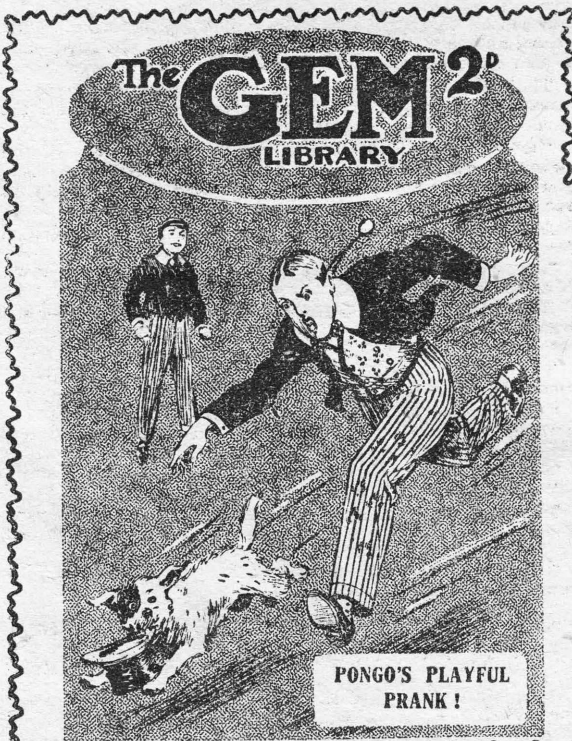
Still, there are heaps of adventures through which poor old Gussy has to pass before this happy conclusion is brought about. You'll enjoy, no end,

"UNDER A CLOUD!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD,

Next week's amazing extra-long and extra-good story of the Chums of St. Jim's.

ORDER YOUR GEM EARLY!



A SURPRISE IN STORE FOR VALENTINE MORNINGTON! The dandy of the Fourth reckons he's got an easy job on hand when he challenges Biggs, the gardener's boy, to a fight. But then Morny doesn't know just how useful Biggs is with the mittens!



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

KIT ERROLL befriends an old acquaintance in **Albert Biggs**, a one-time waif of the slums, who comes to Rookwood and takes up a post as gardener's boy. **Valentine Mornington**, the dandy of the Fourth, appeals to Erroll to "drop" his ragged friend, but Kit refuses. In consequence of this Mornington plots with **Peele & Co.**, three shady rotters, to get Biggs sacked from the school. Their efforts prove of little avail, however, for **Jimmy Silver & Co.** chip in, and bring their rascally scheming to naught. Not to be beaten, Mornington dresses up as the Head, with the intention of ordering Biggs to cut down all the laurels in **Lr. Chisholm's** garden, an order which, if carried out, would certainly merit the sack for the gardener's boy. **Lubby Muffin**, however, gets wise to the ruse and warns **Jimmy Silver & Co.**, with the result that when the impostor is about to carry out his rascally project he is met with a solid stream of water from the garden hose!

(Now read on.)

Challenged to Fight!

BIGGS drew a deep breath. He understood now, and his honest, open face went red with indignation. He looked at Mornington with a look that almost shrivelled that youth, cynical and hard as Morny was.

"Well, what a rotten, dirty trick, Master Silver!" he stammered. "I thank you gents more'n I can say for savin' me! It isn't the first time, neither, that you've done me a good turn! As for this young gent—he ain't a gent at all, the rotter!" he added, with a glance of scorn at Mornington.

"You—you insolent hound!" hissed Mornington.

He would have leaped at the gardener's boy, but **Jimmy Silver**, **Putty Grace**, and **Raby** dragged him back, struggling.

"You said you wouldn't try any games, Morny!" snapped Jimmy. "Chuck it! If you don't—"

"Let 'im come on, Master Silver!" snapped **Albert Biggs**, his face red with anger. "It's time me and 'im 'ad a settlement, I can see that! I don't want to lose my job, goodness knows, but I ain't standin' no more of this from that fellow! I ain't never done 'im no 'arm—he knows that well enough!"

"You hear that, Silver?" gritted Mornington eagerly, a glint appearing in his savage eyes. "Biggs wants a settlement with me. I'm ready to fight the dashed guttersnipe any time he likes, with gloves or without. It's beneath a chap to fight with a servant cad, I know! But I'm ready. Nothin' would give more satisfaction than to lick the hide off the crawlin', spongin' sweep!"

"You—you rotten cad!" snapped **Lovell**. "For two pins I'd thrash you here and now—or try to, anyway! You'll leave this kid alone—you've done enough already against him, you rotter!"

His Own Enemy!

A GRAND NEW SCHOOL SERIAL
DEALING WITH THE ADVENTURES OF
JIMMY SILVER & CO., OF ROOKWOOD.

By **OWEN CONQUEST.**

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold on!" said **Jimmy Silver**.

The junior skipper of Rookwood was frowning thoughtfully. On the face of it it seemed madness for a fight between a scholar and a servant in the school. If the authorities got to know such a thing was going on there would undoubtedly be a "row" about it. And yet—

Jimmy Silver wondered if it would not be for the best. For **Biggs's** own person **Jimmy** did not trouble. Mornington was one of the best boxers in the Lower School. But only that morning **Jimmy** had heard from **Erroll** an interesting piece of news concerning **Biggs**.

He had already had witness that the waif was full of grit and fight. But **Erroll** had also told him that he could box—that his father—killed early in the War—had been a professional "bruiser," and that he had taught **Albert Biggs** to box at a very early age, intending to make a "pug" of his son.

The remembrance of this came to **Jimmy** in a flash, and he could not suppress a grin at the thought. **Morny** was clearly thinking that a thrashing would be the inevitable result for **Biggs**.

Jimmy knew that this would be far from certain, and he wondered if it would not be for the best to allow the two to fight it out. It was quite possible a scrap would clear the air—would put an end to Mornington's bitter animosity towards **Biggs**.

"You really mean it, **Biggs**?" asked **Jimmy**, making up his mind suddenly. "You're willing to fight Mornington?"

"Yes, that I am!" said **Biggs** fiercely. "I'm fed-up with 'is rotten tricks. If I gets the sack for it—well, it can't be 'elped, I s'pose."

"I'll see you don't get sacked for it," said **Jimmy** quietly. "And I'm quite certain Mornington won't report you, whether he's licked or not."

Mornington's face was dark, but his eyes gleamed at that.

"I'm a rank outsider, according to general opinion!" he said, with a bitter sneer. "But you have my word that I won't do anything like that. But I'm goin' to give the cad the hammerin' of his life!"

"We'll see," said **Jimmy**. "Better not make too certain of that, Morny. Personally, I hope he gives you a thrashing; for if anyone ever deserved one, you do, Morny!"

"You—you really mean that you approve of them fighting?" gasped **Lovell**. "Why, you idiot, Morny will smash him to bits! It's getting the poor kid slaughtered, **Jimmy**, you born idiot!"

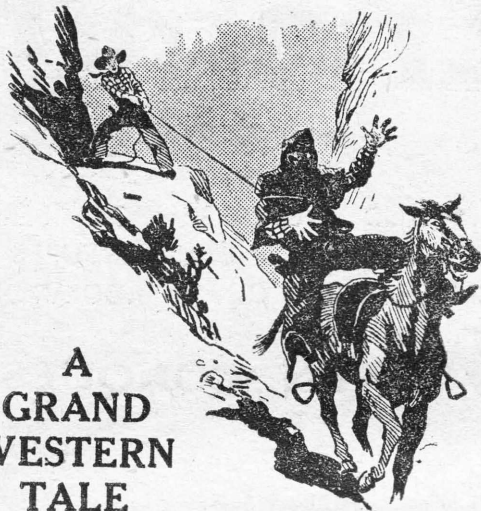
"Yes, rather!" said **Raby**, staring at **Jimmy Silver** in amazement.

"We'll see," said **Uncle James**. "Now, let's get out of this. **Biggs**, shall we say in the woods at two-thirty to-morrow, or would you rather wait until later?"

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"THE BLACK SACK GANG!"



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"To-morrow!" snapped Biggs. "I'd rather not wait longer."

"I won't wait, either!" said Mornington.

"Right! That's settled, then!" said Jimmy Silver coolly, disregarding the astonished glares of his chums. "You'll be by the stile in the lane—it's half-way to Coombe, and I expect you know it, Biggs. Be there at about two-fifteen."

"That I will, Master Silver."

And so it was settled. The juniors hurriedly took back the garden-engine, while Biggs resumed his work. Mornington, without another glance at the juniors, squelched away, dragging off his trampled gown viciously as he went. His brow was black as thunder; yet in his heart was a savage exaltation. At last his chance had come—not perhaps the chance he longed for, to get Biggs "booted" from Rookwood, but to give him the licking of his life.

Jimmy Silver, however, was not so sure that that would happen—nor were the chums when he told them what Erroll had told him. It was more than possible there was a nasty disappointment in store for Valentine Mornington!

Spreading the News!

"**H**E, he, he! What a scream!"
Once again Tubby Muffin, the Falstaff of the Fourth at Rookwood, gave vent to his gleeful cackling—the noise which Putty Grace had humorously likened to a cheap alarm-clock.
He grinned and gurgled, as he raised himself cautiously

from his hiding-place in the shrubbery in the Head's front garden.

Tubby Muffin, the biggest gossip in all Rookwood, had seen and heard all that had taken place in the garden.

Anxious as he had been to spend Jimmy Silver's shilling at the tuckshop, Tubby had been still more anxious to know just what Jimmy Silver & Co. would do in the matter of Mornington's "wheeze."

His eagerness and curiosity quite overcame his hunger for once.

The moment he had seen the Fistical Four and Putty Grace vanish into the Head's garden, Tubby had followed with great caution, his heart thumping against his fat ribs. Tubby knew the terrific risk he was running in trespassing in the sacred garden only too well.

But his eagerness and curiosity overcame even his fear. He trod softly after the juniors, and he had been hidden scarcely half a dozen yards from them all the time. He had heard all and seen all.

Jimmy Silver had intended that no word of the forthcoming fight should leak out, and he had warned his chums to keep silent in the matter. The risk of such an affair coming to the ears of the authorities was great, and he meant to take no risks. He even decided it unwise to tell Erroll—and certainly not kind to do so. Erroll would take no pleasure in seeing either of the principals beaten. Quite the reverse, in fact. Jimmy decided it was better for him not to know.

Jimmy Silver, however, had not counted upon Tubby Muffin.

Bursting with excitement and glee, Tubby watched the juniors out of sight, and then he cautiously made his way back into the quadrangle and rushed indoors.

Jimmy Silver and his chums had gone into the School House, but several fellows were standing chatting just inside the hallway.

They stared at Muffin's face, blazing with excitement. "Hallo! What's up, Tubby?" inquired Conroy. "Don't say that cheque's come—the one I cashed for you on my first day here terms ago?"

There was a chuckle, but it had little effect upon Muffin. "He, he, he! I say, you fellows, I've got some news if you like! You've missed it—missed a scream!" he chuckled almost hysterically. "Morny— He, he, he! Did you see him come in just now?"

"We saw him come in—yes," said Dickenson, with sudden interest. "What happened to him, Tubby—do you know? He was drenched through, but he only bit our giddy heads off when we asked him what had happened."

"He would!" grinned Tubby. "It's a wonder he didn't liff you one on the nose. He's fairly raging. He, he, he! You should have seen it!"

"Seen what, you fat ass?"
"Silver and his lot!" grinned Tubby. "They fairly swamped him—and serve the rotter right. Mind you, I don't hold with backin' up a low servant—especially a chap who was a dashed tramp. But— Leggo, you ass!"

"What's happened?" snapped Conroy impatiently, shaking the fat youth. "Out with it, or I'll bust you, Tubby!"

"Yow! Oh, you rough beast! All right, I'll tell you quickly enough!"

And as Tubby told the story the faces of his hearers grew grim.

"Well, what a caddish trick!" said Gunner, almost bursting with indignation. "Don't I just wish I'd been there! Good for you, Jimmy Silver!"

"And is that a fact, Tubby—about him going to fight that rotter Mornington?" exclaimed Dick Oswald in astonishment.

"Yes! He, he, he!"
"And Jimmy Silver's encouraging it?"
"Yes, old chap! I say, won't that dashed tramp get a licking, you fellows?"

"He will, for a pension!" said Dick Oswald, frowning. "I'm surprised at Jimmy Silver. I know nothing about this chap Biggs and care less; but it's not playing the game to let Mornington get his own back by hammering the kid!"

"Rather not! Rotten!"
Cuthbert Gunner spluttered.

He was a fellow who never could mind his own business—though he was good-hearted, and his interference in what didn't concern him was always well intentioned.

"I'm not standing this, you fellows!" he snapped. "Jimmy Silver ought to be jolly well ashamed of himself letting that poor kid in for a thrashing like this. We all know what that rotter Morny's after—to get his own back. It just suits his book to hammer the kid to a jelly. I'm going to stop it!"

"You keep out of it, you silly chump!" said Dickenson, Gunner's chum. "Jimmy Silver knows what he's doing, I suppose!"

"Rot! Nice skipper he is, I must say! I'm jolly well going to tell him what I think of him! Come on!"

"Hold on—"

"Rats!"

Cuthbert Gunner marched away, his rugged face determined. Dickenson winked at the others, and they followed Gunner. There was always something interesting happening when Gunner was on the warpath.

They found the Fistical Four in the end study chatting. Gunner marched in without troubling to knock.

The rest of the juniors congregated round the doorway.

"He, he, he! Tell him off, Gunner!" grinned Tubby Muffin encouragingly.

"I'm going to!" snapped Gunner. "Now, Silver, what's this about Mornington going to scrap with Biggs?"

"Eh?" Jimmy Silver started. "Who told you about that, Gunner?"

"This fat ass, Muffin!" snapped Gunner. "Is it true, then?"

"Muffin told you—" Jimmy Silver set his lips and glared at the grinning Tubby. "Muffin, you fat eaves-dropper—"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Tubby Muffin. "I saw it all, you fellows. I was hidden in the shrubbery, and I saw you down that cad Morny. I heard all— Yooop! Keep him off, you fellows! Yarroooogh!"

Tubby roared as Jimmy Silver took one angry stride and grasped him by a fat ear.

"You—you prying fat worm!" he gasped. "And we wanted to keep it a secret! Now it will be all over the school, and the beaks will hear of it as likely as not. Oh, you fat rotter!"

"Yow! Leggo!" roared Muffin. "Rescue, Gunner, old chap—rescue!"

Jimmy Silver, angry and dismayed now, sent the fat youth spinning. Gunner then grasped him, and lifted his boot—not in an effort to rescue Tubby, however—quite the reverse!

The crowd scattered round the doorway, and Tubby Muffin flew through, with Gunner's heavy boot behind him.

"Yarroooogh!"

"That's settled that sneaking fat ass!" said Gunner, turning to Jimmy Silver grimly. "Now, Silver, so it's a fact that Morny's going to fight that chap Biggs, is it?"

"Yes, it is!" snapped Jimmy. "I suppose it's no good trying to keep it dark now that fat ass knows about it! But what about it?"

"What about it?" snorted Gunner witheringly. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself, encouraging such bullying!"

"Bullying?" ejaculated Jimmy.

"What else is it?" demanded Gunner indignantly. "That poor kid knows nothing about boxing, and Morny's one of the best chaps with the gloves in the School House! It's nothing short of bullying. It's got to stop!"

"Oh, run away and play!" snorted the exasperated Jimmy.

"I know what I'm doing, and you can leave this to me, Gunner! Now get out!"

"I'm jolly well not—not until I've told you what I think about you!" snorted Gunner. "Are you going to stop this rotten bullying, or not, Silver?"

"Not, old chap! Now clear out—your face worries me!"

"You cheeky owl! Why, for two pins—"

"Outside!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Help me chuck this cheeky idiot out, chaps!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Raby.

"Will you? Why, I'll—"

Gunner got no further. As one man the Fistical Four grasped him, and despite his furious struggles, they rushed him to the door, all arms and kicking legs. They never had much patience with Cuthbert Gunner.

"Look out!"

Crash!

"Yaoooooooop!"

Gunner fell in the passage with a crash and a howl, and Jimmy Silver & Co. returned to their study and slammed and locked the door.

Gunner scrambled up, fuming, but finding the door locked he gave it up, and heedless of the chuckles around him, went to his own study to recuperate. But he wasn't beaten. Gunner felt it his duty to put down bullying, and the present case, he felt convinced, was bullying.

Coaching Albert Biggs!

"I T'S up to me!"

Cuthbert Gunner made the remark emphatically. His study-mate, Dickenson, groaned.

When Gunner talked like that there was always trouble in store—usually for Gunner, and very often for Dickenson. Gunner was undoubtedly one of the best, and

he always meant well. But he was very trying for all that. Gunner had a remarkably good opinion of his own importance, and he was one of those persons who deemed it his duty to put the world to rights.

"It's up to me!" repeated Gunner emphatically. "I can't stand bullying—you know that, Dickenson, old chap!"

"Oh, rather!" yawned Dickenson. "What's the trouble now?"

"About this kid Biggs, of course!" said Gunner, shaking his head. "It's a bit thick, I think, allowing this fight to go on! A kid like that can't have had any chances to use his mitts; that cad Morny is bound to slaughter him—nothing else for it. It isn't good enough! Morny is out to half kill the kid. I'm not going to allow it!"

"That's right!" said Dickenson, nodding. "It is a bit thick, I'll admit. I don't care twopence about the merchant myself. But I think it ought to be stopped, though—"

"Though what?" snorted Gunner.

"Well, Jimmy Silver isn't the chap to allow it to go on if he thinks it will be giving Morny all his own way," said Dickenson sagely. "Jimmy knows what he's about; I expect. Better leave it to him, Gunny."

"Rot!"

"Oh, all right!" yawned Dickenson. "If you can stop it, go ahead, old chap. I shan't mind!"

"I'm not thinking of stopping it," said Gunner, smiling.

"Eh? I thought you were, old chap."

"No. I've got a better wheeze than that!" smiled Gunner. "Now you know how I can handle the gloves, Dickenson?"

"Ahem! Yes, old chap! Like a— an elephant!"

"What? If that's cheek, Dickenson—"

"Not at all," said Dickenson hurriedly. "I mean you're as strong as an elephant, old man! But what's the wheeze? Going to offer to take Morny on yourself instead? That wouldn't suit Morny. He just wants to smash that kid!"

"I know that. Well, I wouldn't mind giving Morny a licking for that matter—he deserves that and more. But my idea is this! There isn't a fellow at Rookwood to touch me with the gloves—you know that."

"Ahem!" Dickenson coughed at that.

"So my idea is," resumed Gunner enthusiastically, "to give this kid a few tips—to get him ready for the scrap. There's good stuff in the kid, I think, and a bit of coaching from me will give him a chance to put up a decent fight!"

"Oh, my hat! But the fight comes off to-morrow!"

(Continued on next page.)

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"Plenty of time for a bit of coaching, though!" said Gunner calmly. "A few tips from me will make all the difference. I shall also second the kid during the fight, so that he can have the benefit of my advice throughout. See?"

"Oh, yes, but—"

"No time like the present," said Gunner, rising and getting his cap. "Come on!"

"But what about tea? I'm hungry!"

"Blow tea! I want to give the kid an hour now, and another hour in the gym after tea. Then another hour before brekker in the morning, and another at noon. That should be enough! Come on! We'll find him knocking about somewhere."

"Oh, my hat!"

Gunner walked out, and Dickenson grinned and followed. As they were passing the end study the Fistical Four emerged. Gunner stopped.

"Hold on!" he said. "I've changed my mind, Silver! I've decided not to stop the fight after all!"

"Oh, have you?" gasped Jimmy.

"Yes, I'm going to coach that kid instead—got him ready for the job, see? You kids can come along and look on, if you like—you could all do with a bit of coaching, in any case."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You're going to coach Biggs?" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, I shall tell him to go all out and see how he shapes against me," smiled Gunner. "I shan't hurt the kid, of course! You can rely on that. Coming?"

Jimmy Silver looked at his chums, and they chuckled.

"Yes, we'll come!" said Jimmy cordially. "That's a good idea, Gunner. I'd like to see Biggs going all out at you, old chap. You may learn something from him, even—you never know! Lead on, Macduff!"

And Gunner grinned and "led on."

Jimmy Silver & Co. followed smilingly. Knowing that Biggs was the son of a "pug," almost brought up with the gloves on, they felt that the kindly Cuthbert Gunner was booked for a surprise and they were booked for an entertainment. So they followed.

Cuthbert Gunner marched along, his face grim and determined. The Fistical Four and Dickenson were smiling.

"Hallo, there he is!"

Albert Biggs, the new garden boy at Rookwood, came round by the chapel, a rake over his shoulder. Gunner called to him:

"Biggs, I want you! Come here!"

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

Biggs came over. He smiled in return at Jimmy Silver & Co. Biggs had his sleeves stripped up, and Gunner rather stared as he noted the brown, firm, muscular arms.

"Finished work, Biggs?" said Gunner, eyeing him over approvingly.

"Jest knockin' off, young gents!" said Biggs.

"Right! Then come along to the gym," said Gunner. "I suppose you don't realise, kid, what you're up against to-morrow in your fight with Mornington?"

"I shall do me best," said Biggs, his blue eyes going steely.

"That's the spirit!" nodded Gunner. "Well, come along, kid! I must say there's good stuff in you. It just wants knocking into shape. I don't suppose you'll be able to hold your own against Morny, but with my help you'll be able to put up a decent show instead of getting simply slaughtered."

"But what—" murmured Biggs, eyeing the juniors.

"I'm going to give you a bit of coaching," said Gunner kindly. "I can't stand bullying. That's why I've chipped in. I'm going to give you a few tips, and when I've done with you you'll be able to make some sort of a show against that cad, Morny! See?"

"Oh! I—I see!" said Albert Biggs, suddenly catching a wink from Jimmy Silver. "Thank you very much, sir! It's kind of you to trouble about a feller like me, Master Gunner!"

"Not at all, kid!" said Gunner loftily. "Come along!"

Biggs went along. Probably Jimmy Silver's wink was enough for him. In any case Biggs was only too glad of the chance to have the gloves on with anybody, just to keep his hand in. The juniors led him into the gymnasium, and at a word from Gunner Biggs took off his jacket and rolled up his sleeves. Gunner disdained to do likewise—in his view it wasn't necessary for him to remove anything. He just turned back his cuffs and started putting on some gloves, aided by Raby.

Jimmy Silver helped Biggs into his.

"Now," said Gunner, when they were ready. "Listen to me, kid! I want you to go for me for all you're worth—all out! Don't be afraid of hurting me—I'll see to that! I want first just to see how you shape with the gloves on. Afterwards, I'll show you where you go wrong, and how to hit! Ready?"

"Yessir!" said Biggs solemnly.

"Then go ahead, kid—and mind you really let yourself go! I shall give you a few taps, but I won't hurt you; you needn't be afraid of that," added Gunner kindly.

"I'm not, sir," said Biggs.

"Then here goes! Look out!"

And Gunner squared up and opened the proceedings with a careless, gentle swing at Biggs' head.

Biggs' head, however, wasn't in the same place the next second, and something hit Gunner's chin with a jolt that sent Gunner's head jerking back.

"Ow!" gasped Gunner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Biggs," said Newcome. "That's Gunner's first tip, and your first tap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope you don't mind, Master Gunner!" said Biggs, smiling. "It didn't hurt you, did it?"

"Ow! Not much!" gasped Gunner. "Jingo, what an awful fluke! You mustn't hit out wildly like that. It just happened that my head was in the way, of course! Go a bit more warily."

"Oh, my hat!"

Biggs grinned. If Gunner chose to regard it as a fluke, he didn't mind.

"And don't be afraid of hitting out!" said Gunner encouragingly. "I shall hit harder than that, I warn you. You must learn how to stand hard knocks, you know. Now again."

It was "again." But this time Albert Biggs took Gunner's advice to heart. He did hit hard. Gunner's glove was flicked aside like a feather, and something that seemed like a battering-ram struck Gunner in exactly the same place again—under the chin.

Gunner's head went back, and his feet went up—off the floor.

Crash!

(Biggs has proved himself to be no novice with the "mitts," and his coming encounter with Mornington will hold you thrilled. Don't miss next week's grand instalment, chums, whatever you do.)

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