

The

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EVERY
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LIBRARY



Love-Lorn Lowther's "Proposal" !

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

A GRAND LONG STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO., FEATURING—

CHAPTER 1.

Where is Gussy?

"Gussy!"

"Where's that fathead, Gussy?"

Two wrathful voices echoed along the Fourth Form passage at St. Jim's in angry unison.

"Gussy!" bellowed Tom Merry.

"Gussy!" roared Blake.

Ralph Reckness Cardew looked out of his study.

"Is this a new game, you men?" he asked languidly.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake snorted.

"Have you seen Gussy?" asked the former.

Ralph Reckness seemed to reflect.

"Let me see," he drawled, "I think I remember seein' the one and only Arthur Augustus, noble seion of a noble house, the glass of fashion and the mould of form—"

"Idiot!" roared Blake in exasperation. Cardew looked up gravely.

"Dear man, do you think so?"

"Think what?" hooted Blake.

"That Gussy's an idiot," said Cardew.

"I'm not surprised, you know, considering the company he keeps."

Blake breathed hard through his nose.

"Don't be a funny ass," he said.

"We've asked you a plain question and we want a plain answer."

Cardew yawned, and lounged up against the door.

"I always felt you were a plain chap, Blake. However, that's not your fault. But to return to the interestin' question of Arthur Augustus. Let me collect my scattered wits. I have seen your illustrious studymate somewhere. I think it was in the Form-room—"

"In the Form-room?" roared Blake.

"What's the silly owl doing there?" exclaimed Tom Merry angrily. "He was in his study ten minutes ago, all ready to start off with us on the cross-country run."

Cardew shivered. The slacker of the Fourth hated exertion in any shape or form, and the mere mention of a cross-country run made him feel tired.

"So that's why you are got up like this?" he drawled, waving a perfectly manicured hand at the two juniors' running shorts and singlets.

Blake snorted.

"Do you think we tackle a ten miles' cross-country run in Etons, you dummy?"

Cardew seemed to collapse.

"Ten miles!" he said faintly. "Ye gods! You men must be sufferin' from an awful attack of excessive energy. Really, I—"

Tom Merry broke in impatiently.

"We can't stand here all day listening to your silly rot," he said. "You say you saw Gussy in the Form-room?"

"I did say so!"

"How long ago?" asked Blake.

Cardew's face wrinkled into a frown.

"I think it must be a couple of hours ago, at least—"

"Eh?" roared Tom Merry.

"Quite two hours," continued Cardew imperturbably. "Now I come to think of it I happened to see Gustavus during Third lesson!"

"You burbling idiot!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You longwinded Jaberwock!" yelled Blake.

Cardew looked surprised.

"But you asked me— Yoooop! Wharrer you doin'?"

Really, the question was superfluous, for it was pretty clear what Blake and the captain of the Shell were doing. Crash!

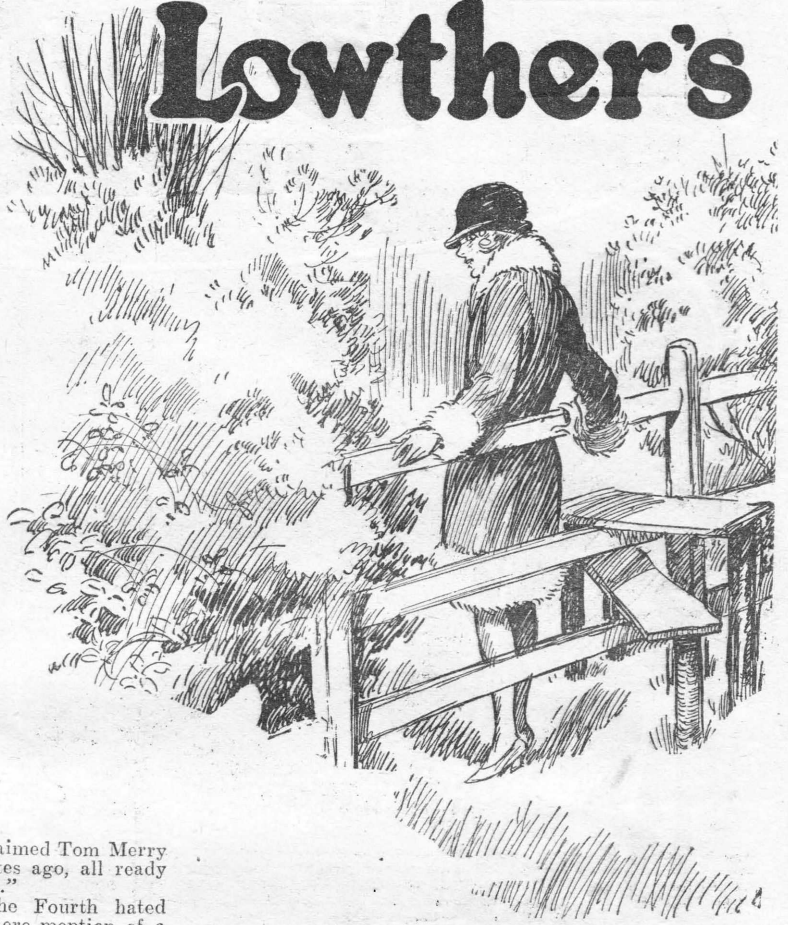
Cardew suddenly found his feet swept from under him and he sat down in the passage with a bump and a roar.

From that recumbent position he saw Tom Merry and Blake rush off along the passage and mount the stairs leading to the Fourth Form dormitory.

The two juniors were annoyed. Herries, Digby, Monty Lowther and Manners were waiting at the School House steps, when Tom and Blake went to fetch Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It was a half-holiday and the juniors had agreed to start their cross-country run at half-past two sharp.

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Lowther's



And here it was a quarter-to-three with no sign of Arthur Augustus. Really, it was too bad of the swell of the Fourth to keep his chums waiting. Valuable time, too, had been wasted while Ralph Reckness Cardew had indulged in a little leg-pulling, and Tom and Blake were angry. They rushed up the staircase and swung open the door of the Fourth Form dormitory. Simultaneously, two wrathful voices rang out:

"Gussy!"

A slim, graceful figure clad in spotless running shorts, and a white silk singlet trimmed with a beautiful shade of sky-blue, was standing in front of a looking-glass.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He started violently as Blake's and Merry's combined roar smote his ears, and the silver-backed brush with which he had been brushing his hair dropped from his hand.

Crash!

It was unfortunate that the silver brush elected to fall on top of the glass water-jug that stood on the chest of drawers, for the jug splintered into fragments. It was doubly unfortunate that the jug had been filled with water, for the water had to go somewhere, and it chose to swamp Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's spotless singlet.

"Gwooooooh!" gasped D'Arcy. "You sillay asses!"

He turned a wrathful face on Tom Merry and Jack Blake. Those two juniors would have laughed at such a happening at any other time, but they were still feeling angry.

"Gussy, you ass!"

"We're all waiting for you!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy screwed his celebrated monocle in his eye and treated his irate chums to a frigid stare.

"Weally, you wottahs, you quite startled me," he said coldly. "Look at this singlet—it's wuined! Now I shall have to change again."

"What!" roared Blake. "Do you think we're going to hang about while you change again. Not likely!"

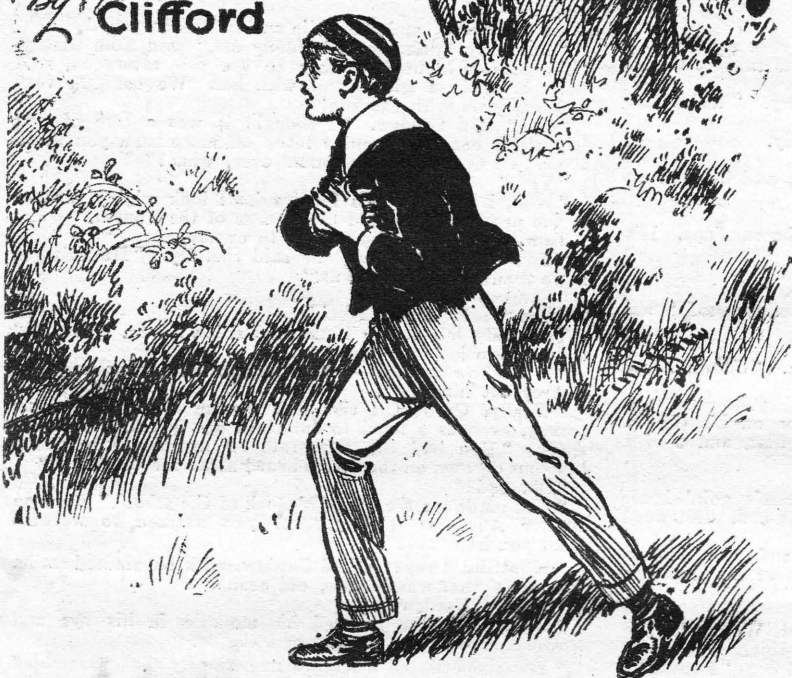
"No fear!" added Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy paid no heed to those outbursts; he was gingerly trying to remove the saturated singlet. That was too much for his chums.

-MONTY LOWTHER, THE HUMORIST OF THE SHELL!

Love Affair!

by **Martin Clifford**



Had anyone at St. Jim's suggested the possibility of Monty Lowther's succumbing to the charms of the fair sex, undoubtedly the loudest of the scoffers would have been the humorist of the Shell himself. The first glance from Miss Daphne's blue eyes, however, is fatal, and Monty Lowther fast develops into a hopeless case of "spoons."

Already the elegant swell of the Fourth had spent an hour in changing from Etons to running kit. In fact, when last they had seen him, Arthur Augustus had been fully changed. Evidently some little detail in his attire had not met with his full approval, for he had repaired once again to the dormitory, there to decide whether his singlet should be a white one with a crimson border, or a mauve or a sky-blue border. This delicacy, in the question of raiment, would perhaps have interested an outfitter, but it failed to interest D'Arcy's chums.

Tom Merry and Blake exchanged significant glances. Then, with one accord, they fell on upon their elegant chum and seized him firmly.

The singlet had been half-raised over Gussy's head. Next minute it was jerked down again. Another minute, and Arthur Augustus was being rushed from the dormitory willy-nilly.

"Stop, you wottahs!" he roared. "I must change my singlet!"

"Some other time, perhaps," grunted Blake. "But not now. Kim on, you dummy!"

Arthur Augustus struggled desperately. The thought of being seen in public with a saturated singlet sent a shiver down his spine, and the wet garment itself doubtless gave encouragement to the shiver.

"Welease me, Blake!" he roared. "Stoppit, Tom Mewwy, you wottah!"

But neither of the juniors thus called upon took heed of their elegant chum. He was rushed down the Fourth Form staircase like a whirlwind, and all three juniors arrived at the bottom landing a trifle breathless. Arthur Augustus was still breathing threats, but they were scarcely coherent.

He was gasping as if for a wager when Blake and Tom Merry arrived with him at the School House steps. Four juniors were waiting there, and judging by their expressions they were not enjoying the wait. Monty Lowther was swinging his arm in an endeavour to keep warm. George Herries was similarly engaged, except that he paused now and again to sweep a clenched fist at an imaginary Arthur

Augustus. Digby and Manners were stamping their feet. But all these operations ceased as Arthur Augustus came up.

"You burbling dummy!"

"You silly ass!"

"You tailor's image!"

"You footling frump!"

Having delivered themselves of these complimentary epithets, Manners, Lowther, Digby, and Herries each and separately bestowed ferocious glances on the wrathful face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

That noble junior pumped in breath, and then groped for his eyeglass. Then he treated each of the juniors to a glance that would, if glances could kill, have withered them up on the spot. But those deadly glances could be likened unto water on a duck's back. Certainly they had little or no effect upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's chums.

"Weally, you fellows—" he began coldly.

"Can it!" grunted Manners. "I'm nearly perished with the cold, hanging about for you, you dummy!"

"Weally, Mannahs," said D'Arcy, "I am extremely sowwy if I have kept you waitin', but a fellow must show a little taste and decency in the mattah of clobber when he appeahs in public!"

"Brrrrrr!"

"Howevah," continued the swell of the Fourth, "I shall not keep you vevy much longah. It won't take me more than ten minutes to wun up to the dormitovy to change this satuwated singlet!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"I should have been weady by now," went on D'Arcy, unheeding the extraordinary expressions of ferocity that were creeping over the faces of his chums, "but for those wuff wottahs Tom Mewwy and Blake. Just twot wound for ten minutes, deah boys, while I change this singlet."

"Eh?"

"It will have to be the one with the cwimson bordah, aftah all," said Gussy thoughtfully.

But the elegant swell of the Fourth was wrong there. His chums had reached the limit of their patience. Already Arthur Augustus had kept the party hanging about cooling their heels for twenty minutes. The thought of another ten minutes' delay while Gussy changed into another singlet was too much for them.

In a trice six pairs of hands were laid on the slim and elegant form of Arthur Augustus.

Bump!

The swell of the Fourth smote the cold, hard, and unsympathetic ground.

"Yawwooooooh!"

"Give him another!" growled Blake.

Bump!

"Whooooop! Stoppit, you wottahs! Gwoooogh!"

"And another!"

Bump!

"Yawwooop! Oh ewikey!"

"Now do you want to change your singlet?" demanded Blake ferociously.

"Yaas!" hooted D'Arcy.

"Up with him again," said Blake.

The juniors raised Arthur Augustus once more.

"Stoppit!" gasped that hapless youth. "Welease me!"

The juniors paused.

"Are you ready to come?" bawled Blake in exasperation.

"Wow! Yaas," panted Arthur Augustus. "You wottahs—"

The elegant swell of the Fourth—not quite so elegant now—was stood upon his feet. He glowered at his chums, and his noble fists clenched.

"Weally, I think you fellows are lackin' in ordinawy mannahs," he said wrathfully. "For two pins I would admintistah a feabful thvashin' all wound!"

"Isn't he like a blessed alarm clock?" growled Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Shut up," bellowed Blake, "and come on!"

And, swallowing his wrath and indignation, Arthur Augustus trotted off with his chums towards the gates. It looked as if the ten miles' cross-country run had started at last.

CHAPTER 2. Corn in Egypt!

"MASTER D'ARCY!"

Taggles, the crusty old porter, held up his hand as the juniors neared the gates. A telegraph boy was with him.

"Master D'Arcy—"

"Pway excuse me, Taggles, deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's. "But, weally, this is hardly the time to detain me. I'm in a huvwyy!"

"Yes, some other time," said Tom Merry. "We're late starting as it is."

"It's for you, sir," said Taggles grumpily.

"What is?"

"This 'ere telegram!" grunted Taggles, and he held up a buff-coloured envelope.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

He took the telegram and hastily slit the envelope. His chums watched him curiously.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Not bad news, Gussy?" inquired Blake.

"No feah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Jollay good news, deah boy!"

"Oh, good!"

"Yaas," beamed the swell of the Fourth. "Cousin Ethel is comin' to tea, you know!"

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus turned a smiling face on his chums. Ethel Cleveland, his cousin, was very popular, and a visit from her was a great honour indeed.

"When is she coming?" asked Manners.

"To-day," said Arthur Augustus. "She's goin' home with a girl friend to Wayland for the week-end. But wead the telegram for yourselves, deah boys."

He handed the telegram to Blake, and the juniors gathered round that junior and looked over his shoulder. The message ran:

"Staying week-end with girl friend at Wayland. See you St. Jim's for tea. Train arrives three-thirty Wayland."
"ETHEL."

"Then the cross-country run is off," said Tom Merry at length.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Very much off," said Blake.

"Let's go back and change," said Digby. "I'm freezing!"

"Good egg!"

The juniors trotted back to the School House. The cross-country run was off. Entertaining Cousin Ethel and her friend to tea was of much more importance than all the cross-country runs in the world.

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pulled up at the foot of the School House steps, with that ejaculation. His noble face was a picture of concern.

"What's up now, Gustavus!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was so agitated that his monocle slumped out of his eye.

"Have you fellows forgotten?"

"Forgotten what?" asked Blake.

"That we're bwoke!" said the swell of the Fourth warsely.

The faces of the juniors dropped. They remembered then, with a sinking of the heart, that they were in that state commonly known as stony. Arthur Augustus, who was generally well supplied with that useful commodity known as cash, had not received his usual handsome remittance from his noble pater.

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked glum. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther looked even more glum. But undoubtedly the glummiest, so to speak, was Arthur Augustus.

"Weally, this is too bad," he said at length. "Here we are, with two guests comin' to tea, and we haven't enough monay to feed a cat. I shall have to speak seveahly to the patah for lettin' me down like this."

Tom Merry & Co. said nothing; but all of them mentally censured Lord Eastwood for not having dispatched his hopeful son's usual remittance.

"This is awful!" said Tom Merry seriously.

"Ghastly!" agreed Blake. "I haven't a bean!"

"Neither have I!"

It was a regular chorus.

With dismal faces the cross-country party trooped indoors.
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Ralph Reckness Cardew was lounging in the Fourth Form passage.

"Well, that must be a record, you men," he remarked languidly, as the juniors came up the stairs.

"What is?"

"Ten miles across country in ten minutes, you know," drawled the slacker of the Fourth. "A world's record, I fancy!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" growled Blake. "The cross-country run is off."

"All right in theory, dashin' about for ten miles," said Cardew, with a grin. "I could do it myself. But in practice—"

He shuddered, and the smile on his face deepened.

"You may think you're a funny ass," said Tom Merry. "But Cousin Ethel's coming to tea this afternoon, and she's bringing a girl friend with her. We couldn't very well carry on with the run."

"Oh!" said Cardew. "I thought it was a case of you frightfully energetic youths bitin' off more than you could chew. So Cousin Ethel's comin' over, what?"

"Yes!"

"Well, I must say you fellows don't look mighty pleased at the prospect," drawled the slacker of the Fourth.

Tom Merry felt it up to him to explain.

"You see, we're stony," he said ruefully. "Haven't got more than a bob between us."

"Famine, what?"

"Yes," said Tom miserably.

The smile left Ralph Reckness Cardew's face. He dived a hand into his pocket.

"If a fellow can help—" he began; but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cut him short.

"Weally, Cardew, I shouldn't dweam of acceptin' your monay, even as a loan, to entertain my fwiends!" he said stiffly. "You had the unpawalledd impudence to put a libellous cartoon on the notice-board about me yesterday."

"Oh, gad!"

"You made me the laughin'-stock of the school," went on Arthur Augustus frigidly, "an' you wefused to wetwact what you had said!"

"What did I say?" asked Cardew, with an amused smile. "Anythin' that wasn't true, old bean?"

"Weally, Cardew!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle in his eye and frowned severely at his distant kinsman.

"You perpetwated a feahful monstwowity that wesembled a donkey, weawin' an eyeglass, and said that the Darwinian theory was obviously w'ong."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. could not restrain their laughter as they recollected the striking cartoon Cardew had pinned upon the notice-board the day before. It had certainly created a furore in the Fourth and Shell, for the donkey was easily recognisable as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Naturally, the swell of the Fourth had failed to see the funny side of it, and his wrath had waxed exceeding great. Perhaps, fortunately for Cardew, Gussy's chums had dragged him away when a "feahful thwashin'" had seemed imminent.

Although the cartoon was a thing of the past, Gussy's wrath had not evaporated. Indeed, every time the elegant junior came into contact with Cardew, his wrath broke out anew.

And now, as he saw the grinning faces of his chums, Arthur Augustus clenched his noble fists.

"Weally, deah boys, I see no occasion for laughtah," he said coldly. "It was a widiculous and insultin' perpetwation, an' I have told that wottah Cardew that I wish to have nothin' furthah to do with him."

With that, Arthur Augustus treated Ralph Reckness Cardew to a freezing glare, and stamped off down the passage with his head high in the air.

"That's done it!" said Tom Merry. "If Gussy would only come off the high horse we should have some funds for tea."

"There's nothing to stop Cardew lendin' one of us the necessary cash," said Manners thoughtfully.

"Do it like a shot, old beans," drawled Cardew. "If a fiver's any good, Thomas—"

The captain of the Shell shook his head.

"It's no good," he said. "Gussy would be bound to ask if I had accepted a loan from you if I suddenly turned up with a fiver. Then he would go off the deep end again. That dashed cartoon of yours has put the tin hat on things, Cardew!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew yawned.

"The wrath of my noble kinsman is an eloquent testimony to my merit as a cartoonist," he drawled, "for I never labelled it with a name."

"You silly ass!" growled Blake. "Anybody with half an eye could see that it was meant for Gussy."

"Another unsolicited testimonial," drawled Cardew, with

a whimsical smile. "After that, I suppose I ought really to give my whole time to the interestin' study of art. But it's such an awful fag, you know."

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Blake irritably, and he turned on his heel and followed Arthur Augustus into Study No. 6.

The rest of the juniors trooped in after him.

Ralph Reckness Cardew watched them go with a thoughtful expression on his face. Then he broke into a smile, and his laziness dropped from him like a cloak. He walked briskly along the passage and mounted the stairs leading to the Fourth Form dormitory.

On four of the beds were the clothes belonging to the chums of Study No. 6. With a cautious glance round to satisfy himself that he was not being observed, Cardew singled out D'Arcy's bed, and picked up that elegant junior's waistcoat.

There was a rustle of crisp paper, and next moment a five-pound note had left Cardew's keeping and found a new home, so to speak, in one of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's waistcoat-pockets.

It was done in a few seconds. Then, with a return of his nonchalant manner, the slacker of the Fourth lounged out of the dormitory and made his way downstairs.

The voice of Arthur Augustus reached him as he neared the open door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

"I trust none of you fellows have accepted a loan from that boundah Cardew," the swell of the Fourth was saying severely. "I weally could not accept a favah at his hands even in the awful predicament we are in."

And at that moment Cardew poked his head round the door.

"Solved the giddy question of cash, you men?" he inquired.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy froze up like an oyster.

"Apparently you have not," said Cardew cheerfully. "I just looked in to make a suggestion, you know. Our elegant friend Gustavus is well known to be a careless dummy—"

"Weally, Cardew—" began D'Arcy heatedly.

"With more money than sense," continued Cardew. "It occurred to me that amongst his extensive wardrobe you might dig up a few giddy shekels. His carelessness in the matter of money is a byword. So-long!"

The slacker of the Fourth gave Blake a shrewd glance of which that bright youth was quick to see the meaning, and lounged out of view.

"The cheekay wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "For two pins I'd go aftah him and give him a fealful thwashin'!"

"No, you won't!" said Blake curtly. "We've got to settle this question of cash. Time's on the wing. I think there may be something in what Cardew said," he added thoughtfully.

"What do you mean, Blake?"

"That perhaps in a moment of mental aberration you've shoved a giddy quidlet in some pocket or other and forgotten all about it."

"Weally, Blake, I considah—"

"Never mind what you consider," broke in his study-mate. "We're in a fix. Practically all the fellows are out of the House, Figgins & Co. are gone to Abbotsford to see the footer match, and here we are without a blessed bean! Come on, we've got to get changed, anyhow!"

And, linking his arm in D'Arcy's, Blake tramped out of the study. The rest of the juniors followed at his heels. None of them had much hope of Gussy discovering an overlooked pound or ten-shilling note. Still, it was a chance.

In silence the juniors entered their respective dormitories and commenced to change. Then they started to run through the pockets of their various garments. It was a dismal task in the Shell dormitory. Tom Merry and Manners each found a sixpence tucked away in their change of clothes, but a shilling was hardly of much use for entertaining a party of nine people. But in the Fourth Form dormitory Blake & Co. experienced better luck.

The leader of Study No. 6 was sure that he had read Cardew's meaning glance correctly; it had been eloquent enough. And, knowing Cardew's whimsical methods of making himself useful, and bearing in mind his good nature, Blake felt convinced that somewhere in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's clothes would be found sufficient cash to tide them over their present desperate needs.

Blake's faith was not misplaced. Digby, Herries, and Arthur Augustus himself had investigated the pockets of



"GUSSY!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy started violently, as a combined roar from Tom Merry and Blake smote his ears, and the silver-backed hairbrush dropped from his hand. Crash! A glass water-jug standing on the chest of drawers splintered into fragments, swamping Gussy's spotless singlet. "Gwooh!" he gasped. "You sillay asses!" (See Chapter 1.)

every spare garment the swell of the Fourth possessed, and drawn blank. Then Blake insisted on Arthur Augustus turning out the pockets of the clothes he had just donned.

"Weally, Blake," said D'Arcy, "this is simplay widic, deah boy. I'm suah I haven't ovahlooked— Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy's slim fingers, delving in his waistcoat pockets, had come into contact with a folded piece of paper. The very touch of it sent a thrill down the elegant junior's spine. Next minute that piece of paper was held out to view.

"A fivah!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"A whatter!" ejaculated Herries and Digby in unison, whilst Blake, more prepared for the discovery, merely said:

"Oh, good egg!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at that precious piece of paper as if he could hardly believe the evidence of his own eyes. But it was a fiver.

"Gweat Scott!" he gasped. "I could have sworn there was nothin' in that pocket when I changed."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Blake hastily. "You must have overlooked it somehow. It's a good one, anyway."

"Corn in Egypt!" said Herries, with a grin.

"Yaas, watah!"

And not for one moment did Arthur Augustus suspect the whimsical Cardew of being responsible for that amazing but cheery discovery. It was enough for him that he now possessed sufficient money to provide a really handsome spread in honour of his guests.

Five minutes later seven juniors, all with beaming faces, were carrying parcels of tuck into Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had fairly let himself go in ordering that special tea for Cousin Ethel and her chum. Not for one moment did the swell of the Fourth imagine that that lavish tea was due to the generosity of Cardew. In fact, when he met that whimsical youth coming out of Study No. 9 he looked at him, and straight through him, as if he didn't exist, before he passed on, whereat Cardew grinned.

CHAPTER 3. Smitten!

"HERE'S the train!"

Blake made that rather superfluous remark as the three-thirty express steamed into Wayland Station.

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cheerfully agreed, with that incontrovertible statement.

All the chums of Study No. 6 and Study No. 10 were there to greet Cousin Ethel and her friend.

Seven faces watched every passenger alighting eagerly.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy suddenly. "There they are, deah boys!"

He raced up the platform, and Tom Merry & Co. sped at his heels.

Cousin Ethel gave them a happy smile.

"It's a weal tweek to see you, Ethel, deah gal," said Arthur Augustus, raising his topper from his noble head with an elegant gesture.

"Rather!" chimed in the rest of the St. Jim's juniors.

"It's very good of you to come to meet us," smiled Cousin Ethel. "Let me introduce my friend Daphne!"

The juniors shook hands with Cousin Ethel's friend warmly. She was an exceedingly pretty girl with blue eyes and golden hair, and her smile was radiant. Monty Lowther could scarcely keep his eyes off Miss Daphne. As a general rule Lowther had little time to waste on girls. But at sight of Cousin Ethel's friend Lowther's stare bordered on rudeness.

Tom Merry, catching the expression on Monty's face, trod on his foot.

"Yowp!"

Monty Lowther came back to earth with a jump. He bestowed a furious glare on his chum.

"You clumsy ass!" he said wrathfully.

And then his gaze travelled back to Miss Daphne. She was engaging Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in conversation, and thus Monty Lowther had a better opportunity of studying her features without embarrassment on either side.

She couldn't have been more than sixteen, Monty told himself. He told himself lots of other things, too—one being that Miss Daphne was a "stunning girl," better looking even than Cousin Ethel.

Miss Daphne, doubtless feeling Lowther's intense gaze fixed upon her, turned her head and caught his eye. She blushed. And Monty Lowther blushed. Then he jumped forward.

"I say, Miss Daphne," he said, in some confusion, "may I see to your luggage?"

Miss Daphne treated the humorist of the Shell to a charming smile.

"That is really very good of you—er—er——"

"Lowther!" volunteered that youth, with a deep blush.

"Please put our cases in the cloak-room, Lowther," went on Miss Daphne. "Ethel and I will collect them on our way back."

She began to talk to Tom Merry, what time Monty Lowther, eager to be of use to Miss Daphne, grabbed two bags that were lying on the platform close handy, and rushed them in the direction of the cloak-room.

"Hi! You young rascal!"

An elderly gentleman, standing quite near the St. Jim's juniors, suddenly leaped in the air as Monty Lowther dashed by him with the two bags.

"Hi! Stop!"

The elderly gentleman went almost purple in the face. He shook his umbrella after Monty Lowther, and began to give chase.

"Stop! Stop the young varmint!"

Monty Lowther, like the rest of the people on the platform, heard those shouts, and looked round to see the cause. He soon knew. The old gentleman dashed up to him, snatched the bags from his hands, and then began to belabour him with the umbrella.

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Whack, whack, whack!

"Yarooooooop! Whoooooop! Stoppit!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Cheeky young rascal!" panted the old gentleman. "I'll teach you to run off with my bags! Take that!"

Monty Lowther took it—and several more like it. He wriggled and squirmed, but there was no escaping that deadly umbrella.

"Wow! Oh crumbs! Yooooop!" gasped Lowther. "Draggimoff! The man must be mad!"

Fortunately for Monty Lowther, Tom Merry & Co. came to his assistance. They had heard the noise, and Monty Lowther's voice raised in anguish was easily recognisable.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he rushed towards the squirming Monty.

The rest of the juniors raced to the spot, and Cousin Ethel and her friend followed them in alarm. Tom Merry seized the enraged elderly gentleman by the arm, and Blake plucked the umbrella away.

"Hold on, sir. What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry pacifically.

"Trouble?" hooted the infuriated old gentleman. "Trouble! Why, that young rascal picked up my two bags and made off with them! I'll give him in charge! I'll——"

"Just a moment," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "There appears to have been a slight mistake."

"Mistake, you young jackanapes!" snorted the elderly gentleman. "I saw the young rascal make off with my bags, I tell you. Here they are—I've just taken them from him. Mistake indeed!"

"What I meant to say was that my friend picked up your bags in mistake. He was taking them to the cloak-room."

"You see, sir," said Daphne, with a sweet smile, coming to the rescue, "Lowther really thought the two bags belonged to me—they were quite near mine, you know."

The elderly gentleman's face softened as he listened to that explanation, and saw Miss Daphne smiling at him. It came home to him then that perhaps he had been a trifle hasty. There was no question of doubt where Monty Lowther was concerned; that hapless youth was still squirming. But he tried to assume a cheerful expression as Miss Daphne took a pace towards him.

"Poor Lowther," she said in a low voice. "It was too bad, really. I might have pointed out which bags belonged to me, then that stupid old gentleman wouldn't have lost his temper."

"It's all right," said Monty Lowther manfully.

"You're not hurt?"

"Grooogh! Not a bit, Miss Daphne!"

"I'm so glad. Perhaps I'd better see to the bags myself."

Monty Lowther pulled himself together.

"That's quite all right, Miss Daphne," he said hastily.

"You leave 'em to me. I won't make the same mistake a second time."

By this time Tom Merry and the rest of the juniors had restored the elderly gentleman to a normal state of mind, and, with the two girls in tow, they strolled back along the platform to where the girls' bags were.

This time Monty Lowther made no mistake. Forgetful of his aching shoulders, he tucked the bags under his arms and once more made off for the cloak-room, to the accompaniment of a very charming smile from the fair Daphne.

And as that favoured glance fell upon him, Monty Lowther felt he could have borne with equanimity the blows of a dozen infuriated old gentlemen put together.

When he returned from the cloak-room and handed Daphne the tickets for the bags, Monty Lowther installed himself at her left hand, and, feeling elated, for what precise reason he could not tell, the humorist of the Shell directed her towards the platform from which the Rylcombe train was due to start.

Perhaps it was that peculiar feeling of elation that caused Monty Lowther to slip on a stray banana-skin that lay on the platform; to jam his finger in the carriage window as he let down the sash, and tread on Miss Daphne's shapely foot. Whatever the cause, Monty Lowther was certainly doing things that afternoon which he had never been known to do before, and none marked his clumsiness and confusion more closely than Tom Merry and Harry Manners.

"I believe the silly ass has gone 'spoons' on Miss Daphne!" ventured Tom Merry, as the party walked to the school from Rylcombe Station.

Manners nodded, and his face broke into a grin.

"You're right, Tommy! Look at him!"

Still on Miss Daphne's left hand, Monty Lowther was strolling towards the school, trying to think of something to say. But his head was all in a whirl, and his tongue seemed tied. Words failed him; but if speech did not fall from his lips, his eyes were singularly eloquent every time they turned in the direction of his fair companion,

"Monty's got it bad!" This time it was Blake who passed the remark. "He's spoons!"

And Herries, who was with Blake, nodded and grinned. "Thumping bad!" he conceded. "But she's a stunning girl!"

"Rather!" said Blake, with considerable warmth and feeling for a fellow who had been deprecating the feelings of another. "Rather!"

And that was the unanimous opinion of the party.

CHAPTER 4.

"Oh, Love is a Wonderful Thing!"

HERE we are, deah gals!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy held open the door of Study No. 6 and bowed his fair guests into the study.

A cheerful fire burned in the grate, and everything was tidy and neat. The table was laid ready for tea, and the kettle, which had been left on the small trivet, was beginning to sing.

The handsome quantity of provisions Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had laid in were behind the door of the cupboard, Blake having taken the precaution of locking the cupboard before the chums had set out to meet the train at Wayland Junction. As Lowther had remarked, with a fellow like Baggy Trimble of the Fourth hanging around, no grub was safe—not even behind a locked door. Still, that chance had to be taken.

Blake, however, made it his business surreptitiously to open the cupboard when Cousin Ethel and Daphne were looking the other way. His face lit with relief when he saw that the good things were untouched. Evidently Baggy Trimble's peculiar and remarkable faculty for scenting grub had failed him on this occasion.

"Shove the kettle on to boil, Lowthah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Right-ho, old scout!"

And Monty Lowther, who could hardly take his eyes off the fair and radiant Daphne, hastened to obey. Just as he bent down and grasped the handle of the kettle Miss Daphne spoke.

"I say, what a jolly study you have here!"

It was extraordinary the effect Miss Daphne's voice had upon Monty Lowther. Of a sudden the kettle jumped as Monty turned his head to look at the speaker, and a stream of hot water shot over the elegant trousers of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Yawoooh!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as the warm water came in contact with his noble leg. "Lowthah, you clumsy ass!" he added in a stage whisper.

"I—I—I'm awfully sorry, Gussy!"

Monty Lowther, a picture of blushing confusion, wheeled sharply, and somehow or other his disengaged hand got caught up in a fold of the tablecloth.

Crash!

Three cups and saucers shot off the white tablecloth and landed on the floor of the study with a clatter.

"You silly owl!" hissed Manners, shaking a furious fist at the unfortunate Monty from behind Miss Daphne's chair.

"I—I—I'm awfully sorry!" stammered Monty Lowther.

Next moment Manners had jerked the kettle out of his study-mate's hand, and Monty was relieved of the task of putting the kettle on to boil.

Miss Daphne and Cousin Ethel appeared not to notice these unfortunate mishaps. They kept up a running fire of conversation with the juniors, what time Herries tactfully scraped together the broken cups and saucers and retired with them. As for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, he looked at his wet trousers, gave Lowther a furious glare, and then smiled sweetly at Cousin Ethel and Daphne.

"If you will excuse me, deah gals," he said politely, "I will wun alon' and get some more cwocks!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy departed in great haste.

"Cwocks!" muttered Miss Daphne, with a puzzled frown.

"Gussy means crockery, you know!" said Monty Lowther, with a smile.

Cousin Ethel's friend smiled sweetly, and Monty found himself blushing like a schoolgirl.

"Oh!" said Miss Daphne. "I wondered what he meant!"

But what Arthur Augustus meant and what he actually did were two totally different things, for the noble swell of the Fourth made all speed for the Fourth Form dormitory and hurriedly changed his trousers. Then, once more spick and span, he hastened back to Study No. 6.

Tea had just started when D'Arcy returned, and he noted with a frown of disapproval that Monty Lowther had, in his absence, taken his chair—the chair which was next to Miss Daphne!

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus indignantly. "The awful wottah!"

He gave Lowther a freezing glance, but it had little effect upon that youth, for Lowther was giving all his attention to his fair companion.

Suddenly Miss Daphne's handbag fell off her lap and rolled underneath the table. On the instant Monty Lowther bent down and searched for the bag. His groping fingers came in contact with it all right, but when he endeavoured to straighten himself his shoulder bumped the under side of the table.

The juniors yelled a warning, but too late.

Crash!

As Monty Lowther pulled himself back on to his chair the table tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees, and the crockery, cakes, jam, tea, and milk were swept off the table in a clattering, noisy stream.

"Whoooooop!" gasped D'Arcy, as the milk-jug shot into his lap and drenched him.

"Wow!" bellowed Digby, as the scalding-hot tea swamped over his hands. "You clumsy idiot!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Tom Merry, as he found a plate of jam-tarts plastering his waistcoat. "You burbling maniac!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Monty Lowther, with a sheepish face. "I'm—I'm awfully sorry, you chaps!"

The "chaps" could hardly tell their chum what they thought of him in so many words; but if looks went for anything, they had said, as the Americans have it, "a mouthful."

It took some time to restore order out of chaos. Fresh tea had to be made, more crockery had to be borrowed, and three of the party at least had to hurry to the dormitory for a quick change.

Cousin Ethel and Miss Daphne passed off the matter

(Continued on next page.)

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lightly, although what they thought of Monty Lowther's extreme clumsiness is not beyond speculation. Poor Monty himself was very conscious of his clumsiness. He stuttered and stammered renewed apologies, and then subsided into tongue-tied silence. The only ray of comfort he derived was when Miss Daphne turned and smiled at him.

"Cheer up, Lowther!" she said, with a twinkle in her eye. "Accidents will happen, you know!"

But the stricken Monty couldn't even find words to reply to that simple statement. He sat through the rest of that tea-party like a naughty fag of the Second Form, conscious all the time of the homicidal glares bestowed upon him by his chums.

It was something of a relief to him when Miss Daphne, glancing at her watch, signified that it was time she and Cousin Ethel had to leave.

"Thank you ever so much for the topping tea you've given us," said Cousin Ethel, as she donned her hat before the mirror over the mantelpiece.

"Don't mench, deah gal!"

"I've enjoyed myself immensely," said Daphne, with a smile at her hosts. "Now where did I put my gloves?"

But already Lowther was leaping to do his fair charmer a service. He had anticipated her words. The gloves were on the bookcase in the corner of the room. In his haste Monty Lowther did not see Jack Blake's rather large pedal extremities stretched in his path. But a moment later he was aware of them, for with a crash, he measured his length on the floor.

Bump!

"Yarooooooop!" howled Lowther, as his nose came in violent contact with the floor. "Wow!"

"Pway allow me to fetch your gloves," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I am afraid Lowthah is wathah clumsy!"

And the elegant swell of the Fourth succeeded in fetching Miss Daphne's gloves without suffering the painful consequences that had fallen to the lot of Monty Lowther.

"We'll come as far as the station with you, if we may," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the girls voiced their thanks and made a move for the door. So did Monty Lowther.

But he never reached it.

Cousin Ethel's back was to Tom Merry and Manners, and so was Miss Daphne's. Taking the opportunity while it lasted, Tom and Manners grabbed Monty Lowther and dragged him back.

"You hurbling, footling, clumsy bandersnatch!" hissed the captain of the Shell fiercely.

"You fozzling maniac!" hissed Manners.

"But——" began Monty Lowther.

The girls were in the passage now, and Tom Merry kicked the door shut. Then he turned on Lowther.

"You've made a regular muck of things! he roared.

"What's come over you, Lowther, you silly ass?"

"But——" began Monty Lowther.

"Oh, bump the silly ass!" snapped Manners. "I'm fed up with him! Perhaps we can bump a little sense into him!"

"But I'm going to see Miss Daphne off at the station!" snorted Monty Lowther. "Get out of the way, you idiots!"

"You're not going to see anyone off at the station, my pippin," said Tom Merry decisively. "You've done enough damage, goodness knows. You're staying here!"

"Right here!" growled Manners.

But that was too much for Monty Lowther. To think that he was to be denied the pleasure of escorting Miss Daphne to the station made his blood boil. With a roar, he charged at his two study-mates.

"Collar him!" roared Tom Merry.

And Monty Lowther was promptly collared.

"Let go, you rotters!" he panted. "Miss Daphne—Whooooooop!"

The humorist of the Shell did not mean to say that, but it seemed the natural thing to say as he smote the floor of the study with a resounding and painful bump.

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yarooooooooh!"

"And another!" said Manners.

Bump!

"Groooooogh! Stoppit, you rotters! Miss Daphne—Yoyp!"

"Now chuck him in the corner!" panted Tom Merry.

Bump!

Monty Lowther was "chucked" in the corner. He lay there gasping and spluttering.

Slam!

Tom Merry and Manners, feeling that the painful fiasco Monty Lowther had made of the tea-party had been avenged, hurried out of the study, slammed the door, and

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turned the key in the lock. Then they hastened after the rest of the juniors.

Cousin Ethel and Miss Daphne looked round as Tom and Manners rushed up.

Apparently Miss Daphne noticed the absence of Lowther. "Hallo, where's your friend?" she inquired.

"Ahem!" coughed Tom Merry.

"Hem!" contributed Manners.

But Jack Blake, who had more than a suspicion of the fate that had befallen Monty Lowther, came to the rescue. He glanced at his watch.

"Snakes!" he exclaimed in well-feigned astonishment. "Time does fly. We shall have to step it out for that train."

"Yaas, wathah!" added the swell of the Fourth, playing up. "Step it out, deah gals!"

And the "deah gals" stepped it out. Whether an inkling of the truth concerning the whereabouts of Monty Lowther occurred to either of them is an open question, for as they moved along the passage the sounds of repeated knocking on a door behind them reached their ears, and between the knocks was an unpraised voice that might or might not have been identified as belonging to Montague Lowther of the Shell.

Tom Merry & Co. enjoyed that walk to the station with their guests, doubtless the more so because Monty Lowther was not present. When the train for Wayland Junction came in, the girls shook hands with each of the juniors in turn and then boarded a first-class compartment.

As the train steamed slowly out of the station Tom Merry & Co. raised their caps and waved them until their girl friends were out of sight. Then they set out for the return journey to St. Jim's.

"Stunning girl!" said Tom Merry, as the juniors tramped back to St. Jim's.

"Ripping!" agreed Blake, with a far-away note in his voice. "By the way, what happened to Lowther?"

"Locked him in your study," replied the captain of the Shell, with a grin. "I don't know what came over the silly ass, but I've never known him to behave like he did this afternoon."

"Perhaps he's in love," suggested Digby, with a thoughtful expression on his face. "I believe chaps do all manner of silly things when they get spoons on anybody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of Monty Lowther, the humorist of the Shell, being "spoons" on any girl was too much for Tom Merry & Co. Their laughter rang out loud and long. But not one of them but thought that there was some truth in the suggestion.

As the ancient pile of St. Jim's loomed up, a bare-headed figure came racing towards Tom Merry & Co.

It was Monty Lowther.

He rushed up to them breathlessly.

"Has she gone?" he panted. "I mean, have they gone?"

"Yes," replied Tom Merry, with a curious glance at the distressed face of his study-mate; "five minutes ago."

Monty Lowther bestowed a wrathful look on his chums.

"You rotters, to lock me up in the study!" he exclaimed, more in sorrow than in anger.

"But how did you get out?" asked Blake.

"I bribed Trimble to let me out," explained Monty Lowther. "And if the fat cad hadn't been so long bargaining before he turned the key I should have been in time to wish Daphne—I mean Cousin Ethel and her friend goodbye."

There was silence after that.

Evidently Monty Lowther's outlook on life had been changed by the visit of the fair Daphne, for he did not even indulge in any little witticisms or puns on the way back to the School House—sure sign that something was amiss with the humorist of the Shell.

And for the remainder of that night Monty Lowther's face wore a far-away look, and several times he was heard to mention the name of Daphne. In the circumstances, it was not surprising that his prep was left untouched, although whether Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, would regard the visit of Miss Daphne as being sufficient reason for Monty Lowther to neglect his preparation was a matter that doubtless would be cleared up on the morrow.

CHAPTER 5.

Poetic!

LOWTHER!

Mr. Linton rapped out the name in a voice of thunder.

It was the following morning, and the Shell were at first lesson. The master of the Shell was generally a very good-natured and even-tempered individual. But a twinge of neuritis will work astonishing changes in the best-tempered person. And Mr. Linton had a twinge—several twinges, in fact.

Several of the Shell juniors had had to suffer for those

twinges of neuritis, for Mr. Linton was particularly sharp on a bad construe that morning. Racke and Crooke were the richer by two hundred lines apiece for having scamped their prep. Grundy had been detained for two half-holidays for a similar offence, coupled with "unparalleled insolence" in daring to answer back; and Wilkins had been given fifty lines for talking in class. Really, Mr. Linton was on the warpath with a vengeance.

The Shell were very circumspect after that, and their attention to the pearls of wisdom that fell from Mr. Linton's lips was beyond reproach. Only Monty Lowther seemed indifferent to what went on around him. His head was buried in his left hand, his gaze was fixed directly upon the master of the Shell; but it was obvious at a glance that although Mr. Linton was on a level with Lowther's eyes that junior saw him not. And ever and anon Monty Lowther would scribble something on a piece of paper in front of him. That done, his unseeing gaze would once more be fixed straight in front of him.

The master of the Shell had been deceived for some time into thinking that Monty Lowther was the most attentive fellow in the Form, until it suddenly dawned upon him to test that theory in the practical way Form masters have. "Lowther!" he exclaimed.

But if Monty Lowther heard he heeded not. His gaze

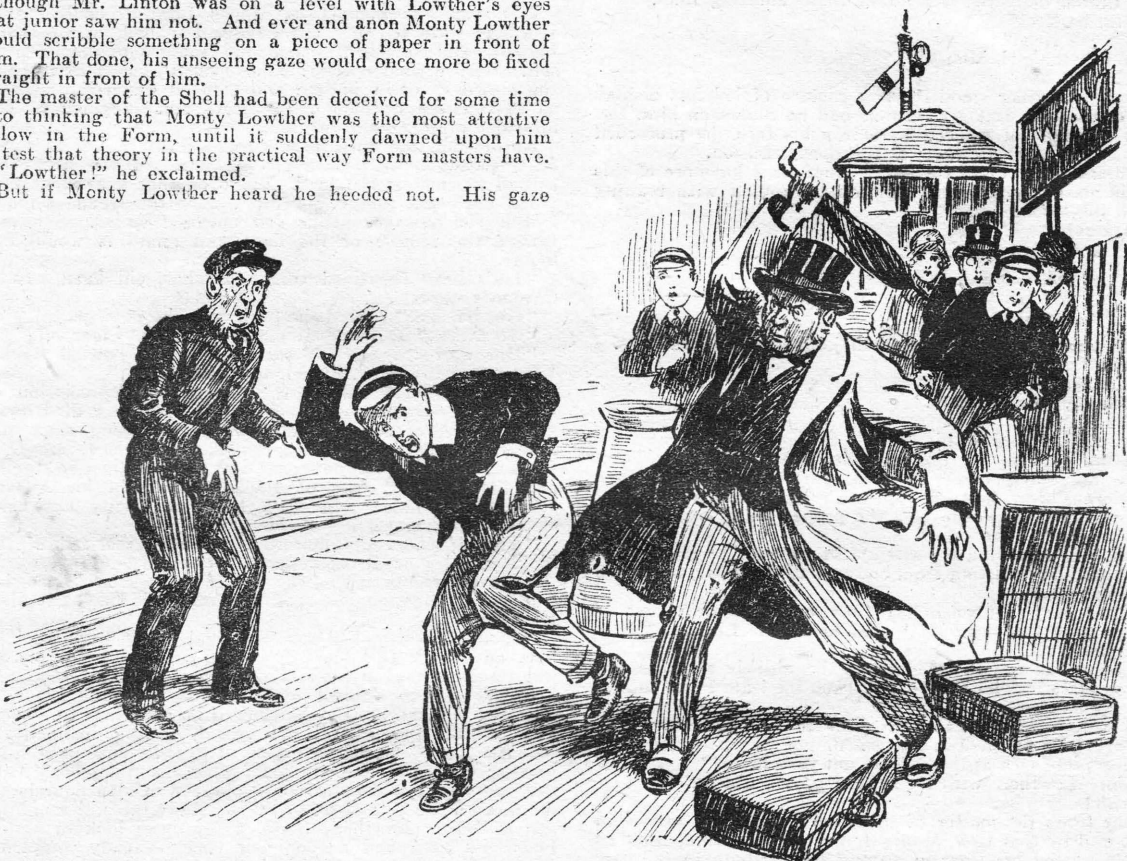
"Well," said Mr. Linton sharply. "I am waiting." Monty Lowther swallowed something in his throat. "I—I—I'm afraid I've lost the place," he said at length. "I was certain of it, boy," boomed the master of the Shell. "You have been writing, have you not?"

"Ye-es, sir!" "And may I ask, Lowther," said Mr. Linton sarcastically, "what matter of importance it is that claims your attention?"

Monty Lowther was silent. He fidgeted first on one foot and then on the other.

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Linton. "Speak up! What were you writing?"

"P-poetry, sir!" admitted Lowther, in some confusion.



"Cheeky young rascal!" panted the old gentleman, belabouring Monty Lowther with his umbrella. "I'll teach you to run off with my bags! Take that!" Monty Lowther took it—and several more like it. "Wow! Oh, crumbs! Yooop!" he gasped. "Draggimoff! The man must be mad!" (See Chapter 3.)

suddenly lowered on to the piece of paper in front of him, and he began to scribble at a terrific rate.

"Monty, you ass!" breathed Tom Merry.

And in a moment Mr. Linton pounced on him.

"Merry!"

"Yes, sir," said Tom, standing up with crimson features.

"You were talking!" barked Mr. Linton.

"W-was I, sir?"

"Take a hundred lines!" snapped the master of the Shell.

Then he turned his attention to Monty Lowther.

"LOWTHER!" It was a bellow this time.

Monty Lowther started guiltily, crumpled up the piece of paper in his hand, and looked up.

"Did you call me, sir?"

The master of the Shell fairly pranced.

"Did I call you?" he snapped with heavy sarcasm. "I have called out your name three times, boy!"

"Oh, sir!" said Lowther, rising awkwardly to his feet.

"You will construe, Lowther!" rapped Mr. Linton. "You will go on from the place where Grundy left off."

"Oh crumbs—I mean, yes, sir," stammered Monty Lowther.

He gave the juniors around him an appealing glance, for the humorist of the Shell hadn't the faintest idea where Grundy had left off. In fact, he didn't know that Grundy had construed at all. But no one had the temerity to whisper to Lowther the information he wanted, for Mr. Linton's eyes was upon the juniors in Lowther's immediate vicinity. A whisper now would mean a caning—that was a certainty. It might mean detention as well.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the master of the Shell. "Poetry indeed! I had no idea that the ranks of the Shell hid a future Kipling. Come, Lowther, let me see this poetry!"

"I—I'd rather not, sir, if you don't mind," said Monty Lowther, his cheeks crimson.

"What!" thundered Mr. Linton. "How dare you, Lowther! Step out before the class, and bring this—this poetry that is so wonderful that it cannot be shown to your Form master!"

There was no help for it now, and with his face the colour of a fresh-boiled lobster, Monty Lowther stepped out before the class and handed his Form master the piece of paper upon which he had spent so much time and thought.

The Shell waited expectantly. One or two of them could guess what that poetry was about, and whom it was about.

Mr. Linton adjusted his pince-nez, creased out the piece of paper, and then perused it. His eyes fairly goggled in their sockets as he became acquainted with Monty Lowther's poetic effort.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed at length.

The master of the Shell gave Monty Lowther a stern glance, then he cleared his throat.

"Boys, we have been hiding a budding genius in our midst," he said, with heavy sarcasm. "Lowther is not content with the beauties of P. Virgilius Maro. He needs must burst out into a poetic effusion of his own creation. I will read you a sample of Lowther's—ahem—verse."

"Oh, my hat!" gurgled Tom Merry. He knew what was coming, and so did Manners.

Shamefaced and crimson, Monty Lowther stood in front of the grinning class, wishing that the earth would open and swallow him up.

"Just listen to this, my boys," said the master of the Shell. And he read out from Monty Lowther's paper the following:

"Her eyes are like the stars at night,
Her dimpled cheeks, so warm and bright;
Her lips, a beckoning crimson light—
That haunts me."

A roar of laughter ran through the Shell Form-room as Mr. Linton delivered himself of those amazing lines.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Isn't it rich!"

"Who's the girl, Monty?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther stood there, a picture of helpless dismay and confusion. But Mr. Linton had no mercy on him, for, with a twinge of neuritis wrinkling his face, he proceeded to read out a second verse of Lowther's effusion.

"Silence, boys!" he rapped. "There is a lot more of this poetic masterpiece, but I will content myself with reading aloud the second verse."

"Hurrah!"

"I met her once, and knew my fate,
Oh, ne'er shall I forget the date;
My heart beat fast—I'd found my mate—
My Daphne."

The second verse sent the Shell juniors into convulsions.

"His Daphne!"

"His heart beat fast!"

"Oh, my sainted aunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Linton held up his hand.

"I am glad to see that so many members of my Form appreciate real poetry," he said crushingly. Then, with a thunderous brow, he turned on the hapless Lowther. "Boy! So you think the Form-room the proper place to indulge in such balderdash, do you?"

Monty Lowther did not attempt to answer that rather difficult question. Shifting from one foot to the other, he looked in abject misery.

"How dare you waste my time and your own time in perpetrating this doggerel!" thundered Mr. Linton. "How dare you, sir?"

A titter ran round the class, to die quickly away as Mr. Linton glared round the Form. Then the irate Form master took up his cane.

"I will endeavour to point out to you, Lowther, that you are here at St. Jim's to learn, not to waste your time writing piffle such as this. Hold out your hand!"

Monty Lowther, with an inward groan, did so.

Swish!

Four times the master of the Shell brought his cane into play, and by that time Monty Lowther was wishing that he hadn't wasted his time in paying that tribute to the fair Daphne, or, at least, that he had waited for some more opportune moment.

Mr. Linton was breathing heavily when he had finished.

"Let that be a lesson to you, wretched boy," he said.

"And, in case it should not prove lasting enough, you will be detained for three half-holidays. Now go back to your place."

Feeling very chastened in spirit, Monty Lowther went back to his desk, with smarting palms and woeful face. But even his bodily discomfort did not succeed in driving thoughts of the fair Daphne from his mind, so much so, that when Mr. Linton, who was taking the Shell in History for Third Lesson, asked Lowther who was the most popular Queen of England before the reign of Queen Victoria, Monty Lowther absent-mindedly answered:

"Daphne, sir!"

At which there were fresh roars of laughter from the Shell and a further application of the cane for Monty Lowther.

But even that did not conclude the misadventures of Monty Lowther that morning, for when the Shell was dismissed a crowd of juniors surrounded him in the passage.

"Who's your lady friend, Lowther?" asked Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"His heart beat fast," quoted Racke pathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He'd found his mate," chuckled Noble, wiping a tear from his eye.

"His Daphne!" chortled Clifton Dane.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But that was more than Monty Lowther could stand. His ears were burning, his face had turned an art shade in pink, and he felt ridiculed and helpless to defend himself. With a sudden effort he wrenched himself away from the crowd of Shell juniors and tore off down the passage as fast as he could go, the jeers and laughter of the hilarious juniors following him.

He did not stop until he had reached Study No. 10 in the Shell passage. Once in there he slammed the door and turned the key in the lock. But even that apartment provided but scant refuge, for there came the tread of many feet in the passage outside and upraised voices. Someone turned the handle of the door and found it would not budge.

"Let's have the third verse, Lowther, old bean," came Cardew's voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors in the passage.

"Go away!" shrieked Monty Lowther. "Clear off!"

"Her eyes are like the stars at night," bawled Racke.

"In fact she is an awful fright, my Daphne!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors in appreciation of Racke's impromptu third line, but the laughter died down as the door of Study No. 10 suddenly swung open and Monty Lowther, with blazing eyes, stood on the threshold.

He gave the crowd one scornful glance and then he singled out the grinning face of Racke. The grin on Aubrey Racke's face faded a moment later, as Monty Lowther's clenched fist connected with his nose.

"Yowp!" came the muffled howl from the cad of the Shell, and his nasal organ spurted crimson.

"There's plenty more where that came from," growled Lowther. "Anyone else got any original lines? If they have, let's hear 'em."

Nobody, however, had any "original lines" to offer. The look on Monty Lowther's face was deadly. Evidently he was touchy upon the use of the name of Daphne.

Aubrey Racke dabbed away at his nose and his eyes glittered with rage. But he showed no eagerness to avenge that painful blow. And the crowd, feeling instinctively that the "fun" was over, dispersed to their various studies, leaving Monty Lowther alone with his thoughts. That they were of Daphne was fairly obvious half an hour later, for there was a pile of paper on the study table, a fountain-pen in Monty Lowther's hand, a far away look in Monty Lowther's eyes, and a couple of verses already completed on the sheet of paper directly before him.

As Tom Merry remarked, sotto voce, to Manners when he came into Study No. 10 a few moments before dinner, poor old Monty had indeed got it bad.

CHAPTER 6.

Lowther Proposes!

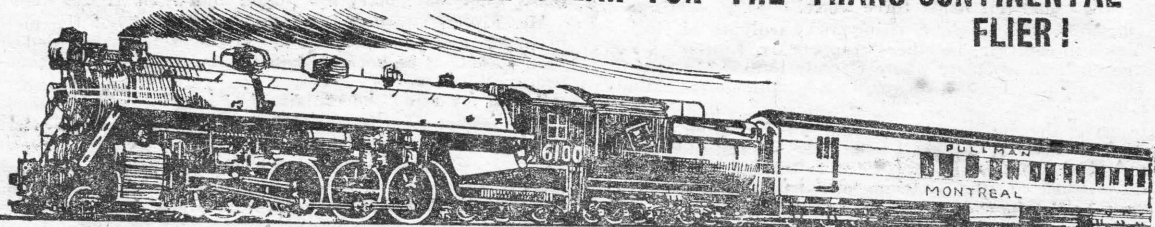
CRASH!

Tom Merry swung open the door of Study No. 10 and looked in. It was the next day.

The captain of the Shell was in footer garb. There was an angry expression in his usually cheery face.

"Oh, there, you are, you slacker!"

ALL CLEAR FOR THE TRANS-CONTINENTAL FLIER!



Monty Lowther, who was seated at the table, gnawing the handle of a pen, looked round irritably as his study-mate came in.

"Don't interrupt, there's a good chap," said Lowther, stabbing his pen into the inkwell with a ferocity that could hardly have been beneficial to the nib.

Tom Merry nearly exploded.

"Of all the cheek——" he began hotly.

Monty Lowther waved him into silence with an irritable gesture.

"What's a rhyme for 'raptured,' Tommy?"

"I'll give you a rhyme for raptured," growled the captain of the Shell, and he strode forward and yanked Monty Lowther out of his chair. "Do you know it's footer practice this afternoon?"

"It's what?" gasped Lowther, putting himself to rights.

"Footer!" reiterated Tom Merry. "F-O-O-T-E-R!"

Monty Lowther forced a grin.

"Oh, I'd forgotten," he said. "Keep your wool on, old scout!"

"You'd forgotten?" hooted Tom Merry. "If that isn't the limit! Look here, Monty, I'm going to talk seriously to you. This idiotic business has got to stop!"

Monty Lowther crimsoned.

"What do you mean?"

The captain of the Shell wagged an admonitory finger at his study-mate.

"You know perfectly well," he said quietly. "Ever since Cousin Ethel brought her friend here the other day you've been playing the silly goat. It's got to stop! Why, you chump, can't you understand that all the fellows are laughing at you?"

Monty Lowther clenched his fists.

"They don't do very much laughing in front of me," he said grimly.

"Well, they do plenty of it behind your back, anyway," replied Tom Merry. "Seriously, though, Monty, you are making a fool of yourself."

"Look here, Tommy——" began Monty Lowther hotly.

"You're making a fool of yourself," went on the captain of the Shell grimly. "You're slacking at lessons, slacking at games, and you're walking about with a face like a romantic idiot in a love play. Pack it up, old chap."

It was on the tip of Monty Lowther's tongue to make some heated reply, but he restrained the impulse. In his heart of hearts he knew that there was a deal of truth in what his chum had said. He was slacking at lessons; he didn't feel the same interest in games as he had before the fair Daphne had dawned upon his horizon. And yet he felt helpless to change his outlook on life. To him Daphne meant more than anything else in the wide, wide universe.

That he should have succumbed so easily and wholeheartedly to the fascinations of Cousin Ethel's friend perhaps surprised no one more than it did Lowther himself. But as yet he was not clear-minded enough to realise that he was caught up in that very natural and common phase of adolescence known as "calf love."

"Come on, Monty!" said Tom Merry, giving his chum a slap on the back. "Buzz off, and get changed into footer togs. A sharp hour's practice will clear the cobwebs from your napper."

He followed Monty Lowther to the door and watched his chum mount the staircase leading to the Shell dormitory. Then he shook his head.

"This is getting serious," muttered Tom to himself. "Something will have to be done to cure old Monty."

And in a thoughtful mood the captain of the junior football team strolled back to Little Side, where his chums were anxiously awaiting him.

"Where's Monty?" demanded Blake.

"He's just changing," answered Tom Merry.

"Well, he's holding up the practice," grunted Herries.

"Can't hang about all day for you Shell bouncers."

It was a practice match between the Fourth and Shell, and the teams were keen to get started. A cold wind was

blowing from the north-east, and hanging about on the open football ground was not calculated to improve tempers.

Tom Merry decided to kick off without Monty Lowther. After all, he would be on the ground within five minutes at the very outside. Tom gave his decision to Blake, who was skipper of the Fourth Form eleven, and then the practice started.

In the excitement that attended the practice no one paid further heed to Lowther, and it was only at the end of half an hour's play that Tom Merry noticed that Monty hadn't put in an appearance.

"Lot of slackers in the Shell, I must say," observed Digby, in a voice loud enough for Tom Merry to hear.

"Oh, shurrup!" grunted Tom.

But he felt annoyed. Really it was too bad of Monty to play up like this. Tom felt more annoyed by the time the practice had finished, for still there was no sign of the Shell junior.

"I say, you fellows——"

It was Baggy Trimble's fat voice that floated across to the footballers as they came off the field, and a moment later Baggy Trimble himself was rushing towards them.

The fat Fourth-Former's face wore an expression of excitement. Evidently something out of the ordinary had occurred, for Trimble was rushing his excessive cargo of avoirdupois towards the footballers at a pace which, for him, could only be described as terrific.

He came up breathlessly.

"What's the trouble?" inquired Tom Merry, eyeing the fat Fourth-Former curiously.

"He, he, he!" cackled Trimble. "You should see him!"

"Him?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Whom?"

"Him—Lowther!" exclaimed Baggy Trimble, with a fat chuckle.

Tom Merry started.

"What's the matter with Lowther?" he asked.

"He, he, he!" cackled Trimble. "You should see him! A sight for gods, and men, and little fishes!"

The captain of the Shell gripped one of Trimble's podgy ears between finger and thumb, and Trimble's cachinnations suddenly changed into a howl.

"Yoooop! Leggo my ear, Merry, you beast!"

"Now, what is it about Lowther?" inquired Tom Merry grimly. "Cough it up, old fat man!"

"Yah! I've a jolly good mind not to tell you now," said Trimble peevishly. "I mean, I'm only too pleased to tell you, old chap! Yoooop! Leave my ear alone!"

"What is it about Lowther?" roared Tom Merry, in exasperation.

"He's making love!" gasped Trimble.

"What?"

It was a regular shout from the footballers.

Baggy Trimble grinned.

"I happened to look in at the Shell dormitory," he said.

"And there was Lowther, on his knees before the long mirror, you know, making faces in the glass and generally acting the giddy goat. He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A peal of laughter rang through the assembled footballers, for it was now common knowledge that Monty Lowther was "spoons" on Miss Daphne, and that he had got "it" bad.

But Tom Merry did not join in the laughter. He released his hold of Trimble's ear, much to that junior's relief, and motioned to Manners.

In a moment the two of them were racing towards the School House. If Monty Lowther should be seen by a number of juniors in the ridiculous position Baggy Trimble had described, it would take him terms to live it down. If he was still playing the goat Tom and Manners hoped to warn him before a crowd arrived upon the scene.

"After 'em, chaps!" roared Blake, as the two Shell juniors sped off, and in a whooping, laughing throng, the footballers raced off Little Side and headed for the School House and the Shell dormitory.

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Looking back, Tom Merry saw that the juniors were close on his heels.

"Put a spurt on, Manners!" he grunted. "We don't want those cackling asses on the scene if there's any truth in Trimble's yarn."

The chums of Study No. 10 put a spurt on, but, as luck would have it, Mr. Railton suddenly appeared in the Shell passage. The Housemaster held up his hand, and the two juniors stopped.

"Although I am a great believer in quickness," said Mr. Railton, "I do not approve of boys rushing about at racing pace within the confines of the school buildings. By all means proceed along the passage at a brisk walking pace if you are in a hurry, but don't run."

And with that caution, the Housemaster rustled on his way. A moment later Jack Blake & Co. and the rest of the footballers trooped in. Before they knew what was happening Tom Merry and Manners found themselves racing towards the Shell dormitory, despite Mr. Railton's warning.

But Blake was the first to arrive. With hardly a sound he opened the door of the dormitory and looked in. Over his shoulder a swarm of footballers looked in, too. And the sight they saw brought expansive grins to every face, and splutterings of mirth.

Kneeling on a cushion before the cheval mirror, was Monty Lowther. Judging by the reflections of his features in the long mirror, the Shell junior was making an impassioned speech. His gesture of hand, too, was done in the generally accepted Victorian style of a man proposing to the lady of his heart. Evidently Lowther was romantic, for he made the most of his proposal, placing his hand on his heart at intervals, and then stretching forward both hands in appeal to an imaginary lady.

Perhaps the fact that it was only his own image that confronted him spurred Lowther on to make a series of "proposals," for, to the amusement of the watching juniors, he rose to his feet, stepped back a few paces, and then advanced again with outstretched hand, an eager expression on his face.

"My love, I could not wait another moment without seeing you!"

That impassioned sentence, obviously intended as a preliminary to Lowther's proposal, reached the ears of the watching juniors plainly enough. But the rest of Lowther's dialogue was not intelligible.

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "This is rich!"
Even Tom Merry and Manners could not help grinning. Had it been possible they would have saved Lowther from this publicity. But Fate, in the shape of a Housemaster, had ruled otherwise.

"Hallo, he's off again!" muttered Blake, as Monty coming in line with the long mirror, suddenly dropped upon one knee and began to plead his suit.

"Daphne—may I call you Daphne?—You are surely not blind to the love—the ever-growing love—that consumes me. Hem! That sounds a bit old-fashioned!"

Evidently Monty Lowther wasn't satisfied with a proposal on those lines. He shook his head and then stared into the mirror for a long time, doubtless in search of more inspiring words.

But the watching juniors could stand it no longer. There was a titter; the titter grew into a laugh, and the laugh into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Monty Lowther, still on his knees before the mirror, started violently, as the Shell and Fourth-Formers poured into the dormitory. His face went the colour of beetroot.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Surely you are not blind to the love," said Blake, with tears of merriment in his eyes.

"May I call you Daphne?" chuckled Herries. "Oh, my giddy aunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "This is wick!"
Lowther scrambled to his feet. All around him were grinning faces. And the expression on Lowther's features was worth, as Glyn put it, a guinea a box.

"You cackling dummies!" hooted Lowther wrathfully. "Did 'ums get your proposal turned down?" inquired Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You silly asses!" roared Lowther. And quite unexpectedly he charged the grinning juniors.

The laughter changed to yells of anguish as three or four juniors were sent staggering by Lowther's charge into the arms of their companions. Next moment about a dozen juniors were sprawling on the floor of the Shell dormitory, trying to sort themselves out.

Meantime, Monty Lowther had made himself scarce. When Tom Merry and Manners came into the study for tea they fully expected to find Lowther there. But no more was seen of Lowther until the juniors were ushered into the Shell dormitory that night.

Kildare, the captain of the school, turned the lights out when all the juniors were in bed, and then retired. When his footsteps had died away several juniors sat up in bed.

"I say, Lowther! How's Daphne?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has she accepted you yet, old scout?"

"Got enough money for a ring, Lowther?"

These and other sallies of a similar nature flew backwards and forwards across the Shell dormitory, but Monty Lowther paid no heed to them. And as he refused to be drawn, the juniors grew tired of this one-sided pastime and settled down to slumber. When all was quiet in the dormitory Tom Merry and Manners whispered a good-night to their chum, but the erstwhile humorist of the Shell made no reply. Evidently Monty Lowther felt hurt.

CHAPTER 7.

Cardew is Sympathetic.

TOM MERRY looked worried.

Manners looked equally worried.
It was the Sunday following Monty Lowther's "proposal" at the mirror in the Shell dormitory.

Monty's love affair, as it had become known in the Lower School, was the main topic of conversation in the studies and in the junior Common-room. Although Tom Merry and Manners saw the humorous side of their chum's first essay in the affairs of the heart, they were worried on his account.

Lowther was keeping to himself. He avoided his Form-fellows whenever it was possible, and his own particular chums saw very little of him, except in the Form-room.

"This is rotten!" said Tom Merry, staring moodily out of the window.

Manners nodded in assent.

"Isn't as if it's the spring yet," he said thoughtfully.

"Eh?"

Manners grinned.

"Doesn't some johnny say that 'in the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love'?"

It was Tom Merry's turn to grin.

"Oh, don't talk rot!" he said at length. "Something's got to be done. Poor old Monty doesn't know what an idiot he's making of himself."

"They never do," remarked Manners wisely. "Don't you remember the time when old Gussy was spoony? Nothing else but his girl mattered in the whole universe. That's the way of these things."

The captain of the Shell nodded.

"But we cured Gussy in the end," he said, with a faint grin.

"And Monty'll get cured in the long run," observed Manners. "These affairs never last very long with a chap of fifteen."

Tap!

There was a knock at the door of Study No. 10.

"Come in, fathead!" said Tom Merry politely.

The "fathead" proved to be Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I hardly approve of your mannahs," said the swell of the Fourth stiffly as he entered the study. "I stwongly object to bein' weferrd to as a fathead!"

"Oh, can it!" grunted Tom Merry.

"Howevah, I will let that pass," said Arthur Augustus graciously. "What I weally came to see you about was Montay Lowthah."

"Oh!"

"You fellows know what an observant chap I am," went on Arthur Augustus modestly.

"We do!"

"We does!"

"We do!"

"We does!"

"We do!"

"We does!"

"We do!"

"We does!"

"We do!"

"We does!"

"We do!"

"We does!"

"We do!"

"We does!"

"We do!"

"We does!"

"We do!"

"We does!"

"We do!"

"We does!"



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"And it stwikes me vewy forcibly that somethin' is vewy w'ong with poor old Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"Go hon!"

The swell of the Fourth failed to see the sarcasm in that contribution to the conversation. He polished his monocle carefully, and then jammed it into his aristocratic eye.

"I've got an ideah, you fellows, that old Lowthah is in love or somethin'," he remarked vaguely. "He mooches about with a far-away look in his eyes, he doesn't eat as well as he used to, and he's always weady to snap a fellow's head off if he speaks to him."

Tom Merry stifled a yawn; Manners was not so particular—he yawned openly.

"Now, as a fellow of tact an' judgment," continued Arthur Augustus, "I was thinkin'—"

"What with?" inquired Manners solemnly.

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Weally, Mannahs, this is no occasion for flippancy. I remarked I was thinkin' of givin' poor old Lowthah a word of advice. As a fellow of tact and judgment, I thought I'd give him a pwetty stwong talkin' to, you know."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Well, you ought to be able to give him good advice, Gussy, old bean. You've been there yourself."

"I shouldn't!" interrupted Monty Lowther. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face reddened.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I shouldn't do any thinking if I were you," advised Monty Lowther. "You're not cut out for it."

"If you intend to be wude, Lowthah—" began the swell of the Fourth warmly.

Monty Lowther waved his hand as if dismissing that suggestion.

"I'm telling you for your own good," he remarked. "You're all right at choosing a fancy waistcoat or the latest thing in ties, but when it comes to thinking—well!"

Lowther made an expressive gesture that was eloquent enough.

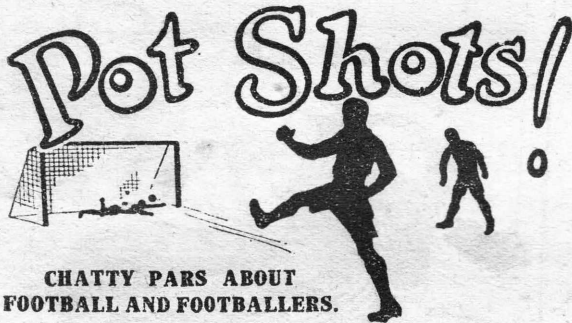
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyes gleamed.

"Weally, Lowthah, I considah you are a vewy wude boundah! I came heah to give you a fwriendly word of advice—"

"Instead of which I've given you one," said Lowther. "Now, if you've finished, will you kindly remove your aristocratic presence."

It was not like Lowther to speak in this vein; but then since Miss Daphne had paid that single visit to St. Jim's Monty Lowther had not been the same fellow. He was "touchy" and moody.

Tom Merry made anxious signs to Arthur Augustus



RONALD DUCKETT, who now plays for Bradford at the Soccer game, has an uncle who used to play Rugby for Bradford on the same ground.

Tom Law, the stalwart defender of Chelsea, had only played five games in junior Scottish football when he was signed on by the Pensioners. A law unto himself evidently.

There are many ways of taking penalty kicks, but the most novel method noticed this season is that adopted by Haines, the Portsmouth forward. He doesn't run to the ball; but just stands near to it, sideways to the goal, and then suddenly screws round and shoots with the inside of his boot.

West Bromwich have a youngster named Bytheway, who is thought a great deal of by the officials of the club. Indeed, he is said to be on the way to an International cap.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy crimsoned.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I fail to compwehend!"

"Have you forgotten the girl in the bunshop?" reminded Tom Merry solemnly.

"Hast thou forgotten love so soon?" hummed Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs!"

The expression on the face of the noble swell of the Fourth was remarkable. Apparently Arthur Augustus had not quite forgotten the occasion when he had fallen a victim to the charms of the girl in the bunshop at Wayland. A crimson glow flooded his cheeks as recollection of that ghastly "affair" came back to him.

"Weally, you fellows, this is not the time to wake up the past," he observed haughtily. "I came heah to talk ovah mattahs; it gwieves me to see Montay Lowthah makin' a fool of himself!"

"Does it?"

Arthur Augustus spun round as that cold voice reached his ears.

Monty Lowther was standing in the doorway, regarding the three juniors in the study with something like a sneer on his face. There was an uncomfortable silence.

"Weally, Lowthah, you quite startled me!" said Arthur Augustus, breaking that very awkward silence. "I was just thinkin'—"

There are only seventeen first-class footballers who are now serving with the same clubs they were connected with in 1913. Time brings quick changes in football.

James McGrory, the only player who has ever scored eight goals in a first-class match, had a trial with Bury when he was eighteen years of age; but they did not sign him on, as they were then very hard-up. He now plays at centre-forward for the Celtic, and scored his eight goals in a game in January.

When a player is suspended by the Football Association his wages stop automatically. But the other members of his team usually make a weekly collection for him to soften the blow.

Manchester City may be said to be always on the Maine Road. That is where their ground is situated. This year they hope it will lead back to the First Division.

No team which has won the Cup since the War has finished higher in the League than sixth from the top in the same season. Three winners have finished in the fourteenth position, and one in the thirteenth. Cup and League success obviously don't run together.

Are Scottish footballers ill fitted for Cup-tie football? This is the suggestion, anyway, from the records of recent years. Only eight Scottish-born footballers have appeared in Cup Finals during the last eight seasons.

There's many a slip 'twixt the Cup and Wembley. And many teams which expect to get there can stay at home in their slippers.

Cardiff City, the Cup winners of last season, took with them to Wembley a black Persian kitten. It was found by their centre-forward, Ferguson, on the golf links at Southport, and the players thought that it brought them luck.

D'Arcy to make himself scarce. The captain of the Shell foresaw a "row," which was the last thing he wanted to happen. And for once in a way Arthur Augustus was quick enough on the uptake to take the hint.

He vacated Study No. 10 in high dudgeon.

When he had gone Monty Lowther faced his chums challengingly. Doubtless he expected a few more "words of advice." But if did he was disappointed, for at a sign from Tom Merry, Manners strolled towards the door whistling softly.

"I'm going over to the New House to see Figgins," he remarked, with his hand on the door knob. "Coming over, Tommy?"

"Yes," replied the captain of the Shell. "I want to fix up the team to play Greyfriars on Wednesday. By the way, Monty, you'll be fit enough to play?" he added, turning to Lowther.

"If you want me!"

It was uttered so ungraciously that a reply was unnecessary, so Tom Merry just nodded and followed Manners out of the study. When they were gone Monty Lowther sat down at the table and dragged a writing-pad from the drawer. Then he commenced to write at a terrific pace.

There was a rapt expression on his face that few fellows had ever seen there before, and ever and anon his lips framed the word "Daphne." Whatever his failings in other directions Monty Lowther was certainly a stickler.

It took him half an hour to write that letter—for a letter it was—and then a shade of annoyance crossed his face. He jumped up and paced the study carpet unceasingly.

"What a fool I am!" he reflected. "I don't even know her surname; I don't know her address. How the thump can I send her this letter?"

That was a poser indeed, and it gave the unfortunate Lowther much food for thought.

"Perhaps one of the fellows knows her address," he muttered at length. "I'll just casually mention the matter to 'em."

Having come to that decision, Monty carefully folded the letter and placed it in the clean white envelope. Then he left the study.

"Hallo, old bean!" It was Ralph Reckness Cardew who spoke. "How's the fair Daphne? Heart just as strong as ever, what?"

Monty Lowther was tempted to make some heated retort, but he stifled it in time. As Cardew was a distant relative of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy it was quite on the cards that he would know something about Cousin Ethel's friend.

"Did you happen to see Miss Daphne?" asked Lowther.

Ralph Reckness Cardew seemed to reflect.

"Girl with golden hair, blue eyes—" he said dreamily.

"Yes, yes!" said Lowther.

"Eyes like stars—at night," continued Ralph Reckness, with solemn face.

"Yes, old chap."

"Dimpled cheeks, an' all that, what?" went on the slacker of the Fourth.

"That's her!" said Lowther warmly, quite unaware that Cardew was pulling his leg. "Came with Cousin Ethel—to tea, you know."

"I remember," said Cardew thoughtfully. "Stunnin' girl, what?"

"Rather!" agreed Lowther enthusiastically. "Stunning simply isn't the word for it!"

He was pleased to find someone who was, or appeared to be, genuinely appreciative of the charms of the fair Daphne, and Lowther, in the innocence of his heart, went into rhapsodies what time Cardew listened with grave face.

"She's a girl in a thousand," said Lowther enthusiastically.

Cardew nodded gravely.

"A girl in a million!" went on Lowther, with that far-away look in his eyes. "I would do anything for her! I would die for her—"

Something like a gurgle escaped Ralph Reckness Cardew, but with manly fortitude he restrained the inclination to burst out into a hearty roar of laughter.

"I say, Cardew," said Monty Lowther confidently. "I've written Daphne a letter."

"Begad!"

"Do you think she'll think it frightful check on my part?" asked Lowther anxiously.

"I don't see why she should!" drawled Cardew. "Most girls would be pleased, you know."

"That's what I thought," said Lowther dreamily. "But the big trouble is, I don't even know the girl's surname, let alone her address!"

Cardew whistled.

"That's bad!" he commented, with a shake of the head.

Monty Lowther waited a moment before he spoke again, his eyes searching Cardew's inscrutable face critically. But whatever Cardew's innermost thoughts were, his face certainly did not betray them.

Then Lowther put the question:

"I say, Cardew, I wonder if you could let me have Miss Daphne's address?"

Cardew jumped.

"I?" he ejaculated.

Monty Lowther nodded.

It was on the tip of Cardew's tongue to say that he didn't know Miss Daphne from Adam, and didn't want to for that matter, but some instinct withheld that confession. A glimmer of an idea was beginning to take root in the slacker's brain, and certain points about it appealed to his whimsical nature.

"I might be able to get Miss Daphne's address for you, old bean," he remarked thoughtfully.

Lowther was jubilant.

"Thanks, Cardew! You're a good chap! I won't forget it!"

Cardew smiled, for the idea that had materialised a moment ago was beginning to take on shape at a terrific rate.

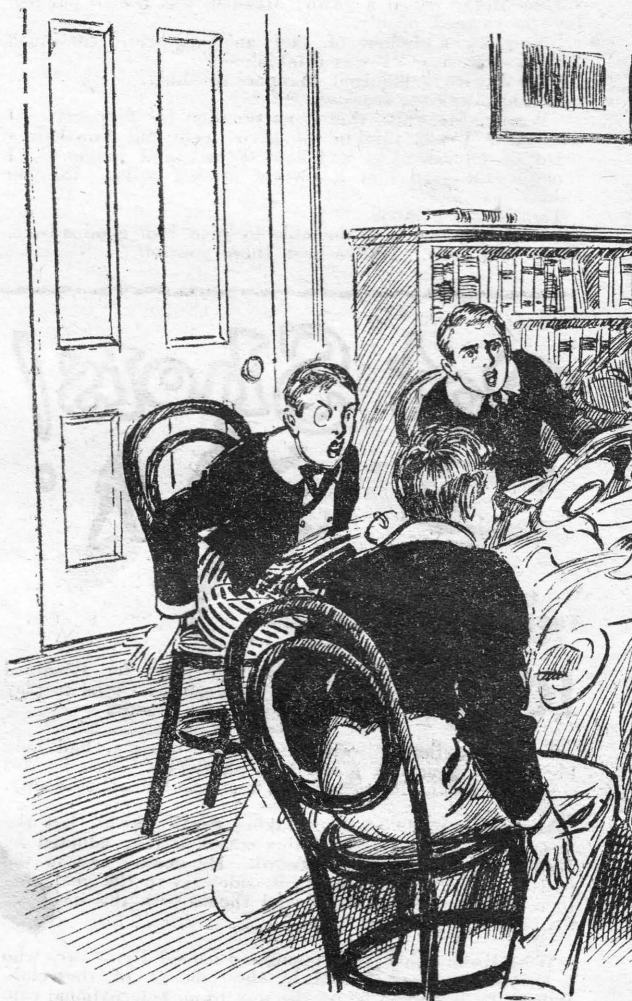
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"Count it as done!" he remarked languidly. "I'll get you the address to send that letter."

The dinner-bell rang at that moment and put a stop to further conversation, and the two juniors hurried into Big Hall and took their places.

It was noticeable at the Shell table that Monty Lowther seemed to be a fellow apart. He ate very little, and it was obvious that his thoughts were miles away. At the Fourth Form table, too, the juniors were quick to notice that Ralph Reckness Cardew gazed abstractedly at the ceiling for the major part of the meal, and that he ate very little of his food.

The latter circumstance did not escape the greedy eyes



Monty Lowther's groping fingers came into contact with M shoulder bumped the underside of the table. The juniors yel of forty-five degrees, and crockery, cakes, jam, tea, and mil crumbs!

of Baggy Trimble. That rapacious youth was quite willing to eat Cardew's dinner as well as his own, which he promptly proceeded to do. Still Cardew gazed reflectively at the ceiling. The result was not surprising. When the Form was dismissed the juniors were asking each other if Ralph Reckness Cardew was another victim of the fair Daphne. Even Levison and Clive, Cardew's study-mates and chums, were puzzled. They linked arms with Cardew as he left the dining-room, and marched him along to Study No. 9. Then they plumped him in the armchair and regarded him critically.

"Dear old Ernest and dear old Sidney, I am exceedingly obliged, and not ungrateful, of your attentions!"

"Oh, don't rot!" said Levison. "What's the giddy game, you ass?"

"Don't tell us that you have caught Lowther's complaint!" said Clive anxiously.

Ralph Reckness yawned.

"I'm several sorts of a giddy ass, dear men," he remarked languidly, "but I don't think I'd fall for the fair sex, not even if dear old Venus herself came to life, and said to the world that her optics had been set on Ralph Reckness

Cardew, and that life would never be complete without the dear chappie!"

Levison and Clive grinned.

"No, dear men," resumed Cardew, with a whimsical smile at his chums. "Do not worry unduly on my account. I haven't succumbed to the complaint that has overtaken the unfortunate love-lorn Lowther. I'm the giddy rescuer of masculinity! In short, dear men, 'tis little me—or, if you prefer it, little I—who will save Monty from the consequences of his own folly!"

"What on earth are you burbling about?"

Cardew waved a lazy hand at Sidney Clive.

"Don't be impatient, Sidney, dear boy! As a certain statesman used to remark, when he couldn't think of a better answer, 'Wait and see.'"

And with that Ralph Reckness Cardew detached himself from the armchair and lounged out of the study. His steps took him in the direction of the prefects' room, wherein was a telephone. That the telephone had not been installed for the use of juniors did not trouble Ralph Reckness. He glanced casually up and down the passage, satisfied himself



me's handbag, but as he pulled himself back on his chair, his turning—but too late. Crash! The table tilted at an angle of the table in a stream. "Whoop!" "Wow!" "Oh, (over 4.)

that the coast was clear, and next minute he was through to a number in Wayland.

A voice came through a moment later.

"Is that you, Cousin Bob?" asked Cardew.

"That you, Ralph, old nut?" came the cheery greeting of "Cousin Bob."

"It is—it are!" replied Cardew. "Look here, Bob, old bean, I want you to do me a favour."

"Anything you like!"

"Good! To-morrow there will be a letter delivered at your house in Wayland, addressed to Miss Daphne Fielding, and—"

"What?" shouted Cousin Bob.

Cardew's voice grew impatient.

"Don't be an ass, Bob! This is a jape. Can't stop to tell you all about it now. The letter will arrive; you will open it. You will ring me up here. Wait a moment"—as Cousin Bob seemed likely to interrupt—"and you will reply to that letter at my dictation—see?"

There sounded a chuckle from the other end of the wire.

"You're a deep 'un, Ralph! But I'll do it for you. I'll phone you directly I receive the letter."

Ralph Reckness Cardew smiled.

"That's a go, Bob, old marrow?"

"It's a go, Ralph, old fruit!"

Cardew replaced the receiver, with a grin on his face. With the aid of his Cousin Bob, who lived a few miles outside Wayland, Cardew felt convinced that he would be able to cure Monty Lowther of his infatuation. He was still grinning when his eyes became drawn to the doorway. Framed there was Gerald Knox, the bullying prefect of the Sixth, with an ashplant under his arm.

He eyed the Fourth-Former with a malignant grin.

"So you were phoning?"

"I was usin' the telephone, to be more correct!" remarked Cardew coolly.

Knox advanced into the prefects' room, his ashplant slipping down into his hand.

"None of your cheek!" he growled. "What do you think you're up to?"

Cardew shook his head sorrowfully.

"Really, old bean, you ought to know better! Have you not learned yet that it isn't good grammar to finish a sentence on a preposition?"

Gerald Knox snarled, and swished the ashplant through the air menacingly, a proceeding that Cardew watched unmoved.

"Did you have permission to use the telephone?" bawled the Sixth-Former.

"Alas, no!" answered Cardew.

Knox's eyes gleamed.

"Hold out your hand!"

"Any old thing to oblige!" drawled Cardew.

And he extended a palm nonchalantly.

Swish!

It was a terrific swipe, that was intended to convey to Cardew that it was not healthy to take liberties in the prefects' room or to give a prefect any "lip." But we are told that the best of intentions sometimes miscarry. Certainly they did on the present occasion, for at the critical moment Cardew whipped away his hand. The ashplant, having started on its downward journey, had to finish somewhere. That was as immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

"Yaroooooooh!"

The ashplant finished its descent in grand style, judging by the howl of anguish that escaped Gerald Knox. And that worthy commenced to dance about on one leg what time he clasped the shin of the other, his face contorted into a diabolical expression that would have done credit to a cannibal at a war-dance.

Ralph Reckness Cardew did not stay to see the full entertainment, so to speak; he acted on the ancient maxim of "beating it" while the going was good. And when Knox, having partly recovered from that unexpected swipe, looked round for his victim, there was no sign of him; whereat Knox allowed himself a few remarks that would have meant expulsion for the cad of the Sixth if anyone in authority had been present to hear them.

CHAPTER 8.

The Fateful Letter!

"LOWTHER!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew was lounging along the Shell passage after tea when he sighted Monty Lowther in the distance.

At Cardew's call the Shell junior stopped, and then retraced his steps.

"Did you manage to get the address, Cardew?"

Ralph Reckness Cardew nodded.

"I copied it down on a piece of paper in case I forgot it, old bean," he remarked lazily.

And he dived a hand into his waistcoat pocket.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Lowther eagerly.

Cardew handed him a piece of paper which bore the following inscription:

"Miss Daphne Fielding,
The Grange,
Upper Wayland."

"You're sure it's all right?" asked Lowther.

"It's the right address for your letter, if that's what you mean," replied Cardew evasively.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Lowther, and his eyes lit up. "You're a brick, Cardew!"

Next moment Lowther had turned, and was scudding back along the passage to his study. He burst in there like a cyclone.

Tom Merry and Manners, who were engaged at prep, looked up in some surprise as Lowther dashed in and collided with the study table.

"What's the giddy game?" demanded Manners wrathfully, surveying a number of blots which had scattered themselves over his prep.

But Lowther paid no heed to Manners or his ruined prep. He sat down at the table, grabbed a pen, spread out the piece of paper Cardew had given him, and began to copy the name and the address on to the envelope that contained his precious letter.

Tom Merry eyed him in some surprise. Manners glared.

It was the former who broke the silence.

"I say, Monty," he remarked, "I've just remembered that old Linton gated you for three half-holidays."

"Blow Linton!" snorted Lowther.

Tom Merry coughed.

"Blow him if you like," he conceded; "but it means that, in any case, you won't be able to play footer on Wednesday—"

"Blow footer!" exclaimed Lowther joyously.

"Look here——" began Tom Merry wrathfully.

"It's the Greyfriars match, Monty," said Manners.

Lowther, having finished writing that precious address, laid down his pen and looked up with a radiant face.

"Bless the Greyfriars match!"

And, to the wrath and astonishment of his chums, he dashed out of the study.

Tom Merry and Manners eyed each other in amazement.

"Mad as a batter!" agreed Manners. "What was he writing—do you know?"

"Blessed if I do!" said Tom Merry; and then, as a sudden thought struck him: "Surely he's not writing to Miss Daphne?"

"Oh, Great Scott!"

It was at that moment Cardew looked into Study No. 10.

"Hallo, Thomas!" he said cheerily.

"What do you want?" asked the captain of the Shell.

"Nothin'," said Cardew, with a smile. "Thought I'd let you know that the cure is beginnin' to get into its stride, you know."

"Cure!" ejaculated Manners and Tom Merry in unison.

"What cure?"

Ralph Reckness Cardew grinned expansively.

"The cure of a lovelorn youth whose name begins with 'L.' Ta-ta!"

And before Tom Merry or Manners could reply to that enigmatical remark the slacker of the Fourth was gone.

"Seems to be another looney about," was Manners' comment. "One in the Shell, now one in the Fourth. I shall begin to think that St. Jim's is a home for 'em soon."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Cardew's a deep bounder," he said. "He's got some game on, that's evident. Well, if it means curing old Monty of his idiocy, I wish him luck!"

Grunt.

Manners was obviously of the opinion that nothing in the wide world would cure the lovelorn Lowther; certainly he held little faith in the powers of the slacker of the Fourth to bring about a cure. But there Manners was wrong, as future events were destined to prove.

Five minutes later Monty Lowther returned to Study No. 10. He was whistling blithely and seemed unconscious of the fact that he was hindering his chums in their preparation, and that his own prep had not been touched.

"I say, Tommy!" he said suddenly.

Tom Merry looked up, with a frown on his face.

"Well?"

"I say, isn't she a peach?"

"She? Whom? Er—you mean Miss Daphne?" asked Tom awkwardly.

Monty Lowther beamed and nodded vigorously.

"Hem! Oh, yes!" coughed Tom Merry, and he endeavoured to get on with his prep. But he found it very difficult, for Lowther would persist in whistling the tune of "Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes." And as Lowther was anything but a musician, and, being such, had no qualms about jumping from one key to another, his rendering of that famous love song can better be imagined than described.

That did not trouble Lowther, however. He felt jubilant. He had posted his letter; he had enclosed his verses which spoke eloquently of the feelings of his heart to the fair Daphne. He was certain in his own mind that there would be a reply to his letter. In that he was not to be disappointed.

CHAPTER 9.

Cardew's Wheeze!

"WHAT is it, Toby?"

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, asked that question.

The Fourth had just taken their places for first lesson, and Mr. Lathom had just arranged his books, when the Form-room door opened to admit Toby, the page.

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The Fourth were very glad of that early interruption. Mr. Lathom was not. Being a conscientious gentleman, he regarded with strong disapproval any encroachment on the hours set aside for the development of his pupils' education.

He frowned at Toby as he rolled into the room.

"Which there's a gen'leman wants to speak to Master Cardew on the telephone, sir," he informed the master of the Fourth.

Mr. Lathom's frown deepened.

"Wants to speak to Cardew on the telephone! Bless my soul! Is this a school, or is it not a school?" he asked no one in particular.

And Toby, being a respectful youth to those in authority, obediently answered:

"I dunno, sir!"

"Kindly inform this gentleman," snapped Mr. Lathom, "that it is not the custom at this school for junior boys to use the telephone, neither is first lesson the time to communicate in any way with any boy of this Form."

But Toby made no move to carry out those instructions. He fidgeted on one foot, and then on the other, and then blurted out:

"Which the call is on Mr. Railton's phone, sir, and Mr. Railton 'e says, says 'e, 'Toby, kindly request Mr. Lathom to allow Master Cardew to use the telephone in my study. The matter, 'e says, 'is of some himportance, I believe.'"

"Oh!"

If Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, had said that, it altered the complexion of things entirely. Mr. Lathom might or might not agree with Mr. Railton's views on the matter; but if he had issued those instructions, they had to be obeyed.

The master of the Fourth turned a severe face in the direction of Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Apparently, Cardew, you are wanted on the telephone. You may leave the Form-room to answer the call. At the same time, I would ask you to remind your caller that he chooses a very inconvenient moment to telephone you. Hem!"

"Yes, sir."

Ralph Reckness Cardew rose to his feet and sauntered out of the Form-room, a lurking grin on his face. He knew full well from whom the call emanated and just exactly how important the particular "business" was. The Fourth watched him go with envious glances. Not one of them but wished that someone or other would phone them up during the hours devoted to lessons—especially first lesson, for that was the time when those who had scamped their prep paid the penalty.

Mr. Railton's study was empty when Cardew looked in, a circumstance that Cardew regarded with no little satisfaction. He crossed to the telephone and picked up the receiver.

"Hallo, old bean!" he said. "Did you get the letter?"

There was an answering chuckle over the wires.

"What-ho, Ralph!" It was Cousin Bob's voice. "I say, that chao Lowther has really got it bad, hasn't he?"

"Shoekin!" agreed Cardew. "I say, Bob, read it out, will you? Then I shall know how to reply."

Cousin Bob proceeded to oblige. He read the letter through without an interruption. It ran:

"Daphne,—I cannot let another day go by without telling you what a difference you have made in my life. Nothing in the whole wide world is of any account except your sweet self. You have captured my heart; my life is yours. Say that you will wait for me, Daphne, or my heart will be black with despair. Write me and tell me that my love is reciprocated; that we may meet—alone. Do, Daphne, I ask you on my knees.

"Yours eternally,

"MONTY."

"Oh gad!" chuckled Cardew, when Cousin Bob had finished.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was an echoing chuckle from Cousin Bob.

"There's a postscript, old son," he said, "which reads, 'I have enclosed a few verses, inadequate in their quality maybe, but nevertheless they lack nothing in sincerity.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Cardew. "This is rich."

"Shall I read out the verses, old fruit?"

"Nunno!" gasped Cardew hastily. "We've had some of 'em. Just one will be enough, I reckon."

"Right-ho—here goes!"

And Cousin Bob proceeded to read out the opening verse of Monty Lowther's poetical effusion. It ran as follows:

"Oh, Daphne, gazing at the dawn,

The blood-red sun that heralds in the morn,

The lifting clouds, the cool, fresh breeze that wrapped me,

All spoke of you, beloved—beloved Daphne."

"Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia! Ha, ha, ha!" Cardew nearly collapsed as he listened to those glowing lines. It was quite two minutes before he could speak with any coherence into the telephone. Cousin Bob apparently was in a similar plight, for his chuckles still echoed over the wires.

"Got a pencil, Bob?" said Cardew at length. "Good! Now take down my letter—ahem!—I mean Miss Daphne's reply to Lowther's letter."

"Ready!" sang out Cousin Bob.

And Miss Daphne's, alias Cardew's, reply was:

"Dearest Monty,—I knew from the first that your heart was mine. Darling, isn't it heavenly? Of course, I will wait for you. After all, your schooldays will soon be over, and then . . . Could we not be engaged? I knew when I saw you at the pictures in Wayland that you were the man of my heart. And your verses; they are divine. I will treasure them for ever. Monty, my pet, meet me at the stile in Rylcombe Woods at three o'clock Wednesday next. I don't know how I shall be able to wait for that day to dawn.—Yours only,

"DAPHNE."

"My hat!" said Cousin Bob. "That's a corker, Ralph!"

"I think that will do the trick," said Cardew. "By the way, old bean, do you want a bit of fun on Wednesday? Yes? Well, then, be in the vicinity of the stile at three o'clock. Keep out of sight, though!"

"Bet your sweet life, old bean!" answered Bob. "I don't quite know what the game is, but I fancy I've got a very good idea."

"You'll post that letter this mornin', Bob?" was Cardew's last remark. "Good man!"

He replaced the receiver, quitted the study, and sauntered leisurely back to the Fourth Form room. First lesson was nearly over when he took his place, for which Cardew was exceedingly grateful. But he incurred the displeasure of Mr. Lathom on more than one occasion during the remainder of morning lessons, for Cardew was paying far more attention to the scheme he had in mind of curing Lowther than the pearls of wisdom that fell from the lips of Mr. Lathom.

But a few lines here and there, followed with a caning, made little difference to Ralph Reckness, for he was a "hard case." His great wheeze had been set in motion, and for the time being nothing else mattered but to see that wheeze blossom forth fruitfully.

CHAPTER 10.

Lowther is "Touchy"!

"LETTER for you, Monty!"

The evening post had just come in, and a stream of juniors surrounded the post-rack when Tom Merry made that remark.

Monty Lowther's heart leaped. He had expected a letter—a letter from the fair Daphne, but he had hardly expected to receive a reply so early. He took the letter with shaking fingers, and his eyes swam as they read the postmark.

It could be only from Daphne. He knew of no other friend in the Wayland district who was likely to write to him. And the handwriting was strange to him. As he glanced at it Lowther drew the impression that it was extremely boyish in its outline, but that thought faded swiftly from his mind as he slit the envelope and drew out the contents.

He looked at the signature at the end of the epistle before reading anything else. Yes! It was from Daphne.

Monty Lowther's cup of happiness was full.

Conscious that the eyes of several juniors were upon him he withdrew from the throng and made his way to his study. There, in absolute privacy, he feasted his eyes on the letter and almost learned it off by heart.

"Hurrah!"

As the full significance of that tender letter was borne in on his mind Lowther felt like jumping over the moon. Daphne was going to meet him on Wednesday. She would wait for him until he was old enough. Could they not be engaged?

"My hat!" ejaculated Lowther. "This is glorious! Hurrah! Engaged? What-ho!"

And then his face fell.

He remembered that it was customary to present the lady with a ring, preferably a diamond ring, when two people became engaged. And diamond rings cost money; and at

(Continued on next page.)

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the moment his worldly wealth consisted of a "lucky" threepenny-bit with a hole in it.

It was a disquieting thought, but Lowther did not allow it to linger. There was plenty of time yet to write home for sufficient money to buy an engagement-ring.

The more the Shell junior thought about it, the more he felt his head bumping against the skies, as it were.

When Tom Merry and Manners came into the study they found Monty Lowther dancing about, like a witch-doctor at a feast, waving a letter on high.

"Hallo! Somebody turned up trumps with a whacking remittance?"

"Remittance!" scoffed Lowther. "Something better than that?"

"Oh!" said Merry and Manners.

"Much better!" chirruped Lowther. "She's written to me—"

"Eh?"

"She?"

"Miss Daphne—Daphne!" exclaimed Lowther jubilantly.

"We're going to be engaged!"

"What!" Tom Merry and Manners fairly shrieked the word.

They had thought their study-mate several sorts of an ass, but that he would go so far as to get engaged to Miss Daphne they had never contemplated for a moment.

Tom Merry sprang forward and gripped Lowther by the shoulder.

"Are you talking sense," he demanded, "or are you romancing?"

"I'm stating facts!" replied Lowther. "Isn't it glorious news? Hurrah! Good old Cardew!"

"Eh!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What on earth's Cardew got to do with it?"

"Cardew was sportsman enough to find out Daphne's address," explained Lowther, "so that I could write to her."

"Oh!"

The captain of the Shell had a lurking suspicion that things were not quite what they seemed. Back to his mind came Cardew's words of the previous evening. Had the slacker of the Fourth some deep scheme in mind? The more Tom Merry pondered over it the greater grew his belief that the letter his chum had received was, somehow, not what Lowther fondly believed it to be. Yet the captain of the Shell did not voice his suspicions.

That Monty Lowther did not for one moment doubt the letter to be genuine was painfully apparent. As Manners remarked, he looked like a kid out of a kindergarten who had just been given a toy.

The rest of the letter Monty Lowther did not communicate to his study mates. He had an idea that if they knew of his appointment at the stile on Wednesday they would do their best to prevent him from keeping it. That he was under detention for that half-holiday was of scant importance to Lowther just then. He had broken detention before for matters of far less importance than that which now occupied his mind.

In joyful spirits, Monty Lowther left the study and made his way down to the Common-room. There was a great deal of laughter going on when he arrived at the doorway, which died a sudden death as some of the juniors sighted him.

Lowther walked in, conscious that there was some joke on—a joke in which he figured.

Then his eyes were attracted to the blackboard.

Aubrey Racke, who was something of an artist, had depicted in chalk a fairly recognisable likeness of Monty Lowther, standing in a pleading attitude before a window, playing a harp. Apparently Lowther was singing, to the accompaniment of the music from his harp, to a fearsome-looking female who lounged, with goggling eyes, against a balustrade that threatened at any moment to give way. A "tag" from Lowther's widely-opened mouth bore the following words, taken from an age-old music-hall song:

"I care not for the stars that shine,
I only want to call you mine,
I only know I love you,
Love me, and the world is mine."

From an artistic standpoint it was a really clever piece of work. The juniors in the Common-room appreciated it, anyway, for after that dead silence somebody began to laugh, and the laugh swelled in volume until the Common-room echoed to it.

But Monty Lowther saw only an insult to his Daphne in that cartoon. He strode up to the blackboard with clenched fists and blazing eyes. Aubrey Racke, reading the danger signals, backed a pace.

Lowther faced him with blazing eyes.

"Did you do this, Racke?" he demanded.

The black sheep of the Shell grinned.

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"Little me," he admitted coolly. "Glad you recognised it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a fresh roar of laughter in the Common-room. "You cad!" hissed Lowther, and he sprang forward with obvious intention of making Aubrey Racke regret having allowed his malicious sense of humour free rein. But Grundy of the Shell darted in his way.

"Hold on!" said the burly Shell junior gruffly.

"Get out of my way!" roared Lowther, who was now beside himself with rage. "Let me get at that cad!"

"That's just what you're not going to do, my pippin," said Grundy coolly.

Monty Lowther glared at Grundy.

"The cad's insulted me," he exclaimed fiercely, "and I'm going to make him pay for it!"

"Your little mistake," answered Grundy. "I can remember the time—scores of times, in fact—when you've done a similar thing. You used to think it funny enough then."

"Hear, hear!" chorused the juniors.

"Keep your wool on, Lowther!"

"I thought you had a sense of humour!"

But, like many another person with a so-called sense of humour, Monty Lowther found it hard to see the point of a joke if it were directed against him. Certainly he saw nothing funny in the present situation.

"Get out of my way!" he roared, and he struggled to get past Grundy. But the burly Shell fellow gripped him by the arm, and Racke took the opportunity of beating a hasty retreat.

"Lemme go!" shouted Lowther, struggling like a wild cat.

"Collar him!" bawled Grundy. "Give the checky rotter a bumping."

"Good idea!"

"Collar him!"

Monty Lowther found himself seized on all sides. Before he knew what was happening he was whirled aloft. Next moment he smote the cold, hard unsympathetic linoleum.

"Yaroooooooh!"

Bump!

"Grooooooogh! Wow! Let up!"

Bump!

"Whooooop! You rotters! Yowp!"

"Cave!" whispered Scrope, who was at the door of the Common-room. "Here's Railton!"

Monty Lowther was being raised aloft for another bumping, but as Scrope's cry of warning rang out the bumpers, so to speak, dropped Lowther as if he had become suddenly red hot and bolted for the door.

In a moment the Common-room was deserted save for Monty Lowther. That luckless youth lay sprawled on the floor, gasping as if for a wager. His collar was hanging from one end, his tie had gone adrift, and his hair was all awry. Altogether, Montague Lowther looked as if he had just emerged from underneath a steam-roller.

Mr. Railton, glancing in at the Common-room door, fairly jumped as he saw Lowther.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Railton. "Boy! Lowther! What does this mean?"

"Grooooooogh!" gasped Lowther.

"Get up, sir! Stand upon your feet!" commanded the Housemaster; and then, as his keen eyes took in the likeness of the figure on the blackboard, he coughed.

He did not need telling whom it was supposed to represent. Racke had done his work well. Perhaps Mr. Railton put two and two together, for he made no further comment, beyond telling Lowther to tidy himself. Then he departed, with rustling gown, and a slight smile curving the corners of his mouth. The master of the School House had set forth from his study to discover the cause of the uproar. He knew now that Lowther and that remarkable cartoon were responsible for it.

As for Lowther, he leaned dizzily against the blackboard until he had recovered. Then he snatched up a duster, and in a few seconds Racke's handiwork had vanished.

There were renewed chortles in the Shell dormitory that night, but Lowther paid them no heed. After all, Daphne really cared for him. The rest of the world, St. Jim's included, could, in his own language, "go to pot." Which went to prove the truth of the old saying that all love is selfish.

CHAPTER 11.

At Three O'clock!

"GOING out, Cardew?"

Ernest Levison asked that question of his study mate shortly after dinner on Wednesday.

Cardew, who was at the top of the School House steps, paused.

"Ernie, your perspicacity does you credit. As you remark, I'm going out."

"Chump!" grinned Levison. "But have you forgotten that it's the Greyfriars match to-day?"

Ralph Reckness Cardew made a deprecating gesture. "Alas! How can a common mortal like your humble forget such a thing with two such energetic youths as you and Sidney for study-mates?"

"But aren't you going to cheer St. Jim's to a win?" asked Levison, to whom the coming match with Harry Wharton was a matter far transcending anything else in importance.

Cardew shook his head. "Once more, alas, no!" he said gravely. "The mere thought of shoutin' gives me a pain in the throat. But I tell you what I'll do, old bean. If cheerin' really does help

He laughed as he repeated the word, and Levison wondered what his chum was driving at. But there was no means of telling. When he liked Cardew could be as irritatingly uncommunicative as a mute.

"Well, chin, chin, Ernie," smiled Cardew, as he donned his gloves. "Hope you pile up all the runs this afternoon, or is it goals?"

"Silly ass!" exclaimed Levison, and he watched his chum saunter towards the gates.

Nothing would have given Levison greater pleasure than to see his chum in the junior football eleven, for Cardew was a great player when he chose to exert himself.

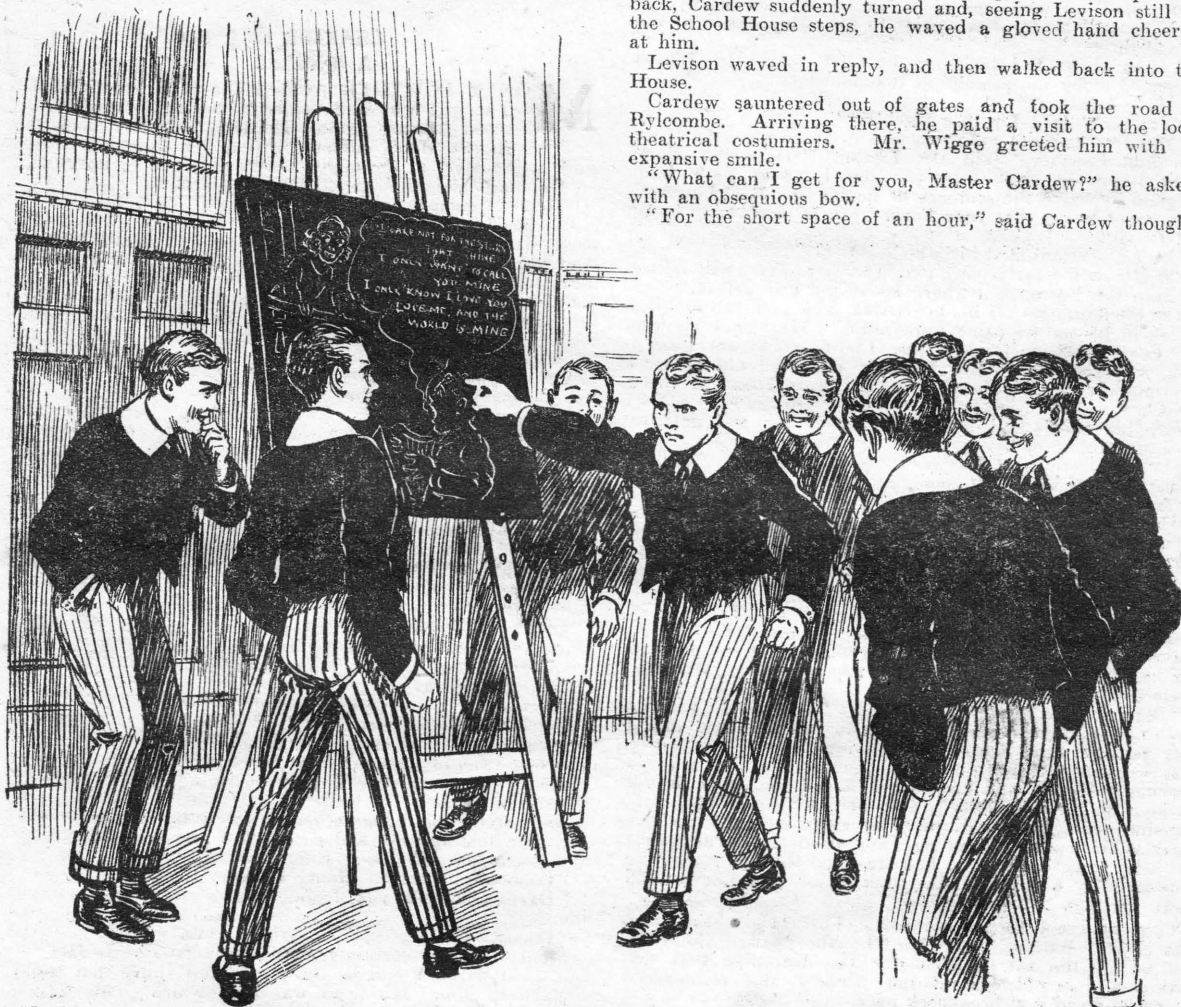
Perhaps conscious of the wistful glance bent upon his back, Cardew suddenly turned and, seeing Levison still on the School House steps, he waved a gloved hand cheerily at him.

Levison waved in reply, and then walked back into the House.

Cardew sauntered out of gates and took the road to Rylcombe. Arriving there, he paid a visit to the local theatrical costumiers. Mr. Wigge greeted him with an expansive smile.

"What can I get for you, Master Cardew?" he asked, with an obsequious bow.

"For the short space of an hour," said Cardew thought-



Monty Lowther strode up to the blackboard with blazing eyes. "Did you do this, Racke?" he demanded. The black sheep of the Shell grinned. "Little me," he admitted coolly. "Glad you recognise it!" "Ha, ha, ha!" There was a yell of laughter from the fellows in the Common-room. (See Chapter 10.)

a side to win, I'll hire a couple of fags from the Second to cheer for me. How does that strike you, Ernie?"

Ernest Levison laughed. "Don't be an ass, Cardew," he remarked. "But I think you might stay in gates to-day, anyway."

"Nothin' would give me greater pleasure, dear boy," said Cardew smoothly. "To watch you and Sidney chasin' the leather is a sight that is always inspiritin' to me. But not to-day. In short Ernie, I have other business to do."

"You're not—"

Ernest Levison's brow clouded as he voiced that unfinished sentence.

Cardew, watching his chum's face, read the unspoken thoughts as if from a book.

"No, Ernie, I'm not blaggin', much as that manly pastime appeals to me."

Levison's face cleared. He knew Cardew's weakness for a game of cards, or billiards and a quiet smoke. But he knew, too, that if Cardew said that he was not going out on the spree that afternoon he was speaking the truth.

"As I said before, old bean," drawled Cardew, "I'm engaged on pressin' business this afternoon. In fact, very pressin'."

fully, "I want to be transformed into a wondrous picture of feminine charm and beauty."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the proprietor of the shop, and he wondered whether the slacker of the Fourth was a trifle "gone in the head."

"Just for one short hour, you know," said Cardew gravely. "Golden hair, pencilled eyebrows, dimpled cheeks—mustn't forget the dimpled cheeks—and crimson lips. Dear man," he added, noting the concerned expression on the face of the proprietor, "this is just a little whim of mine, for which I am ready to pay good, hard cash. Are you on, my dear Wigge?"

Mr. Wigge was certainly on. One glance at the well-filled wallet that the slacker of the Fourth brought into view was enough to allay all his fears and suspicions that Cardew was a bit "touched." If the St. Jim's junior was prepared to spend good money in this scatter-brained "whim" Mr. Wigge was prepared to oblige him.

He became more obsequious in his attention to Cardew. "This way, Master Cardew," he said invitingly, and he showed the slacker of the Fourth into a little dressing-

room, which was lined with mirrors on its four walls. Then the proprietor called his assistant.

"Jelks will give you every assistance, sir," he said to Cardew, with a beaming smile. "Jelks is a past master at the art of make-up. I guarantee that if Jelks passes you out of this shop as—ahem!—female, Sherlock Holmes himself would never tell the difference."

"That is indeed encouragin'," replied Cardew. Then to Jelks: "Now, old bean, let us get down to brass tacks."

And Mr. Wigge, the richer by three pounds, bowed himself out, what time Ralph Reckness Cardew and Jelks got down to "brass tacks."

There was a shock in store for Monty Lowther, but that junior had no suspicion of it as he strolled along the Shell passage at St. Jim's prior to his appointment at the stile at three.

It was sheer bad luck for Lowther that Mr. Linton happened along the passage at that moment.

"Ha! Lowther!"

"Yes, sir!" said Lowther meekly.

"I had occasion to cane you and to detain you the other morning, Lowther," said Mr. Linton. "Had your Form work improved since that warning I would have been tempted to waive the sentence of detention. But, Lowther, I am sorry to say that your Form work is lamentably bad."

"Oh, sir!"

Mr. Linton consulted his watch.

"It is now a quarter-past two, Lowther. You will follow me into the Form-room where I will set you a task."

The Shell junior felt his heart sink, and then the reckless streak in his nature came uppermost. He would go into the Form-room, certainly; Mr. Linton could set him a task, with pleasure. But Lowther promised himself that he wouldn't be anywhere near the Form-room at three o'clock.

Mr. Linton glanced keenly at the junior and perhaps read something of the defiance that seethed in Lowther's breast, for having set him a task from Virgil and walked to the door of the Form-room, he paused, his hand on the knob of the door.

"In case you should think fit to defy authority by breaking detention, Lowther," he said quietly, "I shall take the precaution of locking the Form-room door. At half-past four I will release you myself."

Lowther's feelings can better be imagined than described. With the door of the Form-room locked, his only way of escape was by the window. True he had escaped detention via the window before, but it was a dangerous expedient, for he would be in full view of any prowling master or prefect who happened along.

"Blow it!" he muttered savagely. "I might as well do some of the blessed lines anyhow; there's a chance that I may get back here before half-past four."

It was only a ten minutes' journey to the stile in Rylcombe Woods, and Lowther reckoned that he had half an hour at his disposal before he need set out to keep that appointment. In consequence, he commenced to scribble away at his task at a great rate, and although his calligraphy left a lot to be desired, he had travelled through something approaching a half of the task before he finally laid down his pen.

Then he crept to the window. Fortunately, the coast was clear. Without more ado, Lowther raised the sash, got astride the sill, reached for the drainpipe that was within a foot's length of the window and commenced to swarm down it at breakneck pace.

Luck was with him, for no prowling prefect or master met his view as he stood on the gravel drive below, breathing hard.

Another moment, and he was pelting towards the gates. As he ran the shouts of the spectators on Little Side reached his ears. Somebody had scored a goal. Whether St. Jim's or Greyfriars had opened the scoring in the junior footer match Monty Lowther did not know and did not care. His thoughts were of Daphne, and of her alone.

Waiting for a favourable opportunity before he rushed through the gates, Lowther glanced at his watch. It wanted ten minutes to three. Taggles, the ancient porter, was watering the flower-bed in front of his lodge, and Lowther wondered if the watering-can would never run dry. To rush out of gates now would be foolish, for the names of detained juniors were given to Taggles to ensure that they didn't leave the school precincts.

But at last the watering-can was empty, and Taggles plodded back into his lodge to replenish it. Here was Lowther's chance. He took it, like the opportunist he was, and two minutes later he was speeding towards the stile in Rylcombe Woods, a strange glow of pleasure running through him.

And, as he ran, troublous thoughts intermingled with these that were pleasant. Suppose Daphne did not keep her appointment? The idea sickened Lowther and caused

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him to run harder as if, by doing so, he could dismiss that painful thought as being the most unlikely thing that could happen.

"Ah!"

His heart began to beat at a terrific pace as he came in sight of the stile. A girl was leaning there, powdering her face.

Was it Daphne?

Lowther had dropped into a walk which quickened perceptibly as he sighted the girl. In his heart of hearts he was sure that it was Daphne. Who else, anyway, would be lingering at the stile on that cold afternoon?

CHAPTER 12.

A Mistake!

MONTY LOWTHER reached the stile breathlessly. The girl who had turned as he approached, now stood leaning against the stile with her back to the St. Jim's junior, shifting her shoulders from side to side coyly in the manner often depicted by novelists.

"Daphne!" said Lowther, in a low voice.

"Monty!" came a still lower voice.

The Shell junior started a trifle as that voice reached his ears. It wasn't quite like the voice he had heard before. And yet there could be no mistake. The girl had called him Monty.

But why did she keep her face averted? Doubtless she felt shy, Monty told himself, and as the girl's shyness seemed to develop, Monty Lowther's shyness departed.

"Daphne, your hair looks simply wonderful," he said, as the afternoon sun glinted on those golden locks. "Won't you let me see your face?"

And then the girl at the stile wheeled swiftly. Before he knew what was happening Monty Lowther felt himself held in a powerful embrace—very powerful for a girl, he thought.

"Oh, Monty!"

This time the voice sent a shiver down Lowther's spine. He was certain that it did not belong to the Daphne of his heart. True, it was of the feminine variety, but there wasn't that sweetness and mellowness about it that had been so attractive to Lowther when first he had met Cousin Ethel's friend.

Next moment he knew that something terrible had happened, for the girl, having squeezed him until he was gasping for breath, pushed him away at arm's length and blushed prettily at him.

"Oooooooh!"

Monty Lowther's face worked convulsively, until he seemed in danger of having an apoplectic fit. Words would not come from his lips, not in any intelligible order, anyway. He looked at the girl as if he were seeing Hamlet's ghost. Horror of horrors, it wasn't his Daphne! Not by the widest stretch of imagination could it be said that the girl now holding him, and cooing soft words at him, bore any resemblance to Cousin Ethel's friend.

"Oooooooh!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Darling, aren't you feeling well?" came the tender inquiry.

"Oooooooh!"

Monty Lowther certainly wasn't feeling well. In fact, he felt as if dying would be the pleasantest thing that could happen to him. His head was in a whirl. This wasn't Daphne. But who— But how—and why?

All manner of thoughts chased themselves through Lowther's tortured brain, but he could find no answer to them. This girl, this absolute stranger to him, had obviously expected to meet him here; was she the girl who had written to him, was she the girl who held his verses, his letter, who wanted to become engaged to him?

Lowther felt as if the whole universe was slipping away from him. Next minute he found himself hugged again, and a string of soft, cooing words were poured into his ears. Lowther heard them, but he was in such a whirl that they were a meaningless jumble to him. One thing was uppermost in his buzzing brain. He must explain matters before they went any further.

"Stoppit!" he shrieked at length. "Stoppit!"

"What!"

Daphne released her loving Monty as if he were red hot. "Monty," she said, more in sorrow than in anger, "how could you, dear?"

Monty Lowther gasped, and gazed at the girl with eyes that threatened to start out of their sockets.

She was a good-looking girl; there was no doubt about that. Her hair was golden, very golden. Her cheeks were dimpled, and her lips were shaped like a cupid's bow and were of a bright crimson. All these points Monty Lowther, standing there like a helpless idiot, saw at a glance. Then at last he had the courage to meet the girl's eyes.

They were blue, too!
 And her name was Daphne!
 It was beyond Monty Lowther. He hoped that he would wake up in a moment and find that it was all a dream. But it was no dream. The girl was speaking again.
 "My dear boy, you do look seedy. You want your little Daphne to look after you and feed you up—"
 "F-feed me up?" gasped Lowther.
 "You look half-starved," went on the girl sympathetically.
 "They don't feed you enough at that school. Wait until we are married, Monty darling."

movement to embrace the embarrassed and stuttering junior once more. But this time Monty Lowther backed a pace.

"It's a mistake, I tell you," he blurted out. "That rotter Cardew must have given me your address! Oh, if only I had him here now. I'd make the rotter sit up for this. Keep off!"

Miss Daphne did not keep off. She advanced and seized the horrified Lowther by the shoulder, and held him in a vice-like grip.

"You have been playin' with me, base wretch," she said, with great feeling.

"Nunno, I haven't!" gasped Lowther. "I keep on telling you that it's all a mistake. Oh dear! I don't know you. You're not the Daphne I know!"

"You wicked boy!" said Miss Daphne. "You wicked boy. You breaker of hearts! But you shall not play fast and loose with me. Boo-hooooo!"

A handkerchief came into view, and Monty Lowther had the awful experience of seeing a woman's tears, or, at least, hearing the dismal sound of sobbing and the sight of heaving shoulders as Miss Daphne dabbed away at her eyes.

"You see——" he began.



A shout went up from the spectators and footballers on the playing-fields, as they caught sight of the running figure of Monty Lowther and his pursuer with the upraised umbrella. "My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What's happening?" Lowther dashed towards the players, scattering the spectators to right and left as he did so. "Tommy," he panted, "keep her off!" (See Chapter 12.)

"M-married!" Lowther almost choked.

"Kiss me, Monty!"

Daphne held wide, appealing arms and then drew the helpless junior towards her with amazing strength for so slender a female.

"Groooooough!" spluttered Lowther, as a number of kisses were planted on his cheeks, his hair, his chin. "Wow! Lemme go! It's a mistake!"

"What!" For the second time Daphne released her young adorer. "A mistake?" she added, and a hard note crept into her voice. "Do you mean to tell me that you have been writing love letters and poetry to me for a joke?"

"Nunno!" gasped Lowther. "It's a mistake. You see—you see——"

He found himself at a loss for words. How could he explain to this girl that his letters and his poetry had never been intended for her; that he had never wanted to see her again?

He groaned aloud in anguish of spirit.

"Monty," said Daphne sorrowfully. "Don't be shy any longer. I know I am a little older than you are. But what does that matter? I knew you were the man of my heart when I met you in the pictures——"

"In the pip-pip-pictures!" spluttered Lowther. "But I—I've never seen you b-b-before in my l-l-life!"

"Oh, how could you!" said the girl, and she made a

Miss Daphne turned on him like an outraged tiger.

"You wicked youth! You have broken my heart! You do not love me——"

Monty was silent.

"You do not love me?" repeated Miss Daphne.

"Nunno!" said Lowther, gulping something in his throat. "You see——"

"I see a wicked youth who has dared to play a foolish prank on a poor unsuspecting girl," said Miss Daphne, now dispensing with her handkerchief. "But you shall pay for it. I will write to your parents!"

Monty Lowther jumped.

He had not thought of that possibility.

"Look-here——" he began.

"You wicked boy," stormed Miss Daphne. "I will have compensation——"

"But——"

"I will engage a solicitor," went on Miss Daphne fiercely.

"But—but——" stammered Lowther.

"I will take you to court for breach of promise——"

Monty Lowther almost collapsed.

"B-b-breach of promise," he stammered. "Good heavens! I say, miss——"

But Miss Daphne was like a certain type of horse—she

had to be given her head. She stamped her feet—Lowther noticed that they were particularly large feet for a girl.

"The whole world shall know about this!" she stormed.

"The whole world!"
Monty Lowther didn't know whether he was on his head or his feet. But one thought was in his mind. He must get away from this girl and leave it to someone else to explain for him how the mistake had arisen. He shuddered as he thought of the letter, and the verses he had sent to this girl. He thought of the scandal it would bring on his name if it became public—if it got into the papers. And he groaned aloud.

"Wretched boy!" went on Miss Daphne. "I will teach you the lesson of your life. Remember I hold your letter—"

"Oh dear!"

"And your verse, in which you compared my beauty to the breaking of the dawn!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Lowther, squirming.

"You have caused me great suffering. My heart is broken. Never, never will I give it to another!"

Lowther was glad to hear that. He pitied the chap who became attached for life to this voluble female.

"It's all a mistake," said the junior despairingly. "If you will go now I will endeavour to explain to you by some third party that a terrible mistake has occurred."

"So you would go!" shrieked Miss Daphne. "You coward! You would leave a broken-hearted girl here with her tears! No, no, you wretch!" Miss Daphne's voice was raised fiercely. "I will at least inflict upon you some of the pain and suffering you have brought upon me."

Whack!

That was the first instalment, so to speak, of the infliction. Monty Lowther yelped as Miss Daphne's umbrella sang about his shoulders.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yarooooooo! Stoppit! Oh dear! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Miss Daphne was warming to her work, for the umbrella rose and fell like a flail. Monty Lowther could stand it no longer. Suddenly he turned and ran—ran for his life. And after him, in very unmaidenly fashion, thudded Miss Daphne. Then a newcomer appeared on the scene. It was Cardew's Cousin Bob. That cheery youth had concealed himself behind a bush by the stile, and he had heard all that had passed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roared in helpless mirth. "This is rich."

Wiping the tears from his eyes, he stared after the fleeing Lowther and his pursuer, and his laughter broke out afresh.

Meantime "Miss Daphne" was pursuing Lowther relentlessly.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Lowther, as he saw that the girl was following him; and he put on a terrific spurt. But to his horror Miss Daphne was only a few feet away. Whatever her other failings, Miss Daphne was certainly a worthy performer when it came to running.

"Stop! Stop!" she yelled.

But, needless to say, Monty Lowther did not stop. He was running for dear life. The gates of St. Jim's flashed past before he was hardly aware of it. He realised now that his only hope of refuge was on the playing-fields.

Once there, perhaps, he could hide himself in the crowd until Miss Daphne cooled down and grew tired of seeking him.

Again Lowther glanced back over his shoulder. Miss Daphne was perilously near, so near, in fact, that her umbrella missed him by a matter of inches.

"You young rascal! Stop!"

Like a greyhound Monty Lowther raced through the little wicket gate that gave admittance to the playing-fields from the main road.

The footballers were streaming off the field for half-time, and a regular shout went up as the spectators and footballers, too, caught sight of the running figure of Monty Lowther, and his pursuer with upraised umbrella.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What's happening?"

"Oh, great Scott!" exclaimed Manners. "She's after old Monty!"

Monty Lowther came dashing towards the players, scattering the spectators to right and left as he did so.

"Tommy," he panted, "keep her off!"

"Who is she?" asked the captain of the Shell in amazement.

"It's Daphne—the wrong Daphne!" gasped Lowther. "Explain later. Keep her off while I dodge up to the House, for Heaven's sake!"

And, with that, Monty doubled round the footballers and made all speed back to the School House.

He had barely started on this stage of the journey when Miss Daphne came racing up.

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"Have you seen him?" she shrieked, waving her umbrella.

Tom Merry felt it incumbent upon him to say something.

"Can I help you, miss?" he asked politely.

Miss Daphne waved her umbrella anew.

"I'm looking for that wrecker of homes!" she shrieked. "That breaker of hearts! The boy Monty, who has played fast and loose with me!"

There was a titter from the juniors present, but Tom Merry looked serious.

"There must be some mistake," he said. "I'm sure Lowther would not—hem—play fast and loose with you, miss. He's never met you before, to my knowledge."

"That's where you're right off the giddy rails, Thomas!"

As that voice fell on his ears Tom Merry jumped, and so did the rest of the Shell and Fourth who were standing near.

"Cardew!"

"The same!" said Miss Daphne; and, with a sweep of the hand off came a dainty toque hat and a golden wig.

"Cardew!" exclaimed Clive and Levison in unison.

CHAPTER 13.

Cured!

"OH, my giddy aunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry stared in perplexity at the grinning face of Ralph Reckness Cardew, easily recognisable now without the golden wig and the hat.

"What's the giddy game?" he asked faintly.

Cardew smiled, and proceeded to divest himself of his feminine attire. Once free of the short skirt he carefully rolled down his trousers, which had been secured with safety-pins. Then off came his jumper.

"That's a bit better," he chuckled, when most of his feminine attire had been discarded. "I expect you chaps are dyin' to hear what the game is, or was, eh?"

"Rather!"

And Ralph Reckness Cardew proceeded to explain. "You see, I rather fancied myself as being able to cure that ass Lowther of his spongy spasms," he concluded, "and I've almost finished the cure."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Do you weally mean to say that you are goin' on with this imposture, Cardew?"

"For a little while longer, dear man," replied Cardew coolly. "Now, if Tommy here will talk nicely to Wharton, and ask him to extend the interval for another five minutes, I reckon that you chaps will be in at the death when Lowther's cure is completed."

"I think I can see what you're driving at," said Tom Merry, with a grin. "And if it works, no one will be more thankful than I am!"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners.

"I'll soon have a word with Wharton," continued Tom. "He'll play up like a shot."

A few words were sufficient to put Harry Wharton and the rest of the footer team from Greyfriars in touch with the joke, and Wharton readily agreed to prolong the interval for another five minutes. The score was level—one all—so there was no advantage either to one or the other in extending the interval.

A minute later, a swarm of juniors, with Cardew at their head, were streaming towards the School House. They halted eventually outside Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.

Cardew took hold of the handle, and shook it.

"Is this where that wretched boy Monty lives?" he asked, in a well-feigned feminine voice.

"In there, miss," volunteered Blake, playing up.

From within the study came a startled gasp.

Shake, shake, shake!

Cardew was shaking the handle of the door for all he was worth.

"It's locked!" he said, still in his feminine voice. "And I will see him! I will see the wretched boy! The breaker of hearts!"

"Send her away, for Heaven's sake!" came Lowther's appealing voice through the stout oak panels.

"I refuse to be sent away!" screamed "Miss Daphne."

"Open this door at once!"

"No fear!" gasped Lowther. "Keep her off, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter at Lowther's words, and that luckless junior wondered what amusement anyone could find in the desperate situation he was in.

"Take her away!" he called out.

"I insist upon seeing you, Monty!" came the voice of Miss Daphne. "If you don't open the door I shall smash the panels with my umbrella!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Lowther, but he made no attempt to unlock the door. Not for worlds would he have done that just then.

"Mind, I'm a person of my word!" said the pseudo-Daphne. "Will you open this door?"

"No!" hooted Lowther.

Whack! Crash! Whack!

Miss Daphne commenced to belabour the panels of the door, and as each blow rang out Lowther's courage failed him. Was there no way of escaping from this wretched woman? And then, just when he was in the uttermost depths of his despair, Tom Merry's voice came to him.

On the way up from Little Side Cardew had whispered instructions to Tom, and the captain of the Shell was now putting them in operation.

"Hallo, what's all this?" he demanded, in a voice loud enough for Lowther to hear.

Blake immediately obliged with the necessary information. "This is Miss Daphne Fielding, Tommy," he said. "She particularly wants to see Monty. And Monty has locked himself in the study and refuses to see this charming girl."

"But that's all nonsense!" said the captain of the Shell. "Monty," he added, "open this door!"

"I won't!" howled Lowther.

Tom Merry grinned.

"But Monty, old scout, you can't keep a lady hanging about like this. It's rank bad form, you know."

"I don't care!" howled Lowther. "She's dangerous! I'm not going to open this door!"

"Indeed!" snapped Miss Daphne. "Then I shall at once proceed to your headmaster, and lay the facts before him!"

"Here, I say, don't do that, miss!" said Tom Merry.

"No, no! Don't let her do that, Tommy!" shrieked Lowther.

"Then will you open the door?"

There was the sound of a groan in the study, and the fellows in the passage were almost doubled up with laughter.

"Will you open this door?" shrieked Miss Daphne.

"Ye-es," groaned Lowther. "You'll stand by me, Tommy?" he added miserably.

"Like a shot!" agreed the captain of the Shell.

There was the scraping of a key in the lock, and then the sound of retreating footsteps.

Cardew kicked open the door, and, together with Tom Merry and Blake & Co., crowded into the study.

"Where is she?"

Monty Lowther, who had armed himself with a cushion, doubtless to ward off the blows, if any, of the infuriated Miss Daphne, had taken up a position near the window. And as the juniors streamed in he asked that question in a strained voice.

"Where is she?"

"Here!" said Cardew, in his natural voice.

"What!" exclaimed Lowther irritably. "Don't talk rot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could restrain their laughter no longer. Peal upon peal rang through Study No. 10, much to Monty Lowther's amazement. But one thing he was thankful for, Miss Daphne apparently had disappeared. Where, he hadn't the foggiest notion. But he was, naturally, curious on the point.

"You cackling dummies," he said wrathfully. "Shut up a moment and answer a fellow's question. Where's Miss Daphne?"

"Here," drawled Cardew.

"If you say that again, you silly ass, I'll shy this cushion at you!" roared Lowther.

"Here, then," said Cardew, in the well-known tones of "Miss Daphne." "And I'll have compensation, even if I have to take you to court for breach of promise!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The expression on Monty Lowther's face was worth, as Blake afterwards remarked, a guinea a box. His eyes fairly started from their sockets as that terrifying voice came to his ears.

"Breaker of homes! Wrecker of hearts!" went on Cardew, thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors wiped tears of merriment from their eyes. Really it was too funny. Monty Lowther stood there gaping like a newly-landed fish. Slowly, ever so slowly, the horrible truth was being borne in on his mind.

"I have your letter," went on Cardew, "and your verses."

"You spoofer!"

Monty Lowther seemed to come to his senses then. He made one spring in the direction of the grinning Cardew, but the slacker of the Fourth was even quicker. He had no intention of facing Monty Lowther at that moment. It was a wise moment to retreat.

Slam!

The door of Study No. 10 was slammed in Lowther's face, almost grazing his nose, and Cardew was gone.

"The awful rotter!" shrieked Lowther. "I—I'll burst him! I'll scalp him!"

He wrenched at the handle of the door, but Tom Merry and Manners took him by the arm and detained him.

"Hold on, Monty, there's a good chap," said Tom, laughing. "Cardew said he'd cure you of your spongy spasms, and I reckon he's done it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther gazed round at that grinning assembly, and as he thought of all the mental and physical tortures he had gone through since his appointment with "Miss Daphne" his brow grew black with fury. But his better nature came to the surface after a struggle, and gradually his face broke into a smile. The smile grew into a laugh, for laughter is catching, and for once in a way Lowther, a humorist himself, thoroughly enjoyed a joke that had been perpetrated at his expense.

"Bravo, Monty!" said Tom Merry, patting his chum on the back. "I believe old Cardew's done the trick. But aren't you supposed to be in detention?"

(Continued on page 28.)

HARD KNOCKS FOR KNOX!

Once again Gerald Knox, the rascally prefect of the Sixth, finds himself up to the neck in trouble as a result of his sporting proclivities, and as usual Knox has no scruples when he sees a way out of his desperate position.

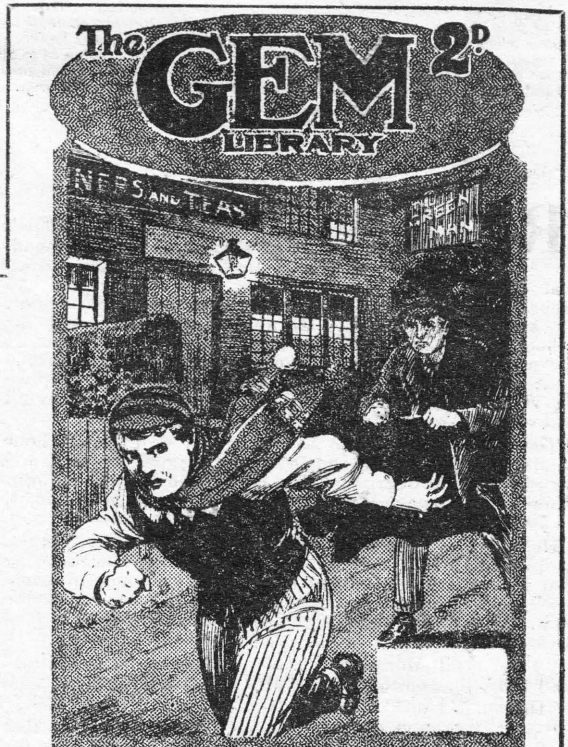
But it is said of old that the best laid plans sometimes go astray; certainly Knox comes a cropper over his latest piece of villainy. Mind you read

"A CHUM'S TEST!"

By Martin Clifford,

next week's stupendous yarn of Tom Merry and Co. at St. Jim's.

ORDER YOUR "GEM" EARLY, BOYS—SAVES DISAPPOINTMENT!



LETTING THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG! Just when Mornington is congratulating himself that his rascally scheming against Biggs, the gardener's boy, has been successful, Clarence Cuffy, the duffer of the Fourth, butts into the picture, and Mornington's precious scheme tumbles round his head like a pack of cards!



His Own Enemy!

A GRAND NEW [SCHOOL SERIAL DEALING WITH THE ADVENTURES OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., OF ROOKWOOD.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

off—to try to frighten me. But it won't come off! And now the cad knows I mean to go on, he won't turn up—you'll see!"

"What rot!"

Jimmy Silver broke off and bit his lip as Mornington, with studied insolence, turned his back and strolled away. A junior was just coming out of the School House. It was Kit Erroll.

Mornington's eyes glittered as he sighted him and walked over to him.

"Goin' to see the fight?" he inquired, with his mocking smile.

"No, I am not," said Erroll quietly.

"Afraid of seeing your precious pal knocked about—what?" sneered Mornington.

"I should not care to see him knocked about, Morny," said Erroll. "Nor should I care to see you knocked about by him."

He paused, and looked at Mornington appealingly.

"Look here," he said steadily, "won't you drop this business, Morny—call this wretched fight off?"

"Afraid of your dear pal Biggs getting licked?" jeered Morny.

"Not at all. I know he'll fight until he drops, and I know you also will fight until you drop," said Erroll, his brow clouding. "I'd give anything to be able to persuade you to call it off, Morny. It can do no good—only increase the bad blood—though goodness knows Biggs isn't the fellow to want trouble—you know that, Morny."

"It's all my fault, of course!" gritted Morny.

"You know it is," said Erroll in distress. "Morny—"

"That's enough!" snapped Morny. "I tell you this, I'm going to make mincemeat of that kid, if he does turn up. But I fancy he won't—he knows better!"

Without another word Mornington walked away, heading towards the gates to join Peele & Co., who were waiting there, obviously for him. Erroll gazed after him, strange thoughts working in his mind. He turned and went indoors, glum and sad. He wondered why Morny should suggest that Biggs might not turn up. But he had no intention of seeing the fight himself, and he went along to his study.

With Peele & Co., Mornington started out for the woods, and Jimmy Silver & Co. followed. They were not the only Classical juniors heading that way at that moment. Everyone wanted to see the fight.

"I feared Morny would fail to turn up, or try some of his tricks on," said Jimmy to his chums. "But he's going to toe the line all right."

"He's no funk, anyway," grunted Lovell. "I don't like not backing up a Rookwood chap, but—well, I'm—I'm rather hoping that Morny doesn't win!"

"I'm afraid that's general," said Jimmy Silver. "His rotten trickery and unreasonable hatred of that poor kid has sickened the chaps. They're fed-up, and I don't wonder!"

The juniors crossed the stile and joined the crowd of fellows heading for a shaded dell in the woods where school fights often took place. Before dinner Jimmy had had a few words with Biggs, and he had given him careful in-

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 nought. Not to be beaten, Mornington challenges Biggs to a fight with the gloves, an action he regrets shortly afterwards when he hears that Cuthbert Gunner, in an attempt to coach Biggs, has suffered the humiliation of being floored in ridiculously easy fashion by the gardener's boy. Dreading he may share a similar fate, Mornington bribes Butcher Bagnall to waylay Biggs in the wood, making it appear as though Biggs is funking the scrap. Clarence Cuffy, happening to be trailing Mornington at that precise moment, however, discovers the gardener's boy tied hand and foot to a tree, with a butcher's apron over his head, and promptly releases him.

(Now read on.)

A Shock for Mornington!

"**R**EADY, Mornington?"

Jimmy Silver asked the dandy of the Fourth that question grimly as he met him in the quadrangle. From Tubby Muffin Jimmy had learned that Morny had gone out of gates, and the thought had occurred to him that Morny had gone off to escape the fight. He knew quite well that Mornington dreaded it—all the School House knew. Morny had been openly gloating at the prospect of thrashing his enemy—until he had learned what had happened to Gunner. After that Morny had shown his rage and apprehension by sulking and scowling at all and sundry. Naturally the fellows soon realised why.

The knowledge that he had gone out of gates an hour before the fight was booked to start was rather curious, and many fellows had grinned and talked about funking. But while Jimmy knew Morny wouldn't funk the actual fight, he also knew he would do anything to escape it now.

He was here, however, and Jimmy's face cleared again. Despite all he had done, Jimmy could not help remembering that Morny had been decent until Biggs had come to Rookwood, and he hoped from the bottom of his heart that the fight, however it ended, would finish the absurd feud between the two.

"Yes," said Mornington coolly, "I'm ready any time! You think that outsider will really turn up, Silver?"

"Of course I do!"

"Well, I don't!" said Mornington. "I don't believe that dashed yarn about him being such a wonderful boxer; it's spooof from beginning to end! It's set out to try to put me

structions where to find the spot, though it was a very little distance from the woodland path, and very easy to find.

They arrived there, and preparations were made. The Fistical Four had brought all that was necessary, for Jimmy was determined that the affair should be done properly. The Classical Fourth had turned up almost to a man.

"Perhaps old Babbage won't allow him to come," suggested Dick Oswald suddenly. "He ought to have been here by this."

"He's asked old Babbage for an hour off—it's not his afternoon off, of course," said Jimmy Silver. "That's all right. He'll be along presently."

But Biggs did not come along presently. Jimmy Silver looked at his watch again and again impatiently, his face showing more and more surprise. It was two-thirty-five now.

"Blessed if I can understand this!" said Jimmy Silver. "The kid knows the time, and should have been here long ago. Cut along to the path and see if he's coming, Raby."

"Right-ho!" Raby trotted off. He came back presently shaking his head.

"No sign of him," he said briefly. "Looks as if he's been delayed, or something."

"He, he, he!" laughed Tubby Muffin. "He funks it! I knew he would. I say, you fellows, if he doesn't turn up, why don't one of you fellows take Morny on? Knock the conceit out of him, you know. The beast— Oh, I didn't see you there, Morny! I meant to say— Keep the beast off, you fellows! Yoooop!"

Tubby fairly flew as Mornington made a savage stride towards him. But Morny suddenly halted and gave a mocking smile.

"So your man hasn't turned up, after all, Silver?" he said coolly. "I rather fancied somehow he wouldn't. Well, I'll give him five minutes, and then—"

"One moment, my dear Mornington!" It was Clarence Cuffy, and in Clarence's outstretched hand was a gold cuff-link.

"My dear Mornington, pray allow me to hand you this," he observed, beaming. "I have been hunting for over an hour for you in order to return this to you. However," proceeded Cuffy, with smug satisfaction, "I am exceedingly glad to say that my time was not wasted. Though I had a very unpleasant journey into the depths of the woods while following you, I am very glad to say that by going I was instrumental in doing quite an unexpected good turn to a humble member of the school staff—Biggs, I believe his name is. He was—"

Clarence halted, quite frightened by the expression that had suddenly appeared on the face of Valentine Mornington. Mornington's face was fendish.

Not Nice for Mornington!

ALL eyes turned on Mornington. The expression on his dark face was startling.

"You—you— What do you mean—" Mornington was stammering, a sudden terrible dread in his heart. He was wondering what Clarence was going to say next.

"What's that, Cuffy?" asked Jimmy Silver, smiling. "You've seen Biggs—within the last few minutes, do you mean?"

"Oh, no, my dear Silver. On the contrary, it must have been nearly an hour ago," said Cuffy, blinking at the captain of the Fourth. "I was exceedingly distressed, as you may imagine, at seeing the unfortunate Biggs in such an unpleasant predicament. I immediately cut him loose from the tree, and he dashed away in a great hurry. He stated— My dear Mornington, what is the matter? I cannot understand why you are glaring at me in that extraordinary manner. Have I made you cross in any way? I sincerely trust not!"

Mornington flushed crimson. He bit his lip till the blood came in a desperate effort to control his feelings. He knew the worst now.

"Shut up, you long-winded, blithering idiot!" he snapped, trying to speak carelessly. "Get out! Clear off, you footling ass! We've no time to listen to your tommy-rot now."

"But, my dear Morn—" "Hold on!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "Cuffy, don't go! I think we had better hear your story first. Don't you, you fellows?"

"My hat! I should jolly well think so!" said Cuthbert Gunner warmly, his glance on Mornington's livid face. "There's something fishy here, I fancy!"

The fellows eyed Mornington curiously now. Peele exchanged a wink with Gower and Lattrey. He felt that he understood, if nobody else did.

"Now, Cuffy, old man!" said Jimmy Silver quietly. "What's this about Biggs being tied to a tree? You said that—"

"I will certainly explain, my dear Silver," said Clarence, quite pleased at having an interested audience for once. "As I was explaining, I was following Mornington. I followed deep into the woods, being led onwards by the sound of someone—two or more persons, it seemed to me—advancing ahead. They stopped at last, and then," proceeded Cuffy impressively, "to my utter alarm and distress I discovered Biggs tied hand and foot to a tree, with a butcher's apron over his head."

"Wha-at?" "There was a buzz of amazement from the Fourth-Formers. "You—you don't mean that, Cuffy?"

"Most decidedly! And standing before Biggs was that wicked youth, Bagnall, of Coombe! As I watched him I saw him remove the apron from Biggs' unfortunate head, and then he went away. Recovering from my natural alarm, I at once ran to Biggs and released him."

"Well, my hat!" "Who the confederate of Bagnall was I cannot say," proceeded Clarence mildly. "He must have disappeared the moment before I appeared upon the scene. It is a most remarkable occurrence, is it not, my dear fellows?"

"Phew!" "It is very strange that you did not see them, my dear Mornington," said Clarence, blinking amiably at the black-browed schemer. "Very strange indeed! Your disappearance was most remarkable. However, I have found you now, and I am exceedingly pleased to have been so useful this afternoon!"

And Clarence Cuffy handed Mornington his gold cuff-link. Mornington took it almost mechanically. He could feel—though he dared not look round—the scores of suspicious eyes fastened upon him.

The silence was broken by Tubby Muffin. "He, he, he! I say, Morny," he giggled, "where did you disappear to? There's a whole lot of grease on your coat-sleeve, old chap. Is it off Bagnall's apron?"

"You—you fat rotter!" hissed Mornington, almost beside himself with bitter rage and mortification. "Why, I'll— I'll—"

He made a sudden spring at the cackling Tubby Muffin, but Jimmy Silver jumped between and pushed him back.

"No, you don't!" snapped Jimmy, his eyes gleaming scornfully. "I fancy Muffin's hit the nail on the head! Where is Biggs now? We'll deal with this matter when Biggs arrives!"

"Here he is!" said Dick Oswald suddenly. "Oh, good!"

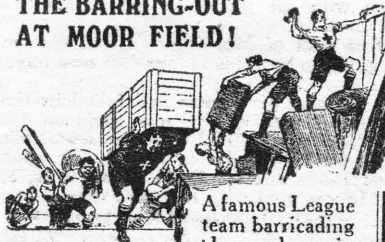
Through the trees a youth came dashing up breathlessly. It was Albert Biggs, right enough.

Mornington gave one look at the gardener's boy, and then he started to take off his coat.

But the dandy of the Fourth was bowled out. He knew that no further evidence was needed by the juniors; their looks were condemning already. Mornington had failed, and there was nothing left but to fight it out. He was no coward, and he would fight to the last gasp. But Mornington's heart was bitter, and his rage made him tremble from head to foot.

(Continued on next page.)

THE BARRING-OUT AT MOOR FIELD!



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"Here you are, Biggs!" said Jimmy Silver, handing the gardener's boy the gloves and eyeing the youth closely. "Why are you so late?"

"I'm sorry, sir!" panted Biggs, giving Mornington one long, searching glance. "But some fellows collared me and tied me to a tree in the woods. An' I 'ad to go to the village for Mister Babbage after that. It weren't my fault. This 'ere young gent with the specs will tell you all about it!"

"Yes, indeed!" observed Clarence, stepping forward again. "I must remark—"

"No you won't!" said Jimmy Silver. "You've had your innings, old chap. Run away and play! Now, Morny, before we make a start I'd like to ask you a question. Biggs was collared, and it looks to me as if it, was just to keep him away from the fight. Do you know anything about it?"

Mornington drew a deep breath.

Nothing could be proved against him, unless Butcher Bagnall chose to give him away, and the butcher's boy was unlikely to do that. But—

Mornington's eyes blazed recklessly. He knew that whether he admitted it or not, the fellows had already made up their minds on the question.

"You want to know?" he asked sneeringly.

"Yes—and I mean to find out sooner or later!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "These sort of tricks won't do for Rookwood."

"Then I'll tell you!" hissed Mornington, his face ablaze with reckless passion. "I was the fellow who helped Bagnall, and I paid him a quid for the job. So put that in your dashed pipe and smoke it—and hang the lot of you!"

"That's enough!" snapped Jimmy. "If you're ready Biggs is. And I hope he gives you the thundering good thrashing you deserve, you rank outsider!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm ready!"

Mornington slipped on his gloves and jumped into the ring. Biggs faced him, his gloves dropping as Mornington refused to shake.

"Time!" snapped Jimmy Silver.

The Fight!

THE crowd of excited fellows closed in breathlessly as Jimmy Silver called out the word.

Knowing the bitter feelings in Mornington's breast and Biggs' deep, seething indignation at the cruel, unjust treatment he had received at Morny's hands, the juniors expected an exciting, gruelling fight.

And they were not disappointed.

Mornington was flying at his enemy in a flash, scarcely waiting for the word. Biggs awaited his onslaught coolly, his arms, brown and sinewy, showing up in striking contrast to the white arms of the dandy of the Fourth.

There was not much to choose between the two in height, weight, or reach. But the knowledge that Biggs was the son of a bruiser—a fellow who had been trained by his father almost from the cradle—made success for Mornington very doubtful indeed, despite the fact that he was one of the best men with the gloves in the Lower School at Rookwood.

But that first rush of Mornington's told that something else was not going to be in his favour—his own ungovernable temper.

The knowledge that his scheme had failed by the merest, unlooked-for fluke—that it was now common knowledge, and that his rascally trick had filled his schoolfellows with contempt and scorn—was bitter indeed. It made Mornington more reckless and careless than anything else could have done. He was mad with rage and shame.

Since learning that Biggs could box, Morny had realised he would need all his skill, all his coolness and self-control to hope to hold his own against the gardener's boy.

But he forgot all that now—or, if he did think of it, he did not heed or care.

He came on with a whirling rush, and smashed a blow at Biggs that would have felled the lad instantly had it struck him.

It didn't reach its mark, however, for Biggs' head moved a trifle, and the blow slid past him. As it did so Biggs' right flashed out, hitting Morny's chin with a jolt that rocked the junior from head to foot.

By a miracle Morny kept his feet, and as he swayed, a second slam went home under his left ear.

This time Mornington simply crumpled up and went crashing down.

"Begging and praying for it!" remarked Dick Oswald. "My hat, Morny's going to finish it quickly, as he said he would!"

There was a grim chuckle, and the dandy of the Fourth crimsoned as he heard it. Before three had been counted he was on his feet again, his hands up.

Biggs made no attempt to attack him, and Morny took the lead again swiftly enough.

"Steady, you fool!" called Peele.

But Morny ignored the call, wise as it undoubtedly was. He had fully intended to be careful—very, very careful. He had vowed, as he scrambled up after that severe shaking up, that he would control his savage temper and keep cool. But it was beyond him.

A tap on his nose from Biggs' left did it.

He went for Biggs like a whirlwind again, and Biggs smiled grimly and backed away, his brown, flexible arms taking every blow, his head moving easily.

A sudden jolt pulled the dandy of the Fourth up sharp—a right hook that nearly lifted him off his feet again. It was followed with dazzling swiftness by two more of the same kind. Mornington rocked on his feet, frantically defending himself to little purpose. And then—

The call of "Time!" undoubtedly saved him.

Mornington sank down on a fallen tree, viciously shoving aside the sponge Peele was offering.

"I'm all right!" he panted.

"You silly fool!" muttered Peele. "You're simply chucking the game away! You won't last another round at this rate! For goodness' sake, pull yourself together and control your rotten temper! Why, Muffin could put up a better show than that!"

Mornington ground his teeth. He knew only too well that unless he pulled himself together, he was hopelessly beaten, though he had a bitter feeling that whatever he did that would happen. It was a feeling shared by every fellow there, and he knew it. He knew—he felt almost certain—that, if he had cared to, Biggs could easily have finished the fight in the first few seconds.

Mornington started the next round more cautiously, leaving the attack to Biggs this time. And he showed some of his own style, keeping Biggs off by desperate defence, though again he had the feeling that Biggs was only playing with him—that he could have got through the defence if he had liked. The thought filled Mornington with seething rage and mortification.

"I wish Biggs would finish it!" said Jimmy Silver to Raby. "This is— Oh, my hat! Good for you, Morny!"

An involuntary cry of approval escaped Jimmy. Morny had attacked with amazing suddenness, and his first blow slammed through Biggs' defence. It caught the garden-boy clean under the chin, sending his head back with a jerk.

It seemed to daze the youth, and before he had recovered Mornington sailed in with a fury and vigour that was as swift as it was unexpected.

A final right-hander with all Morny's weight behind it sent Biggs crashing down.

"One—two—three—four—"

Jimmy Silver suddenly ceased counting. Biggs was on his feet now. His lip was bleeding, and a bruise showed over his right eye, though Morny was in a far worse state already.

They were at it again next second, but Biggs had had his lesson. Morny did not touch him for the rest of the round, and Morny himself received severe punishment as he strove to follow up his brief success.

"Don't take him too easily, Biggs!" whispered Tommy Dodd warningly, as he fanned the gardener's boy's heated face. "He might easily have got you for good that time! If he once feels his feet, you won't find it too easy to lick him!"

"It won't 'appen agen!" said Biggs.

Nor did it. Biggs up to now had shown little of what he could do in attack, though his defence had been superb. So far there had been little excitement, but now a change came over the fight.

It was very clear to all in the next round that Biggs had decided to dally no longer. His face was set hard, and he took the offensive at once.

Desperately Morny tried all he knew to defend himself against the attack. Back he went, struggling desperately, while Biggs rained blows upon him ruthlessly.

Crash!

A left hook sent Morny crashing down, but he was up again in a flash, a look of almost vicious determination on his face. Biggs was on him at once, punching hard, his defence never at a loss, driving the Rookwood junior round and round the ring.

Again Mornington went crashing down, and again he scrambled up, panting and bruised, but game enough.

"Go it! Oh, good man, Biggs!"

"Finish it, man!"

The Rookwood fellows had been loth to shout for Biggs—at least, they were loth to shout against a Rookwood man. But they did now, for the fight was warming up in real earnest.

"Time!"

It was lucky for Morny that it came just then, for he was staggering and obviously helpless, though he was still game.

Biggs danced into the ring as fresh as paint when the call came for the next round, but Morny was groggy. He was blinking dazedly, and he staggered a little as he retreated before Biggs.

Only Mornington's iron determination seemed to be keeping him on his feet. A stinging right-hander on the nose brought tears to his eyes, and his temper, which until now, since Peele's warning, he had held under control to some extent, suddenly blazed out.

Throwing all caution aside, Mornington went for the cool, steady Biggs like a cyclone, his exhaustion forgotten in a fit of ungovernable passion.

But Biggs eluded him like a will-o'-the-wisp by a dazzling display of swift footwork. Then, swinging backwards, he brought his left across with a wicked hook that sent Morny spinning.

That was the beginning of the end for the dandy of the Fourth. The sheer fury of that brief attack had exhausted him beyond belief. Following that wicked punch, Biggs set his lips and sailed in in deadly earnest. Morny retreated, desperately, vainly trying to avoid the rain of blows to face, ribs, and head that landed with deadly force.

Then came another of those wicked left hooks, apparently from nowhere—or so it seemed to the hapless Morny. It took the reeling junior clean under the chin, to send him crashing down on his back.

Biggs waited, his chest heaving slightly. But Morny lay there, a sea of excited faces swimming around him. Twice he struggled to rise, and each time he fell back helplessly. Jimmy Silver's voice went on steadily.

It finished at last, and Biggs reached for his jacket. Mornington strove desperately to pull himself together, seemingly unconscious of the fact that he was counted out.

"I'm not done yet!" he panted huskily. "I—"

"You're counted out!" said Jimmy Silver quietly. "The fight's over, Mornington. Biggs wins!"

"I—I— Hang you!" panted Morny.

He stared about him dazedly. Peele and Gower grasped him and helped him to his feet. Gower handed him his jacket.

"I—I'm not done!" stammered Morny. "I—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Peele roughly. "Dash it all, can't you see you've been licked, Morny? Blessed if I ever saw a chap put up such a footling scrap! What in thunder was the matter with you? Your rotten temper, I suppose!"

Mornington gave his "friend" a bitter, savage look—though he could scarcely see through either of his half-closed, swollen eyes. But he said nothing more.

He was beaten—hopelessly beaten! He knew he had not fought as he was capable of fighting. But at the same time he knew also that for most of the fight Biggs had also not done anything like what he might have done. He had played with him—could have knocked him out in the first round had he wanted to. He had not seemed to take the fight seriously—until the last.

It was bitter, humiliating knowledge to the dandy of the Fourth.

He was defeated, at all events—there was no doubting that. It was what he had feared—what every fellow there had expected, though they had certainly expected Morny to make a better show than he had done.

The fellows were moving away now, some of them looking disappointed, many of them wearing mocking grins. Biggs had his jacket on, and he came across to Morny and held out a hand frankly.

"I'm sorry it had to be, Master Mornington," he said quietly. "But I 'opes—"

"Get out, you hound!" gritted Mornington, and he dashed the proffered hand away viciously.

Biggs half raised his fist, and then he dropped it and turned away, flushing.

"You—you rotten cad!" snapped Jimmy Silver. He had little sympathy for Mornington even in his hour of bitter defeat after that. "Now, look here, you rotter! There's been more than enough of this sort of thing. Now let's have no more of your rotten trickery, Morny. Biggs has licked you, and he's licked you in fair fight. But he's still a servant here and he can't defend himself against a fellow who's cad enough to take advantage of his position. I give you fair warning, Morny, if you don't leave the kid alone then you'll be made to. Understand?"

Mornington's eyes burned.

He could scarcely stand or see. He had received terrific punishment, and he was a sight. But his deadly glare of animosity told Jimmy Silver that his words of warning were wasted.

"We'll see!" Mornington muttered hoarsely. "I'm not done yet! I know who I've to thank for all this, and I'm not likely to forget! I've been beaten all along the line, but my turn will come! And that—that sneakin', crawling guttersnipe shall know it when it does!"

Jimmy Silver did not reply; he turned his back, without a word, and joined his chums standing a few yards away. Biggs had already departed, and Jimmy Silver & Co. followed the crowd back to Rookwood. The fight was over, Mornington had been thrashed. But instead of clearing the air, as all had hoped, it had only filled the wilful, head-strong Mornington with a stronger and more bitter hatred for Erroll's protegee than before.

Not Beaten Yet!

"PEELE, old bean!"

No answer!

"Gower, old nut!"

No answer!

Valentine Mornington smiled mockingly.

Tea was over in the study occupied by Peele, Gower, and Mornington—at least, it was over as far as Mornington was concerned.

That junior had not felt like tea that afternoon.

He had gone to the study after a prolonged visit to the bath-room, and he had flung himself down in the arm-chair, sick with misery and bitter humiliation.

The dandy of the Fourth's body felt a mass of bruises, and his face certainly was. His nose was puffed and red, and both his eyes were swollen and discoloured. He ached in every limb, and his head felt like lead.

But the hurts Mornington had received in that gruelling fight troubled him little—he scarcely gave them a thought. His thoughts were too full of the position in which he now found himself.

He had been licked—hopelessly thrashed by the fellow he despised—or affected to despise—and hated with a fierce hatred. He had been thrashed in public—thrashed by a servant belonging to Rookwood—a fellow he had done his best—or worst—to get "shifted" from the school by trickery and treachery.

(Continued on next page.)

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But that was not all. Mornington had been exposed in public once again—exposed and condemned by his fellows for a trick that he knew full well was mean and contemptible. He had tried, by bribing a villager, to keep Biggs away from the fight because he knew Biggs would thrash him.

And he had failed. All he had gained was the scorn and contempt of all who knew him at Rookwood.

Even now, as Mornington crouched in the armchair, his brow black, his mind full of bitter, savage thoughts, he tried to excuse himself, tried to justify himself. But it was a failure. Deep in his heart he knew that it was his own folly—his own stupid, unreasoning jealousy, his savage and ungovernable temper, and suspicious mind. He tried to tell himself that his rival for Erroll's friendship had triumphed—that Biggs had won, had taken away his friend as he had suspected would happen from the first.

But he knew it was not true; he knew that he himself had lost his friend through his own wayward, wilful attitude.

Yet though Mornington knew it he would not admit it. His mind seethed with bitter malice and outraged pride against the fellow who had thrashed him so soundly. There was neither remorse nor regret in Mornington's mind—quite the reverse. It was of plans of revenge—of still further schemes that Mornington was thinking as he crouched in the armchair, his half-closed eyes glinting.

He had scarcely realised the flight of time until Peele and Gower came in. Then he realised that he had had no tea, and that his study-mates had not been in for tea, either.

Mornington felt in a flash that he could guess why, and he looked at the faces of his study-mates as they came in. Both gave him a quick, stealthy glance, and then averted their faces. Mornington spoke to them at last, his old, mocking smile returning to his face. The dandy of the Fourth was far too proud to show the bitterness of his feelings.

But neither Peele nor Gower answered him. They both silently got their caps, and were going out, when Mornington jumped up, kicked the door shut with his foot, and stood with his back to it.

His study-mates eyed him uneasily.

"What's this game?" asked Mornington coolly, though he was quivering with rage. "Lost your dashed tongues?"

Peele hesitated, and then, with a glance at Gower, spoke.

"I—I'm sorry, Morny," he stammered. "It—it's none of our doing, of course, and—we don't approve of it. But—but the fellows have sent you to Coventry for a week."

"I thought so!" sneered Mornington. "You—supposed to be my pals—are keeping it up, of course?"

Peele shrugged his shoulders, avoiding Morny's glinting eye.

"You know we can't do anything else, Morny," he said uneasily. "We should get a Form-licking if we did otherwise. If—if anyone heard me now—"

"So that's why you funked coming in to tea?" smiled Morny. "Very good, old beans! You can go out—and stay out! If you come in again I shall treat you like this!"

Mornington opened the door, and grabbing the startled Peele, sent him whirling out into the passage, to crash against the opposite wall. The next moment Gower was flying out after him.

(For the continuation of this grand serial, chums, see next week's GEM.)

LOWTHER'S LOVE AFFAIR!

(Continued from page 23.)

Monty Lowther whistled.

In the excitement of the last half an hour he had clean forgotten about his task in the Form-room.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "I'd better nip back and get on with it, before old Linton looks in."

And as the juniors listened to that rational remark they were unanimous in their opinion that Cardew's "cure" was a certainty.

Five minutes later Monty Lowther was back in the Form-room. But he did not work. He was going over the amazing events of that short half-hour when he had "courted" the wrong Daphne. It had been a stupendous jape against him—that, there was no denying. But it had served to bring the love-lorn Lowther to his senses. He blushed as he thought of the ridiculous figure he must have cut in the eyes of his Form-fellows. The poetry, the "proposal" to the mirror in the dormitory, his clumsiness and confusion in the presence of the fair Daphne.

"I've been a silly ass!" muttered Lowther. "I can see it now. Why, playing the silly goat like that might have meant that I would lose Miss Daphne's friendship for ever."

The thought of that was very disturbing to the Shell junior, for deep in his heart was still, naturally, a genuine attachment for Miss Daphne. But it was a normal liking and respect that held no place for impassioned verses, proposals, and an engagement at the tender age of fifteen. Lowther blushed again as he thought of the engagement.

"Oh, my hat!" he murmured. "I wonder what the pater and mater would have said to that?"

Really, until now, Lowther had never given that very important matter a thought. But it had come home to him with more force than ever that his mad infatuation for Cousin Ethel's charming friend had led him into a number of indiscretions that he would have condemned in any other fellow of his own age.

"Never again!" he said aloud, as he stared out of the window. "Miss Daphne's a charming girl, and I like her immensely, and I'm jolly glad I haven't made a fool of myself in front of her."

From which it seemed likely that Monty Lowther had come down to earth, so to speak.

Indeed, when, a fortnight later, Cousin Ethel paid another visit to St. Jim's, she brought Daphne with her. Monty Lowther was, of course, invited to the tea that followed, and the members of the party watched him curiously to see what would happen. But nothing out of the ordinary occurred. True, Monty was very attentive to the fair Miss Daphne, but he didn't upset the tea-things, or gaze at her as if in a trance, or generally act like one who is said to be a "hopeless case."

In short, Monty Lowther behaved himself like a normal human being, which meant another feather in Cardew's cap. For, to place a "spoony" schoolboy next to the girl of his heart after one dose of the "medicine," and to see the said schoolboy emerge from that trying ordeal absolutely unscathed, said a lot for the efficacy of Cardew's medicine, whatever his method of administering it.

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, chums, entitled: "ACHUM'S TEST!" Make sure of reading it by ordering your GEM well in advance.)

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