

The

GEM

2^d

No. 1,067.
Vol. XXXIV.
July 28th, 1928.

EVERY
WEDNESDAY.

LIBRARY



**A TASTE OF HIS OWN
MEDICINE!**

*(A "compelling" incident from this
week's splendid school story of St. Jim's.)*

A ROUSING LONG YARN OF TOM MERRY & CO., AT ST. JIM'S—

IN HONOUR

by
Martin Clifford

Generations of D'Arcys have fought and bled for their country and their honour, but none has shown more courage in the face of odds than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth at St. Jim's, who takes all the limelight in this week's rousing school yarn!

CHAPTER 1. A Windfall for Wally!

"I T'S rotten!"

It was Cutts, of the Fifth Form, at St. Jim's, who made that remark.

Gerald Cutts was in a bad temper!

There was nothing very uncommon about that fact. Cutts was frequently in a bad temper. As Monty Lowther of the Shell had once remarked, Cutts generally went about St. Jim's looking as if he had swallowed his last sixpence. But this time, Cutts was in a worse temper than usual.

"Hang Ratty!"

Cutts' brow was like thunder as he made that exclamation.

He glared at the study carpet. But he was thinking of Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the Fifth.

It was not exactly unusual for Fifth-Formers to feel annoyed with Mr. Ratcliff. That irascible gentleman was by no means popular with the fellows who had the doubtful pleasure of working under his acid authority. Cutts had many a time and oft said hard things about Mr. Ratcliff. But at the moment he could scarcely find words for his feelings. Could he have chosen Mr. Ratcliff's fate just then, it would have been something lingering, with boiling oil in it.

The door opened, and St. Leger came in.

"What's up?" asked St. Leger.

That something was "up" was obvious from Cutts' black brows.

Cutts glared at his study-mate.

"You ought to know!" he snarled. "Hang it, you've not forgotten I'm giving that party to-night?"

"Rather not. Knox is comin', isn't he?"

"Yes!"

"But why the worried brow, old man? Aren't you pleased old Knox is comin'? Dash it, it ain't often that Sixth-Formers—"

"You ass! It's not that! Didn't I tell you about that stuff I'm getting in for the party?"

"Yes, but—"

"And weren't you in the same giddy class-room with me when Ratty dropped on me for dozing—"

"Anyone would have dozed!" grinned St. Leger. "Livy may have been a cheery old bird when he lived hundreds of years ago, but his books ain't exactly snappy readin' these days."

"Ratty doesn't see it that way," snarled Cutts. "He gave me five hundred lines to do by tea-time! Hang him! And that means I can't go into Rylcombe to get that parcel for to-night."

"Oh!"

St. Leger understood.

"That's rotten," he said. "I'd have gone, but my foot's still a bit gammy, after that slip I had yesterday on the stairs."

"I know it is, you ass!" growled Cutts. "That's the trouble! I've got to get that rotten parcel, somehow. But I daren't risk not getting those lines done, and I can't get 'em done if I go into the village. Blow Ratty!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned St. Leger. "Carried unan—"

"I'll have to get some kid to go for me."

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St. Leger looked doubtful.

"You'll be lucky if you can," he said. "Those fags are such cheeky little sweeps when the Fifth ask them to do anythin'. If I had my way, the Fifth would have fags."

"Well, you've not got your way!" said Cutts surlily. "So don't waste time jawing!"

He rose to his feet.

"I'll see what I can do," he growled, and left the study. In the Hall, Cutts ran into Blake & Co. of the Fourth.

It was a half-holiday, but since there was no cricket that afternoon the chums of Study No. 6 were off for a ramble in Rylcombe Woods. They glanced round in surprise when Cutts hailed them.

"Hallo, Cutty?" grinned Jack Blake. "Wherefore the worried frown?"

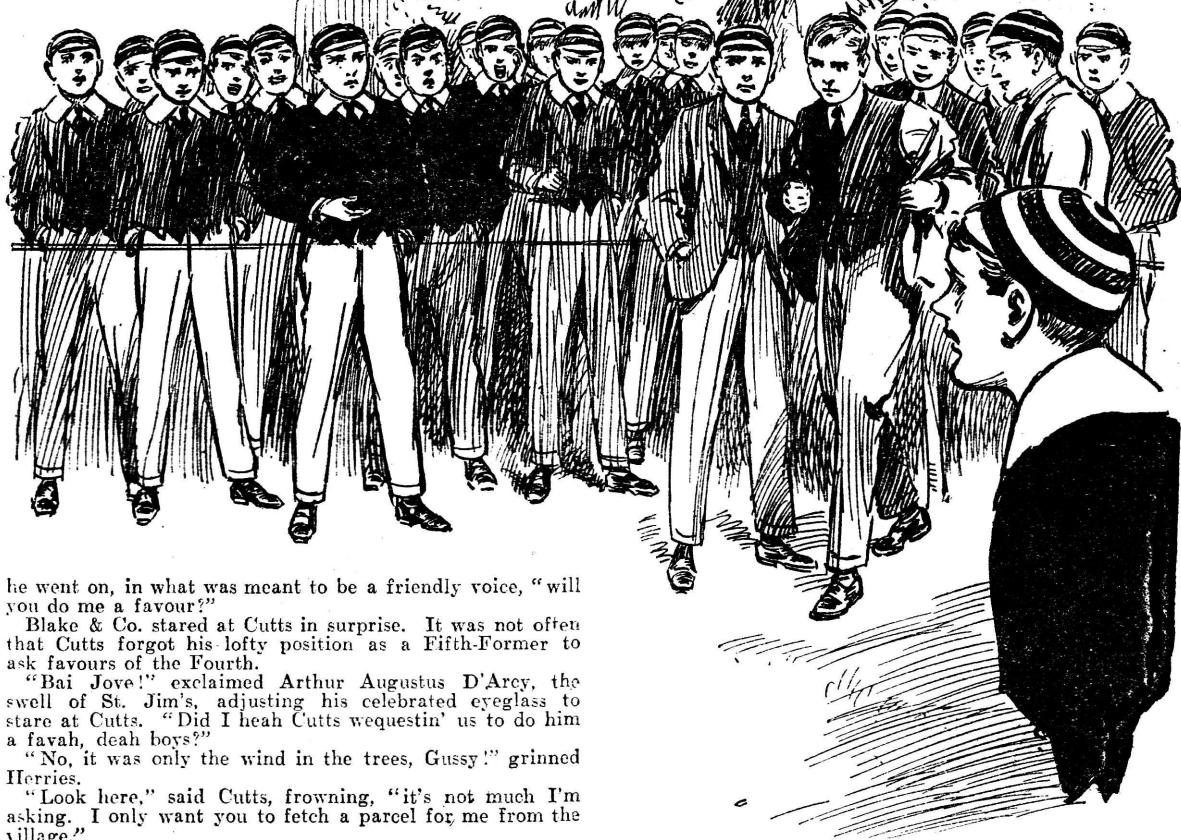
"Still backing gee-gees that get cramp half-way?" asked Robert Arthur Digby humorously.

It was well known at St. Jim's that Cutts, the black sheep of the School House, had dealings with shady racing men in the village. That was only one of Cutts' dingy black-guardisms.

"Shut up!" growled Cutts angrily. "Look here, kids,"

—STARRING ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY OF THE FOURTH!

BOUND!



he went on, in what was meant to be a friendly voice, "will you do me a favour?"

Blake & Co. stared at Cutts in surprise. It was not often that Cutts forgot his lofty position as a Fifth-Former to ask favours of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, adjusting his celebrated eyeglass to stare at Cutts. "Did I heah Cutts wequestin' us to do him a favah, deah boys?"

"No, it was only the wind in the trees, Gussy!" grinned Herries.

"Look here," said Cutts, frowning, "it's not much I'm asking. I only want you to fetch a parcel for me from the village."

"Sorry, Cutts, we're not going to the village," chuckled Blake. "We're going to Rylcombe Woods. Even if we were going to the village, I dunno that we'd want to start collecting parcels!"

"We're not giddy postmen!" growled Herries.

"Weally, Cutts, I wegard your wequest as wathah cheeky!" said Gussy with dignity.

Had the request come from some other fellow than Gerald Cutts, Blake & Co. might have been only too ready to oblige. But there was no love lost between Study No. 6 and Cutts of the Fifth. Cutts would certainly never have stirred a finger to oblige them. So they did not see why they should go out of their way to oblige Cutts!

"Look here, you kids——"

"Can't. Your face hurts the eyes," said Blake gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you young sweeps!" roared Cutts.

"Naughty temper!" said Dig reprovingly, shaking a finger.

"All I want——" went on Cutts angrily.

"Is a bar of soap and a sponge!" grinned Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake & Co. turned away, chuckling, and vanished into the quad, leaving Cutts glaring after them.

There was a sep behind the Fifth-Former, and Reggie Manners of the Third appeared.

"Hi, kid!"

Reggie Manners halted abruptly when Cutts hailed him. He eyed Cutts warily. Reggie knew Cutts!

"You've got to go into the village for me, young

Manners." growled Cutts. "See? If you don't, I'll give you a good licking!"

"Go and eat coke!" bawled Reggie Manners, more loudly than politely, and he turned and bolted as Cutts made a furious grab at him.

Cutts snorted.

There was another step in the Hall. It was Kit Wildrake, the boy from British Columbia.

"I say! Wildrake!"

Wildrake, heading for the quad, glanced at Cutts in surprise.

"Going out?" murmured Cutts affably. "I want a parcel fetched from the village. Would you mind——"

"I should mind," nodded Wildrake cheerily. "Good-bye!"

And the Canadian junior vanished into the quad.

"I say! Clive!"

Sidney Clive had appeared from the stairs, accompanied by Levison.

"I want a parcel fetched from the village, Clive. I know you wouldn't object to obliging me——"

"Wrong again!" grinned Clive. "So long, Cutts!"

Clive and Levison vanished into the quad also.

Cutts seemed out of luck! He breathed hard.

"Hallo! It's Cutty-Wutty! How's Gerald?" sang out a cheery voice.

It was Monty Lowther, of the Shell.

Cutts looked round quickly. Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther, had come along, arm-in-arm. The Terrible Three had promised to join Blake & Co. for the ramble in

Rylcombe Woods, and they looked very healthy and cheery. Cutts eyed them doubtfully. He had not much hope that he could make use of the Terrible Three.

The Terrible Three were not nearly fond enough of Gerald Cutts to want to oblige him! However, he could but try.

"I say, you kids," said Cutts, in as friendly a voice as he could assume, "are you going out?"

Since Tom Merry & Co. had their caps on and were heading for the quad, the question was really a little unnecessary.

"Oh, no!" said Tom Merry gravely. "We've only got caps on because we mean to stay in all the afternoon."

Lowther and Manners chuckled. Cutts flushed angrily.

"You're very funny!" he snarled.

"Not half so funny as you!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"In fact, there's nothing quite so funny as you, Cutts. Your face, frinstance—"

Cutts controlled himself with an effort.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "I want a parcel fetched from the village. If you are going into the village, I'd be obliged if you'd get it for me."

The Terrible Three looked at one another, after which Tom Merry winked at his chums.

"What about it, you chaps?" he said gravely.

Cutts' face brightened.

"Always nice to oblige old Cutts," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Rather!" agreed Manners.

"But fair's fair," said Tom Merry. "Look here, Cutts, we'll do this favour for you if you'll do a favour for us."

"What's that?" asked Cutts.

"Nothing much," said the junior captain of St. Jim's airily. "While we're fetching your parcel, we'll expect you to buzz up to our study and clean it up a bit. Black the grate, sweep the chimney, scrub the floor, beat the carpet, lay in a spread for tea—at your expense—do our prep, oil our cricket bats, clean the boots, dust our clothes, and—"

He broke off in apparent surprise.

"Here, where are you off to, Cutts?"

But Gerald Cutts wasn't waiting to hear any more. He strode off with a thunderous brow, and if looks could have killed, Tom Merry would have dropped dead on the spot.

"Don't go!" pleaded Monty Lowther. "Give us one last loving look!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Cutts did not give one last loving look. He stamped away, leaving the chums of Study No. 10 to go their way, grinning cheerily.

Cutts was getting desperate. If he did not start his lines very soon, they would not be ready by tea-time. And that would mean facing the wrath of Mr. Rateliff. And "Ratty's" wrath was not a thing to be faced lightly.

"Hang it!" muttered Cutts, between his teeth. "I—"

He broke off, his eyes lighting up.

Four fags had come into view.

They were Wally D'Arcy, Levison minor, Curly Gibson, and Jameson, and they were looking rather doleful.

As a matter of fact, the four Third-Formers had planned to go to the pictures that afternoon at Rylcombe. But at the last minute they had discovered that they only had twopenny and a three-halfpenny stamp between them! Hence their gloomy faces.

Cutts turned towards them.

After his experience with Reggie Manners, Cutts resolved to try different tactics. Anyway, he knew that Wally D'Arcy was not the kind who could be bullied into doing things. With a would-be friendly smile, Cutts planted himself in the path of the fags.

"Half a minute, kids!" he said.

The "kids" halted. Wally D'Arcy eyed Cutts suspiciously.

"What's wrong with you?" growled the cheeky leader of the fag tribe. He did not like Cutts.

"Do you want to earn five bob, young D'Arcy?"

Wally jumped.

It was just what he did want to do. But his look was still suspicious.

"How?" he asked cautiously.

"Nothing much. I want someone to trot into Rylcombe for me and get a parcel. Are you game?"

Before Wally could answer his friends answered for him.

"You bet Wally's game!" said Curly Gibson.

"He'll go for you, Cutts!" chimed in Jameson.

"Rather!" nodded Frank Levison eagerly. "Let's have the five bob, Cutts."

Wally glared at his companions.

"Shut up!" he roared. "He asked me, didn't he? Not you, you asses! Look here, Cutts, let's see the five bob first."

Cutts produced a couple of half-crowns. The eyes of the Third-Formers gleamed.

"Corn in Egypt!" muttered Curly Gibson. It certainly did seem a stroke of luck for the fags. Even Wally's doubts had vanished. He pocketed the money, with a grin.

"Right-ho, Cutts, old man!" he said cheerily. "I'll fetch your giddy parcel! Where is it? But I won't get it if it's cigarettes," he added, with a sudden return of his suspicions. "I know you're a shady rotter—"

Cutts glared at him.

"You cheeky little sweep!" he roared. "How dare you?"

"Keep your wool on!" said Wally coolly. "It's not cigarettes, is it?"

"No!" snarled Cutts. "This parcel is waiting for me at Tilley's, the jobmaster in Rylcombe, you know. Say I sent you. Half a minute—I'll scribble a note."

The Fifth-Former took out a pencil and scribbled on the leaf of a notebook, which he tore out and folded, handing it to Wally.

"There you are. Give Tilley that."

"Right you are, old son!" said Wally cheerfully. "Come on, you chaps! Wouldn't do to be seen here talking to a Fifth-Former—we've got the honour of the Third to think of."

"Why, you cheeky young sweep—"

Wally & Co. moved off towards the steps that led down into the quad, looking very pleased with themselves. They would be able to go to the pictures after all, now.

Gerald Cutts watched them disappear, with an odd look on his unpleasant face. Then he turned and made for the Fifth Form passage.

It was time he began "Ratty's" lines. But even with that prospect ahead of him, he looked quite cheerful, now that he had arranged for the fetching of his mysterious parcel!

CHAPTER 2.

Cutts' Parcel!

"W EALLY, deah boys, I'm beginnin' to feel watah hungwy!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who made that observation.

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. had covered a good many miles in their ramble that afternoon, and they were one and all feeling as D'Arcy felt—rather hungry! In fact, that was quite a mild way of putting it.

"Rather hungry!" echoed Blake. "My hat! I feel as if I could eat the legs off a dining-room table."

"I could give a boa-constrictor a start of ten puddings, and then out-eat him!" groaned Monty Lowther. "What about you, Tommy?"

"I feel jolly peckish, too!" laughed Tom Merry. "I vote we make tracks for Rylcombe now, and have a good feed at Mrs. Murphy's tuckshop."

"Good wheeze!" nodded Blake.

"Yaas; let's make twacks for Mrs. Murphay's, deah boys," agreed D'Arcy.

The juniors were not far from the village, luckily, and it did not take long for them to reach the High Street. By the time they entered the tuckshop, however, their appetites were raging.

"My tweat, deah boys!" murmured D'Arcy, adjusting his monocle and inspecting carefully the good things on the counter. "Pway leave this to me! Mrs. Murphay, two dozen of those tarts, please, and—yes, one dozen two dozen doughnuts, please, and—yes, one dozen mewinges, please, Mrs. Murphay. That sultana cake looks pwetty wippin'—I'll have that, too."

"Steady on, Gussy—don't buy up the shop!" grinned Digby. "There are only seven of us—not a regiment!"

D'Arcy smiled upon him benevolently.

"My deah Dig, pway leave this to me. I feel hungwy enough for a wement myself!"

It was Gussy's way to stand treat on a lavish scale. But Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. couldn't help wondering if they would be able to get through all the good things that D'Arcy had provided for them. Still, they meant to do their best!

"These jam-tarts are ripping!" mumbled Monty Lowther, with his mouth full.

It is not supposed to be polite to speak with one's mouth full; but Monty was too hungry to worry about that.

The chums of the School House need not have worried as to whether or not they could polish off D'Arcy's lavish spread; for help was shortly at hand.

"Hallo, hallo! Look who's here!"

It was the cheery voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's minor.

Wally, Curly Gibson, Levison minor, and Jameson were

grinning in at the tuckshop doorway. Wally nodded to his major.

"Hallo, old hoss!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy frowned slightly as he adjusted his eyeglass to survey his grinning minor. Arthur Augustus did not approve of his young brother referring to him as "old hoss." It was always a sore point with Gussy that his minor quite failed to show more respect for the lofty position of his major as a Fourth-Former.

Wally stepped into the tuckshop. "Come on, you kids!" he sang out cheerily. "Here's old Gussy standing treat! I s'pose we're invited, Gussy?"

But before his major could have a chance of replying Wally had sat down at the table; and, at his command, his three pals sat down with him.

Gussy gasped. "Weally, you young scamp—" "Those meringues look prime," said Wally thoughtfully. "Pass 'em over, Tom Merry."

The leader of the Shell smiled and passed them over. Gussy's friends were all grinning as they watched his aristocratic face. But Gussy was not grinning—far from it!

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another and grinned. "So Cutts got someone to fetch his giddy parcel, after all!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "He had the cheek to suggest that we fetched it!"

"Same here!" chimed in Digby. "He asked us, too. Beastly cheek!"

"Don't like mixing with Cutts," went on Wally. "He's a shady rotter! Besides, the Third don't care to mix with the Fifth—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "But five bob's five bob, you know," said Curly Gibson. "So Wally fetched Cutts' rotten parcel."

"So we see," said Tom Merry, glancing at the brown



Wally snatched up the cream bun and flung it wrathfully at Curly Gibson, but the bun landed fairly in the eye of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy! Squelch! "Ow! Oh! Bai Jove—" howled the swell of St. Jim's. (See Chapter 2.)

"Weally, Wally, I wegard your mannaahs as fwightfully—"

"After you vith the jam-tarts, Blake!" sang out Wally. "What's that, Gussy?"

"I wegard your disgwaceful wudeness with howwor!" said Gussy bitingly. "Weally, Wally, I nevah invited—"

"These tarts are ripping!" murmured Wally. "Try one, young Levison!"

Gussy glared at his minor. "Wally!"

"Get it off your chest, old hoss!"

"You deserve a fwightful thwashin'! Your mannaahs are a disgwace to the D'Arcys! To join at a spwead before you are pwoperly invited is fwightfully wude! I—"

"Sorry!" said Wally amiably. "But you would have invited us, eh?"

"Of course. I should certainly have suggested that you and your fwriends joined us."

"Then you can't grumble," grinned Wally. "'Cause we've joined you just the same. Pass that sultana-cake, please."

And Wally D'Arcy carried on cheerfully, heedless of his major's wrathful look.

"What have you kids been doing with yourselves this afternoon?" asked Tom Merry, smiling.

"Been to the pictures," answered Wally, with his mouth full of sultana-cake. "Bit of luck, that was! We were stony, but old Cutts gave me five bob to fetch a parcel for him."

paper parcel that stood on the table behind Wally. "Hanged if I'd risk a parcel of mine being fetched by the Third!" he added, with a chuckle. "Don't start playing footer with it on the way back, kids, or Cutts'll drop on you!"

"Why, you checky rotter!" said Wally warmly. "If you think the Third can't be trusted—"

At that moment Wally's indignant words were interrupted.

Curly Gibson, in passing the cream-buns to Levison minor, had swung the plate around rather too hastily. One of the cream-buns shot off the edge of the plate and landed on Wally's waistcoat.

There was a yell from Wally.

"You frabjous ass—"

He snatched the sticky mess from his waistcoat and flung it wrathfully at Curly Gibson.

Curly Gibson ducked.

It was lucky for him he did, but it was unlucky for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!

There was a fiendish yell in the tuckshop as the squashy cream-bun caught the swell of St. Jim's in the eye.

"Ow! Yawwoop! Oh! Bai Jove—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You fwightful young wuffian—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wally. "Sorry, old hoss!"

Wiping the sticky mess frantically from his eye, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose in majestic wrath.

"Wally, if it were not for the fact of cweatin' a scene

heah, I should give you a feahful thwashin'! As it is I ordah you to wetiah from these wpremisses!"

"I don't think!" said Wally cheerfully.

"Bai Jove! I ordah—"

"Order away, old hoss!"

"I shall have to administah a feahful thwashin' when we get to St. Jim's unless you do as I ordah!" gasped Gussy.

"Bow-wow!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard. He pushed back his chair and took a step towards his cheeky minor, apparently with the intention of removing Wally by force from the tuckshop.

Wally, in alarm, jumped up, and there was a crash as his chair went flying. It fell against the table behind and sent that flying, too. And with it flew Cutts' parcel.

There was another crash.

"Oh crumbs!" panted Levison minor, as he stared in dismay at the fallen parcel.

Something inside had broken!

"Now you've done it, you ass!" exclaimed Wally, glaring at his major. "I dunno what's in Cutts' rotten parcel, but I heard it smash. You silly chump—"

"Bai Jove! I wefuse to be blamed for that, you young wapscaillon! I uttahly wepudiate all wresponsibility—"

There was a sudden shout from Herries.

"My hat! Look! Cutts' parcel!"

A trail of sticky-looking red liquid was running slowly out on to the floor from the mysterious parcel.

"What the thump—"

Tom Merry stooped over the parcel and stared at the liquid trail closely. Suddenly his face went very stern.

"My only hat!"

He straightened himself and stared round at the others with grim, startled face.

"What's up?" cried Manners quickly, amazed at the look in his chum's eyes.

"My hat!" muttered Tom Merry again. "I knew Cutts was a shady rotter, but I never thought he'd go as far as this! Do you know what that red liquid is, you chaps?"

"N-n-not blood?" whispered young Jameson, rather white in the face.

Tom Merry laughed shortly. He could not help himself, grave though he was looking.

"No, you young ass," he answered. "It's wine! Cutts has been trying to smuggle a bottle of wine into the school! He said he had a party on to-night, you remember; I heard him say so to Gilmore in Hall this morning. That's what it's for. The silly fool! The dingy rotter!"

There was a contemptuous curl to Tom's lips as he spoke in low tones.

"This is the limit!" muttered Manners, after a short silence.

It certainly was the limit—even for Cutts of the Fifth! Smuggled cigarettes, it was well known, found their way to the study of the blackguardly Fifth-Former. That was bad enough to make all the decent fellows at St. Jim's steer clear of Cutts. But a bottle of wine!

It was the limit!

As Tom Merry & Co. realised, no doubt Cutts simply wanted to "show off," to impress his guests with his "dog-gishness," wanted to let them see what a daring "goer" he was. There could be no other reason for his reckless act, for it was very certain that neither he nor his shady friends would have enjoyed the contents of that parcel. It was simply a matter of ridiculous bravado.

And to impress his guests with his "doggishness," Gerald Cutts had gone to the limit!

The faces of the juniors were grim as they stared at one another.

Tom Merry stooped and gathered up the sticky mess of paper, cardboard, and broken glass, and tossed it contemptuously into the fireplace with a grimace.

Even the irrepressible Wally looked serious for once.

"Cutts ought to be hoofed out of St. Jim's!" muttered Blake.

"He ought to have been hoofed out long ago, you mean!" growled Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a sudden soft chuckle from Monty Lowther.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "I've got a wheeze! Let's give Cutts a lesson. We'll get a bottle from Mrs. Murphy, and we'll fill it up ourselves—with red ink and things. Cutts won't know the difference—not till he tastes it!"

"Ha, ha, ha! He'll know then!" chuckled Digby.

"You kids game to deliver the doctored parcel?" asked Monty Lowther. "We'll see Cutts doesn't flay you afterwards."

"You bet we're game!" grinned Wally grimly. "The awful rotter! Why, if we'd been found with that giddy parcel, we might have got sacked!"

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"Bai Jove! Yaas, so you might!" gasped D'Arcy major, a sudden thoughtful look springing into his eyes.

There was still that thoughtful look in the face of the swell of St. Jim's as the others trooped, grinning, from the tuckshop, Monty Lowther carrying under his coat an empty bottle, obtained from Mrs. Murphy, that was destined to hold Cutts' "patent medicine," as Monty had humorously called it.

That grim and thoughtful look was still in D'Arcy's face when they reached St. Jim's. There was a frown upon his noble brow, too.

Gussy was thinking—and thinking hard! But, so far, he was keeping his thoughts to himself.

CHAPTER 3.

Not Nice for Knox!

"SO there you are, you young sweep!"

It was Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth, who spoke.

He had met Wally D'Arcy on the stairs, in the School House.

"Sweep yourself!" growled Wally warmly.

"Cutts sent me along to look for you!" snapped Mellish. "You've been the dickens of a long time fetching his parcel. Give it over!"

Wally handed it over with surprising meekness.

If Cutts had sent Mellish, who was a toady of his, to get the parcel from Wally, Wally was quite willing to hand it over. He did not want to be very much in the limelight concerning that parcel!

Mellish took the parcel and hurried upstairs with it. Wally watched the sneak of the Fourth vanish in the direction of the Fifth Form passage, and grinned.

It was not the first time that Mellish had helped Cutts get things ready for a party, as Wally knew. Mellish, though a Fourth-Former, was to a certain degree "in" with some of the shady seniors. They found him useful, and he, in turn, saw that he got his reward for obliging them.

Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger were alone in the study when Mellish entered with the parcel. Cutts' guests had not yet arrived.

"Got it?" growled Cutts, his eyes gleaming. "Good! I thought young D'Arcy was never going to get back from the village, hang him!"

He took the parcel eagerly, tore off the covering paper and cardboard, and took out the bottle.

"Good!" he grinned. "This will be a surprise for Knox!"

Cutts was, perhaps, speaking truer than he knew! It certainly would be a surprise for Knox! But whether it would be a nice surprise was doubtful.

Cutts glanced round the study. Playing-cards and cigarettes, biscuits and cake, were all ready for the guests. The black sheep of the Fifth nodded with satisfaction.

"Good!" he said. "You can cut now, young Mellish."

Mellish "cut."

"Better get that bottle out of sight, old man," said St. Leger nervously. "It wouldn't be healthy for us if it was spotted."

Cutts nodded, and put the bottle in the cupboard, where cigarettes were ready for the shady seniors, when they wanted them.

A minute later there was a knock on the study door. Prye and Poynings, of the New House, had arrived.

After a few minutes more there was another tap at the door. This time it was Knox of the Sixth.

Knox, the blackguardly prefect of the School House, was the guest of the evening. It was quite an honour for the Fifth-Formers, they felt, to have Knox at their little party. Whether Knox would have accepted Cutts' invitation if he had not expected to fleece them of some money at cards during the evening was rather doubtful. But Cutts & Co. did not realise that.

"A little game of nap, eh?" murmured Cutts, when everyone was settled round the table and the door had been locked. "Have a cigarette, Knox, old man?"

Knox took a cigarette, as did the others, and the game began.

Cutts was feeling very proud of himself. He felt that he was being a very gay dog indeed! Not for a moment did it occur to his limited intelligence how utterly stupid his dingy blackguardism really was.

It was not long before Knox of the Sixth began to win heavily. The "blades" of the Fifth were no match for the cunning of the black sheep of the Sixth.

After a while Cutts pushed back his chair. He was still quite proud of himself, although he had lost quite a lot of money to Knox.

"I've got a little treat for you, Knox, old man," he murmured, with pretended carelessness. "What do you say to a spot of port wine?"

He took from the cupboard the bottle that Mellish had brought to the study. That it was not the same bottle that he had arranged to have left for him at the jobmaster's in Rylcombe never occurred to Cutts for one moment. Such a possibility was very far from his mind.

Even Knox whistled at sight of it.
 "My word, how did you get that in?" he muttered.
 "Easy!" chuckled Cutts. "St. Leger, hand over those glasses, old chap. Ta! Here you are, Knox! You'll like this."

Cutts had already uncorked the bottle, and now he poured out a generous measure into Knox's tumbler, giving the others their share as well.

Knox picked up his glass. He was grinning.
 "You certainly know how to go the pace!" he exclaimed.
 Cutts flushed. He regarded that as a compliment—especially as it came from the Sixth-Former.

"I suppose I am pretty fast!" he agreed fatuously.
 "Hum! Looks a nice colour," said Prye.
 "It is, isn't it?" nodded Cutts. "A real rich colour, I call that. I bet this is tasty stuff!"

He sniffed his glass. It did not smell quite as he had expected it to smell. But he knew nothing about wine, so he said nothing, for fear of showing his ignorance. Knox, too, knew less of those matters than he would have liked to admit. Otherwise, Monty Lowther's hideous mixture would never have deceived him for a moment.

"Well, here goes!" grinned Knox.

He lifted his glass, and to show what a thorough "blade" he was, he tossed off the glassful at a gulp.

The next moment a fiendish yell rang out in the study.

"Ya rooooh!" howled Knox, springing to his feet, one hand clapped over his mouth, his eyes almost starting from their sockets.
 "Ow! Grooooooh! Help! Oh, help! Gerooooooh!"

The others stared at the Sixth-Former in amazement—all but Cutts. He, too, had put the mixture to his lips, and although he had not swallowed so much as Knox, he had swallowed enough to put his glass down hastily and, like Knox, clap a hand over his mouth.
 "Oh, lor!" gasped Cutts. "Ow! Groooh!"

With goggling eyes he glared at the glass from which he had drunk.

"Groooh! I'm poisoned!" gurgled Knox.

"Mmmmm!" mumbled Knox.
 "Oh! Groooh! I'm poisoned!"

The others stared in amazement. Then Gilmore took a doubtful sip from his glass. But only one sip! He put his glass down hastily after that.

Monty Lowther had spared no pains in mixing Cutts' "patent medicine." Not only was there red ink in that mixture—lots of red ink!—but there was turpentine, and paraffin, and red pepper. Quite a lot of red pepper, in fact. That was why Knox was now clapping his hands to his throat and dancing wildly round the room.

Knox felt as though his throat was on fire!
 "Oh!" he groaned. "Ow! Yarrooooo! My throat's burnt away! Gimme some water, somebody! Help!"

There was a jug of water standing on the mantelpiece, and Knox dashed at it, and almost drained it, with great gulps. Cutts, who also felt a burning feeling in the region of his inner man, watched Knox with streaming eyes.

"I—I—I'm awfully sorry, Knox, old man," he mumbled.
 Knox glared at Cutts. He tried to speak, but he could find no words. Then he stamped towards the door, turned the key, and strode from the study, banging the door violently behind him.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Cutts. "He's ratty, I'm afraid!"

"You don't mean it?" said St. Leger dryly.

"But who's done it?" rapped out Gilmore. "Someone must have doctored the giddy stuff! Some cad—"

Cutts started.
 "My hat!" he ejaculated. "Mellish!"

The others stared at him.
 "Mellish!" ground out Cutts, his eyes glittering with

fury. "He brought the bottle! He thought it would be funny, I suppose! My hat! I'll slay him for this!"

"What about those Third Form kids?" put in St. Leger.

"Rats!" snapped Cutts. "They didn't know what was in the parcel—I never told them, of course. So how could they have got the idea of doctoring the stuff? But Mellish knew what was in that giddy parcel! It must have been him! Confound him! But he'll pay for this."

Cutts' little party had been broken up properly. But Cutts meant to have his revenge.

Percy Mellish of the Fourth, innocent though he was, was in for a warm time when Gerald Cutts got hold of him.

CHAPTER 4.

The Honour of the D'Arcys!

"I SAY, deah boys—"
 "Please don't say, Gussy!"
 "Weally, Blake! I wequest your attention for one moment—"

"Certainly," said Blake. He looked at his watch. Moment's gone, Gussy. Now shut up!"

"You uttah ass! I have been thinkin'—"

"What with?"

"Weally, Howwics—"

"Oh, cut the cackle, Gussy!" groaned Robert Arthur Digby.

"We want to get on with our prep."

"Blow pwep!" said Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Old Lathom will be blowing you, if you blow prep," grunted Blake.

"You've not touched yours yet this evening, Gussy, you ass!"

"I am not an ass, Blake! I wegard you as an uttah ass, howevah."

Pway listen for a few moments. I have come to a most important decision—"

"To give up spotted ties for striped ones?" asked Dig, with a grin. "Or to change the cut of your spats?"

"Pway be sewious! I have we-solved—"

"I've resolved, too," said Blake grimly, picking up a hefty Latin dictionary.

"My resolve is to chuck this at your napper if you don't give that chin of yours a rest."

"I wefuse to be instructed as to when I may or may not talk in this studay, Blake—"

Forced to take action, Blake flung the dictionary. It caught D'Arcy full in the waistcoat, and he doubled up, with a grunt.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Herries and Dig.

"You uttah wuffian, Blake!" panted D'Arcy. "I have a good mind to give you a feahful thwashing!"

"Any old time," nodded Blake good humouredly. "But at the moment, shut up! We want to work!"

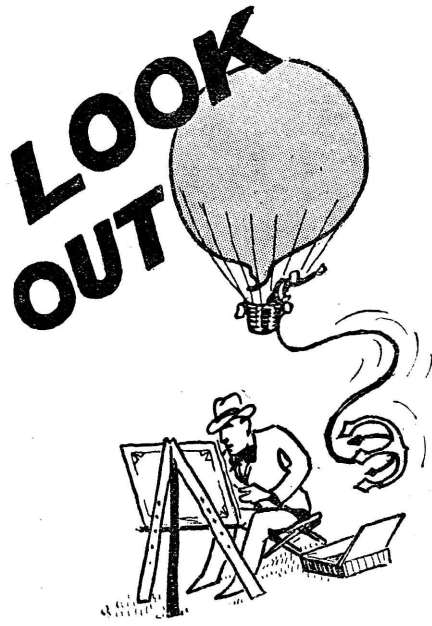
"I wefuse to shut up! It is a most twemendous decision that I have come to, you wottahs!" Arthur Augustus' lips set with resolve. "It is a mattah that concerns the honour of the D'Arcys!"

"My hat!" gasped Digby. "Do you mean you've decided to go and drown yourself, to rid the family of a silly idiot?"

Gussy glared at his study-mate through his eyeglass, and breathed hard. Clearly, it was only tremendous self-control that prevented the swell of St. Jim's from administering a "feahful thwashin'" to Digby there and then.

"I tweat that wemark with uttah contempt," he said severely. "It is about that fwightful cad, Cutts. I am fewwin' to his cadish act in gettin' my minah to fetch that parcel from Wylcombe. Had Wally been discovahed with that dweadful stuff, he would have been sacked from St. Jim's!"

"That's so," nodded Blake. "At least, he would have been sacked unless he could have proved he didn't know what was in the parcel. And I don't see how he could have proved that."



chums, for a first-class treat that is coming to all readers of the "GEM." This treat, which lasts over several weeks, is a great scoop for the old paper, and you'll be agreeably surprised when you learn the nature of it. Next week's issue contains full particulars!

"He couldn't have proved it," said Herries.

"That is so," said D'Arcy, obviously pleased to have won the attention of his humorous study-mates at last. "The facts are, then, that this unspeakable wottah, Gewald Cutts, did a thing which might very easily have resulted in Wally's bein' hooped out of St. Jim's! Wally is only a kid, and can do nothin' to wevenge the dastardly act of this wottah Cutts—"

"Not so sure of that!" murmured Dig.

"So the responsibility of settlin' with Cutts wests with me," said D'Arcy solemnly. "I wegard it as a mattah of family honour. For the honour of the family, I must fight Cutts!"

"W-w-w-what?" stammered Blake, in amazement.

"For the honour of the D'Arcys, it is impewative for me to fight Cutts," repeated Arthur Augustus firmly.

"You're burbling," said Herries.

"I am not burblin', Hewwies, you ass! I considah that I should be lettin' down the family name if I did not challenge Cutts to a fight, and twy my best to give the unspeakable wottah a most tewwible thwashin'!"

"But you couldn't thrash Cutts!" howled Herries.

Arthur Augustus polished his eyeglass thoughtfully. "Pewwaps not," he admitted, rather sadly. "But that is not the point. I might pewwaps black his eye before he thwashes me. Anyway, my duty to the honour of the family name is cleah. I must fight Cutts!"

Blake, Herries and Digby looked at one another.

That Gussy really meant it was obvious. And they knew what a mule-like obstinacy their chum possessed. If Gussy had made up his mind to fight Cutts, Gussy would fight Cutts—unless they took forcible steps to prevent it.

"But you'd get slaughtered!" cried Blake.

"Weally, Blake! I considah I know how to use my fists."

"But look at his weight against yours!" cried Herries.

"Wats!"

"It's all right," said Digby suddenly. "Cutts would refuse to fight. The ass would think it beneath his giddy dignity as a Fifth-Former to fight a chap in the Fourth. Though goodness knows—"

"I shall not allow Cutts to wefuse to fight!"

"But if he does refuse—"

"I assuah you Cutts will not wefuse," said D'Arcy confidently. "I shall thweaten to weveal his blackguardly secret if he twies to avoid the fight."

Blake whistled.

He saw that D'Arcy was right. Cutts would not dare to refuse, when he realised that D'Arcy knew about the parcel.

"But, hang it, you wouldn't sneak, even about Cutts," said Digby, wonderingly.

D'Arcy flushed.

"Weally, Digby!" he exclaimed. "I certainly should scorn to sneak. But Cutts will not realise that!"

And D'Arcy smiled a triumphant smile.

His chums eyed one another uneasily. Then they eyed Gussy.

They knew that if he fought Cutts, there would not be much left of the swell of St. Jim's. Gussy seemed to realise that, too. Only the fact did not seem to worry him.

When Arthur Augustus felt that the honour of the D'Arcys was at stake, the prospect of physical discomfort—and worse—did not worry him very much.

"But look here," protested Blake, "why be an ass? You'll only get an awful licking, and since no harm has been done, why worry? It's not as if young Wally has got into trouble. He might have got into trouble through that beastly parcel, but since he hasn't—"

"It is the pwinciple of the thing, deah boy," explained Arthur Augustus D'Arcy calmly. "Cutts did a caddish thing to a membah of the family who cannot call Cutts to account himself. So I, as a wepwesentative of the family, must act for him."

"You're an ass!" snorted Herries. "But you're a good little ass!"

"Wats!"

Evidently, the only way to stop the fight would be to prevent it by force, when the time came. And to stop their chum from being smashed to a jelly by Gerald Cutts—even though Gussy was asking for it—was a thing that Blake & Co. were determined upon.

But Arthur Augustus evidently read that thought in their faces.

"I shall expect you chaps to second me, of course," he went on calmly. "Unless you pwomise to second me, I shall wefuse to tell you where or when my fight with Cutts is to take place."

"Oh!" said Blake blankly.

"You pwomise to back me up?"

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Blake, Herries and Digby looked at one another helplessly. Unless they promised to back their study-mate up, he was not going to tell them when or where the fight was to take place! They could not keep Gussy a prisoner in the study for the rest of the term! Clearly, then, they had no hope of preventing the fight by force.

"Oh, all right, then!" roared Blake angrily. "We can't very well get out of it! But you're a fathead!"

"That's a pwomise! You thwee fellows all pwomise to second me?"

"I suppose so," growled Herries, and Digby nodded gloomily.

"Good egg!" beamed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Then I will now pay Cutts a visit, and awwange ewewythin'!"

And with aristocratic dignity, the swell of the Fourth crossed to the door and left the study, with his chums gazing blankly after him.

CHAPTER 5.

Fixing the Fight!

D'ARCY closed the door of Study No. 6 behind him firmly, and went along the passage at a leisurely pace. He was looking a little worried, but there was no uncertainty about his step.

He had made up his mind that the honour of the D'Arcys could only be saved if he challenged Cutts to a fight. A duel might have been better—that was what his noble ancestors would have decided upon, of course; but unfortunately, duels were out of date.

So, since he had made up his mind, Arthur Augustus was going to carry the matter through, whatever happened.

"Hallo, Gussy! Whither away?"

It was Monty Lowther who spoke. On turning the corner, D'Arcy had run almost into the very arms of the Terrible Three.

"Just goin' along to the Fifth Form passage, deah boy."

"What on earth for?" asked Tom Merry.

"I am goin'," said Arthur Augustus firmly, "to see Cutts. I am awwingin' a fight with Cutts."

"You're arranging a which?" gasped Manners.

"A fight, deah boy. With Cutts. I considah, in view of what happened this aftahnoon, that it is a mattah of family honour for me to fight Cutts of the Fifth," said Arthur Augustus.

He waved his hand gracefully to the three dazed Shell fellows, and continued on his way, leaving them speechless.

Half-way up the stairs Arthur Augustus ran into Talbot of the Shell.

"Hallo, Gussy!" sang out Talbot. "Where are you heading for, with that look of giddy determination? Off to change your spats? It must be something pretty serious!"

"Don't be an ass, Talbot!" said Arthur Augustus good-humouredly. "As a mattah of fact, I am goin' to see Cutts!"

"What on earth for?" asked Talbot, staring.

"I am goin' to challenge him to a fight, deah boy. It is a mattah of family honour. So-long, Talbot, deah boy!"

The swell of the Fourth left Talbot of the Shell staring dazedly after him.

The Fifth Form passage was deserted when Arthur Augustus reached it. But Cutts' study was not deserted—that fact was obvious from quite a little distance away.

A peculiar gurgling sound was issuing from Cutts' study. It was a sound which caused Arthur Augustus to give a puzzled frown before tapping on the door and entering.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

An unexpected sight met his eyes.

Cutts was in his study, and so were St. Leger and Gilmore. They were not alone. Percy Mellish of the Fourth was in the room as well, and apparently he was not enjoying himself.

Mellish was tied to a chair, with his head held back by Gilmore, whilst St. Leger was pinching the prisoner's nose to prevent him from breathing through it. Cutts was standing before Mellish, grinning hugely as he slowly poured the contents of a bottle into the Fourth-Former's mouth.

Arthur Augustus recognised that bottle.

It was the bottle that had contained Monty Lowther's "patent medicine." And Mellish was getting a big dose!

With St. Leger holding his nose, Mellish was perforce to swallow the loathsome mixture that Cutts was pouring into his mouth. That the sneak of the Fourth was not enjoying the taste was obvious from his frantic writhings and the expression on his face.

"Bai Jove!" gasped the swell of the Fourth again, staring in amazement at the scene through his gleaming eyeglass.

Why Cutts should be treating Mellish in that way was a mystery to Arthur Augustus. Though he had recognised the bottle of mixture, it had never occurred to Arthur Augustus, of course, that Cutts could be labouring under the



"Your major's in for a licking, of course," said Frank Levison. "Cutts will beat him, and serve him right for asking for trouble, the silly jay— Ooooooh!" Levison minor's remarks were cut short, as Wally grasped him by the nose, and pulled—hard. "You'd call my major a silly jay, would you?" roared Wally. (See Chapter 6.)

delusion that Mellish was responsible for it, and that the Fifth-Former was now getting his own back!

"There!" said Cutts, as the last few drops fell into Mellish's mouth. "That'll teach you not to play your rotten japes on me!"

Not till then did Gilmore, glancing up, catch sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy standing in the doorway.

"What do you want?" he roared.

The swell of the Fourth entered the study and closed the door behind him.

The three Fifth-Formers stepped back from their victim. "Oh!" gasped Mellish breathlessly. "You rotters! Oh! Grooooooh! You cads! I tell you I didn't doctor the stuff! I never touched it!"

"Expect me to believe that?" growled Cutts. "Get out of here, you little sweep!"

He freed the wretched Mellish, and swung him out of the door by the collar. Mellish turned a livid face to the Fifth-Former, but slunk away without further protestation of his innocence.

Cutts turned on D'Arcy.

"What the dickens do you want here?" he roared angrily. "Clear out!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "Cutts, I have come heah on a family mattah—"

Cutts gazed at him in bewilderment.

"Is he going potty?" he asked his chums dazedly. "What the thump do you mean, you tailor's dummy?"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass and fixed Cutts with a haughty and disdainful stare.

"I wegard you as an unspeakable wottah!" he exclaimed. "You are a fwightful cad! That is my considahed opinion, Cutts!"

"M-m-m-my hat!" stammered Cutts.

Why Arthur Augustus should have bothered to come to his study to tell him his considered opinion of him, was a mystery to Gerald Cutts. It was certainly not a very complimentary opinion, anyway. It staggered Cutts to hear Arthur Augustus speaking to him like that, in the confines of his study, with no help at hand.

Cutts began to push back his cuffs. He stepped between the Fourth-Former and the door.

"Any more you want to say before I lick you?" he said between his teeth.

Cutts was still in a very bad temper after the breaking up of his party. Even the vengeance he had wreaked upon Mellish, whom he had believed to be the culprit in that affair, had failed to soothe his ruffled temper.

"Bai Jove! I wefuse to be licked!" said D'Arcy haughtily. "I have come heah to visit you, Cutts, on a family mattah. This aftahnoon you were responsible for my minah fetchin' a parcel fwom Wylcombe—"

Cutts' jaw dropped. So Gussy knew!

"What's that?" he muttered, in thick tones.

"A parcel from Wylcombe," went on Arthur Augustus coldly. "You know what that parcel contained, you wottah! Had my minah been found with that in his possession, he would pwobably have been sacked fwom the school!"

"I don't know what you mean, you young fool!"

"You know jolly well what I mean!" retorted Arthur Augustus warmly. "I wegard you with great contempt, Cutts. But that is not enough. I have come heah for satisfaction! On behalf of my minah, Cutts, I challenge you to a fight to a finish!"

Gerald Cutts stared at the junior as though he could not believe his ears.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared St. Leger and Gilmore.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon them severely.

"Pway wemembah this is a sewious mattah, and does not call for mewmiment. On behalf of the family, Cutts, I challenge you to a fight to a finish. Yaas, wathah, bai Jove!"

"You—you challenge me?" stuttered Cutts. "To a fight?"

"Yaas!"

"Are you all there?" went on Cutts wonderingly. "Not been hit on the head with a cricket-ball this afternoon, or anything like that?"

"Weally, Cutts, I—"

"Do you feel at all feverish?" went on Cutts, staring at the Fourth Form junior curiously. "If you do, I should see the matron. You're ill."

"I'm not ill!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I am uttally sewious!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared St. Leger and Gilmore. "You really want to fight Cutts?"

"Yaas! I have come to fix the place and the time for this affair of honour!" said Arthur Augustus firmly.

Cutts seemed to realise at last that the swell of St. Jim's was really serious. He grinned, then gave a roar of laughter.

"Weally, Cutts, pway wemember this is a sewious mattah!"

"Oh, my hat!" Cutts wiped his streaming eyes. "You want to fight me, D'Arcy? Why, you cuckoo, I could lick you with one hand tied, and my eyes shut!"

"Pewwaps," said the swell of St. Jim's. "And pewwaps not. Howevah—"

Cutts glared at him.

"Do you think I would fight a Fourth-Form kid?" he roared. "For two pins I'd give you the hiding of your life! You young fool—"

"Unless you agree to fight me, in the pwopah way, Cutts, you will wegwet it. I pwomise you that you will wegwet it! You must wemember that I know about that wotten parcel, you wottah!"

Arthur Augustus spoke quietly and coldly, but there was a gleam in his aristocratic eye that Cutts didn't quite like.

"You little sneak!" breathed Cutts fiercely.

"Wecwiminations will do no good," said Gussy severely. "You agreee to the fight?"

Cutts glared at the swell of the Fourth as though he would have liked to wipe up the floor with him there and then. But that threat about the parcel had frightened him badly. He dared not touch the noble Arthur Augustus now.

"Hang you!" he snarled viciously, "I agree! I'll give you the licking of your life, too! You'll be sorry for this!"

"Then it only remains to fix the time and place," murmured Arthur Augustus calmly. "It would pewwaps have been more cowwect to have sent my seconds to you for that purpose. Howevah, they are silly asses, and this mattah needed a fellow of tact and judgment. I suggest the cleawin' in Wylcombe Woods by the big oak, at half-past two, on Wednesday next."

"I'll be there, hang you!"

"Pway do not forget, then," said D'Arcy. "I wegwet that it is impossible to fix the fight for an earlier date, Cutts, but I have to play cwicket on Saturday, and so, Wednesday is the first afternoon pwacticable."

"You'd better bring a coffin, too," snarled Cutts.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus turned and moved gracefully from the study, the light of triumph gleaming in his eyes.

Not that many juniors would have felt very triumphant at having fixed up a fight with a hefty senior like Cutts of the Fifth. But to Arthur Augustus this was a matter of honour, and he was feeling very pleased with himself at having forced Cutts into agreeing to a fight, which, even if it meant a rough time for Arthur Augustus, would undoubtedly mean a good deal of laughter at Cutts' expense.

That had been the difficulty—to persuade Cutts to agree to making himself a laughing-stock! But Gussy had persuaded him.

There was a springy lightness in the step of the swell of the Fourth, as he made his way downstairs. He was feeling very pleased with himself! The family honour was to be defended.

He turned into the Fourth-Form passage. Instantly, there was a roar from a big crowd of Fourth-Formers and Shell fellows gathered there. Evidently, they had been waiting for Arthur Augustus.

"Here he comes!"

"Here's the burbling lunatic!"

"What did Cutts say, you frabjous idiot?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Good old Gussy! Are you going to fight Cutts?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass and surveyed the crowd coldly.

"Yaas, deah boys," he nodded. "I'm fightin' Cutts at two-thirty on Wednesday next, in Wylcombe Woods."

"Wha-a-a-at?" gasped Kangaroo of the Shell.

"I twust I speak cleahly, Noble!"

"You don't mean to say—"

"My hat! You've persuaded Cutts to fight you, you— You burbling jabberwock! You really mean—"

"Oh, wats!"

"But look here, is it true?" roared Blake.

"I twust I would not tell an untwuth, Blake!" snorted D'Arcy.

"You really mean you've fixed up a fight with Cutts—a proper fight, with seconds, and rounds and things?" gasped Tom Merry. "And Cutts agreed to it?"

"Yaas!"

The fellows stared at one another. Then they stared at Arthur Augustus. It seemed too extraordinary to be true.

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Yet they knew that Arthur Augustus would shrink from telling a lie.

"Wonders will never cease," gasped Lowther.

"How did you persuade Cutts?" asked Racke, grinning.

"That is my business, Wacke!"

"He, he, he! Cutts will smash him!" sniggered Baggy Trimble. "He'll knock Gussy all over the shop!"

"Like this, eh, Baggy?" put in Herries, and with a smart shove he sent Trimble flying against the wall, with a force that knocked all the breath out of his fat frame.

"Yaroooh!" wailed the fat Fourth-Former.

"Well, you've certainly got cool cheek, challenging a chap of Cutts' weight!" grunted Gore.

"Faith, an' he has, he jabers!" put in Reilly, the Irish boy of the Fourth. "Sure, an' I admoire your pluck, D'Arcy!"

"It's not a mattah of pluck, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "It is a mattah of the family honour!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy opened the door of Study No. 6 and entered gracefully, intent at last upon getting busy with his prep!

CHAPTER 6.

Wally is Angry!

"HEARD the news?"

Frank Levison of the Third asked that question.

Levison minor had joined Wally D'Arcy and Curly Gibson under the elms in the quad. It was after tea on the day following Cutts' little party.

"What news?" asked Wally and Gibson together.

"Why, about your major, of course, Wally!"

The leader of the Third groaned.

"What's the ass been up to now?" he asked. "That's the worst of having a major, they need such a lot of looking after!"

Frank Levison chuckled.

"He's going to fight Cutts!"

"W-w-w-what?" gasped Wally.

"Fact! Everybody knows! All the giddy school is talking about it," admitted Levison minor ruefully. "It's rotten!"

"What's it all about?" asked Gibson. "What the thump—"

"It's over that parcel bizney!" explained Levison minor. "You know—that giddy parcel Cutts gave you five bob to fetch from Rylcombe, Wally. Gussy has taken that matter up frightfully seriously! Calls it a matter of family honour, the ass—"

"Are you calling my major an ass?" roared Wally.

"Well, you did!" grunted Levison minor.

"I can call my major an ass if I want to," howled Wally. "But I'll pull your silly nose, young Levison, if you—"

"Oh, right-ho," put in Frank Levison hastily. "There it is, anyway. Your major's challenged Cutts to a fight. Trimble says it's going to be on Wednesday next, in Rylcombe Woods. Your major is in for a terrific licking, of course. Serve him right for asking for trouble, the silly jay— Ooooh! Yaroooop!"

Frank Levison's remarks were cut short, as Wally, grimaced, grasped him by the nose, and pulled—hard.

"Leggo by doze!"

"You'd call my major a silly jay, would you?"

"Oh! Ow! I'b zorry! I neber meant to call the silly cuckoo nabes—oh! Yaroooh!"

"So, he's a silly cuckoo, too, is he?" roared Wally, tugging harder.

"No! The fathead's not a cuckoo—leggo!"

"And a fathead?" snorted Wally. "I'll teach you!"

Levison minor broke free with an effort, and hurled himself at Wally. Their arms whirling, the two Third-Formers struggled and fought, with trampling feet. Wally gave a gasp as Levison's fist thumped on his nose.

"Chuck that, you kids!"

A stern voice cut in abruptly, the voice of Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's. With a gasp, Wally and Levison "chucked it."

"What do you mean behaving like this in the quad?" snapped Kildare. "Don't let me catch you at it again, either of you."

He passed on, leaving Wally and Levison minor breathing hard.

"Good old Kildare!" chuckled Curly Gibson. "He's a sport, not to give you two asses lines."

"Who are you calling an ass, young Gibson?" glowered Wally.

"Oh, chuck rowing!" cried Gibson. "Look here, young Levison, is it true about Wally's major? Or is it just a silly yarn of Trimble's?"

"It's true," answered Frank Levison, rubbing his nose

tenderly. "Everyone's talking about it. Everyone knows about that rotten parcel, too! Mellish found out anyway, he seems to know all about it. He said it was because of that parcel that D'Arcy major is going to fight Cutts."

"Well, my major's not going to fight Cutts," grunted Wally.

"Don't see how you can stop him," said Gibson. "Don't you?" snorted Wally. "Well, I tell you I am going to! The silly idiot isn't going to get smashed up because of me, I tell you!"

"But—" continued Gibson. "What do you mean—'but'?" roared Wally. "I tell you I'm going to stop this silly business, so don't argue, you prize cuckoo!"

"Yes, but—" "Do you want me to pull your nose, like I did Levison's?" Wally howled, glaring at Curly Gibson, who backed away hastily. "I'm going to find my giddy major now, and put my jolly old foot down!"

Wally swung on his heel and headed for the School House. Curly Gibson and Levison minor watched him go, with grins upon their faces.

"Poor old Wally! He's quite cut up about this!" said Curly Gibson. "He won't show it, but you can see he's sick!"

"I hope his silly ass of a major gets licked, anyway," growled young Levison, rubbing his injured nasal organ.

It was still very red and sore, from Wally's treatment of it! At the moment, anyhow, Wally's troubles evoked no sympathy from Levison minor.

"And if Wally thinks he can stop this giddy fight, he's jolly well wrong!" added Levison. "So there!"

In the School House, Wally D'Arcy sped up to the Fourth-Form passage. But he found Study No. 6 empty.

He looked into the junior common-room. But there was no sign of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Aubrey Racke & Co. were there, however, and they grinned at sight of the Third-Former.

"Have you seen my major?" inquired Wally. "No," chuckled Racke. "Why, does Cutts want him?"

Wally glared at him. "There's going to be a death in your family soon, ain't there?" grinned Crokee.

"Oh, rats!" said Wally disgustedly, and slammed the door.

In the Hall he ran into Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth.

"Seen my major?" demanded Wally. Cardew grinned, and raised his eyebrows.

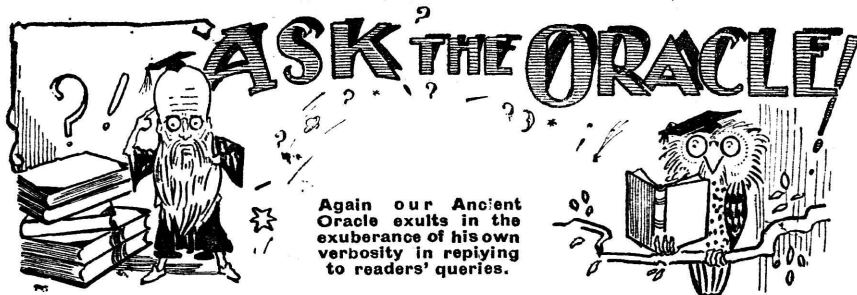
"Lookin' for the dear brother, eh?" he drawled. "No, I've not seen him. I should inquire in the sanny, kid! Maybe the great Gussy is choosing which bed to be carried to next Wednesday!"

Wally D'Arcy breathed hard. "Are you trying to be funny, you cheeky ass?"

Cardew smiled at him agreeably. "Yes, I suppose I am," he admitted. "D'you mind?"

"You're a fathead, if you ask me," growled Wally. "I didn't ask, though, my excellent young friend," smiled

(Continued on next page.)



Again our Ancient Oracle exults in the exuberance of his own verbosity in replying to readers' queries.

Q. What is a quagga ?

A. This, Eddie Grey, is a striped wild horse peculiar to Africa and related to the zebra. At one time this animal was found in great numbers south of the Vaal River, but very seldom farther north. The quagga, like many other African animals, has been greatly hunted and now it is believed to be extinct.



This certainly does not look a safe boat to paddle—but it is! The Arab uses this craft—named a goofah—with great skill.

Q. Where was the first lighthouse built ?

A. Near Alexandria in Egypt. This lighthouse does not now exist, but was one of the wonders of the ancient world, and is reputed to have been three times higher than the Monument in London.

Q. Where do old motor-cars go ?

A. Most of them don't! (Think it over, boys—think it over!)

Q. What is the difference between a loofah and a goofah ?

A. A loofah, "Sixth Former," is the pod of the *luffa Aegyptica* (a plant that bears the Arab name of *lufah*). It is commonly used as a flesh-brush and is often found in the bath-rooms of English houses. A goofah is a small Arab boat woven of reeds and coated with bitumen, a sort of pitch—rather like a greengrocer's basket in shape. It is supposed that it was in a goofah that the prophet Moses was hidden among the bulrushes.

Q. Why doesn't a carpenter use nails in oak ?

A. The reason for this, Ken Keenan, is that oak contains gallic acid, and this acid has a bad effect on iron. So if a carpenter used iron nails in oak, the nails would soon corrode and break. Brass screws, however, may be used with this hard wood.

Q. What is a totem ?

A. Among various primitive peoples, W. G. H., it is the custom for each family or tribe to adopt some bird, reptile, or beast as their own special symbol, or totem. A totem then is a sign, and it may be carved either in wood or stone. In all cases it is supposed to be a sort of mascot to the possessor. Some tribes that have an animal totem will never kill that particular animal. The aborigines of Australia have great faith in their totems, and the Red Indians of North America erect carved and painted poles with the strange symbols upon them.

Q. Who invented the saxophone ?

A. Thousands of sufferers would like to know that, Ivor May. Frankly, I don't know, my boy, and if I did, I should arm myself with a coke hammer and go forth with the mob to wreak vengeance.

Q. Where do bats go in the day-time ?

A. Your question, "Curious," of Poplar, rather reminds me of that other query: "Where do flies go in the winter-time?" Bats are what we call nocturnal creatures—in other words, they are active only at night. During the day they hide away in dark places, such as caves, church towers, cellars, and under the roofs of houses.

Q. What is the origin of £ s d ?

A. These letters stand for the Italian words *lire* (pounds), *soldi* (shillings), and *denari* (pence), which are derived from the Latin, *libra*, *solidus*, *denarius*. The Italian terms were introduced into England by the old Lombard merchants.

Q. What is an albatross ?

A. This is a sea-bird very much larger than the ordinary gull that frequents the waters of the southern hemisphere. The albatross will follow a ship for hundreds of miles, and for hours at a time does not appear to move its wings. Sailors are still superstitious about this bird, and to kill one is reckoned to bring very bad luck.



What peculiar objects! Know what they are? They're totem poles, carved and used by the North American Redskins. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,067.

Cardew lazily. "But I'm always glad to have a candid opinion, don't you know. By the way, I understand that your brother is fightin' Cutts as a matter of honour—the jolly old family honour, what? Cutts made you fag for him, didn't he, and fetch a bottle of wine from the village?"

"Cutts didn't make me fag for him!" snorted Wally. "He gave me five bob to do it—"

"Oh, that was it, was it?" grinned Cardew. "And so our dear Gussy is going to call naughty Cutts to account, is he, for his minor's sake? How sweet and touching!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew strolled away, still grinning. "Go and eat coke!" growled Wally, after the retreating figure of the dandy of the Fourth.

There was a step on the stairs, and George Alfred Grundy of the Shell hove into sight.

It was not often that the great George Alfred condescended to talk to Third-Formers. But he stopped at sight of Wally D'Arcy.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Grundy. "What's this I hear about your brother, young D'Arcy?"

"How do I know what you've heard about him?" grunted Wally.

George Alfred Grundy frowned. "No cheek from you, kid!" he boomed angrily. "Is it true your brother is going to fight Cutts of the Fifth?"

"No!"

"But everybody says he is."

"Then what did you ask me for, if you know already?" said Wally bitterly. "Anyway, it's not true. That fight's not coming off!"

"Has your brother backed out?" cried Grundy, in surprise.

"No, he hasn't!"

"Then—"

"Go and eat coke!"

George Alfred Grundy frowned a majestic frown. In the opinion of George Alfred, if there was one person in the Shell who should not be cheeked, it was George Alfred Grundy.

He made a grab at Wally D'Arcy's shoulder, but the Third-Former was too quick for him. Wally lowered his head and charged George Alfred, and his head caught the great George Alfred amidsthips.

Grundy, of the Shell, gave a roar like that of the celebrated bull of Bashan, and clasped his waistcoat as he doubled up.

"Ow!" gasped Grundy. "Grooof!"

Wally D'Arcy did not wait. He sped away, leaving Grundy of the Shell gasping and groaning.

On the steps leading down into the quad, Wally almost charged full-tilt into Glyn of the Shell.

"Mind where you're barging!" exclaimed Glyn, side-stepping hastily.

Wally D'Arcy glanced over his shoulder. There was no sign of George Alfred Grundy in pursuit.

"I say, have you seen my major?" Wally asked breathlessly.

"Yes," said Glyn. "I saw him going into the gym, with Blake and Tom Merry and some other fellow. But I say, what's all this about your major fighting Cutts? He'll get an awful licking, and I'm hanged if I can understand—"

But Wally D'Arcy did not wait to hear what Bernard Glyn failed to understand! He left Glyn talking to the empty air, so to speak, and sped across the quad towards the gym.

There was a very grim light in the eyes of Wally of the Third!

His cheeks were red and wrathful; like the celebrated Alpine climber, his brow was set, and his eyes beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath.

"I'll jolly well put my foot down about this silly fight!" he told himself darkly. "It's going to be stopped!"

But whether Wally would be able to stop the extraordinary fight that was already the talk of St. Jim's was a problem.

CHAPTER 7.

Wally on the Warpath!

D'ARCY of the Third found the gym deserted but for the group of School House juniors.

Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners, and Blake, Herries and Digby had come to act as sparring partners for Arthur Augustus, at his earnest request. For the swell of St. Jim's did not mean to waste the interval of time that had still to elapse before the day of the great fight in Rylcombe Woods.

D'Arcy of the Fourth was going into hard training!

As Wally entered the gym, Arthur Augustus was busy sparring with Tom Merry.

For a minute or so Wally watched, unobserved.

Tom Merry was the best boxer of the junior school. But

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Wally noticed, to his great satisfaction, that his brother was standing up splendidly to the captain of the Shell.

Everybody knew that Arthur Augustus knew how to use his fists. But he would need to train very hard indeed to save himself from a terrible thrashing at the hands of Cutts! Good boxer though he was, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was far too light to stand any chance at all against a hefty senior like Gerald Cutts. In fact, it was pretty certain that Cutts would administer a really sound thrashing, however hard the swell of St. Jim's went into training!

Of that there could be no shadow of doubt—no possible doubt whatever!

Tom Merry dropped his hands.

"Whew!" he gasped, grinning. "Your turn now, Herries!"

Tom drew off his gloves and tossed them across to George Herries. Herries stepped forward, and the perspiring Gussy faced him.

Gussy was not sparing himself! He had already faced Blake, Manners and Lowther, as well as Tom Merry.

"Weady, Hewwies?" panted Arthur Augustus.

Herries nodded, and the two began sparring briskly.

"I feel pwetty fagged, I admit, deah boy!" exclaimed Gussy breathlessly. "I wondah if I could, in my pwesent state, land a weally cwashin' blow?"

Before Herries could answer, however, Arthur Augustus stepped forward and made the experiment.

It was a very successful experiment as far as Arthur Augustus was concerned. But from Herries' point of view it was quite a failure.

D'Arcy's fist landed—with an exceedingly "cwashin' blow"—on Herries' nose, and Herries gave a yell.

"Oh great!" beamed Arthur Augustus. "That pwoves that even when I am tewwibly fagged, I am still able to land a weally powerful and effective blow! Thank you, Hewwies, deah boy, for allowin' me to make that important expewiment."

"You silly fathead," roared Herries, massaging his battered nasal organ, "I didn't allow you to make your beastly experiment—not on my nose!"

"My deah fellow, then why the mewwy dickens didn't you guard that blow?" inquired Arthur Augustus in surprise.

"I didn't get the chance!" howled Herries. "You silly lunatic, I—"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

With a snort, Herries rushed at Arthur Augustus, and Arthur Augustus put his fists up again in alarm. For the moment, Herries seemed quite to have forgotten that he was supposed to be a sparring partner, and that it is not a sparring partner's duties deliberately to attempt to black his principal's eye.

"Take that!" roared Herries, as he landed a glove on the aristocratic eyebrow of Arthur Augustus. "And that!"

"That" was a biff on the chin that sent the swell of St. Jim's reeling into the arms of Monty Lowther. Herries stood before the collapsed swell of St. Jim's and brandished his fists.

"Come on!" he hooted. "I'll teach you to experiment on my nose!"

"Bai Jove! Hewwies, you uttah wuffian—"

"Chuck it, Herries!" grinned Blake, and he and Tom Merry and Dig dragged back the indignant Fourth-Former.

"It was just a little mistake of Gussy's, that's all!"

"He oughtn't to make mistakes with my nose, then!" grumbled Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, I nevah dweamt—"

"Oh rats!"

"I am weally distwessed, Hewwies, if your nose has weally suffahed," persisted Arthur Augustus. "Pwayer accept my apologies."

It was at that moment that Wally of the Third stepped forward, tight-lipped, and planted himself squarely in front of his major.

"Hallo, kid!" exclaimed Tom Merry in surprise. "What do you want?"

Arthur Augustus put his eyeglass into his eye and beamed upon his minor quite paternally.

"Ah, Wally!" he exclaimed. "I wanted to see you, as a mattah of fact—"

"You giddy fathead!" breathed Wally.

"Weally, Wally!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, I—"

"You burbling jabberwock!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You tailor's dummy! What's all this silly business about you fighting Cutts because of me?" roared Wally.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared at his minor dazedly

Though he was acting entirely from a sense of duty, and did not wish to receive any gratitude from his minor, Arthur Augustus could not help but feel that he, at any

rate, deserved gratitude. After all, what he was doing was on Wally's behalf. He had somehow expected a certain degree of grateful admiration from Wally.

But he wasn't getting it!

In fact, Wally was being rude to him.

It was too much for Arthur Augustus. He bestowed a look upon his minor that ought to have frozen Wally into a small iceberg, as Lowther remarked afterwards.

"Weally, Wally," said Arthur Augustus icily, "I wefuse to put up with your extwaordinawy and vulgah abuse. I am goin' to administah a most feahful thwashin', your young wuffian!"

He took a step forward, but Wally eluded him.

"Oh, chuck it, Gussy!" he growled. "I've come to make you see sense. I'm not allowing this fight to take place. See?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

"I'm putting my foot down, in fact!" went on Wally grimly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling hyenas grinning at?" howled Wally, glaring at D'Arcy's chums. "I tell you my major's not going to make an ass of himself by fighting Cutts! He'd only get slaughtered, and there's no sense in it! I won't allow it!"

"You won't, eh?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus faintly. "Wally, are you crazy?"

"No, I'm not, but you are, to think you can fight Cutts! It wouldn't be a fight—it would be a giddy punchball exhibition! And you'd be the punchball!"

Arthur Augustus, crimson with wrath, reached forward, grasped his indignant minor by the shoulder, and began to shake him, till Wally was breathless.

Tom Merry suddenly pushed his way between the two. "Chuck it, Gussy," he said quietly. "The kid's right. What he says is only what we've all been telling you all along. You won't listen to us. But you'd better listen to your own minor. He's the one most concerned—it was he whom Cutts got to fetch that parcel—"

"It is no good arguin' furthah, Tom Mewwy," replied Arthur Augustus firmly. "I have awwanged this fight, and I am wresolved to go through with it. It is a mattah of the family honour!"

"Blow the family honour!" snorted Wally.

"I wefuse to blow the family honour, Wally! I—"

"Oh, it's no good arguing with an obstinate mule like that," put in Blake. "You might as well save your breath all of you."

"Except that I wesent bein' called a mule, that is the only sensible wemark any of you asses have made," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "As Blake has wemarked, you might as well save your bweath!"

Wally D'Arcy turned helplessly to the others.

"What can you do with a major like this?" he demanded. "A good many chaps have got majors that are a thundering nuisance—Reggie Manners, f'rinstance—"

"Why, you cheeky little sweep!" gasped Manners.

"But mine takes the giddy biscuit!" finished Wally dolefully.

"Weally, Wally, I—"

"You think you're going to fight Cutts, don't you?" said Wally grimly. "Well, I tell you you're not! I'll dish this silly fight if it means a million pounds!"

Since the whole Third Form of St. Jim's did not possess even a million farthings—or anything near a million farthings, if it came to that—Wally D'Arcy's threat sounded a little exaggerated.

But there was no doubt that he was very determined about his resolve to stop the fight!

That was obvious in his face as he turned away with a sniff and vanished indignantly from the gym.

"My minah is a cheekay young wapscallion!" observed Arthur Augustus angrily. "Weally, Tom Mewwy, you should not have interfeahed when I was about to administah a sound thwashin' to the cheekay young wascall!"

"Oh, rot!" said Tom. "Wally's right!"

"Wats!"

"Yes he is," said Tom Merry, with a frown. "I wish to goodness that somebody could persuade you to chuck this up! But it's really too late now, anyway, since you've fixed it up with Cutts, I s'pose—you couldn't very well back out now—"

"Yaas, it is certainly too late!" said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"So you'd better carry on with this giddy training, I suppose!" said Tom Merry. "It may prevent Cutts from tearing you absolutely limb from limb."

"I wathah fancy," said Arthur Augustus, "that I shall, when the time awwives, pwove to you fellows that even if I cannot lick Cutts, I can at least stand up to the wotahh, and delivah a great deal of punishment before I am honouwably defeated."

There was a ring of calm confidence in the voice of the swell of St. Jim's as he delivered himself of that dignified statement.

Evidently, Arthur Augustus himself did not share the belief of the rest of St. Jim's that he would be but as a leaf before the storm, before the wrath of Gerald Cutts!

CHAPTER 8.

Hard Training!

THE news soon spread through the junior school that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was going into serious training for his great fight.

The news was received with some amusement. In the opinion of most of the fellows it would have been about as much use for a mouse to go into training for a scrap with a cat!

The general opinion was that Arthur Augustus was a fathead; that he had asked for trouble, and that he was going to get it. But most of the fellows agreed that they had to admire the Fourth-Former's pluck.

In fact, during the next few days Arthur Augustus became quite the popular hero. Offers galore reached him of help in his training should he need it; even Figgins & Co. of the New House offered to lend their services as sparring-partners, were they required. But Arthur Augustus declined all these offers gracefully. Backed up as he was by Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three, he had no need for further assistance in his great task of fitting himself to meet Cutts of the Fifth.

Even Ralph Reckness Cardew, the slacker of the Fourth, offered the services of himself and his bicycle for pacing Arthur Augustus in his road work, it being known that the swell of St. Jim's was going for a run every morning and evening.

(Continued on next page.)

FAMILIAR SAYINGS:

THE world is large, and yet it's not so vast that the good old GEM hasn't spread to every corner of it.

READERS of all ages look upon Wednesday as the best day of the week, because it's GEM day.

EASY-TO-READ type, lively pictures, a real sporting serial and, of course, its topping, complete school yarn have brought your favourite paper to the top of the tree.

ASK the Oracle if you want to know anything, for he's a wise bird, with an outside in "nappers" and a brain as big as a library.

THE best way to avoid disappointment is to give your newsagent a regular order for the GEM.

SHOULD you miss next week's bumper number you'll be absolutely in the dark about those stunning TREATS. And they are Treats, believe me, the like of which no GEM reader has known before.—ED.

It was, perhaps, rather a relief to Cardew when his offer was gratefully declined. That the slacker of the Fourth had made the offer was very surprising to everyone—to himself, possibly, as much as to anybody.

The fellows were feeling rather sorry for Arthur Augustus. They admired his spirit; but they were quite sure that he was in for the thrashing of his life!

Only Aubrey Racke & Co. seemed to be pleased at the prospect of the swell of St. Jim's receiving the terrific thrashing that was coming to him.

Aubrey Racke and his toadies were the only fellows in the junior school who admired Gerald Cutts. He was quite their ideal of what a "blade" and "goer" should be. And they disliked Blake & Co. very much. Therefore, they openly admitted they were looking forward to watching Cutts give Arthur Augustus the hiding of his life.

When they came across Arthur Augustus in the House, or in the quad, they grinned at one another and loudly inquired the price of coffins. But if they hoped to "put the wind up" Arthur Augustus, they were disappointed. The swell of St. Jim's carried on with his training calmly and cheerfully.

Arthur Augustus was not only certain that he was doing the right thing; he was beginning to feel equally certain that he would be able to give Cutts a good deal to think about when the day of the fight came.

Nobody else thought so! Gussy's own opinion of his prowess was not shared by the rest of St. Jim's.

But that fact did not seem to worry Arthur Augustus.

It was not long before most of the seniors knew as much about the coming fight as did the juniors.

This did not please Cutts at all.

He got very tired indeed of hearing jokes about "baby-weight boxers" and similar matters. It was not safe to ask Cutts if he wasn't afraid of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. He didn't like it. His efflow Fifth-Formers teased him unmercifully about his coming fight with a Fourth-Former, and Cutts' temper grew worse and worse as the days went by.

"Poor old Gussy!" remarked Kangaroo one day. "Cutts is going round looking like a bear with a sore head! He's getting ragged to death by the Fifth about this giddy scrap! He won't half take it out of poor old Gussy on Wednesday!"

It was on the following Monday evening, two days before the excitedly-talked-of fight, that Cutts was crossing the quad alone, a cricket bat under his arm. He was returning from the nets. As he neared the School House a distant figure by the gates caught his eye.

It was Arthur Augustus, in running shorts, accompanied by Manners on a bicycle. The swell of St. Jim's, evidently, was just returning from a spell of road work.

Cutts frowned and gave a sour grin.

"You'll have to look out, Cutts!" grinned Figgins of the New House, who strolled by at that moment with Kerr and Fatty Wynn. "Gussy'll give you a frightful licking if you aren't careful! He means business; he's training hard!"

"I'm going to slaughter the little idiot!" snarled Cutts. "Maybe it'll be a good lesson to you kids not to give yourselves airs with the Fifth!"

The Fifth-Former passed on scowling.

As he reached the School House steps someone touched him on the shoulder. Cutts glanced round and started when he saw that it was Knox of the Sixth.

Cutts and Knox had not met since the little party in Cutts' study.

"Hallo!" said Cutts nervously. "I—er—"

"What's all this about you fighting D'Arcy of the Fourth on Wednesday?" asked Knox curiously.

Cutts gritted his teeth.

"I'm going to slay the little cub!" he muttered. "I was forced into the fight, and I'm a laughing-stock in consequence. But I am going to give the little hound a lesson he won't forget."

Knox laughed.

"I suppose, as a prefect, I ought to take steps to stop this fight," he said softly. "But, on second thoughts, I think I'll give it my blind eye."

There was no love lost between Knox of the Sixth and the fellows of the Shell and Fourth, as Cutts knew. He understood that Knox was only too glad at the prospect of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy receiving a hiding at the hands of a bigger fellow.

"I'll promise you he won't be able to stand when I've finished with him," said Cutts savagely. "But, I say, Knox, old man," he went on, "I wanted to see you to apologise about that stuff the other night; it was doctored, of course, but I swear I never dreamt—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Knox, with surprising good-humour. "I realised someone had japed you. Wasn't your fault."

"It was young Mellish," said Cutts, relieved to find Knox so pleasantly forgiving. "I made him suffer for it, though."

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"Good!" grinned Knox. "That's the way to treat those young rotters!" He laughed. "Well, mind you make D'Arcy suffer!"

And, with a nod, he passed on.

In the Hall, Cutts passed Mellish of the Fourth. The Fifth-Former went by with scarcely a glance at Mellish—in fact, Cutts scarcely noticed him. But there was a very bitter look in the face of the sneak of the Fourth as he watched Cutts go up the stairs towards the Fifth Form passage.

Percy Mellish had not forgotten his treatment at Cutts' hands.

"I wish D'Arcy was twice as big and could give you the worst licking of your life!" growled Mellish to Cutts' retreating figure.

Unfortunately, D'Arcy wasn't—and couldn't! Like the rest, Mellish knew well enough that Arthur Augustus could not hope to make himself felt very much against a hefty Fifth-Former.

Next morning, with only one more day to the big fight.



There was an ugly look in Cutts' eye as he rushed at Arthur Augustus and his fist crashed on his chin, lifting the swell of St. Jim's clean off his

quite a large crowd of juniors turned out before breakfast to give Arthur Augustus a cheer as he set off for his morning run.

Arthur Augustus was certainly looking very fit indeed. His cheeks glowed in the crisp morning air, and his legs looked firm and well-muscled. Though Arthur Augustus D'Arcy always kept himself pretty well in the pink, there was no doubt that his hard training of the last week had put him into really superb condition.

"Never felt fittah, deah boys!" he remarked, beaming round at the big crowd of Fourth-Formers and Shellites. "Never bettah! I am twustin' to make Cutts wemembah to-mowwow's scwap—yaas, wathah!"

"Ready, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, jumping on to his cycle.

With a wave of his hand to the assembled crowd of juniors, Arthur Augustus broke into a steady run, heading for the gates. He was accompanied by the Terrible Three, Blake & Co., Talbot, Kangaroo, Levison and Clive, and several others—some on bicycles, others on foot. Those who remained gave a cheer as Gussy passed out of gates.

"He looks jolly fit!" remarked Fatty Wynn.

"Yes," said George Alfred Grundy. "But he can't hope to wallop Cutts. There's only one chap in the junior school who could wallop Cutts—and that's me!"

"Eh?" gasped Kerruish. "My hat!"

"Well, who else could do it?" demanded Grundy.

"Oh, nobody! But—er—I was just wondering—"

"Get it off your chest!" roared Grundy.
 "Oh, nothing!" grinned Kerruish.
 "I tell you I'm the only chap in the junior school who could wallop Cutts," repeated the great George Alfred. "I dunno if I ever told you chaps, but I was sacked from Redclyffe for walloping a prefect before I came here—"
 "Yes, you've told us," sighed Wilkins.
 "More than once, in fact," grinned Gunn, softly.
 "Yes, I could manage Cutts. But poor old Gussy is an ass to try it. He's in for a terrible walloping to-morrow!"



! D'Arcy tried to dodge a swinging right-hander, but failed. Cutts' "My hat!" yelled Crooke. "It's all over already! Ha, ha, ha!"

For once, George Alfred Grundy was voicing the opinion of everybody.

CHAPTER 9.

Wally's Wire!

THE day of the fight dawned at last. Arthur Augustus was up early, and together with the Terrible Three and his chums of Study No. 6, went to the gym and put in some sparring. He appeared at breakfast with glowing cheeks and confident smile.

Aubrey Racke beckoned across the table to him. "Made your will all right, Gussy?" he inquired, with a leer. "You'll need to have made it, later on to-day!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fixed him with an icy stare. "Yaas, Wacke, deah boy," he murmured. "I've made my will—and I've left my manicure-set to you. I noticed your nails are wathah badly in need of cleanin'."

Racke flushed crimson, and hastily hid his hands under the edge of the table. "One up to Gussy, I fancy, dear man!" murmured Cardew. "Oh, rats!" growled Racke. Though Racke & Co. were looking cheerful enough about the prospects of the fight, the Terrible Three and Blake & Co., at any rate, all looked decidedly depressed in class that morning. Both Mr. Linton of the Shell, and Mr. Lathom of the Fourth, noticed that there was "something in the wind," and wondered what it was.

Mr. Lathom found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy particularly absent-minded. In fact, when he asked the swell of St. Jim's suddenly for the name of the general who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, and Arthur Augustus replied vaguely, "Gerald Cutts, sir!" the master of the Fourth quite lost his temper.

"Ridiculous boy!" he snapped, with asperity. "You are apparently in a day-dream, D'Arcy. You will take two hundred lines."

"Bai Jove! Vewy well, sir!" Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. were not the only fellows who were looking rather depressed that morning.

Apart from Gussy's numerous sympathisers in the Shell and Fourth, the Third Form was taking a keen interest in the coming fight. Wally D'Arcy and his chums all looked thoroughly miserable as the morning wore on, and the fatal hour drew near.

After classes, Wally, Curly Gibson, Levison minor, Reggie Manners, and Jameson, gathered in a doleful group under the elms in the quad.

"Not long now before they bring your major back on a stretcher," grunted Frank Levison.

"It's rotten!" muttered Reggie Manners.

"Cutts is a cad!" put in Curly Gibson.

Wally frowned darkly.

He had told everybody that he was going to "put his foot down" and stop the fight. At the time, he had thought, somehow; that he would be able to do so. But he hadn't succeeded in stopping the fight yet!

"My hat!" exclaimed Wally, suddenly. "I've got a weeze!"

"What for?" asked Gibson. "To save your major from getting smashed to a raspberry?"

"Yes! Turn out your pockets, you chaps!"

"Eh?"

"Turn out your pockets!" commanded Wally. "I want to see how much wealth we've got between us!"

Wonderingly, the fags turned out their pockets. Reggie Manners produced fourpence-halfpenny, Curly Gibson twopence, Jameson threepence and a three-halfpenny stamp, Levison minor a penny.

"Good!" chuckled Wally. "That's enough, with my sixpence, to send the wire!"

"What wire?"

"The wire I'm going to send, of course, you ass!"

"You're sending a wire? asked Gibson, puzzled. "Who to?"

"You silly ass, to my major, of course!"

"Why?" asked Levison minor, wonderingly.

"You silly cuckoos, haven't you got any sense at all?" howled Wally, excitedly. "I'm going to send a wire to my major, saying somebody's ill! Telling him to come at once, and all that sort of thing! He'll get it after dinner, and he'll have to go, and he can show the wire to Cutts, so Cutts can't say he's cowardly to back out, and everything'll be all right!"

"Oh!" gasped Reggie Manners.

"My hat!" cried Jameson admiringly.

"That's a scheme!"

"But who's ill?" asked Curly Gibson.

"Nobody, you chump!" exclaimed Wally. "But I'm going to say somebody is ill!"

"You'll be telling a giddy whopper, then!"

"I don't care," said Wally, recklessly. "It's not a bad kind of whopper. It's a white lie, you know. I wouldn't tell one except to save old Gussy."

He sat down on one of the seats under the old elms, and produced a pencil and an old envelope.

"Now to get out the wire," he murmured, thoughtfully.

"What about old Conway? S'pose I said he'd got mumps?"

Lord Conway, Wally's eldest brother, was a young man in the twenties, and somehow it was difficult to think of him with mumps. Reggie Manners said so.

"Well, chicken-pox?" suggested Wally.

"That's not serious enough," said Curly Gibson, shaking his head. "Your major wouldn't have to go home because of that."

"What about scarlet-fever?" suggested Jameson, hopefully.

"Or botulism? I dunno what that is, but people do get it."

"Bottle which!"

"Botulism!"

"That sounds jolly serious, you know," nodded Curly Gibson. "Good idea! Say old Conway's got bottleism, and Gussy's bound to go!"

"Why not say your pater's got it?" put in Levison minor.

"He'd jolly well have to buzz along if your pater was ill!"

"Say they've both got it," chimed in Reggie Manners.

"That's a good scheme, young Manners," nodded Wally, with approval. "S'pose I say all at home have got it? That'd make certain, you know."

Hastily Wally jotted down the telegram on the envelope, and put it into his pocket. Then he jumped up.

"Now to buzz into Wayland like mad on our bikes!" he cried. "We'll be late for dinner, but that can't be helped!"

Two minutes later, the five fags were pedalling furiously out of the gates!

Scarcely had Tom Merry & Co. been dismissed from dinner, when there came a tap on the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth-Form passage.

"Come in!" called out Jack Blake.

The four chums of Study No. 6 were discussing the forthcoming fight between Cutts and D'Arcy, with the Terrible Three.

In answer to Blake's invitation, the door opened, and Toby, the School House page, entered.

"Telegram for Master D'Arcy," said Toby, holding out an orange-coloured envelope.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in astonishment.

"For me? Thanks Tobay!"

He took the telegram and opened it.

"Nothing wrong, is there?" asked Tom Merry quickly, seeing the peculiar expression that appeared on the face of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "How vewy extwaordinawy!"

"Which the telegraph boy wants to know if there's any hanswer," said Toby, the page.

"No, thanks, deah boy!" exclaimed Gussy.

Toby departed the richer by sixpence.

"Weally, this is most extwaordinawy!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He passed the wire across to Blake.

"Pway, wead that out, deah boy, and tell me what you think of it!"

Jack Blake read the message out aloud:—

"Come home immediately. We have all got botulism!"

The juniors stared at one another, and then they gave a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was so obvious that the telegram, so peculiarly worded as it was, could not have come from Eastwood House, Gussy's home, that they felt no anxiety at all for Lord Eastwood or his family!

Wally, in his anxiety to make the telegram alarming enough, had rather overstepped the mark!

"It must be some silly jape!" cried Tom Merry.

"Anyway," chuckled Blake, "this wire is stamped locally. It was sent off from Wayland, not from your home, Gussy! Yes, it's a giddy jape all right!"

"But who the merry dickens—"

"Sounds like a fag, the way it's worded!" grinned Digby.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "My minah, Wally!"

"Wally?" echoed Manners. "Do you think—"

"Yaas, bai Jove, I do! The young wascal! It must be young Wally—no one else would wish to perpetwate a silly jape like this. You all remember how he said he was goin' to stop my fight with Cutts? The young wottah is twyin' to make me wush home, so that I shall not be able to fight!"

It would have astonished Wally could he have known how quickly his major had seen through his dark scheme!

But, really, it was pretty clear. No one else in the Third could have had any motive for sending that extraordinary wire; and that it was the work of a Third-Former was obvious from the peculiar way in which it had been worded.

Blake tossed the telegram into the grate with a laugh. But Arthur Augustus was still frowning darkly.

"I shall have to question my minah about this mattah!" he exclaimed. "In fact, I weally think I ought to administah a sound 'thwashin'!"

"Oh let Wally alone!" laughed Tom Merry. "He only meant it for the best. You know, the poor kid can't bear to think of you getting smashed up by Cutts."

"If you weally think it is simply his great affection for me, as his majah," said the swell of St. Jim's, evidently pleased, "I will let him off a thwashin', and meahly give him a seveah lectuwinn' upon the ewwor of his ways!"

"That's the idea!" nodded Blake. "Wally means well."

Manners glanced at his watch.

"Time we were going, eh?" he said quietly. "To Rylcombe Woods."

Arthur Augustus, who seemed to be the coolest of the lot, nodded.

"Yaas, wathah!" he answered. "Come along, deah boys!"

A little later Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. passed out of gates.

They were not the only ones. Many other fellows, in twos and threes, were sauntering out, apparently carelessly. But all turned in the direction of Rylcombe Woods.

As Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his friends vanished

down the lane, an excited figure bolted up the steps of the School House. It was Levison minor, who had been posted in the quad as look-out. Frank Levison found Wally and the rest in the Third-Form room.

"I say," he cried breathlessly, "they've gone!"

"To the station?" cried Wally.

Levison minor shook his head.

"No. Herries was carrying a towel—I saw it under his jacket. That means the fight is taking place, after all. Your wire hasn't worked."

Wally gripped Levison minor's arm.

"You're sure?" he muttered.

Levison minor nodded.

"Oh dear!" groaned Walter Adolphus D'Arcy of the Third.

CHAPTER 10.

The Big Fight!

"HERE he is, you chaps!"

"Good old Gussy!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a burst of excited cheering from the swarm of fellows gathered in the clearing where the big fight was to take place, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy arrived on the scene, in the company of Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass and stared round the clearing, in evident surprise at seeing so many fellows there.

School House juniors galore thronged the clearing, and there was quite a large body of New House juniors, too, headed by Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn. There were plenty of Fifth-Formers, also, most of them grinning in rather a superior fashion. They could not resist coming to see the fight; it was such an unusual affair altogether. But they felt it was necessary to show the juniors that they did not regard it as a serious contest by any means.

Hence their superior smiles!

Tom Merry glanced at his watch.

It was only three minutes before the half-hour, but there was still no sign of Cutts.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seated himself elegantly upon a tree-stump, and glanced occasionally at his watch.

He appeared amazingly cool, considering the task that lay before him.

Many of the fellows hurried across towards him, to have a word with the swell of St. Jim's and wish him luck. Nearly all of them felt sorry for Arthur Augustus, convinced as they were that he was in for a really bad time at the hands of Gerald Cutts.

Tom Merry had brought a length of thin rope, and with the aid of Manners and Lowther he quickly rigged up a square enclosure. With such a crowd, some sort of a roped ring was necessary.

"Heah's Cutts, deah boys!" murmured Arthur Augustus grimly, a few minutes later.

The figure of Cutts had appeared among the trees.

Instead of a cheer, such as had welcomed Arthur Augustus upon his arrival, a dead silence greeted the arrival of Gerald Cutts.

He glared round at the assembled fellows, obviously very taken aback at finding such a large crowd of onlookers. Then he shrugged his shoulders and smiled sourly. After all, the whole school, or nearly the whole school, knew that he was to fight a Fourth-Former; so, since they knew, it did not matter very much if they were there to watch him thrash D'Arcy within an inch of his life—as he intended to do!

The black sheep of the Fifth was accompanied by St. Leger, Gilmore, and Prye. Unlike Gussy's supporters, the Fifth-Formers had not brought any towels or sponges—Cutts had not thought them at all necessary.

Cutts peeled off his coat, and glanced at Arthur Augustus with a contemptuous grin.

"Ready for your thrashing?" he asked sourly. "Don't turn round and call me a bully afterwards, that's all I ask. Remember, you insisted on it, D'Arcy."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Gilmore.

"Oh, cut out the jaw!" snapped Tom Merry. "You're late as it is, Cutts."

"You have yet to pwove yourself clevah enough to give me a thwashin', Cutts!" said D'Arcy warmly.

The swell of St. Jim's peeled off his coat, and removed his collar and tie, and carefully rolled up his elegant cuffs. He was looking very grim and determined. Herries and Dig were busy preparing a jug of water, and sponges and towels. They would be needed soon—badly needed, they thought.

"Got your life insured, Gussy?" cried Racke, from among the crowd.

"Shut up, Racke!" roared a dozen voices; and Racke

"shut up" hastily. Public opinion was very much against Aubrey Racke at the moment.

But there was a sneer on the face of the black sheep of the Shell as he stood by the ropes, with Crooke on one side of him and Mellish of the Fourth on the other. Racke and Crooke were whispering to one another and grinning. But Mellish seemed silent and morose, and watched the preparations with glittering eyes.

"Is your man ready?" asked Tom Merry.
"You bet he is!" drawled St. Leger, with a note of derision in his voice. "By the way, does D'Arcy want to take it bending over or standing up?"

There was a snigger from Racke and Crooke, as well as from Chowle of the New House.

Cutts clambered over the ropes into the improvised ring. D'Arcy was already waiting in one corner, looking extraordinarily calm and unruffled, most of the fellows thought admiringly. Compared with the big Fifth-Former, Arthur Augustus looked amazingly slim and light.

"Poor old Gussy!" breathed Reggie Manners of the Third, who had just arrived with Levison minor, Curly Gibson, and several other fags. Wally himself was not there. He had resolved not to witness the fight, after his bitter disappointment at the failure of his telegram to stop the contest.

"Yes, poor old Gussy's going to get it badly!" muttered Curly Gibson. "I'm sorry for the silly ass, although, of course, he's asked for it!"

Tom Merry, who was acting as timekeeper, had a watch in his hand.

"Seconds out of the ring!"
"There ain't any seconds in the ring, dear man!" murmured Cardew of the Fourth.

"Shut up, Cardew!" growled Talbot. "Let's have the thing in order!"

"Sorry!" yawned Cardew.
"Time!" called Tom Merry.

There was a tense silence in the clearing as the strangely contrasting fighters stepped forward. Except for the rustle of the breeze in the leaves, no sound broke the stillness of Rylcombe Woods.

There was a slight frown on Tom Merry's face as he watched the contestants step forward. The captain of the Shell was breathing hard. He was not looking forward to watching the fight at all.

The faces of most of the onlookers reflected the same feelings. Only a few, such as Racke and Crooke, were grinning with anticipation.

Tom Merry glanced swiftly from face to face as Arthur Augustus and Cutts approached briskly to the centre of the ring.

Arthur Augustus, still contriving to look quite elegant, despite the fact that he was in shirt-sleeves, wore a look of quiet determination on his aristocratic features—features that were destined, surely, to be badly battered during the next few minutes! If the swell of St. Jim's felt any trepidation at the prospect of the fight, he showed nothing of it. Not by so much as the flutter of an eyelid did he betray the slightest trace of "funk."

The face of Cutts, who seemed to tower over Arthur Augustus like a Goliath over a David, bore a look of smouldering anger now.

The Fifth-Former felt that he was the laughing-stock of everyone, being forced into the ring to fight a "kid" in the Fourth, and he meant to get his revenge.

He was not going to spare Arthur Augustus. That was obvious from the ugly look in his glittering eyes, as he rushed in to start the fight with a swinging right-hander.

Thud!

Arthur Augustus tried to dodge the blow, but failed. Cutts' fist crashed on his chin with a sickening thud, lifting the swell of St. Jim's clean off his feet. Arthur Augustus went flying against the ropes, to collapse on the grass in a huddled heap.

Cutts gave a laugh.
"My hat!" yelled Crooke. "It's all over already! Ha, ha, ha!"

In breathless silence the onlookers stared at the prone figure of the swell of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 11.
Licked to the Wide!

CROOKE, however, had been a little early in thinking the fight was over!

As Tom Merry began to count, D'Arcy scrambled up, and there was a sigh of relief from round the ropes.

Cutts rushed in immediately. Again he swung for Arthur Augustus' chin. But this time the blow failed to get home.

There was a thud. But it was the fist of Arthur Augustus that thudded this time, and it was the chin of Gerald Cutts that took the blow.

"Hurrah!" yelled Curly Gibson. "Go it, Gussy!"
Cutts was feeling very annoyed—and rather hurt—from that strong, jolting punch. It was no part of Cutts' programme to receive punches. He was to give them, but not to receive them—that was how he had pictured the fight from beforehand.

Again a stinging punch landed on his chin, and there was an excited yell from round the ropes.

Cutts was feeling oddly dizzy.

He tried to shake the dizziness from his brain. But those two blows must have been even harder than he had thought, he told himself, for he failed to recover from the sickly, half-dazed feeling that had come stealing over him.

He lurched forward, hitting out strongly. But his blows only found the empty air.

"Go it, Gussy!"
"Hurrah! Good old Gussy!"

"Well played, there!"
With excited shouts, the onlooking juniors yelled encouragement to the swell of St. Jim's.

The watching Fifth-Formers, on the other hand, were frowning in perplexity.

"What's wrong with old Cutts?" muttered Prye.
"Looks groggy, don't he?" agreed St. Leger.

"His face is getting a rum colour," put in Gilmore.
"Dash it, young D'Arcy can't have hit him hard enough to upset him like that!"

"Cutts' face would be a better colour if he chucked smoking cigarettes!" remarked Talbot, who had overheard Gilmore's muttered words.

At the end of the first round an excited buzz of talk had arisen. The fellows were amazed.

Cutts wasn't thrashing Arthur Augustus, after all!
Except for that terrific opening punch, which had knocked the swell of St. Jim's helplessly into the ropes, Cutts had scarcely landed a blow!

Arthur Augustus, on the other hand, had landed many. Cutts had seemed quite incapable of defending himself.

The fellows stared from Arthur Augustus in his corner—looking quite cool and unruffled—to Gerald Cutts, opposite. They stared in amazement. Cutts' face was an unhealthy yellow colour, and his nose was bleeding, and one eye was half closed.

"Well, I'm blessed!" gasped Clive.
"Wonders will never cease!" breathed Monty Lowther to Tom Merry, as he got busy with a sponge on the noble forehead of Arthur Augustus.

The only fellow in the clearing who did not appear utterly staggered by the way things were shaping was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He glanced round at his supporters with a confident smile.
"I fancy I am holdin' my own pwetty well!" he murmured.

"My hat, yes!" gasped Manners. "It's amazing!"
"I weally fail to see anythin' vewy amazin' in that, Mannahs, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, a little stiffly.

"I have been twainin' vewy hard, and I remarked to you fellows that I had evvey expectation of standin' up pwetty well to Cutts, although the wottah is biggah than I am."

"Well, I dunno," grinned Monty Lowther. "I never thought things would go this way! Candidly, Gussy, I thought we should be going round with a dustpan and brush by now, sweeping up your bits!"

"Weally, Lowther!"
"Well, of course we did!" exclaimed Herries. "Hang it all, Gussy, you can't blame us for expecting you to get a walloping from Cutts! It beats me how it is he hasn't finished the job already! Instead of that, he looks quite groggy!"

"I intend that he shall look considewably more gwoggy



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before I have finished with him," said Arthur Augustus with dignity.

There was a very businesslike gleam in the eyes of the swell of St. Jim's, as he rose for the second round.

Although Arthur Augustus had all along had a far higher opinion of his own chances against Cutts than had anybody else, it had really been rather a surprise even to himself to find that he had come off so extraordinarily well so far.

A new hope had come to him. Perhaps, after all, he could not only stand up "pretty well" to Gerald Cutts of the Fifth, but perhaps he could actually beat him!

With that thought surging in his brain, Arthur Augustus rushed at his opponent, and hit out lustily.

Cutts of the Fifth, big and powerful fellow though he was, strongly enough seemed utterly incapable of withstanding the vigorous attack of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He made feeble attempts to guard the stinging blows that thudded into his ribs and face, but he scarcely landed a blow himself. His footwork was slow, and every now and then he would lurch in an odd way.

The fellows stared in wonderment.

Something was wrong with Cutts.

"My hat! He's selling the fight!" breathed Racke. "That must be it! D'Arcy has paid him to let himself get beaten!"

"Don't talk like a bigger ass than you can help, Racke," said Manners contemptuously, over-hearing the remark.

"Well, why doesn't Cutts knock him into the middle of next week?" growled Racke, giving Manners a vicious look. "He could if he wanted to!"

Manners did not answer. Though Racke's idea was absurd, of course, Manners could think of no good reason for Cutts' feeble exhibition.

"He's ill!" gasped Tom Merry.

Cutts had suddenly lurched heavily, his eyes half-closed. His face was now the colour of putty.

"He's ill!" echoed Redfern of the New House.

"Stop the fight!" shouted Prye.

The only fellow present who did not think Cutts was ill was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

In the excitement of the fight, it was natural that he failed to understand the truth of the matter. To D'Arcy, it seemed that he was winning hand over fist, but that fact, though it surprised him a little, did not surprise him very much. All along he had expected to put up a better show against Cutts than his supporters had expected from him.

Now that he was actually licking the black sheep of the Fifth, a wave of joyful triumph swept over Arthur Augustus. The light of battle gleamed in his eyes. He was licking a Fifth-Former! It seemed almost too good to be true. But since it was true, Arthur Augustus meant to make the most of it.

Cutts certainly deserved a thrashing. Arthur Augustus intended to give it him.

With a final terrific straight-left, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy knocked Cutts flying, just as Prye called out to stop the fight.

The black sheep of the Fifth crumpled up into a still heap, and lay motionless.

There was a breathless silence. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared down at the vanquished figure of his foe with rather mixed feelings.

He had thrashed Cutts!

But, now he had done it, the tender-hearted Gussy began to wonder if he had rather overdone it. Gerald Cutts looked so very battered and ill, down there on the grass.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I am afraid I have been hittin' wathah hardah than I intended! I hope Cutts will not have to go to the sannay! I am wathah a hard hittah when I am woused."

He stooped down over the prostrate figure. But already half a dozen fellows had clambered through the ropes, and were running to Cutts. Tom Merry, Blake, Talbot, St. Leger and Gilmore knelt beside him anxiously.

That Cutts had been ill was now very obvious. That was the sole reason why he had put up such a feeble show. That was why he had been licked to the wide by a Fourth-Former, everybody realised.

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Everybody, that is, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's had put up a splendid fight, and had been amazingly plucky to face his burly antagonist at all. But it was owing to Cutts being off colour, not Gussy's skill, that had saved the swell of St. Jim's from the terrible hiding that he had been promised.

"I am sowwy if I have been wathah bwutal, St. Legah," said Arthur Augustus with dignity. "But, weally, the wottah wichly deserved his thwashin'. Howevah, I wepeat that I am sowwy if I have been wathah too seaveh with him—"

"You young fool!" snapped St. Leger. "He's sick!" "Yaas, he looks pwetty sick," agreed Arthur Augustus.

"You see, St. Legah, I am wathah a hard hittah!" "You young idiot! I mean, he was sick before you hit him at all, only none of us realised it till too late!" cried St. Leger angrily.

"Wats!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "Weally, St. Legah, I know it must be pwetty sickenin' for you Fifth-Form fellows to see Cutts thwashed by a Fourth-Form chap. But to make up a widiculous stowy like that is weally wathah the limit! I am surprised, St. Legah."

"Of course he was ill!" yelled Prye. "Wats! But one could not vewy well expect the Fifth to admit a lickin'!" said Arthur Augustus icily. "Tom Mewwy, where is my coat, deah boy? Thanks! What about returnin' to St. Jim's? Now that I have thwashed Cutts, we will leave him to his pals."

And with his noble head held high, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strode from the field of battle—a conquering hero!

IT'S RISKY



TO LEAVE TILL TO-MORROW WHAT YOU SHOULD DO TO-DAY! IF YOU WAIT TILL NEXT WEDNESDAY BEFORE MAKING CERTAIN OF YOUR COPY OF THE "GEM" YOU ARE ASKING TO BE DISAPPOINTED. WITH ALL THE CHAPS TALKING ABOUT THE GRAND TREAT THAT'S COMING ALONG, THERE IS BOUND TO BE A RUSH FOR THE "GEM" NEXT WEEK. ALL THOSE WHO MAKE CERTAIN OF THEIR COPIES—BY ORDERING TO-DAY—WILL BE IN THE POSITION TO CONGRATULATE THEMSELVES. ALL THOSE WHO LEAVE ORDERING FOR ANOTHER DAY, STAND THE RISK OF DISAPPOINTMENT. THEREFORE—SAFETY FIRST—DON'T RISK IT!

CHAPTER 12.

Where Ignorance is Bliss!

"WEALLY, this is vewy sportin' of you fellows!" Arthur Augustus made that remark, on entering Study No. 6, on his return to St. Jim's.

Unknown to the swell of St. Jim's, Blake & Co. had laid in a very fine spread for tea that day. They had thought, before the fight, that it was the least they could do—that it might be some small consolation to their noble study-mate if he could sit down to a really ripping tea, when he had been brought home battered and mangled at the hands of Gerald Cutts.

But, seeing how things had turned out, Arthur Augustus seemed to imagine that it was a feast to celebrate his amazing victory. His chums all knew that his victory had scarcely been due to Gussy's powers on the field of battle, so to speak. But they scarcely liked to tell him so.

So far, in fact, no one had had the heart to break the news to Arthur Augustus that he had only beaten a sick man.

That fact would have to be made clear to him soon. All the school knew the truth, and it could not be kept from him long.

But at present Arthur Augustus was in happy ignorance of the facts.

He beamed upon the spread in Study No. 6, through his gleaming eyeglass, and nodded approval.

"This weally is vewy gwatifyin', deah boys," he murmured, as he took the seat of honour at the head of the table. "It is most kind of you to celebuate my victowy over that wottah Cutts in this wippin' mannah."

"It must have been a gweat shock to Cutts to find out that I was such a hard hittah," continued Arthur Augustus. "When he found himself powahless against my tewwific blows, it was weally a shock for all the Fifth, I suppose, to watch and see him battered to a jellay!"

"It was a shock to everybody," murmured Digby. "Sit down, you chaps," invited Blake, glancing at the Terrible Three. "Now, Gussy, pile in! We laid in this spread especially for you."

"Thanks, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus, who had developed a large appetite during his fight, proceeded to pile in.

There was a silence in Study No. 6. D'Arcy's chums were glancing at one another from time to time, doubtfully.



"Wally meant to stop that giddy fight!" grinned Reggie Manners. "He thought out a good stunt, too—Ow!" Reggie broke off suddenly, as a foot hacked his shin under the table. "Ow! You fathead, Curly! What did you kick me for?"

(See Chapter 14.)

Who was to be the first to break the news to Arthur Augustus that his victory was but a hollow mockery.

"Ahem!" coughed Blake, after a while. "Well, I'm sure we're all jolly glad to see old Gussy back here safe and sound. But, of course—"

"Thanks, Blake, deah boy!"

"Not at all! As I was saying, but—"

"Yaas, deah boy?"

"Well, I was going to say," mumbled Blake, "that it was a pity that Cutts wasn't a bit more fit, or—"

"Cutts nevah is fit," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his noble head. "Too many wotten cigawettes! If he had been pwoperly fit, pewwaps I should not have licked him so fwightfully easy."

"Yes," chipped in Digby. "That's just it. You—"

"I might barely have managed to knock him out, in fact," murmured Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Of course, I should have knocked him out in the end, anyhow, but not so easily, pewwaps."

"Ahem!"

"You are suffewin' fwom wathah a wotten cough, Blake," remarked Arthur Augustus kindly. "I should see the matwon."

"No-n-no, I'm all right!" protested Blake hastily. "You see—"

"In fact—" began Manners.

"It's like this, Gussy—" chimed in Tom Merry.

"Ahem!" coughed Herries.

"Hewwies has a cough, too!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in concern. "Possibly you have caught Blake's cough, Hewwies."

"Possibly!" gasped Herries.

"It's like this!" said Tom Merry firmly. "We're all jolly glad you won the fight, Gussy, old man. Jolly glad! It would have been rotten if you'd been licked by Cutts. But—well—"

Tom broke off awkwardly.

Arthur Augustus, with a beaming smile, rose to his feet. The others stared at him.

With a shock, they realised that Arthur Augustus was about to make a speech.

"In wreply to Tom Mewwyy's kind speech and congwatulatin' me on my victwry over that wottah Cutts," began Arthur Augustus gracefully, "I can only say thanks most

feahfully, deah boys, for backin' me up so wippingly all along the line. I do not wish to say 'I told you so.' But you must remember that I felt pwetty suah all along that I could stand up to Cutts, although you fellows wathah widiculed that ideah. I do not blame you. You did not fully wealise what a tewwific hittah, and what a tewwibie fightah I am when I am woused. I weally must admit that it was no surprise to me to thwash Cutts as I did. I only twust I have not been a little too bwutal. Speakin' as the most powerful fightin' man of the junior school at St. Jim's—"

"What?" yelled Herries.

"Speakin' as the most powerful fightin' man of the junior school," repeated Arthur Augustus, raising his voice a little so that Herries should not again fail to hear, "I should like to point out a few intewestin' facts about fightin' at St. Jim's."

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Monty Lowther.

"I shall not take more than ten minutes, deah boys—or fifteen at the vewy most," beamed Arthur Augustus.

"Firstly—"

"I think, if you don't mind, old man, you'd better keep your speech for some other time," put in Blake hastily.

"We've still got our prep to finish, you know."

"I shall not be more than ten or fifteen minutes, deah boy, or twenty minutes at the vewy most—"

"Help!" panted Digby. "Stop him—someone!"

"I beg your pardon, Dig, deah boy?"

"Nothing," said Dig hurriedly.

"I will start by bwiefly outlinin' a histwry of the school—"

"Some other time, old chap!" cried Blake. And he rose and forcibly pushed Arthur Augustus back into his chair.

"No time now!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Must start prep!" cried Blake earnestly. "Mustn't shirk your lessons, Gussy, even after licking Cutts! Work first, you know!"

"Weally, I've nevah heard you say so before!" cried Arthur Augustus, in great surprise. "It astonishes me, Blake, deah boy, to see you so keen on work all at once. Howevah, if you weally feel—"

"I do!" said Blake. "Come on, you chaps, clear away quick, and we can get down to our interesting prep!"

"Intewestin'?" echoed D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, Blake—" "No time to waste javin'!" said Blake severely. And, with a great clatter, he began shifting plates and cups and saucers.

"Vewy well!" said Arthur Augustus resignedly. "I will leave you to start your pewp, Blake. But I feel it is only wight and sportin' of me to go along to the Fifth Form passage first of all and inquire aftah Cutts, to make suah he is not sewiously damaged aftah my feahful w'ath!"

"Look here!" began Tom Merry. "I shouldn't! You see—"

"It is the pwivilege of the victowious chap in a scwap to show a forgivin' feelin' towards his beaten foe," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "I considah it is my dutay to ask after Gewald Cutts."

"Look here," said Tom, "I shouldn't! You don't understand! You see—ahem! Well, you'll only be putting your foot in it!"

"I twust, Tom Mewwy, that I am a fellow of tact and judgment," said Arthur Augustus serenely. "So long, deah boys!"

And the swell of St. Jim's left the study, still blissfully ignorant of the fact that he was not exactly the conquering hero he imagined himself to be.

"Why didn't you stop him?" roared Blake.

"I couldn't," answered Tom helplessly. "Poor old Gussy! It'll be a nasty jolt for him to learn that Cutts was ill all along. Well, he's got to know in the end—the sooner the better. The Fifth will soon make it pretty clear to him."

At the end of the passage Arthur Augustus met Cardew.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Cardew. "How's the giddy victor?" "Wippin', thanks, Cardew! But will you tell me, as an unpwejudiced observah of the fight, if you considah I was a twifle too wuff on Cutts? He looked pwetty feahful when I had finissh with him. I am a vewy hard hittah, you know. He looked quite ill at the finish. I twust I was not bwutal?"

Ralph Reckness Cardew stared. Then he grinned. Cardew realised in a flash that Arthur Augustus was still quite unaware that Cutts had been ill and practically helpless to defend himself.

"Why, no, Gussy!" said Cardew gravely. "I think you were right to teach Cutts a lesson. Your wrath was terrible to behold, but it was a righteous wrath."

"Yaas! I agree that it was a perfectly wigtheous w'ath!" agreed Arthur Augustus, nodding.

"Certainly! Of course, one could not help but feel a little sorry for Cutts, as your smashing blows rained home upon him," went on Cardew. "Big fellow though Cutts is, he was like a child before your magnificent display of er—the fighter's art. You reminded me of a film I once saw of Charlie Chaplin."

"Eh?" "I mean of Gene Tunney," said Cardew hastily. "One of his big fights, you know, on the screen. You reminded me of that."

"Did I weally?" murmured Arthur Augustus, much gratified.

"The resemblance' was extraordinary, Gussy."

"Was it weally?" beamed Arthur Augustus.

"It really was. For example, you both had two legs," said Cardew gravely.

"W-what?" "And two arms and a nose," continued Cardew. "And you both had a couple of eyes, and two ears. Amazing resemblance!"

Having explained himself thus, Ralph Reckness Cardew nodded and strolled on, leaving Arthur Augustus staring after him very dubiously.

"Weally, I wondah if the silly ass was twyin' to pull my leg?" murmured the swell of St. Jim's.

With a doubtful look on his noble countenance, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy continued his way towards the Fifth Form passage, on his kindly mission to inquire after his defeated foe.

CHAPTER 13.

A Shock for Gussy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS reached Cutts' study in the Fifth Form passage, and tapped on the door. There was no answer.

He tapped again, but still there was no reply.

A step in the passage caused Arthur Augustus to turn. It was Lefevre, the captain of the Fifth. He stopped and looked at the swell of St. Jim's curiously.

"There's nobody in there, I know," he said. "Who were you wanting—St. Leger?"

"I wanted to see Cutts," murmured Arthur Augustus kindly.

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"What?" snapped Lefevre. "Do you mean to say you've not heard Cutts is in the sanny?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"W-w-w-what?"

"He's sick!" said Lefevre curtly, and passed on.

"M-m-my only aunt!" stammered Arthur Augustus. "I—I feah I must weally have been bwutal, if it is necessary for Cutts to go to the sanny! I—I nevah meant to thwash him so tewwibly as all that! Oh deah!"

And, with dismay upon his face, the swell of St. Jim's hurried downstairs. At the end of the Shell passage he ran into Talbot.

"I—I say, Talbot, deah boy!"

"Hallo, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus grasped Talbot's arm.

"Have you heard about Cutts?" he gasped.

"What about him?"

"He's in the sanny, I'm afwaid."

"Why, didn't you know all along?" exclaimed Talbot, in surprise. "They took him there immediately after the fight!"

"Bai Jove!"

"He's pretty bad, I'm told!"

"Oh deah! This is tewwible!"

Talbot eyed Arthur Augustus curiously.

"You knew he was ill, of course?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas! I'm afwaid I was wathah bwutal!"

"Oh, but you didn't know, when you lammed him like that, I suppose?"

"Wathah not! I had no ideah how hard I was hittin'!"

"Well, it's not your fault," said Talbot reassuringly. "I don't think you hurt him vewy much. He soon came round from that lammung. But—"

"I didn't hurt him vewy much!" echoed D'Arcy, in bewilderment. "But he is in the sanny, deah boy! I must have hurt him tewwibly! I am wathah tewwible when I am woused, and—"

"Oh, no, you didn't really do much damage!"

"But—"

"Don't you worry, Gussy! You didn't hurt him much. He's ill, that's all."

"Not hurt much?" said the swell of St. Jim's, in amazement. "But he's ill in the sanny! Weally, if you do not considah that bein' hurt, Talbot, I am hanged if I know what you do call bein' hurt!"

"But don't you see," explained Talbot patiently, "he is in the sanny because he's ill, not because you lammed him."

"Weally, I do not understand you at all!" said Arthur Augustus helplessly. "I twust you will not be offended, Talbot, if I remark that you appeah to be talkin' thwough your hat!"

Talbot jumped. Suddenly he understood.

"My only Aunt Sempronia!"

"What has she to do with it?" asked Arthur Augustus, irritably.

"You mean to say, Gussy, that you haven't heard yet?" yelled Talbot. "That you didn't know Cutts was ill when he fought you, and that was why he was so easily licked? That if he hadn't been ill, you would have been in the sanny yourself and not him?"

It was D'Arcy's turn to jump.

"What?" he gasped.

"That's the whole thing!" grinned Talbot. "Didn't anyone tell you? Cutts had been drinking something that disagreed with him, it seems, and they're dosing him in the sanny for it. He was a pretty sickly sort of colour during the fight, you know—"

"Yaas, but—"

"Well, that's why! No wonder you licked him."

Gussy gasped.

He remembered now what St. Leger had said, after the fight. He understood, too, what Lefevre had meant a few minutes ago.

He understood why his own chums had been so oddly lacking in enthusiasm over his victory!

In a moment, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's glorious dream-castle came tumbling about his ears, so to speak. The beads of perspiration stood out upon his noble brow.

"Oh deah!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

The sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face made Talbot feel quite sorry for him. He patted the swell of the Fourth on the shoulder in a friendly way.

"Cheer up, Gussy! You didn't know, when you lammed into him, that he was sick! It wasn't your giddy fault!"

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus miserably.

"Serve him right, anyway. He wouldn't have spared you, if he'd been fit enough to thrash you!"

"Oh deah!"

Talbot passed on his way, leaving Arthur Augustus with a face about as cheerful as that of a martyr at the stake.

"Hullo, Gus!"

A sudden voice hailed Arthur Augustus as he stood there. It was Wally of the Third.

"I've been looking for you everywhere," grinned Wally. "I say, old hoss, what a ripping show!"

"What's that?" muttered Arthur Augustus wretchedly. "Ripping the way you waded into old Cutts!" chortled Wally. "He deserved it!"

"B-but he was sick, you silly young ass!" cried Arthur Augustus, finding his voice.

"Well, a jolly good bit of luck for you, that's what I call it. He'd have smashed you to a jelly otherwise!"

"I do not admit that he would have smashed me to a jellay, Wally!" cried Arthur Augustus, breathing hard. "I considah that I should have licked him anyhow, you widiculous young ass!"

"Oh, come off it!" growled Wally. "You know he would have licked you! With one hand tied!"

"Wats! I considah—"

"Oh, bow-bow!"

The suggestion was too much for Arthur Augustus. He made a rush, and pinned the alarmed Baggy to the wall.

"You fat wottah!" he exclaimed.

"Ow, really, Gussy—"

"You miserable fat fwog!"

"Leggo! I'm only telling you what some of the chaps are saying!" panted Baggy. "I thought you ought to know!"

"Cleah off!" snorted Arthur Augustus, releasing the fat junior contemptuously. "You are makin' up silly stowies, Twimble!"

"But it is true!" hooted Trimble. "Everybody knows now that Cutts was doped so that you could win the fight—"

Arthur Augustus made another rush, and Baggy turned and scuttled away down the passage as fast as his fat little legs could carry him. The swell of St. Jim's did not follow.

At the end of the passage Baggy Trimble turned.



"You think Wally doctored Cutts' lemonade so that he would be groggy, and you could win the fight!" said Mellish. "But you're wrong. Another chap did it!" "Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "Who's this other chap?" Mellish grinned and tapped himself on the chest. "I'm the chap!" he replied calmly. (See Chapter 15.)

And Wally, grinning, turned away and vanished. Wally, at any rate, was very satisfied with the way things had turned out.

But the face of the swell of St. Jim's was as long as a fiddle as he made his way slowly to his study.

On the stairs he passed Mellish, who eyed him curiously. Then Racke came along. Racke stopped.

"Hullo, here's the giddy conquering hero!" he called out with a sneer. Racke was very disappointed with the result of the fight, and he intended to get a little satisfaction by taunting D'Arcy. "Been licking any more invalids and cripples, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus did not even hear Racke. He passed by with clouded brow.

In the Fourth-Form passage, a fat figure rolled in his direction.

It was Baggy Trimble. And he was grinning in a way that showed that he was simply bursting with news.

The Falstaff of the Fourth blinked at Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"I say, Gussy! Have you heard what they say about Cutts?" he sniggered. "The Fifth are saying that Cutts was deliberately doped so that you could lick him! Did you dope Cutts, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Yah!" he yelled. "I believe you doped Cutts yourself, Gussy, you rotter!"

Then he vanished hastily.

Arthur Augustus moved slowly on in the direction of Study No. 6. A worried frown had appeared on his noble brow.

Could it possibly be true, what Baggy had said?

Had Cutts been deliberately "doctored" by someone who wished to see him licked by the swell of St. Jim's?

It was at least possible!

Arthur Augustus paused before he reached his study. His face was deeply troubled. He turned, and with quickened step, returned in the direction from which he had come.

He headed straight for the Fifth-Form passage, and tapped on the door of Lefevre's study.

In answer to a shout from within, Arthur Augustus entered the study. Lefevre would be sure to know the truth.

The captain of the Fifth was alone. He glanced in surprise at the Fourth-Former.

"Hallo, what do you want?"

"Pway pardon this intwusion," said Gussy with dignity. "I know you are a fair sort of fellow, Lefevre, although you are in the Fifth—"

"Thanks!" roared Lefevre dryly. "Thanks awfully!"
 "Don't mench! I know you will not try to conceal the twuth, Lefevre. I am askin' you, therefore, if it is twue about Cutts. I have heard a vewy amazin' and dreadful stowy, but, since it came fwom that fat and widiculous ass, Twimble—"

"Oh, don't talk all night!" cried Lefevre impatiently.

"What do you want me to tell you? Get on with it."

"Weally, Lefevre! I am gettin' on with it!"

"Well, what is it?" roared the captain of the Fifth.

"Of course, it may be just a widiculous stowy of Twimble's. But Twimble declared most emphatically that Cutts had been doctahed pwior the fight in Wylcombe Woods!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass and watched Lefevre anxiously.

"Perfectly true," nodded Lefevre, with a grim look. "Cutts was perfectly well this morning, and, had apparently, however, eaten nothing that could have upset his health. Before leaving the school for Rylcombe Woods, he drank a glass of lemonade which made him feel seedy."

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "So it is weally twue?"

Philip Lefevre nodded again.

"Oh, deah! But I—I suppose nobody thinks I intah-feahed with Cutts' dwink?"

"Oh, no," said Lefevre with a smile. "I don't think anyone would accuse you, D'Arcy. You may be an ass, but you're straight."

"Weally, Lefevre—"

"Cut along now, please. I'm busy."

"But—"

"Scat!" roared the captain of the Fifth.

Arthur Augustus went. His face was a picture!

CHAPTER 14.

On the Scent!

THE swell of St. Jim's stood on the hearthrug in Study No. 6. There was a look of deep trouble upon his noble countenance.

"So that is the dweadful twuth, deah boys!" he said.

Blake & Co. stared at their elegant study-mate sympathetically. He had just told them what he had heard from Lefevre.

They felt sorry for D'Arcy.

"Rotten luck!" said Blake. "But no one will blame you!"

"I twust the fellows know me bettah than to suppose I would dweam of doin' such a thing as to dope Cutts, so as to thwash him unfairely," nodded Arthur Augustus. "But it is all vewy distwessin'! Of course, I should have licked Cutts anyhow—"

"Ahem!"

"You should weally see the matwon for that cough of yours, Blake. I was just about to say, deah boys, that I considah it is up to me!"

"What's up to you?" asked Dig.

"To discovah who the wottah was who doped Cutts," said the swell of St. Jim's firmly, "and thereby cleah myself completely of suspicion. It is necessary to discovah the culpwit for the sake of my honour!"

"Bless your honour!" grunted Herries.

"I have just visited Cutts in the sanny," went on Gussy.

"He is a lot bettah, fortunately. But he still has a pain in his tummy."

"But who on earth is responsible for it all, I wonder?" exclaimed Blake, jumping up, with a frown on his face.

"It was a proper cad's trick—unless it was done by some silly kid who didn't realise what—"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gave a sudden startled exclamation.

"What's bitten you, Gussy?" asked Digby in alarm.

The face of the swell of St. Jim's was a picture.

Whatever the thought that had given rise to his sudden ejaculation, the swell of the Fourth did not seem to find it a pleasant one, judging from the expression on his noble countenance.

"Bai Jove!"

"Get it off your chest!" cried Herries. "What's up?"

"A feahful thought has stwuck me!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Well, that's better than a lump of iron!" put in Blake humorously. "What is it, Gussy?"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Don't keep repeating yourself!" roared Herries. "What bee have you got in your giddy bonnet now? If you think you can guess who the chap is that doped Cutts, tell us his name—don't stand there saying 'By Jove!'"

"Bai Jove! I—I— Oh, bai Jove!"

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"Bump him!" growled the thoroughly exasperated Herries, and D'Arcy's chums made a rush.

"Hands off!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in alarm. "A tewwible thought has stwuck me! Can it possibly be that my feathah-bwained young minah is wespensible? We know young Wally was tewwibly distwessed at the pwospect of my fight with Cutts—the youngstah not wealisin' that I was more than a match for the Fifth-Former. Pewwaps the young wascal was foolish enough to try to stop the fight by makin' Cutts too ill to meet me!"

"My hat!" gasped Blake.

"My giddy aunt!" muttered Herries. "That's just the sort of thing the Third would do! Those kids wouldn't realise how jolly serious it was to try a stunt like that!"

But Digby shook his head.

"I don't think young Wally would try that kind of game."

"He might!" cried Arthur Augustus, greatly distressed. "I do not think for a moment the young wascal would mean to give me an unfair victowy—no doubt he thought Cutts would be too ill to show up, and the fight would be off."

"I don't think so," said Dig thoughtfully.

"But who else could it be?" cried Arthur Augustus hopelessly. "I do greatly feah my suspicions are cowwect. But, anyway, the pwoblem can easily be solv'ed. I will go in search of my minah at once, and wequest the twuth fwom him."

And with a worried frown upon his face Arthur Augustus D'Arcy left the study in search of his trouble-some minor.

But Wally was nowhere to be found.

At last, however, Arthur Augustus came across Reggie Manners and Curly Gibson in the quad. They grinned at the swell of the Fourth cheerfully as he approached them.

"Hallo, Gussy!" exclaimed Curly Gibson. "I say, we chaps in the Third were jolly glad to hear how you waded into that brute Cutts! Good bizney!"

"Yes, congratters, Gussy!" nodded Reggie Manners. "We men in the Third don't take much interest as a rule, of course, in what you silly Fourth-Form asses get up to, but this time we really backed you up."

"You diswesp'ctful young sweeps!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus severely. "I am lookin' for Wally—"

"We dunno where he is!" said Gibson, a little hastily.

Arthur Augustus eyed the curly Third-Former suspiciously through his eyeglass.

"You are suah?"

"Sure as eggs!" nodded Curly Gibson. "What do you want Wally for?"

Arthur Augustus glanced first at Curly Gibson, then at Reggie Manners. Something in their manner struck him as being odd. Distinctly odd!

Could it be that Reggie Manners and Curly Gibson had been in Wally's plot, and were now afraid that Arthur Augustus was looking for his minor because he suspected the truth?

To the swell of St. Jim's it seemed highly probable.

However, if the two Third-Formers were intent upon shielding Wally, it would be no good challenging them with the facts, D'Arcy told himself. This, clearly, was a case for his well-known tact and judgment.

"Ahem!" coughed Arthur Augustus. "I am pleased to heah that you kids were so anxious for me to defeat Cutts this aftahnoon."

"You bet we were!" affirmed Reggie Manners promptly.

"Possibly you kids would like to come along to the tuck-shop and have a ginger-pop?" suggested Arthur Augustus, with a benign smile.

To the two Third-Formers, the sudden offer on the part of the swell of St. Jim's was rather a surprise. But no Third-Former ever paused to wonder why, when there was an offer of a free feed.

Reggie and Curly Gibson accompanied Arthur Augustus joyfully, and a little later the three were seated in Dame Taggles' little shop, with ginger-pop and jam-tarts on the table before them.

"Jolly good of you, Gussy!" mumbled Reggie, with his mouth full of jam-tart.

"Not at all. Always a pleasuah to see you kids enjoyin' yourselves! By the way, about my minah, Wally—"

"What about Wally?" murmured Curly Gibson.

"I suppose he was vewy eagah for me to beat Cutts in the fight in Wylcombe Woods this aftahnoon?" observed Arthur Augustus casually.

"Oh, rather!" nodded Reggie Manners. "Of course, he never thought you would lick Cutts—"

"None of us did, of course," put in Curly Gibson airily.

"And, of course, you jolly well wouldn't have licked him if Cutts hadn't been ill, you know—"

Arthur Augustus frowned.

He was a little tired of hearing the point of view expressed that he would have been beaten very badly but for Cutts' mysterious illness. He himself did not share the general view. But at the moment he let Curly Gibson's remark pass.

"Have another tart, young Mannahs," he suggested. "So my minah was vewy wowwied, was he?"

"Oh, rather! In fact, he jolly well said he was going to stop the fight, you know—"

"Weally?" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Have another ginger-pop, deah boy. Yaas, as you were sayin'—"

"Wally meant to stop that giddy fight!" grinned Reggie Manners. "He thought out a good stunt, too— Ow!"

Reggie broke off very suddenly, and emitted a yell as a foot hacked his shin under the table.

"Ow! Yoooop! You fathead, Curly! You kicked me!"

"What on earth are you talking about, young Manners?" asked Curly Gibson innocently.

"I was only saying that it was a good stunt of Wally's," went on Reggie Manners, glaring at his chum, "when he— Yow! Oh! Yoooop!"

"Shut up, you ass!" hissed Curly Gibson, in a tone that was meant to be heard by Reggie alone. But Arthur Augustus caught the words, too, and his brow set.

"Look here, young Gibson—" roared Reggie Manners, nursing his ankle painfully.

"Come on, Reggie!" interrupted Curly Gibson, jumping up. "Time we got along! Thanks awfully for the spread, Gussy!"

Before Reggie Manners had time to resist, Curly Gibson gripped him by the arm and whirled him out of the tuckshop.

"Look here, what's the giddy idea?" roared Reggie. "I was only telling Gussy what he's bound to find out soon! And, anyway, he won't mind—it never came to anything!"

"Rot!" hissed Curly Gibson angrily. "How do you know Gussy won't mind? If you ask me, I think he'll make it hot for Wally if he finds out about that telegram, and—"

"Oh, well, if you think Gussy would be ratty—" grunted Reggie Manners.

"Of course he would," said Gibson, as the two Third-Formers went their way.

But in the tuckshop Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat with frowning brow and troubled face.

"Bai Jove!" he muttered under his breath. "It's as cleah as daylight! Young Mannahs says Wally thought out a stunt to stop the fight. If young Gibson had not stopped him talkin', Weggie Mannahs would have blurted out the whole twuth. Oh deah!"

That it could only have been the telegram he had received before the fight that Reggie Manners and Curly Gibson had been talking about in the tuckshop never occurred to Arthur Augustus for a moment.

With a worried frown on his noble countenance, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose, paid his bill, and left the tuckshop, a prey to gloomy reflections.

CHAPTER 15.

A Promise Fulfilled!

PERCY MELLISH, the sneak of the Fourth, entered the tuckshop half an hour after Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had left it. Mellish was surprised to see Baggy Trimble seated by the counter, demolishing a plateful of doughnuts, with a glass of ginger-beer at his fat elbow.

Mellish knew that Baggy was stony, and that Dame Taggles had long ago declined to allow the fat junior further "tick"—hence Mellish's surprise.

"Hallo, porpoise!" exclaimed Mellish. "Raised the wind somewhere? Been looting somebody's money-box, or what?"

"Oh, really, Mellish!" Baggy Trimble blinked at the sneak of the Fourth loftily. "As a matter of fact, D'Arcy gave me half-a-crown."

"What on earth did Gussy give you half-a-crown for?" Mellish asked curiously, as he seated himself at the counter and started on the jam-tarts he had ordered. "To buy soap? You need it!"

"Oh, really, Mellish! As a matter of fact," went on Trimble, with his mouth full, "he gave me half-a-crown to go and look for his minor, young Wally. He, he, he!"

"What the thump are you sniggering about?" demanded Mellish, staring at Baggy curiously.

"I happen to know why Gussy wants to see Wally," grinned the fat junior, leaning towards Mellish and lowering his voice. "I—er—happened to stoop down to do up my bootlace just outside Gussy's study this evening—"

"I see," nodded Mellish, with a sarcastic smile.

"And I happened to overhear what was being said in the study," went on Baggy. "Gussy was saying that he believed his minor had been the chap that doctored Cutts' lemonade, so as to save old Gussy from getting slaughtered—"

"My giddy aunt!" breathed Mellish. He gripped Baggy's arm suddenly. "You really heard that?"

"Yes!" sniggered Baggy. "News, isn't it? Everybody's wondering who doped Cutts for the fight; evidently it was young Wally."

"And Gussy wants to see him about it, eh?"

"Rather!"

"What does he mean to do to Wally?" muttered Mellish.

That was a thing which Baggy Trimble did not know. But when he did not know facts, Baggy usually supplied fiction, rather than admit himself ignorant.

"Oh," he said glibly, "Gussy is going to reward his minor, of course! He's going to give him a fiver!"

"A—a fiver?"

"A whole giddy fiver!" nodded Baggy Trimble.

"My giddy aunt! I should have expected Gussy to be a bit ratty with Wally, knowing what a beastly righteous sort of chap he is," muttered Mellish. An odd grin spread suddenly over his features. "Well, I suppose even Gussy isn't such a hopeless ass as to be wild with the chap that saved him from an awful licking at the hands of Cutts."

"Of course not!" sniggered Baggy. "Gussy's as pleased as punch!"

Mellish jumped down from his chair.

"Well, so-long, Trimble!" he murmured, and hurried from the tuckshop.

There was a peculiar expression on the face of the sneak of the Fourth as he crossed the quad in the direction of the School House.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat at the table in Study No. 6 finishing his prep.

Blake, Herries, and Digby had already finished theirs, and had left Arthur Augustus in solitary state. There was a deep frown upon the noble brow of the swell of St. Jim's as he worked away at his Virgil. Though he was busy with Virgil, he was thinking of Wally.

As yet, evidently, Baggy Trimble had failed to find the scapegrace of the Third. At any rate, Wally had not been near Study No. 6.

A sudden tap at the door caused Arthur Augustus to look up with a start. Was it Wally at last?

"Come in!" called out Arthur Augustus, dropping his pen hastily.

The door opened. It was not Wally who entered the study, but Percy Mellish.

Arthur Augustus frowned as he adjusted his eyeglass to survey Mellish. Mellish grinned and closed the door behind him.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Mellish. "I want a word with you!"

"P'wray get it ovah as quickly as poss," returned Arthur Augustus a trifle coldly. He did not like Mellish. "I am busy with my p'wep."

"You think Wally doctored Cutts' lemonade, don't you?" said Mellish, with a grin.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus stared at Mellish in amazement. The swell of St. Jim's was thoroughly taken aback to find that Mellish knew that.

"You're wrong, old bean!" said Mellish cheerily. "I tell you, you're right off the rails! Wally doesn't deserve anything for that job!"

"Bai Jove! And I had wresolved to give Wally—" "I know what you'd resolved to give him," grinned Mellish. "But the kid doesn't deserve it!"

"Bai Jove, no!"

"But," went on Mellish cheerily, "someone else does!"

"Wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus.

"And the chap that really doctored Cutts' lemonade, so that he'd be groggy, and you could win the fight, deserves what you were going to give Wally, doesn't he, Gussy?" cried Mellish.

"Ewewy time!" said Arthur Augustus. "But who is this chap?"

Mellish grinned cheerfully and tapped himself on the chest.

"I'm the chap!" he observed calmly.

Arthur Augustus stared at the sneak of the Fourth as if he could not believe his ears. Mellish tapped himself on the chest a second time.

"I'm the chap," he said. "Don't forget you've promised to give me what you were going to give young Wally!"

"M-m-m hat!" stutored Arthur Augustus.

"I deserve it, not Wally."

"You—you—"

(Continued on page 28.)

JUST CRICKET! Dick Dare is only a youngster, but he knows more about cricket than many chaps twice his age. And Dick plays "cricket" in more than one sense of the word, as Markshire discover in their hour of need!

THE LUCK OF THE GAME!



By
RICHARD RANDOLPH.

A GRAND NEW CRICKET STORY, DEALING WITH THE ADVENTURES OF A BOY WHO LOVES THE GREAT SUMMER GAME, AND IS A MASTER AT IT, TOO.



A New Job for Dick!

ALAN EDMEAD was dozing fitfully when Dick Dare went to bed that Sunday night. A dozen times in the night Dick had to get out to minister to his chum's wants. He did it ungrudgingly; but it meant little sleep for him, and in the morning he felt far less fit than usual.

The doctor when he came again said that it was only a chill on the liver, but needed to be treated with care. There would be no more play for Alan Edmead in the match at Hove.

"I can't begin to think who's going to keep wicket," said Tom Armlay, as the pres., all but Balkwill, went to the ground together.

Balkwill had breakfasted late, and had disappeared immediately after the meal.

"Maybe the skipper will," suggested Toplady.

"You don't mean that, Walter?" said Jenyns.

"I don't. Not but that I think he could do it all right if he cared to. He's smart enough. But it would be too much like hard work for that one, I guess."

Not until ten minutes before the time for play was the question answered. Then Urwine met the men coming in from the nets, and said abruptly:

"You will take the gloves, Dare!"

It was grossly unfair. Every man there realised that it was so. One or two of them expected Dick to rebel. But he remembered his compact with himself, and answered coolly:

"Very well, sir."

"Ever done it before?" asked Toplady.

"Once—ten years ago."

Rayner laughed. Ten years ago Dick had been a small boy in knickers, of course. But Toplady said, quite seriously:

"You can do it all right if you try. You're good for any job on the cricket field, my son!"

"Oh, I shall try, you bet! But don't get on your ear if I miss catches off you, Walter."

"Urwine will go a bit too far before he's finished," said Armlay to Jenyns and Rayner. "He treats us as though we were blessed serfs!"

Both nodded. There was revolt in the air. They knew that the captain presumed on his kinship to the man who practically owned the county club; and it angered them the more because they never doubted Ainsley's fairness, yet did not know how to make him see matters from their standpoint.

Dick put on the gloves, and went out with the rest. Balkwill had only arrived a few minutes earlier, and he was not ready for the field until the Sussex batsmen, Bowley and Tom Cook, were on their way to the wickets. Urwine would have spoken sharply to anyone else who was thus belated. He said nothing to Balkwill. But Dick could guess from the faces of both men that they had not come to any agreement.

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"You'd better stand well back to Toplady," said Urwine to the new wicket-keeper.

"Very well, sir," Dick replied.

He went some ten or twelve yards behind the wicket. Urwine called him a little closer, then sent him back again—did all he could to fluster him. Dick kept his head, and smiled.

Toplady bowled one of his fastest. It rose more than stump high, and Cook, trying to get out of its way, had the bad luck to touch it. Dick ran forward and took the ball within three inches of the ground, and a good man was out to the first delivery of the day. The catch was nothing out of the ordinary; but the Markshire players, all but Urwine and Balkwill, applauded it.

To Balkwill, Dick, getting no instructions, stood close up. He might give a few byes thus; but he would have a chance of stumping. The crack often drew the unwary batsman out of his crease.

Langridge stayed with Bowley. The younger man was rather slow; but the Sussex crack scored at a good pace, and was not bothered by any of the bowling.

Most men who are really good in the field can make some sort of shot at keeping wicket, though the really great wicket-keeper is a rare bird. Possibly Dick had it in him to be one, though he had never had any ambition in that direction; anyway, his performance was more than creditable. Three or four of Toplady's that Peter Nevern or Edmead would probably have stopped went to the boundary for byes, and Urwine scowled and muttered each time. But his wry faces and bad words did not trouble Dick.

Langridge left to a good ball from Armlay. Wensley next. Balkwill enticed him out; he missed the ball, and scrambled to get back. But Dick had whipped off the bails quickly and deftly, and he was too late.

Then Urwine told Dick to take off his pads and gloves.

"You'll go on at the south end," he said. "Rayner, you must keep wicket."

"Excuse me, sir, but I'm no good at the job."

"Do as I tell you!" snapped Urwine.

Rayner turned, as if to march off the field. They were not serfs. Urwine was their captain, but not their master. If they owed him obedience, he owed them at least ordinary civility.

Had Rayner gone, at least three of the others would have followed him. But he remembered John Ainsley, and thought better of it.

"That a Captain!"

THE move was a bad one. Arthur Gilligan came next, and before he had scored was missed by Rayner, who had never been used to fielding anywhere but in front of the wicket. Bowley reached his hundred, and he and his skipper piled on the runs after that. Gilligan gave no more chances. Hitting hard and cleanly, he scored faster than the pro., and Bowley was anything but slow. An hour after lunch Sussex seemed quite definitely on top.

But the dismissal of Bowley and Gilligan, after they had

added 109 in partnership, made matters look more hopeful for Markshire. Balkwill got both wickets.

Then Rayner blundered again—not his fault, for he was doing his best—and two of the later batsmen shared in a bout of fast and furious hitting. The Markshire score was passed by 40 runs before the innings came to an end.

When the Markshire innings commenced, Westland found one from Tate altogether too good for him, and Rayner was caught at cover, and Balkwill and Urwine were brought into partnership.

An uneasy feeling pervaded the Markshire team. All knew by this time that there was grave trouble between the two who had once been allies. All agreed that it was up to Urwine to pay for the damage he had done; but none felt sure that he would do it. If he did it would be because he saw no way of getting out of it.

"One of those two will run the other out," said Tom Armley.

"Then it won't be Greg, unless it's by accident," replied Toplady. "He's the queerest beggar I know, and you can't even guess at times where you stand with him. But he'd never do the dirty on anyone—not even Urwine."

No one dissented from that. Dick had often wondered what the real feeling of his comrades towards Balkwill was. He had seen that the crack held himself aloof from them, and he had only lately begun to understand why. Even now he did not wholly understand.

Balkwill and Urwine settled down. Their batting was masterly. It seemed as though neither man could make a mistake. Runs came fast, though the bowling was frequently changed. Once more Markshire seemed to be getting on top.

"But we've got to declare and get them out if we're to win," said Jenyns.

Any declaration, however, was clearly a matter for the morrow.

The pair were still at the wickets when half-past six came.

Dick had a brief talk with Balkwill in the evening.

"Urwine says he won't pay," he told Dick. "Thinks the owner of the launch may, if we go to him. Dashed if I'm going, though! He wasn't to blame, and I'm asking favours of no man."

"I suppose we shall have to, if Urwine won't, then," Dick said.

"If we can."

And Balkwill shrugged his shoulders. There was trouble in his dark face—anger, too. Dick would have difficulty in raising his share of the money needed. And he could guess that it would be even harder for Balkwill.

The overnight not outs soon got going again in the morning, when Edmead was allowed to leave his bed, though not the hotel.

None of the Sussex bowlers bothered them. They had put on 257 in partnership before the pro. was run out.

"Told you so!" said Armley.

"Oh, if you'd said that Urwine would do it, I shouldn't have argued the case," answered Toplady. "I knew Greg wouldn't."

Balkwill had made 139. The crowd cheered him. The Sussex players gave him a round of applause. And as he drew near the pavilion his comrades roared at him. But his dark face never brightened, and he did not raise his eyes. He lifted his cap an inch from his head, and that was all the acknowledgment anyone got of their generous appreciation of what he had done.

The dark fit was on him, and he went straight from the dressing-room to the bar as soon as he had taken off his pads and bathed his face.

Then Dick did what he knew was an audacious thing. He was very likely to get snubbed for it; but he risked that.

He followed Balkwill to the bar, and was beside him before he could give his order.

"Have one with me, old man!" he said.

Balkwill nodded, and Dick gave the order.

The drink was cool and sparkling.

Then Balkwill laid a thin, long-fingered hand on Dick's shoulder, and they left the bar together. Not another

word was spoken, yet it seemed to Dick that the pressure on his shoulder said:

"You're the only man who could have got away with that. But don't you try it too often."

Lunch came with Urwine still in, and nearing 200. Since Sussex led on the first innings, Markshire's obvious game was to go all out to finish the match. Everyone concerned had faith in Gilligan's also going for a win outright, even at the risk of losing the five points for the lead already attained. But a declaration could be delayed till the home side had no chance of getting the runs, and in that event there would be practically no chance of getting them out.

The Markshire pros. hoped for a declaration after lunch, but they hardly expected it. The side had made enough runs for a sporting chance.

"But he's never got 200 yet, for all the centuries he's made," said Armley. "And he always did care more about himself than about the side."

Westland had made up his mind that nothing should induce him to offer the captain his advice. He offered none. But had he done so it would have been to no avail.

Urwine was determined to get his 200. He needed 20 or so. He might have got the runs in less than half an hour had he gone for them hard. But he would take no risk. He played himself in again with the greatest care; and the minutes, precious as gold, slipped away, and Westland turned his back on the game, and in the pro.'s quarters the men chafed and grumbled.

Not one member of the Markshire side applauded the stroke that brought their captain the 200. There was some clapping among the less critical spectators. But all who knew the game realised that Urwine had played for his own hand, not for his county, and Walter Toplady expressed the feeling many men had when he said, snapping his fingers in contempt:

"That—a captain!"

The game could only end in a draw now. When Markshire took the field Urwine told Balkwill to go on.

Balkwill refused point blank.

"There's no use in it," he said. "I'm not going to wear myself out for nothing!"

He was wrong, of course. Toplady, who felt just as he did, saw that, and would not follow his lead.

Dick was put on at the other end; and these two were kept on for well over an hour, while Bowley and Tate piled up runs. Nothing takes the devil out of a bowler like the certainty that all he can do is of no use. If he cares for his side more than for himself he is likely to be of less use than the individualist, to whom runs or wickets matter because they count in the averages. Neither man bowled badly. At first they bowled pretty well. But when the time passed, and still they were not relieved, they were easy money for the batsmen.

At length Toplady stalked over to Urwine at the end of an over of Dick's.

"I'm bowling no more," he said. "There's another match to-morrow, and a longish journey home before it."

Urwine showed his teeth.

"There may be another match to-morrow, but that's not to say you will be playing in it!" he answered savagely.

"We'll see. Anyway, I bowl no more to-day. And I think it's about time you took young Dare off. The boy's fagged out."

Urwine made a double change, Armley and Tooker going on. The game petered out into a tame draw instead of providing the thrilling finish it might have done. It was a sore and disgruntled team that made its way back to Manchester to meet Notts.

"Who Is On My Side?"

THEY did not get home till the early hours of the morning, and few of them were early at the ground.

Contrary to his usual custom, Gregory Balkwill was among the first to turn up. He was talking with



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Driven to rebellion by the tyranny of an over-bearing manager, young Dick Dare is sacked from his job in an insurance office and decides to apply at the Markshire County Cricket Club ground for a place on the staff. A born cricketer, Dick is engaged to play for his county by John Ainsley, the man who has brought Markshire to

the forefront of cricketing counties, and whose life Dick had saved a few days before. The youngster acquires himself well in his new job, but unfortunately falls foul of Leonard Urwine, the Markshire skipper, and a relative of Mr. Ainsley, for Dick's name is mentioned in John Ainsley's will. Fearing Dick might sooner or later cut him out entirely in the eyes of Mr. Ainsley, the rascally Urwine plots to get Dick out of the way. His effort proves of little avail, however, thanks to the timely intervention of Balkwill, another Markshire player, who has already warned Dick of Urwine's treachery. Urwine next tries to drown Dick by steering a motor-launch broadside on to a small rowing-boat in which Dick and Balkwill are spending the day. In spite of all this, however, Dick makes up his mind that Urwine shall not drive him out of the team. Dick returns to the hotel, after this adventure, to nurse his sick chum, Alan Edmead. (Now read on.)



Toplady and Peter Nevern, now recovered and fit to play, when Dick arrived.

Dick saw Peter shake his head in reply to something Balkwill had asked him. But the fierce look on the face of Walter Toplady showed that he was with Balkwill. Walter put both hands on Peter Nevern's shoulders, and looked down into the face of the little man with the grey-streaked hair who had so long been his good comrade; and Dick could see that he was trying to coax Peter. But Peter shook his head.

"Come here, Dare!" called Balkwill.

Dick joined the group rather unwillingly. There had come to him a sudden intuition as to what was in the air, and he did not know what he would do.

Armley and Rayner came up, followed by Tooker and Jenyns.

"I'll give it you straight," said Balkwill. "I'm asking you all to strike—to refuse to play for Markshire again while Urwine captains the side. We shall do no good till we get rid of him. I thought I was sure of Peter; but he won't come in."

"No," said Peter Nevern. "I don't love Urwine. I would far rather see Westland skipper. But—there's Mr. Ainsley! Think what the club means to him—think, too, what every man among us owes to him! We have had no better friend. He gave us our chance; he's stood by us whenever we needed help. Gregory drop it! I can understand your feeling. I don't blame you for feeling that way. But to do this—no, I can't have a hand in it!"

He passed the back of a hand, misshapen through much hard work behind the stumps, across his eyes, and the simple gesture gave Dick a lump in the throat.

Perhaps it moved Balkwill, too, but not to the giving up of his scheme of rebellion.

"You're the best man of the lot of us, Peter," said Balkwill. "If I'd heed any man I'd heed you. But I'm not going back. I won't play again with Urwine, that's flat! Who's with me?"

"I am, Greg!" cried Toplady.

"I was sure of that—and of you, Armley, and of Rayner. Dare, what do you say?"

"He's with us, of course," Toplady said.

But Dick had had time to think. He perceived that Balkwill's plan was all wrong. It might get rid of Urwine, but the cost would be a heavy one. John Ainsley was not the man to be dictated to, and he would have the committee solidly behind him. It would be impossible to let revolt pass unpunished, however well it might be justified. There would be suspension for some at least of the men, and Markshire's chance of the championship, which had not yet gone west, would be utterly wrecked.

"I can't!" said Dick. "Don't you see that it's not cricket?"

Balkwill glared at him, Toplady looked surprised and hurt. Armley snorted angrily. But Rayner's face showed that the colt's outspoken words had shaken him.

"Does Urwine play the game?" asked Jenyns.

"No. But that's for him to answer."

"And we're out to make him answer for it!" snapped Armley.

Now came Dick's hardest trial. Balkwill took him by the arm and led him apart. The dark face had softened, grown strangely winning.

"I thought we were chums, Dick," said Balkwill.

"I hope we are, Greg."

"There isn't much I wouldn't do for you, my son."

"And there's not much I wouldn't do for you, old man. But I can't do this, because it's all wrong to me. I see it Nevern's way, not yours."

"Think how that rotter's treated you! Why, you wouldn't be alive now if he'd had his will!"

"I believe that. And that's one reason why I can't side with you. I should be like him if I did it because of that—putting myself before Markshire!"

Balkwill put a hand to his forehead, as though his head ached. It did. He had lain awake all night thinking of this stroke. He had been very sure that Dick would be among his supporters. It threw him out to learn that he was wrong.

Yet it did not anger him now, though it had done for a moment.

Between these two, so unlike in most ways, there had grown up a very real and strong affection. At the outset Balkwill had been drawn to Dick by a curious feeling that Dick was very much what he himself had been when John Ainsley had brought him to Marchester. He had held aloof from Dick because he had realised that he was no longer a

companion from whom the boy could get any good. He had gone too far along the miry ways with Urwine for that.

Yet, in his association with Urwine he had always been fool rather than knave—fool of the clever, reckless sort, the sort that see whither the road leads, yet still follows it. He cared more for his mother than anyone else in the world; but his love for her had not saved him. It was Urwine's treatment of Dick that had led to a complete break between him and the county captain.

What that break was likely to mean to him only he knew. But he would not try to patch up the quarrel now. He had defied Urwine to do his worst. He did not doubt that Urwine would hit out. But he counted on getting in the first blow.

Now he turned away. Dick and Peter Nevern were right. He hated to imagine what John Ainsley would think of him. But he must go on!

"Greg," said Dick, his voice trembling a little, "is this the finish between us?"

Balkwill swung round.

"Not unless you make it so, boy!" he answered gruffly.

Then he turned again, and marched away.

Ten minutes later he and Toplady invaded the secretary's office.

"Eh? What's this?" asked Mr Frost, handed a sheet of paper.

"Better read it, sir," answered Balkwill, while the big fast bowler flushed and shifted his feet.

It did not take long to read. In a few words it stated that those whose names were undersigned refused to play in to-day's or any future match under Urwine's captaincy.

No reasons were given. It might have been expected that Mr. Frost would ask for some.

He did not. He read without a word, laid down his pince-nez after reading, and sat for a full minute before speaking.

He had seen this trouble coming, and not he alone. But he had not seen it coming quite in this way.

"Will you take my advice?" he asked.

"We'll listen to it, sir," replied Balkwill respectfully.

"I know what that means—you'll do no more than listen! Ah, here comes the man who will settle things! Mr. Ainsley has arrived."

The Team to Meet Notts!

THE secretary had glanced out of the window, and had seen Mr. Ainsley enter the pavilion.

Toplady started for the door.

"You'd better stay," said Mr. Frost. "If you go you're fairly certain to meet him coming up, and he'll think you're funking it."

"I am!" whispered the big fellow to Balkwill.

"I'm not," the crack answered.

But, though he did not flunk the coming interview, he dreaded it. He would face it; there would be worse than this to face before he was through. But not even Peter Nevern thought more of John Ainsley than he did. The difference between them was that Peter had always gone straight, whereas between Balkwill and the great man there hung the cloud of many things Balkwill had done of which he knew Mr. Ainsley would not approve.

Mr. Frost saw at a glance that John Ainsley had already heard something. It was not from any of the players he had gathered that heavy trouble was pending, but from a member of the committee, who had caught a few words, quite by accident, that had not been intended for his ears.

"What is it, Robert?" asked John Ainsley.

For answer the secretary handed him the signed paper.

Toplady edged nearer the door. It was said of Toplady that, as a lad of eighteen, he had come near winning the V.C. during the War. He would never have shown the white feather in the face of bodily danger. But he was in a funk now.

But Balkwill had set his face hard, and when Mr. Ainsley turned upon him he did not flinch.

"You signed first, I see, Balkwill," said John Ainsley. "This is, I assume, a stroke of your own devising. As man to man, give me your reasons for it."

"Urwine has not treated the men fairly," answered Balkwill. "His attitude towards one man—Dare—has been nothing short of persecution. We do not believe that he cares about winning as much as he cares about his own personal distinction. He is not fit to captain the side. He should have declared the innings at lunch yesterday. He delayed till he had reached 200, and we lost all chance of a win. He kept Toplady here bowling till Toplady refused to go on longer. I have a charge to make against him on my own account. Dare and I were out in a boat at

Brighton on Sunday. Urwine, steering a motor-launch, ran us down and smashed up the boat. I cannot swim; but for Dare I might have been in grave peril. Urwine refuses to pay for the damage done, and neither Dare nor I can afford to pay. I could say a whole lot more. But I think that's enough."

"Why not have reported all this to me, or to the committee?" asked Mr. Ainsley.

"There was not time."

"You mean that you wanted to force our hands? We were to be given half an hour, or less, to choose between the bulk of the team and the captain? But that is not playing the game with us. For my part, I refuse absolutely to be coerced. I accept without hesitation the obvious fact that we must play this match without the aid of any of those who have signed this manifesto. As to future matches—well, who knows whether Markshire may ever play again? But this match must and shall be played! That is all I have to say to you."

If Toplady could have recanted then and there he would have done it. But he saw that to attempt it would be useless. He almost choked as he went out. He was man enough, though, not to blame Balkwill by as much as a word. They were all in it; and, looking at the strained, dark face, he guessed that Gregory felt this at least as much as he did.

Balkwill's heart warmed to him for his silence. Toplady's tongue was an unruly member; it was no little thing that he should control it now. From the moment when they went downstairs together without speaking dated the beginning of a real friendship between these two. They had never hated one another; but Balkwill had giped at Toplady, and Toplady had made it plain that he did not approve of Balkwill's ways. There would be no more giping, and already Balkwill's ways had changed.

"Well, Bob?" said Mr. Ainsley.

"It's all very fine to say we'll play this match. But how are we going to raise a team?" returned Mr. Frost.

"We can do that. It's not a question of finding a side to beat Notts. Let us admit that hopeless. We may be beaten by an innings and 300 or 400 runs. That has happened to other counties, though never yet to Markshire."

"On that understanding, let's see what we can do. Of the regular pros, we have only Nevem—loyal old Peter—and young Dare."

"Was Dare asked to sign that paper?" inquired John Ainsley.

"One can hardly doubt that—surely."

"Why didn't he, then?"

"Because, like Peter, he's loyal, I imagine. Because he's in the habit of fighting his own battles, and won't have them fought for him!"

John Ainsley nodded.

"There's a bowler, a bat—no; two bats; for Peter is never so apt to make runs as when they're badly wanted—and a wicket-keeper for us," he said. "Reginald Westland gives us another first-class bat. Ferguson and Reeve will manage somehow to play, even though they weren't down on the list. Young Matthews—another bowler. That's six. I'll wire to Tryon, if he's not on the ground. Seven. A couple more of the youngsters, though I'm afraid we can't count on them for very much but doing their share in the field—we haven't a man on the staff who can't do that. Nine."

"You're forgetting Urwine," said Mr. Frost dryly.

"Urwine will not play," replied John Ainsley.

"You mean he'll refuse? I don't think that."

"I mean that he will not have the choice. Till this matter is set right he is as much out of the field of selection as any of the strikers. He brought this trouble upon us. I think it very unlikely that he will ever play for Markshire again. I blame myself for his appointment as captain. I have not been blind to the fact that he has not been an ideal leader; but I had hoped that he would improve, and there is no denying his value as a batsman. We must find two more men."

It was not easy. Later in the season University and public school players would have been available. Given more time, a couple of them might have been found now. But it was time that lacked.

"There's Blair," said Mr. Frost doubtfully.

"Even in a side booked to be heavily beaten I do not care to play Blair," was the answer he got. "I have not yet had it explained to me how it was that he turned up at Edgbaston—with his bag—in advance of Dare, whom we sent."

"I have it! There's Arnulf. It's five years since he played for us last, and he's fifty if a day; but he can still get them, and stick to a catch if it comes his way. Agreed? That's ten, then. As for the eleventh—you'd better turn out yourself, John, and captain the team."

"I? At my best I was never first-class, and these three

years past I haven't handled a bat. As for the captaincy, Westland's the man."

"He'd rather not. He won't refuse if you ask him. But he's far more likely to get a heap of runs—and we shall need them—if he hasn't to be bothered about the captaincy at such a time."

"If there were but a day to turn round in—but they've rushed us, and there isn't—I wouldn't think of it. But as it is— Oh, confound it, I'll do it, Bob!"

"That's good! Now we'll see what the committee says."

But Mr. Frost knew well that the committee would say just what John Ainsley said. It was not that they feared him, but that they trusted him wholly.

Not one of them raised a dissenting voice. They were sure that it was for the best. Impossible to give in to the strikers—quite right to leave Urwine out—better to play the match and be beaten to any extent than to back out of it—so their verdict ran.

Wires were dispatched, and John Ainsley felt like praying that he might win the toss. If he did not, he would have to ask Arthur Carr for five or six substitutes in the field, he supposed.

When the strikers heard what was the chosen team they gasped. But they did not feel in the least minded to laugh.

"Urwine out of it!" said Tom Arnley. "That means we're winning!"

"Winning what?" snapped Toplady. "Not the match, that's a sure thing. I'd rather he played; he might make another two hundred!"

"I always thought Mr. Ainsley a great man," said Rayner. "I'm sure of it now."

No one argued against that.

And John Ainsley won the toss. He never knew that Carr had made up his mind to put the home side in if he won. The Notts skipper had heard of the trouble. He could not doubt that his side would win easily enough, and his chivalry prompted that decision. But he was saved taking the responsibility of it.

Neville Tryon was on the ground, and as keen as could be to play. But Ferguson, Reeve, and Arnulf were still to come. Word had arrived from all three, however. They were on their way.

"You must go in first with Mr. Westland, Dare," said John Ainsley, who somehow looked years younger to Dick in his flannels and blazer.

"Very well, sir."

"You won't mind?"

"Not a bit! Any place from No. 2 to No. 11 is my place," replied Dick, smiling.

And Mr. Ainsley noticed the modesty that made the speaker say "No. 2," giving Westland the first place as of right, as well as the sportsmanlike willingness.

"Don't try to rush things. We're bound to be beaten, I suppose, but we may as well put up a decent show if we can."

"I understand, sir."

This colloquy took place in the pros' dressing-room. The strikers, in mufti, were all there. Mr. Ainsley never even glanced at them. One or two of their number had been half afraid that he would order them out. He preferred to ignore them.

But he could not ignore Leonard Urwine, who met him as he closed the door.

"What does this mean, sir?" demanded Urwine hotly.

"I hardly think you need ask. But if you really want to go into the matter come to my room with me. Understand, however, that I, not you, captain Markshire to-day."

"It wasn't my fault that I turned up late. I—"

"Your arriving late was not a material issue."

"I don't fathom what all this means. I—"

"You will fathom it very soon. Come with me!"

When, five minutes later, Urwine left Mr. Ainsley's room he disappeared into the bar.

A Wednesday morning usually brought few spectators to the Marchester ground. After lunch they rolled up, for Wednesday was the local half-holiday. To-day there was but a sprinkling round the ropes when play began. But within half an hour the turnstiles were clicking fast. Word had got to the town of the curious situation of affairs, and the enthusiasts did not know how to stay away.

Cards were studied, not merely scanned. The Markshire side, in the order of going in, though that was necessarily subject to change, since three men were not yet on the ground, read thus: "R. H. G. Westland, Dare, N. B. Tryon, Fallows, K. M. Ferguson, C. Reeve, Nevem, A. H. Arnulf, Rayle, Matthews, J. R. M. Ainsley." Urwine absent,

Balkwill, Toplady, Rayner, Arnley—what could they hope to do without such as these, and with old crocks and raw colts in their places?

Sympathy was with the strikers, and the fact that Urwine was a rank outsider seemed to be common knowledge now. But if that were so, and if he were to be left out, why not have played them? That he should be stood down seemed to prove them in the right of it.

It was hard to understand. The presence in the team of Peter Nevern and Dick Dare made it even harder. Why were they not with the strikers?

Dick sensed an inimical feeling on the part of the gathering crowd. They had made a favourite of him before. They did not cheer him now.

But he had done what he held right, and he was strung up to his best now.

Against Harold Larwood and Sam Staples he and Westland batted with such care that only ten runs came in the first half-hour.

But this was not the natural game of either man, and soon the score began to move at a better rate.

Barratt went on with his fieldsmen clustered thickly to the on. Westland, very quick on his feet, got him away to the off for ten in one over.

Young Voce was tried at the other end, and Dick, well set, found him easy to play. At the end of an hour the 50 went up.

Larwood came back, but troubled neither batsmen. Runs were coming fast now, and the growing crowd applauded. Opinion was veering round. The best that could be done by such a side against a powerful team like Notts, seemed in the nature of a forlorn hope. But at least these two were leading it courageously.

At lunch they were still together, and the score had been carried into three figures.

As Dick made his way to the pavilion by Westland's side, amid the clapping of the spectators, he wondered what sort of reception he was likely to get from the strikers.

The reception he got surprised him for a moment. They crowded round him, patted him on the back, made much of him. He told himself that he had been wrong to doubt them. Good fellows all, they cared greatly for Markshire.

The veteran Arnulf and Colin Reeve turned up at lunch. Ferguson would be along by four at latest, he wired.

Sam Staples got Westland with his first ball after lunch. It was a beauty—might have bowled anyone. The old Cambridge man had made 52 of the 107 for the first wicket.

Tryon shaped well in his first county game, and scored 23 of the next 35 by clean hitting. But Larwood sent his middle stump spinning at 142.

(Not bad for a team of crocks, is it, chums? Anyway it certainly does not look like being a cake-walk for Notts. Don't miss the grand wind-up of this powerful serial which will appear in next week's issue of the GEM.)



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SUNDAY GRAPHIC

IN HONOUR BOUND!

(Continued from page 23.)

"So let's have it, Gussy! Mind, you promised!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy passed a hand dazedly across his brow.

"You really want me to give you what I was going to give to Wally?" he asked feebly, eyeing Mellish as though the sneak of the Fourth were some strange freak.

"I jolly well do!" "Wight you are, then!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I think you're off your wockah, Mellish; but if you weally are the chap that doctahed Cutts' lemonade, you deserve ewevy bit of what I was goin' to give Wally. I'm dashed if I undahstand why you want it, but here it is!"

With a terrific punch, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy swept Mellish off the table, into a heap on the floor.

Mellish did not seem to like what he had got, although he had made Arthur Augustus promise to give it to him. He staggered up, his nose looking rather like an over-ripe tomato. Arthur Augustus knocked him down again, prancing over him with wildly waving fists.

Five minutes later, when Wally D'Arcy put his head in at the door, it was to find his major, looking far less elegant than usual, standing in the middle of a partially wrecked study, with Mellish's head tucked comfortably under his left arm, while he pommelled him with his right fist.

"What the thump—" grinned Wally. "Hallo, Wally!" gasped Arthur Augustus cheerfully.

"Yarooooooh!" howled Mellish. "Ow! Oh, Yooooooop!" "Baggy Trimble says you want to see me!" yelled Wally, to make his voice heard above Mellish's howls. "But—"

"That's all right!" beamed Arthur Augustus, still holding Mellish's head in chancery, and battering away merrily. "My mistake, Wally! Shut the door!"

It was a sadder and wiser Mellish who at last succeeded in breaking free, and bolted wildly from the study. As Monty Lowther remarked, when Mellish nearly collided with him in the passage, Mellish was looking rather like the wreck of the Hesperus!

But that was not the only licking he received for his share in Gussy's famous fight. Trimble, after overhearing another conversation in Study No. 6—Baggy had been fastening his shoelace, as he explained—spread the news that Mellish was the fellow who had doctored Cutts' lemonade. And that news did not take long to get to the ears of Gerald Cutts.

Had he seen Mellish emerge from Cutts' study after Cutts had dealt with him, even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy himself might have felt a little sorry for the sneak of the Fourth.

Mellish had doctored Cutts' lemonade to revenge himself for being forced to drink Monty Lowther's "patent medicine!" But when both Arthur Augustus and Gerald Cutts had finished with him, Mellish very much wished that he had never interfered with Gussy's affair of honour!

THE END.

(There will be another magnificent story of Tom Merry and Co. in next week's GEM entitled: "RATTY'S BID FOR FAME!" You cannot afford to miss this bumper number, chums, as it will contain full particulars of a stunning treat that will be the sensation of the year.)

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