

Star School Stories

"GUSSY'S IN LOVE AGAIN!"

A Laugh-a-Line Long Yarn
of the Chums of St. Jim's.

"RIVAL ENTERTAINERS!"

A Sparkling Story of
Harry Wharton & Co. of
Greyfriars.

—In This Issue.

The GEM

2^d



**GUSSY GETS HIS
GIRL FRIEND GUESSING!**

GUSSY'S CONE COOFY AGAIN! HE CAN'T RESIST A PRETTY FACE!

Gussy's in



"Pewwaps you will allow me to see you as fah as the van?" said Arthur Augustus; and, without waiting for a reply, he accompanied the girl from Blankley's down the passage. The juniors looked at one another and grinned. "Fairly hit!" exclaimed Lowther. "Knocked into a cocked hat!" chuckled Manners.

CHAPTER 1.

A Surprise for Gussy!

"GUSSY!"

"Wats!"

"But—"

"Pway wun away, Tom Mewwy. I am wathah wowwied!"

"Yes, but—"

"Weally, deah boy, I wepeat that I am wathah wowwied, and I wish you would wun away!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the most elegant junior in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, looked worried.

He was seated at the table in Study No. 6 in the School House, with a pen in his hand, of which he was chewing the holder occasionally, apparently as an aid to thought.

A half-written letter lay before him, and seemingly the Honourable Arthur Augustus found it difficult to get on with the letter.

There was ink on his fingers, and there was a smudge on his aristocratic nose, and several spots on his usually immaculate shirt-cuffs.

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In his noble brow there was a deep wrinkle.

Tom Merry grinned as he looked in at the study doorway. Arthur Augustus' noble face was decidedly worried.

But Tom Merry did not run away, as requested.

"I am sowwy to appeah gwuff, deah boy," Arthur Augustus explained, "but I am w'itin' a vevy difficult lettah. It is to my patah, you know."

"Yes. But—"

"My patah has not been playin' the game. I ask you, Tom Mewwy, as a sensible chap, whethah I am wespensible for stocks and shares bein' so topsyturvy?"

"Certainly not. But—"

"Therefore, it is uttably absurd for my patah to tell me that owin' to his twoubles he cannot accede to my wepeated requests for wemittances. It is weally unjust to wegard my requests as wepeated. It is neahly a fortnight since my governah sent me a fivah. Now, I have w'itten to him thwee times, and nothin' is forthcomin'—nothin' at all. I am goin' to w'ite him a stiff lettah!"

"Good! But—"

"How you keep on intewwuptin' a chap, Tom Mewwy! I am in wathah a difficult posish. You see, I want to put it vevy plainly to my patah. At the same time, I wish to avoid appwoachin' anythin' like diswespect. Diswespect fwom a chap to his fathah is howwid bad form."

"Awful!" said Tom. "But—"

"I want to make it stwong, but not too stwong. Above all, I want to make sure of the fivah. You may be aware that a new stores has opened in Wayland, and there are a lot of things thore I wequiah. I am, in fact, goin' to make some vevy expensive purchases. Now, in the circs, it is time for my governah to send me some extwa fivahs, not to dock my old allowance. Don't you think so?"

"Of course. But—"

"So I want to word this lettal vevy carefully, and it bweaks the thread of my wefections when a duffah comes in and intewwupts me. I have persuaded Blake and Hewwies and Dig to leave me the study to myself for a bit. Pway

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THE ROMEO OF ST. JIM'S AND HIS LATEST LOVE AFFAIR WILL KEEP YOU IN FITS OF LAUGHTER THROUGHOUT THIS LIVELY LONG YARN.

LOVE AGAIN!



By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

wun away and play, Tom Mewwy. Excuse me, you know."

"Fathead!" roared Tom Merry. "I've come to tell you—"

"Pway don't tell me anythin' at pwesent, deah boy. I have to devote all my attention to this wowwyin' lettah."

"A parcel's come for you—"

"Nevah mind that now."

"It's from Blankley's, in Wayland."

"Yaas; all wight."

"The porter wants to see you."

"Wats!"

"And wants the money, fathead!"

"Oh deah, what a feahful bothah!"

"The porter's waiting in the passage with the parcel, and won't part with it without the tin."

"What a weally wotten portah! Tell him to go and eat coke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cacklin' at, Tom Mewwy? I uttably fail to see anythin' to cackle at. I wegard the portah fwom Blankley's as an impertinent fellow. Is he here?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes!"

"Portah!" called out Arthur Augustus, without rising from his seat or looking round. "Pway leave that parcel. I cannot wowwy with it now. I wegard you as a wowwyin' ass!"

"I am sorry, sir," said a soft voice. Arthur Augustus jumped. He left his

chair with a bound, and simply spun round.

Tom Merry was laughing like a hyena. In the doorway stood the porter from Blankley's.

But it was not a "he"; it was a "she." A girl, in a very pretty uniform, with a pretty porter's cap on her head, stood there, half-smiling at the astounded Arthur Augustus. D'Arcy's jaw dropped.

"Bai Jove!" he said faintly.

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

"Pway stop that widiculous cackle, Tom Mewwy. Pway come in, deah gal—I mean miss. Vewy kind of you to give me a look in, I am sure."

The girl extended a large parcel towards Arthur Augustus, who blinked at it.

"Two-and-sixpence to pay, please—"

When Arthur Augustus D'Arcy starts composing sloppy poetry and casting sheep's eyes at a pretty girl, his chums don't need telling that he's fallen in love again!

"Gweat Scott!"

"It's the porter from Blankley's, you duffer!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! Are—are you the portah, miss?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, sir."

"Gweat Scott! I was not aware that Blankley's had young ladies for portahs," said Arthur Augustus.

"It is a new idea of Blankley's. Two-and-sixpence to pay on this parcel, sir."

"Vewy good. I—I twust you will excuse my wathah hasty wemark," said Arthur Augustus, with a crimson face. "I—I thought—I mean I did not know it was a lady portah. Pway excuse me."

"Certainly, sir! Two-and-sixpence to—"

"Yaas—yaas, certainly!" Arthur Augustus ran his hands through his pockets. The girl from Blankley's was smiling, perhaps at Arthur Augustus' evident confusion, and perhaps at the inky smudge on his noble nose. "Two-and-six! That—that's half-a-cwown, isn't it? Vewy good. Here you are!"

Arthur Augustus took the parcel, and in his confusion let it slip from his fingers. There was a crash.

"Bai Jove, they're bwoken!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "What wotten

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luck! They were a pair of new vases for the study mantelpiece, you know."

The girl from Blankley's was holding out a slip of paper.

"Your receipt, sir."

"Oh, I see!"

Arthur Augustus took the receipt and glanced at it. Printed on the slip were the words "Porter's signature," and following them came the pencilled name, "D. Fane."

Evidently D. Fane was the name of the charming lady porter from Blankley's.

"What a pretty name!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Good-afternoon, sir!"

"Pway wait a moment!" Arthur Augustus had often remarked that he was an awfully deep fellow, but never had he been so awfully deep as he was at this moment. "This is your name—what?"

"Yes. The receipt has to be signed by the porter delivering the goods."

"Yaas; but ought not the name to be signed in full?" asked Arthur Augustus cunningly.

The girl from Blankley's looked a little surprised.

"If you prefer it, certainly, sir!"

"Yaas; I should pwefer it."

"Very well."

The porter took the slip and pencilled "Dorothy" over the initial, and handed it back to Arthur Augustus. Then she bade him good-afternoon, and left the study.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed at the slip in his hand like a fellow in a trance. Tom Merry looked at him with a chuckle.

"What a weally wippin' name!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "I should like to have a sistah named Dowothy."

"Go hon!"

"Awfully businesslike people—those Blankley's," said D'Arcy. "Wippin' ideah havin' gal portahs—what?"

"Lots of firms have," said Tom Merry. "Nothing surprising in that, is there?"

"I wegard it as a wippin' businesslike ideah. It will make their custamahs send them lots more ordahs."

"Eh?"

"I wathah think that ordahs will go wollin' in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Those vases are bwoken," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, gazing at his wrecked parcel on the floor. "I shall have to ordah new ones, of course. Bai Jove, I'd bettah w'ite a postcard to Blankley's at once!"

"What about your letter to your pater?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, that can wait!"

"Isn't it awfully important?" grinned Tom Merry.

"Not vevy. I must get that postcard to Blankley's w'itten and posted for the collection. Bai Jove! What has that ass Blake done with the postcards?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, turning the study desk out hastily. "I shall lose the collection, the silly ass! Oh deah! Where is there a postcard? Have you got a postcard about you, Tom Mewwy?"

But Tom Merry did not reply. He limped away, doubled up with merriment. He left Arthur Augustus wildly searching the study for a postcard, upon which to indite his new order for Blankley's.

Apparently he found one, for five minutes later he was seen careering across the quadrangle to the letter-box, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,553.

and he breathed a deep sigh of relief when he found that he had caught the collection.

CHAPTER 2.

Drastic Measures!

BLAKE, Herries, and Digby came into Study No. 6, ruddy from footer practice. They were hungry, too—hungry as hunters. They looked expressively at the table.

As their noble studymate had been indoors, there was no reason whatever why he shouldn't have had tea ready. But there was no sign of tea in the study.

Arthur Augustus was seated at the table, chewing the handle of his pen. He did not even seem to see his chums enter, to hear them.

There was a far-away expression on his face, and his eyes had a very dreamy look. Blake woke him up, so to speak, with a tremendous thump on the shoulder.

"Yowoo!" roared Arthur Augustus. "You uttah ass! Wow!"

"You shouldn't go to sleep writing a letter," said Blake chidingly. "Besides, it's high time you finished that letter to your pater."

"I am not w'itin' to my patah, you fathead!" said Arthur Augustus, rubbing his shoulder.

"Finished it?"

"No. I have forgotten all about it."

"Forgotten it!" said Blake, in surprise. "What about the fiver? You were going to screw a fiver out of him with that letter?"

"Oh, wats!"

"The study's short of funds," said

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Blake seriously. "It's time Lord Eastwood played up, you know. It isn't playing the game to leave this study in the lurch. But what the dickens were you mooning over, if it's not the letter to your pater?"

"Oh, wats!"

Blake glanced at the sheet of impot paper Arthur Augustus had been scribbling upon. His eyes grew round with astonishment as he read:

"Like fairy dew upon the grasses,
Her feet are lightsome as she passes;
Her voice is like the mellow tone
Of sweetest flutes by fairies blown!"

Jack Blake stared at that poetical effort blankly. Arthur Augustus left off rubbing his shoulder, made a sudden jump to the table, and caught up the paper. His face was crimson.

"What the merry thunder does this mean?" ejaculated Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Is that about Cousin Ethel?"

"Certainly not!"

"Or Mary, the housemaid?"

"You uttah ass!"

"What was it?" asked Herries, who had not seen the lines.

"Poetry," said Blake. "Gussy's per-petrating poetry. It goes like this."

"Dwy up, Blake!"

"Rats! Why shouldn't Herries and Dig hear it? You can't have too much

of a good thing," said Blake. "It goes like this, as near as I remember:

"Like hammers used by black-smith's men,
Her feet are number nine or ten;
Her voice is like the squeaky tone
Of some old wheezy gramophone!"

"You uttah ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "You have got it all w'ong!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a wotten boundah, Blake! Some jokes are in vevy bad taste. That wotten joke is in vevy bad taste indeed!"

"Go hon! What about tea?" asked Blake, quite uncrushed.

"I don't want any tea."

"Well, I do," said Blake cheerfully. "What is there in the cupboard, Dig? Haven't you done the shopping, Gussy?"

"I forgot all about the shoppin'."

"Off your rocker?" asked Dig.

"Pway don't be widiculous, Dig! I wefuse to answah absurd questions. I wefuse, in fact, to continue this discuss with you duffahs at all!"

Arthur Augustus walked out of the study with his nose high in the air.

His chums looked at one another in astonishment.

"What on earth's the matter with him?" asked Herries.

Blake shook his head.

"Blessed if I know, unless he's fallen in love again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme see; it's a whole term since he was in love last time," said Blake thoughtfully. "I suppose it's due again. So near as I remember, Cousin Ethel was the first; then there was the Head's niece, then the vicar's daughter, then the girl in the tobacconist's, and I think one or two others that I've forgotten. I believe he generally breaks into poetry when he's in love. It's the usual thing, you know. But who the deuce can it be this time?"

"Give it up!" yawned Herries.

"Let's have tea."

Study No. 6 had tea, but Arthur Augustus did not return. Apparently he was "off his feed." But Blake remarked that he had been just like that last time. It was nothing new.

After tea the chums of Study No. 6 went to look for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They did not find him in the School House, and they inquired for him.

The Terrible Three of the Shell—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—were chuckling together in the doorway, apparently over some good joke, and Blake & Co. bore down on them.

"Seen Gussy?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what's the cackle about?" demanded Blake.

"Oh, we've seen him!" grinned Monty Lowther. "He's walking under the elms now, with a far-away look in his eyes. I recommend a strait-jacket."

"So you've noticed it," grinned Blake.

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "I was there when it happened. Love at first sight, you know, same as they do in novels and the newspaper serials."

"Love at first sight!" said Blake. "It can't be Miss Marie, then; he's seen her lots of times. It can't be the new cook, surely?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No. It's the girl from Blankley's."

"The which?"



"Pway leave that parcel, portah!" said Arthur Augustus, without turning round. "I cannot wowwy with it now. I wegard you as a wowwyin' ass!" "I am sorry, sir," said a soft voice. Arthur Augustus left his chair with a bound and spun round. It was a pretty girl he had spoken to!

"They have women porters at Blankley's now, and they come to deliver the goods!" chuckled Tom. "You should have seen Gussy—fairly floored: knocked all in a heap. You should have heard him finding out her name; he was as deep as a well. And he's sent off another order to Blankley's, so that the charmer will come again tomorrow."

"Oh, my hat!" said Dig. "This has got to be stopped," said Blake resolutely. "Why, our study will be chipped no end, with Gussy playing the giddy ox like this. Come on, you chaps, and we'll talk to him straight."

Blake, Herries, and Digby marched out into the quadrangle, leaving the Terrible Three grinning.

They found Arthur Augustus pacing to and fro in a solitary spot under the old elms. His lips were moving, as if he were murmuring to himself. Every now and then he paused and gazed up at the sky.

Blake brought him down to earth again with a slap on the back which elicited a wild yell from the swell of St. Jim's.

"Ow! You wuff ass! Ow!" Blake shook his forefinger at him. "You've got to chuck it, Gussy!" he said severely.

"Chuck what, you duffah?" "You've been mashed before, and we've borne with it," said Blake. "But there's a limit. We're not going to allow you to trifle with the affections of that girl from Blankley's."

"Certainly not!" said Dig solemnly. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy! Talk about Lothario!"

"We shall forbid the banns!" added Herries.

Arthur Augustus turned crimson. "I wefuse to listen to your wibald wemarks!" he said hotly. "Pway mind your own bisney!"

"This is our bisney," said Blake warmly. "We're not going to have a gay dog breaking hearts in our study. We're going to cure you before it goes too far. Love is like a cold in the head; it can be cured if taken in hand in time. What you need is plenty of exercise. Mooning under the trees is the very worst thing for it—only makes it worse. Come on!"

"I wefuse to come on. Pway leave me!"

"A good sprint round the quad is what you need. Take his other arm, Herries," said Blake, gripping Arthur Augustus by one arm.

"What-ho!" said Herries, possessing himself of Gussy's other arm.

"Wefuse me, you wottahs!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"You come behind, Dig. When he lags, help him with your boot."

"Certainly!" said Dig. "I'll do anything to help Gussy out of a scrape like this. It's for your own good, Gussy."

"I insist upon bein' weleased!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, struggling in the grasp of his over-zealous chums.

"Not till you have fallen out of love again," said Blake firmly. "This way!"

"Oh, you wottahs—ow!"

Arthur Augustus simply had to go. Struggling vainly, he was rushed off in the grasp of his chums. Digby, bringing up the rear, nobly did his part, letting out with a heavy boot whenever the swell of St. Jim's attempted to slow down.

"Ow—ow! You wottahs! Gwoogh! Oh deah!"

Right round the wide quadrangle went the chums of Study No. 6 at a great speed. As they completed the circuit of the quad, Blake paused.

"Cured?" he panted.

"Wow! You wottah! Wow!"

"Come on, then!"

"I wefuse—yow-ow!"

Round the quad they went again, running hard. Loud yells of laughter.

greeted them on all sides. The sight of Arthur Augustus struggling and wriggling in the grasp of Blake and Herries, while Digby helped him from behind, seemed to strike the St. Jim's fellows as funny.

As they passed the door of the School House a second time, Arthur Augustus made a terrific effort, and wrenched himself away, and bolted into the House like a rabbit into a burrow.

"After him!" shrieked Blake.

The trio rushed in pursuit.

Arthur Augustus bolted up the stairs. He rushed into Talbot of the Shell, who was coming down, and floored him; he collided with Levison of the Fourth on the landing, and sent him spinning.

In the Fourth Form passage he cannoned into Reilly and Kerruish, who were coming away from the study, and they crashed into the wall. Arthur Augustus did not heed. He did not even pause to ask whether they were hurt. Perhaps he knew they were. He bolted on to Study No. 6, rushed in, and slammed the door and bolted it.

Then he sank into the armchair, gasping.

A few seconds later Blake, Herries, and Digby were hammering at the door. They were joined there by Levison, Kerruish, and Reilly, breathing vengeance.

"My hat, he's locked the door!" shouted Blake, exasperated. "Gussy, Gussy! Fathead! Open the door!"

"Go and eat coke, you wottah!"

"Sure, I'll pulverise ye!" yelled Reilly. "Open the door, ye spalpeen!"

"Wats!"

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

But the door did not open. The voice of Kildare of the Sixth came shouting up the stairs:

"Stop that row, you young rascals! Do you want me to come up there with a cane?"

The attack on Study No. 6 ceased. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was left in peace at last.

About an hour later, Blake, Herries, and Dig looked into Tom Merry's study, where the Terrible Three were at work on their preparation.

"Room for little us?" asked Blake. "Can you lend us some books, and let us do our prep here? We're shut out of our study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It isn't a laughing matter," growled Blake. "That howling ass Gussy won't let us in. We've promised to scalp him. He won't open the door. We're homeless."

The Terrible Three chuckled, and made room for the homeless Fourth Formers.

When prep was over, Blake & Co. visited Study No. 6 again. The door was still locked. They breathed dire threats through the keyhole, and retired. But it was not till bed-time that Arthur Augustus came forth from his lair.

CHAPTER 3. Hard Hit!

"HALLO! Wherefore this thushness?"
Monty Lowther asked the question

It was the following day, and lessons being over, the juniors were thinking of footer practice. The Terrible Three had called in at Study No. 6 for Blake & Co.

Study No. 6 were all at home.

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And they were all talking at once. Their voices could be heard at a considerable distance along the Fourth Form passage.

Blake was looking wrathful. Herries and Dig appeared decidedly exasperated. Arthur Augustus wore an expression of lofty indignation and scorn. There appeared to be a rift in the lute in Study No. 6.

Tom Merry waved his hand gently to the mutually exasperated Fourth Formers.

"Peace, my infants," he said chidingly. "Let dogs delight to bark and bite," said Manners seriously. "As you are probably aware, it is their nature to. Let bears and lions—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake.

"Growl and fight," resumed Manners calmly. "They've nothing else to do. But fags like you should never let your angry passions rise—"

"Dry up, fathead!"

"Your little fists were never meant to black each other's eyes," concluded Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Besides, how can you be waxy when you are permitted to behold the great Augustus in all his glory," said Monty Lowther, looking with great admiration at the swell of the Fourth, who was simply resplendent. "Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed so nuttily as this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus was indeed a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. Never had his shirtcuffs been so spotless, his tie so elegantly tied, his trousers so beautifully creased. He presented a picture that was almost dazzling to the eye.

Curiously enough it was that dazzling aspect of the swell of St. Jim's that exercised so irritating an effect upon his studymates.

"Look at the ass!" exclaimed the exasperated Blake. "He's got his best bib and tucker on. Instead of coming down to the footer— Look at him!"

"I have no time for footah this aftahnoon, Blake."

"Cousin Ethel coming?" asked Lowther innocently.

"Cousin Ethel is not comin', Lowthah."

"Then why this glorious thushness?"

"I pwesume that there is no harm in a fellow makin' himself look decent?" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "As a mattah of fact, I am keepin' up the weputation of the study

by dwessin' decently. These thwee wagged wobins—"

"These what?" ejaculated Herries. "Weggad wobins," said D'Arcy. "The knees of your twousahs, Hewwies, bag fwightfully. Dig's jacket looks as if it had been used for cleanin' a blackboard. Look at Blake's necktie— just as if he had been twyin' to hang himself, and was stopped only just in time."

"Why, you—you—you—" stuttered Blake.

"One well-dwessed fellow makes a study look wespectable," said Arthur Augustus.

"He's got on his best bib and tucker because he's in love!" roared Blake. "He's doing it again."

"Doing it again!" assented Dig.

"He's always doing it!" hooted Herries.

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"We've stood it before, time and again, and we're fed up!" continued Blake. "My idea is that Gussy has fallen in love quite enough, and that he ought to give it a rest—at least till the end of the football season."

"You uttah ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus, growing crimson to the tips of his ears. "I wufuse to allow you to make such wibald jokes, Blake."

"I'm not joking. I'm fed up. It's the girl from Blankley's!" growled Blake. "Gussy's been sending more orders. He's got a dodge of sending orders every day, so that he can interview the charmer regularly. We're not standing it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you Shell bounders have come hero to cackle—"

"We have!" roared Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"And if he doesn't chuck it, we're going to rag him," said Blake. "We're not going to have him getting engaged—and perhaps married—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful duffah—"

"It's jolly nearly as bad as taking to drink," pursued the indignant Blake. "He can't expect the study to stand it! It's too thick!"

"If you are askin' for a feahful thwashin', Blake—"

"You get into your football clobber at once, or you will hear something drop!" said Blake.

"I wufuse to do anything of the sort. I have no time for footah now."

"Do you know there's the Rookwood match soon?"

"I have no time to play in the Wookwood match."

"Hark at him!" said Blake, with breathless wrath. "Probably planning an elopement already—a midnight bolt in one of old Blankley's vans—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wibald ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, brandishing his knuckles under his chum's nose. "If you uttah another word on that subject—"

"Two-and-sixpence to pay, please!"

The swell of St. Jim's lowered his fist suddenly. The juniors all spun round towards the door. A graceful figure stood there. A parcel was held out, and the girl from Blankley's smiled demurely over it.

Certainly the girl from Blankley's looked very charming. Arthur Augustus might be excused if his inflammable heart had been touched once more. His face was as red as a peony as he looked at Miss Dorothy.

"Yaas!" he stammered.

He gave his chums an expressive look. But they did not seem to understand it. They showed no sign of clearing off. They stood their ground and looked on.

Arthur Augustus took the parcel and fumbled in his pockets.

He had intended to have quite a pleasant little chat with the girl from Blankley's. But in the presence of six grinning juniors the pleasant little chat did not seem feasible.

Arthur Augustus found a half-crown and handed it over, and the girl from Blankley's gave him a receipt.

"Good-day, sir!"
"I suppose your van is waitin', miss?" ventured Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, sir."
"Pewwaps you will allow me to see you as fah as the van. The—the stairs are wathah dangewous," stammered Arthur Augustus.

And, without waiting for a reply, he accompanied the girl from Blankley's down the passage.

The juniors in the passage looked at one another expressively.

"Fairly hit!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Knocked into a cocked hat!" chuckled Manners.

Blake breathed hard through his nose. "And he's going to chuck up footer to go mashing!" he said wrathfully. "Well, I'm fed up! He's going to be stopped. Wait till he comes in!"

But it was a long time before Arthur Augustus came in. It seemed to take a considerable time to see the girl from Blankley's to her van.

The juniors went downstairs at last, and they were just in time to see Arthur Augustus go into the prefects'-room. In that room was a telephone, which the juniors were sometimes allowed to use.

"Phoning, by gum!" said Blake.

The juniors looked into the prefects'-room. Arthur Augustus was at the telephone, and he was speaking into the transmitter.

"Is that Blankley's? Vewy good! Please send me somethin' to-mowwow. Yaas, D'Arcy, School House, St. Jim's. What? Oh, yaas! Anything will do—I mean, send me a box of chocolates. Vawious pwices? Oh, yaas—ten-and-six, yaas, ten-and-six will do. The aftahnnoon delivewy—yaas. Thanks!"

Arthur Augustus hung up the receiver. He turned from the telephone to find his chums glaring at him.

"So you've sent another order to Blankley's?" yelled Blake.

"Yaas."
"Ten-and-six for a box of chocolates!" howled Digby. "Are you rolling in money? Has that fiver come?"

"The fivah has not come, Dig."

"How are you going to pay for the chocolates, then?" hooted Blake.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Oh, scrag him!" said Blake.

Fortunately for Arthur Augustus, Kildare and Darrell strolled into the prefects'-room just then. Kildare glanced at the juniors.

"You young rascals—ragging here!" he exclaimed. "Be off!"

Arthur Augustus walked off in security. Even then he did not change for footer. He eluded his exasperated chums, and sauntered away by himself.

When he was seen later, he was strolling aimlessly under the elms, occasionally glancing up at the sky, with a smile on his face which Blake described as idiotic.

It was clear that the swell of St. Jim's was hard hit. It was equally clear—to Blake & Co., at least—that drastic measures were required. Study No. 6—with the hearty co-operation of the Terrible Three—were prepared to apply the necessary drastic measures.

ST. JIM'S JINGLES. No. 6.



HERBERT SKIM POLE.

APPROACH with solemn tread and awe

*This youth of erudition,
Who counts Determinism more
Than scholarly precision.
And woe betide you if you deem
To chat with one so clever!
For Skimmy, like the poet's stream,
Goes gurgling on for ever.*

*He reads the work of that great swot,
Professor Balmycrumpet;
And though his hearers like it not,
They simply have to lump it!
The reader's flushed and fevered face
Inspires them with a passion
To hurl him straightway into space
In "neck or nothing" fashion!*

*When moved with a delightful dream
To manage England's masses,
His earnest eyes begin to gleam
And glow behind his glasses.
He swiftly summons all St. Jim's
To bow before his presence,
That he may tell them of his whims
And gain their acquiescence.*

*The rowdy souls who thirst for fun
Attend with solemn faces,
And silence reigns as, one by one,
They pass into their places.
But close inspection would reveal
The object of their mission,
For putrid eggs and orange-peel
Are borne as ammunition!*

*"My heart is moved," the speaker cries,
"To see you here before me.
I trust that nothing may arise
To make the meeting stormy."
A fusillade of ancient fruit
Then checks his brief oration;
And into space doth Skimmy shoot
Mid yells of exaltation.*

*The battered politician crawls,
In search of lint and lotions;
But, lo! no skirmishes or squalls
Can crush his curious notions.
He next befriends the unemployed,
And many hardened sinners
To Skimmy's study are decoyed
To eat delicious dinners.*

*Then bow before this brainy boy,
Far wiser than the sages—
A never-failing source of joy
Through this and future ages;
Who renders us convulsed with mirth
Until our eyes are tearful,
And makes us feel that all on earth
Is sunny, bright and cheerful.*

Next Week: ERNEST LEVISON.

CHAPTER 4.

Trial by Jury!

THAT evening it might have been seen, as a novelist would say, that there was something "on" in the School House.

Arthur Augustus did not think of observing it. His thoughts were elsewhere. He was strolling in the quadrangle, looking up at the moon, with a reckless disregard for "prep" that was certain to get him into trouble with his Form-master in the morning.

But what did Arthur Augustus care just then for prep or Form-masters? Prep and Form-masters had vanished from his mind, which was filled with thoughts of sweeter things.

But although Arthur Augustus never thought of observing it, a great deal was going on in the School House. There was whispering and chuckling among the juniors.

Blake, Herries, and Digby, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were the leading spirits. But Kangaroo, Dane, and Glyn of the Shell, and Reilly, Julian, and Kerruish of the Fourth, joined the number of whisperers and chucklers. And then Figgins & Co. came over from the New House.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn seemed to enter into the plot, whatever it was, with great keenness. Whispering and chuckling went on at a great rate.

After a time the juniors might have been seen making their way towards the woodshed, and collecting there. Then Blake & Co. went to look for Arthur Augustus.

They found him under the elms. He was gazing at the moon, and the idiotic smile, as Blake described it, was still upon his face. Doubtless, the vision of the girl from Blankley's was floating before his mind.

Blake touched his elegant chum on the shoulder. Arthur Augustus came suddenly back to earth, and blinked at him.

"Come on!" said Blake.
"It is not bed-time yet, Blake."
"Come on!"
"As for pwep, I am leavin' it for this evenin'."

"Come on!"
"I do not want any suppah."
"Come on!" roared Blake.
"Wats! I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."
"Collar him!"

Blake took one of Gussy's arms and Herries took the other. Arthur Augustus, in anticipation of being dribbled round the quad again, struggled violently.

"Will you welease me, you wottahs? I—yow!"

The Fourth Formers marched him off, still struggling. Arthur Augustus was marched away to the woodshed, and forced into it. Blake and Herries entered with him, still holding his arms. Dig followed them in and closed the door.

Arthur Augustus stared round him in astonishment.

The woodshed was crowded. Two or three bike lamps shed their light upon the scene. It was a striking scene.

Upon a chair, perched upon a high bench, Tom Merry sat, and for some mysterious reason he had a large wig on his head, the property of the Junior Dramatic Society. Manners, also wearing a large wig, was seated by the bench.

Before them, on several benches and boxes, there were twelve juniors, sitting in a row—Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,553.

Redfern, Julian, Kerruish, Reilly, Noble, Dane, Glyn, Talbot, and Gore. Monty Lowther had a separate seat, and he also had a large wig on. Opposite him was another chair, with a wig lying on it. Blake took the chair, and put the wig on his head.

Digby and Herries picked up cricket stumps and stood guard over Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's surveyed the extraordinary scene in amazement.

Some of the juniors were smiling, but others were looking very solemn. Tom Merry, perched above the heads of all present, wore an expression of owl-like gravity.

Arthur Augustus blinked at them and jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and blinked again.

"You uttah asses—" he began.

"Silence in court!" said Manners, in a deep, booming voice.

Manners, apparently, was clerk of the court. Arthur Augustus realised that he was in a court of law.

"I regard this as an outrage, you duffahs!"

"If the prisoner persists in speaking out of order, he will be committed for contempt of court!" said Tom Merry, from his perch on the elevated chair.

Arthur Augustus recognised the fact that the captain of the Shell was a judge.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" "Order!" said Manners.

"I wefuse to wemain here!" Arthur Augustus made a break for the door. Herries and Digby collared him at once. Herries and Dig, it was plain, were warders.

"Welease me, you wottahs!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to take any part in these wiculous pwoceedings."

"If the prisoner is violent he must be put in irons," said the judge. "Warders, do your duty!"

"Yes, your lordship!" said Digby. Clank, clank, clank!

The irons were produced—an ancient and heavy set of disused fireirons, suffering considerably from rust. Herries and Digby yanked Arthur Augustus' hands

together, looped a cord over them, and knotted it, and tied on the clanking fireirons.

"You uttah wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus, in a voice of anguish. "You are wubbin' wust on my twousahs!"

"Order!" boomed Manners. "Oh deah! Oh cwumbs!"

With an ancient and heavy poker, shovel, and tongs dangling from his wrists, the prisoner at the bar was quite helpless. He sat down on a box, his irons clanking away merrily, and glared.

"Clerk of the court!" said Judge Merry.

"Yes, your washup," said Manners. "Read out the charge!"

"I pwotest—" "Silence in court while the clerk reads out the charge!"

"Oh, wats!" Manners unfolded a sheet of impot paper and proceeded to read out the charge. The court listened in respectful silence, and the only interruptions were the indignant snorts from the prisoner at the bar.

"Whereas the prisoner, Arthur Augustus Adolphus Gustavus D'Arcy, of that ilk, is charged with playing the giddy ox, and giving up footer for the nefarious purpose of mashing girls from Blankley's, and whereas it is considered that it is unpatriotic to fall in love and whereas the friends of the said Arthur Augustus are fed up with his fatheadedness generally, the said Arthur Augustus is hereby brought before the High Court of the Woodshed, to be tried by twelve good men and true, according to the Statute, Vic, 1, Cap. 11, Art. 111, Div. IV., Part V., Appendix VI."

"Wats!" "And if the prisoner shall be found guilty," went on the learned clerk, "he shall be sentenced to be ragged bald-headed, and displayed before the girl from Blankley's in a disreputable state, according to the Act for the Defence of Study No. 6."

"You uttah ass!" "Prisoner at the bar—" "Wats!"

"You will now be tried by jury," said

the clerk of the court, with dignity, "and any contempt of court will be punished by a rap on the napper with a cricket stump."

"Fathead! Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus, as a stump rapped upon his noble head. The warders were doing their duty. "Hewwies, you wottah! Dig, you beast—"

"Silence!" thundered the judge. "Counsel for the prosecution, pile in—I mean, get on with the washing!"

Jack Blake jumped up. Arthur Augustus rubbed his head and glared, and the counsel for the prosecution got on with the washing.

CHAPTER 5.

Found Guilty!

"GENTLEMEN—"

"Hear, hear!" "Silence in court!" said Manners. "Jurymen don't cheer, you asses! Jurymen have to shut up and do as the judge tells them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Gentlemen of the jury," said Blake, "in all my career at the bar I have seldom come upon so heinous a case as this. Gentlemen, I beg you to look at the prisoner. I beg you to note his sinister and slinking aspect—"

"Weally, Blake—" "His shifty eyes, his nefarious manner of concealing himself behind an eyeglass, and his hand-dog look generally. Gentlemen, the charge against this person is of the most serious character. I shall call witnesses to prove my statement. At a time when the football season is fairly in swing, the prisoner at the bar has deserted the playing fields, and ceased to urge the flying ball, and for what? Gentlemen, I repeat, for what? To order articles from a large store in Wayland—articles for which he has no use—in order that they may be delivered by a young lady porter."

"Dwy up, you beast!" "Rats!"

"Yawwooh! Oh, my nappah! Gwoogh!"

"Instead of attending footer practice, the prisoner at the bar dresses himself in his Sunday clothes, and hangs about like a slacker, waiting for the girl from Blankley's to arrive with a parcel. During the intervals between the deliveries from Blankley's, the prisoner is absent-minded, irritable, capricious, neglectful of his old pals, and a worry generally. Gentlemen, if the rules of the court allow me to call the prisoner's record as evidence, I may say that this is by no means the first offence."

Monty Lowther, counsel for the defence, jumped up.

"The prisoner's record cannot be called as evidence," he said. "I appeal to his washup."

The judge nodded solemnly.

"Counsel for the prosecution is called to order," he said.

"I bow to your lordship's decision," said Blake meekly. "Gentlemen of the jury, I have stated my case. I call for a sentence of guilty upon the prisoner at the bar. I rely upon your verdict, gentlemen, upon the well-known good sense and honest judgment which has made the jury system the glory of the civilised world."

Blake sat down.

"Lemme see, what's next?" asked the judge.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Go it, Manners!" came a voice from the jury. The clerk of the court always has to tell the judge what to do, you know."

"Guilty or not guilty?" said the judge.

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"That ought to have come first," said Figgins, with a chuckle.

"Silence in court!" thundered the judge. "Prisoner at the bar, do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Wats!"

"As the prisoner refuses to plead, the trial will proceed," said the judge.

"And if the jury keep on cackling, I shall order the court to be cleared."

"Will you welease me, you silly asses?"

Rap!
"Wow-wow-wow!"

Counsel for the defence got on his feet.

"Gentlemen of the jury, you have listened to the eloquent speech of my learned brother. Gentlemen, I am here to defend the prisoner at the bar. I am here to say what little can be said in his favour."

"Go it, Monty!"

"Gentlemen, it must be admitted that the prisoner at the bar has played the giddy ox. But is there no excuse for him? It must be remembered, gentlemen, that the prisoner belongs to an ancient and aristocratic family, and consequently cannot be expected to possess the ordinary allowance of brains. As the prisoner will, in due course, take his seat in the House of Lords, brains are not in the least essential to him, and would, indeed, be out of place, in the circumstances, I submit that if the prisoner has acted like a howling ass and a burbling duffer, it is no more than should be expected of a scion of one of our oldest families."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"The defence, therefore, is that the prisoner, not being in possession of the full faculties of an ordinary person, is not responsible for his actions, and must be discharged on the grounds of hopeless idiocy, or else be detained during his Majesty's pleasure."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottah—"

Crack!
"Yoooooow!"

"Gentlemen of the jury"—it was the judge this time—"you have heard the speeches of the learned counsel for the prosecution and the defence. You will now kindly find the prisoner guilty."

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed the foreman of the jury, Figgins of the Fourth. "We settle that for ourselves, don't we?"

The judge frowned.

"Certainly not! Juries have to do as they're told."

"Then what the merry dickens is the use of a jury at all?" demanded Figgins.

"None whatever. It's an ancient custom, that's all, which has survived for some reason not explained."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, we're jolly well going to find our verdict ourselves!" said Figgins. "Now, you chaps, guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" chorused the jury.

"Hold on!" said Talbot of the Shell, laughing. "You haven't called any witnesses."

"My hat!" said the clerk of the court. "Never mind, it's too late for witnesses now. Besides, it's jolly near bed-time."

"Guilty!" shouted the jury.

"Are you unanimous in this verdict?" asked the judge.

"Yes, rather!"

"Good egg! Prisoner at the bar, have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed on you, according to law?"

"I wegard you as a silly ass, Tom Mewwy!"



"Look here, I'm fed-up with answering the door! You're the third caller this month!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Ford, Oaklands, Ashley Crescent, Keyworth, Notts.

"That is not evidence. Have you anything—"

"Oh, wats!"

"Very well. Prisoner at the bar, after a fair trial before twelve of your fellow-countrymen, in the high court of the woodshed, you have been found guilty of this serious charge. You are guilty of neglecting footer, and of casting sheep's eyes at the girl from Blankley's."

"You impertinent beast!"

Crash!

"Oh, wow! You beast, Dig! Oh, oh—ow!"

"Sentence will now be passed. Unless you, here and now, give your solemn promise to fall out of love immediately, and on the spot, and have no further dealings with Blankley's, you will be bumped on the floor of the high court of the woodshed."

"You wuffian!"

"And to-morrow, when the girl from Blankley's arrives, you will be displayed before her eyes in a disreputable state, which would shock any girl from Blankley's. Take your choice!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Warders, execute the sentence!"

"Hands off, you wottahs! Yawoop!"
Clank, clank, clank! Bump, bump, bump!

"Yow-ow! Help! Gweat Scott! Yoop! Gwoogh! Owp!"

The court broke up. Judge and counsel and jury filed out of the high court of the woodshed, chuckling. Arthur Augustus was left sitting on the floor, roaring.

It took him about a quarter of an hour to free himself from his irons, and then he limped out of the high court, dusty and dishevelled and furious.

CHAPTER 8.

Broken Friendship!

GOOD-NIGHT, Gussy!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther spoke all together as they passed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the passage on their way to the Shell dormitory.

Arthur Augustus did not respond.

He extracted his eyeglass from his waistcoat pocket, and jammed it into his eye, and surveyed the Terrible Three with a look of lofty scorn. Then he turned upon his heel.

"Cut dead!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

"The cut direct!" gasped Manners.

"Oh, Gussy!" said Tom Merry reproachfully. "Won't you speak to your old 'pals, after all they've done for you?"

Arthur Augustus looked round.

"I wefuse to speak to you," he said.

"Not one little word?" sighed Monty Lowther.

"Not a syllable!" said D'Arcy firmly. "I wegard you as wank wottahs, and I have ewased your names fvwom the list of my fwiends. You have acted vevy impertinently upon a mattah that should be sacwed to ewevy pwopahly constituted mind. I wegard you with scorn."

And the swell of St. Jim's stalked away to his own dormitory.

The Terrible Three certainly ought to have been crushed. But they required a great deal of crushing.

They grinned cheerily as they walked on to the Shell dormitory, where they made the interesting announcement that Gussy was on the high horse—an announcement that was received with many chuckles by the Shell.

Arthur Augustus walked into the Fourth Form dormitory with his noble nose very high in the air. He was on his dignity, and when Arthur Augustus was on his dignity, he was a very dignified person indeed.

When the Fourth Form turned in, Blake, Herries, and Digby spoke in a sort of chorus.

"Good-night, Gussy!"

No reply.

"Good-night, Gussy darling!" called out Reilly.

Silence.

"Is it deaf ye are, Gussy?"

"I am not deaf, Weilly."

"Then why don't you say good-night?"

"I wefuse to say good-night to you, Weilly, unless you apologise for your beastly conduct!"

"Howly mother av Moses!"

"What about little us?" inquired Blake.

"I wefuse to speak to you, Blake! I no longah wegard you as a fwiend!"

"After all we've done for you!" exclaimed Blake.

Snort!

Arthur Augustus had let the sun go down upon his wrath.

The next morning the same chilling dignity was visible in the aspect of the swell of St. Jim's. All his old friends were cut dead.

Arthur Augustus walked in the quad in solitary state until breakfast. At breakfast he was as silent as a mummy.

Blake slipped his arm through Gussy's as the Fourth were going to their Form-room. Arthur Augustus disengaged his arm very deliberately.

"Still going strong?" asked Blake affectionately.

"I wefuse to speak to you, Blake!"

"You don't want me to lend you ten-and-six to pay for the chocolates when they come?" chuckled Blake.

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove, I had forgotten that! However, I shall wefuse to bowwow that sum of you, Blake!"

"Perhaps it's just as well," said Blake thoughtfully, "as I've only got ninepence. But what are you going to say to the girl from Blankley's?"

"That is my bisney, Blake."

"Leave it to us," suggested Blake. "If you like, we'll raise the tin to pay for the chocolates, and we'll see Dorothy for you."

"I wefuse to allow you to uttah that young lady's name in so familiar a mannah, Blake!"

"Floored again!" said Blake. "However, we're going to look after you."

Arthur Augustus looked a little apprehensive.

"If you play any wotten twicks this aftahnoon, Blake—"

"Don't you remember the sentence of the court?" demanded Blake.

"As I have dwopped your acquaintance, Blake, you will pway not assume the wight to intahfere with me in any way!"

"But we haven't dropped yours!" exclaimed Blake. "You can throw over your old pals, if you like, but we're true as steel. We stick to you like glue; we stick to our old pal through thick and thin!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You rely on us," said Blake cheerily. "When Miss Thingummy comes to-day with the chocolates, she is going to have a surprise. Leave it to us. We'll attend to the whole bisney."

"You uttah wottah!"

It was time to go into the Form-room, and Arthur Augustus had no opportunity of telling Blake what he thought of him.

During morning lessons Arthur Augustus might have been observed to wear a worried look.

Having dropped the acquaintance of all his old chums, on account of their extremely impertinent interference in his affair of the heart, he might naturally have expected that they would go on their way and leave him to rip, so to speak.

Apparently, they were going to do nothing of the sort. Their friendship for him was unabated, and they were going to show it in their own peculiar way.

Arthur Augustus looked forward to the afternoon with apprehension.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, had occasion to rag Arthur Augustus several times that morning. In the first place, he had done no preparation the previous evening; and, in the second place, his thoughts were wandering. He construed in a way that made Mr. Lathom open his eyes wide, and earned the unfortunate Gussy a hundred lines.

Arthur Augustus was very glad that it was a half-holiday that afternoon. He felt that he could not put his mind to lessons—he really couldn't.

At dinner his noble brows were wrinkled, and he stole several glances at his former chums. When he caught Blake's eyes, Blake nodded encouragingly. So did Dig and Herries.

Evidently they were as friendly as ever, in spite of Gussy's icy reserve. Their devoted friendship was not what Gussy wanted just then. He would rather have been without it.

"You're playing this afternoon, Gussy?" said Tom Merry, after dinner, tapping the swell of St. Jim's on the shoulder in the most cordial way.

"I'm not playin', Tom Mewwy!"

"But it's a Form match, and you know what will happen to the Fourth if you're not there," said Tom seriously.

"They have bwrought it upon themselves!" said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "I wefuse to play for the Fourth!"

When the footballers were ready Blake looked for Arthur Augustus. He found him under the elms scribbling upon a paper that was outspread on his knee. D'Arcy hastily thrust the paper into his pocket as Blake came up.

"We're waiting for you," said Blake.

"I wefuse to play, Blake!"

"Fathead! Come on!"

"Pway do not speak to me, Blake! I decline to know you!"

"Look here, Figgins is captaining the Fourth, and if you stick out, he will put in a New House chap!" shouted Blake.

"That is quite indiffewent to me!"

"You silly jabberwock!"

Arthur Augustus rose and walked away.

Blake glared after him, in two minds whether to collar him and yank him forcibly away to the football ground. But the footballers were waiting, and Blake stamped away wrathfully.

"Isn't he coming?" asked Dig.

Blake gave a snort.

"No. He's standing out—the ass! Let him wait till six o'clock, and then we'll give him a lesson!"

And the Form match was played without the assistance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

When it was finished and the players came off, Arthur Augustus did not even inquire whether the Fourth or the Shell had won. He seemed to have lost all interest in football.

Blake, Herries, and Digby found him

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in Study No. 6 when they came in, but he did not look at them or utter a word.

"Well, ass?" greeted Blake.

No reply.

"The Shell have licked us!" growled Blake.

Arthur Augustus smiled slightly.

"What could you expect, Blake, in the circus?"

"Well, with so many New House bouncers in the Form team, we hadn't much chance, I suppose," said Blake. "What have you got your best bib and tucker on for?"

Arthur Augustus did not seem to hear.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came in at tea-time. Arthur Augustus looked very restively at the juniors.

"I twust you fellows will leave me the study to myself about six," he remarked.

"No jolly fear!" said Blake promptly.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We're all going to be on the scene!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Then I shall wetiah ffrom the study!" said D'Arcy, with dignity.

Blake jumped up, and put his back to the door.

"That you jolly well won't!" he said. "You're not going to waylay the girl from Blankley's in the quad! She's coming up to the study, as usual!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Quarter to six," said Tom Merry. "Time to get ready. You've got your colour-box, Manners?"

"Yes, rather!"

"We're ready for you, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus made a jump for the door. The next moment half a dozen pairs of hands were grasping him.

CHAPTER 7.

Great Preparations!

"WOTTAHS!"

"Collar him!"

"Wascals!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Welease me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you feahful boundahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, struggling desperately. "If you do not welease me at once—"

"Hold his paws!" said Blake. "Now, Gussy— Yaroooooh!" Blake broke off suddenly as Arthur Augustus' flying fists crashed upon him. He caught one with his eye and one with his nose. "Yarooooop! Oh, my hat! Oh, my nose! Yooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar him, can't you, you cackling fatheads?" shrieked Blake.

Arthur Augustus was putting up a fight like a second edition of the celebrated Tommy Farr. Six juniors were collaring him on all sides, but the noble blood of all the D'Arcys was up, and Gussy was hitting out with terrific vim.

There was a crash as he was borne to the floor, with his affectionate chums clutching him and sprawling over him.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Keep quiet, you ass!"

"Welease me, you wottahs!"

"Sit on his head!"

"Yawoooooh!"

Arthur Augustus' voice died away in mumbling as Herries sat on his head. Dig stood on his legs, with dire results to the most elegant trousers in the School House at St. Jim's.

Blake nursed his nose with one hand and caressed his eye with the other, and glared.

"The blessed idiot!" he gasped. "What do you mean by hitting at your old pals like that, you burbling jabberwock?"

"I do not wegard you as a pal," came in muffled accents from underneath Herries. "I wegard you as a beast!"

"Bring a chair here," said Tom Merry. "He's dangerous, and he'll have to be tied up, or the girl from Blankley's will be scared, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther placed a chair in position. Arthur Augustus was yanked into it, and his arms were tied round the back of the chair, and his feet tied to the front legs.

Then the juniors released him, and Arthur Augustus gasped and wriggled.

"You awful wottahs!" he gasped. "I shall give you a feahful thwashin' all wound for this. You feahful beasts!"

"Now, take it calmly, Gussy!" urged Tom Merry. "It's all for your own good, you know."

"I wefuse to take it calmly."

"If you struggle and topple over, you may be hurt," remarked Lowther.

Arthur Augustus realised that, and he wriggled a little less energetically. He could not get his hands or feet loose. And—horror of horrors!—Manners was opening his colour-box and selecting a brush.

And it was the hour of the afternoon delivery from Blankley's. Almost at any moment now Miss Dorothy Fane might drop in with the box of chocolates, and she would see him thus.

The juniors gathered round to watch Manners' artistic operations. Blake was still dabbing at his injured nose.

"A nice sky-blue," suggested Lowther. "Say sky-blue for the cheeks and scarlet for the forehead. That will make an effective contrast."

"Good!" assented Manners.

"Oh, you wottahs! If you touch me with that bwush, Mannahs— Gwoogh!"

"Better keep your mouth shut," suggested Manners. "I don't want to waste the paint. Paint costs money!"

"Gerrrg!"

"I told you so! Keep your mouth shut, old chap!"

Arthur Augustus closed his mouth—with a daub of paint in it—and looked daggers.

Meanwhile, Manners worked rapidly, like a finished artist. The cheeks of the Honourable Arthur Augustus were soon as blue as an Italian summer sky. His forehead was as red as the coat of a soldier of other days.

There was a chorus of approval from the juniors. The effect struck them as completely satisfactory.

"Now, what about his ears?" said Manners thoughtfully

"Green!" suggested Lowther.

"Yes, a nice artistic green," said Blake.

"Green it is!" said Manners, and he proceeded.

With blue cheeks, scarlet forehead, and green ears, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy presented a really extraordinary aspect.

"What about black circles round his eyes?" said Tom Merry.

"Certainly!"

"And purple for his nose?"

"Good! A purple nose will be aw-

fully effective! Blessed if he isn't beginning to look like a futurist picture!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The most advanced of Surrealist painters had never produced anything to equal Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth when Manners had finished with him. His appearance was not merely striking—it was stunning!

Manners closed his colour-box. His work was done, and done well. He experienced that sense of artistic satisfaction natural to the true artist who knows that his work could not be improved upon.

"I don't think that could be bettered," said Tom Merry. "Now we'd better do his hair. Gussy is rather particular about his hair, you know."

"Oh, you feahful wottahs!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

"A little flour and glue will make a ripping pomade," said Tom. "You can leave it to me. I'm rather adept at barbering."

Flour and liquid glue having been mixed in due proportions, Tom Merry applied that home-made pomade to Arthur Augustus' hair.

The hair was gathered up and stuck together in a sort of pyramid. It rose to quite a sharp point on top of Gussy's head when the barbering was done.

"Oh deah! You feahful beasts!"

"It's for your own good, Gussy," urged Blake. "You ought to be jolly

glad to have pals to stand by you like this in an emergency. When I fall in love I'd like to be able to rely on you to see me through, you know."

"Oh, you wottah!"

Lowther draped the hearthrug artistically round Arthur Augustus, and pinned it on. Then the juniors felt that they had done enough. Arthur Augustus felt that they had done a little too much.

There was a light step in the passage—a step that Arthur Augustus knew well. He gave a wriggle of horror.

The girl from Blankley's was coming.

"Clear!" shouted Blake.

The juniors crowded out of the study. There was a wail of anguish from the swell of the Fourth.

"Blake—Tom Mewwy! Welease me! Oh, you wottahs! Oh cwumbs!"

The girl porter from Blankley's glanced at the grinning crowd of juniors and tapped at the open door of Study No. 6. She had the parcel in her hand.

"For D'Arcy?" asked Blake politely.

"Yes, sir."

"All serene. He's in there; take it in."

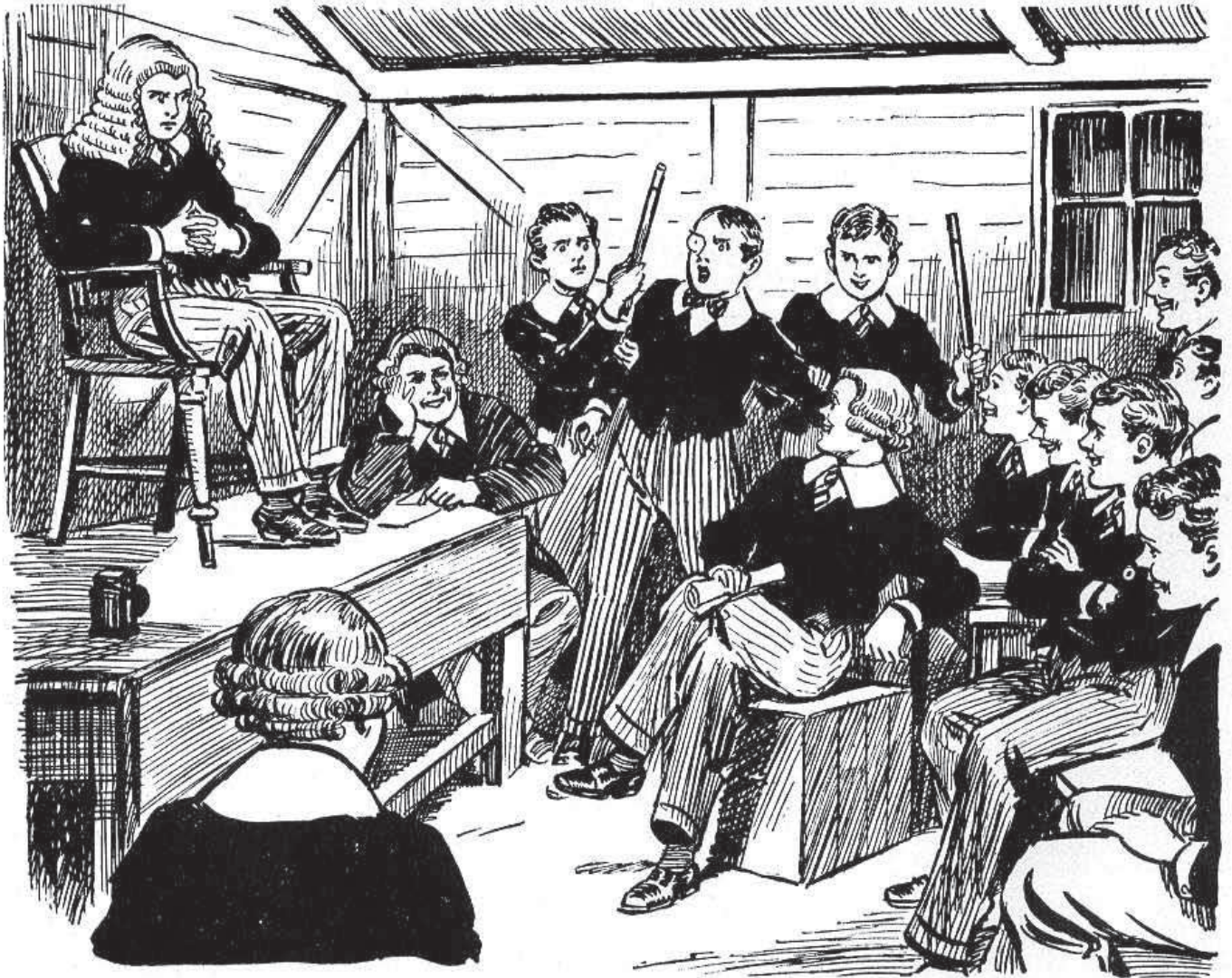
"Yes, sir."

The girl from Blankley's entered the study, parcel and invoice in hand.

Crash!

The parcel dropped on the floor, and the girl from Blankley's recoiled with a sudden shriek.

Arthur Augustus had dawned on her.



"Prisoner at the bar," said Tom Merry, the judge, "you have been found guilty of neglecting footer and of casting sheep's eyes at the girl from Blankley's!" "You impertinent beast!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Sentence will now be passed," continued the judge. "You will be bumped on the floor of the High Court of the Woodshed!"

CHAPTER 8.

Rough on Gussy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY looked at the girl from Blankley's.

The girl from Blankley's looked at Arthur Augustus.

Neither moved. Gussy was tied to the chair, and the girl porter was rooted to the floor.

There was an awful moment of silence. "Oh dear!" said the girl from Blankley's, at last.

"Gwoogh!"

"Ten-and-six to pay, please!" said the girl porter, in a faint voice.

Arthur Augustus wriggled.

"Pway excuse me, deah gal, for appeawin' in this widiculous posish," he gasped. "It is a wotten pwactical joke, you know."

A smile lurked on the charming face of the girl from Blankley's. She understood the chuckle from the passage.

"I am goin' to thwash those wottahs all wound!" resumed Arthur Augustus. "This is a feahful outwage, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jumped. The girl from Blankley's was laughing! Actually laughing, as if she saw something funny in the matter.

"Weally—" gasped D'Arcy.

Miss Fane became grave at once.

"Ten-and-six to pay, please!" she said.

"Pewwaps you would have the gweat kindness to welease me, deah gal," moaned Arthur Augustus. "You will observe that I am tied up. If you would be so awfully good as to cut this wotten cord—"

The girl from Blankley's smiled, and took a knife from among the tea-things that were piled on the shelf. She kindly sawed through the bonds that secured the noble limbs of Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus gasped with relief when he found himself free again.

"I—I suppose I look wathah widic—" he gasped, tearing off the hearthrug and hurling it into the fender.

"Ahem!"

"A set of wotten pwactical jokers, you know—"

"Ten-and-six to pay, please!"

"Oh deah!"

To his dismay Arthur Augustus forgot the state of his highly-coloured countenance.

He had intended to borrow half-a-guinea from somewhere to pay for the chocolates, and beg the girl from Blankley's to accept them as a present. But he had not been able to raise the ten-and-six; and the hoped-for fiver had not come from home. He was not able to pay on delivery.

"Bai Jove! I—I—I have wun out of money!" he gasped. "Pewwaps you could wait while I get it?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Arthur Augustus rushed from the study.

There was a wild howl of laughter from the passage. The sight of the highly-coloured junior, with his pyramidal hair, caused a sensation.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy!" shrieked Blake. "Don't go downstairs like that, you ass! Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus halted.

"Bai Jove! Oh, you wottahs!"

"Sure, he'll be the death of me!" shrieked Reilly. "Oh, Gussy! Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus dodged back into the study. The girl from Blankley's was trying hard to be grave and businesslike.

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But it was difficult. She seemed dangerously near hysterics.

"Pway excuse me!" panted Arthur Augustus. "I—I cannot go out in this state. Oh deah! Pewwaps you could let it stand ovah—"

"Payment on delivery is the rule, sir!"

"Oh deah!"

"But I could bring the parcel tomorrow," suggested the girl from Blankley's. "We are not allowed to leave parcels without payment."

Arthur Augustus brightened up—under his paint.

"Yaas, wathah—what a wippin' ideal!" he ejaculated. "Pewwaps you wouldn't mind bwingin' it along to-morrow."

"Certainly, sir! Good-day!"

"Oh deah! Good-day!"

Arthur Augustus did not offer to accompany the porter to her van this time. He felt that it would not do.

The girl from Blankley's departed.

Then a howling crowd looked in at Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus gave them a glare like a basilisk.

"You cacklin' wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get your camera, Manners!" shouted Kangaroo of the Shell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you dare to bwing your camewah



"Would you mind cracking little Willie's nut for him, please?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss H. Lampard, 116, Stride Avenue, Copnor, Portsmouth.

here, Mannahs, I will bwreak it ovah your head!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

He turned to look in the glass, to see how horrid he looked. He staggered back as he saw his reflection. That was how the girl from Blankley's had seen him! What would she think of him after that?

"Mind that glass!" shouted Blake.

"Don't crack it, Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howwid wottahs! Oh cwumbis!"

The exasperated swell of St. Jim's rushed at the crowd in the doorway, hitting out. The juniors scattered, howling with laughter. Arthur Augustus shook his fist after them, and tramped away to the dormitory to wash.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three came into the study. "I should think that would cure Gussy. He won't want the girl from Blankley's to see him again, I should think."

And the chums of the Shell sat down to their prep, chuckling.

It was about an hour later that the study door opened and Arthur Augustus came in. He was clean now; newly swept and garnished, so to speak. But his eye was glittering with wrath behind his eyeglass.

The Terrible Three nodded to him in the most affable manner.

"Don't mensh, deah boy!" said Monty Lowther, before the swell of St. Jim's could speak.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You've come to thank us—what?"

"Why, you wottah—"

"Don't mensh!" said Tom Merry heartily. "Always at your service, Gussy."

"You uttah wottah, I have not come here to thank you!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"It's an ungrateful world!" sighed Manners.

"I have come here to give you a feahful thwashin' all wound!" said Arthur Augustus, pushing back his cuffs. "You first, Tom Mewwy."

"Mercy!"

"Put your hands up, you wottah!"

Tom Merry obediently put up his hands, lifting them above his head.

"That right?" he asked.

"If you do not put up your hands, Tom Mewwy, I shall stwike you!" shouted Arthur Augustus, brandishing his fist within an inch of Tom Merry's nose.

"But, they are up— Oh, yaroooh!" roared Tom, as Arthur Augustus' knuckles came in contact with his nose.

"I am goin' to thwash you, you wottah! I am also goin' to thwash Lowthah and Mannahs, and then I am goin' to thwash Blake and Hewwies and Dig."

"What a big order!" grinned Lowther. "How much will there be left of you, Gussy, when you're finished?"

"Are you weady, Tom Mewwy?"

"Well, if it must be it must be," said Tom resignedly, rising to his feet.

"Don't be hard on a little 'un, Gussy."

"Don't be a funny idiot, Tom Mewwy! I am waitin' for you."

"Hold on!" said Lowther, jumping up, with a twinkle in his eyes. "This has got to be in order—Queensberry rules! None of your hooliganism, Gussy!"

"You cheeky ass!"

"We'll go into the gym and have it in order," said Lowther. "No room in the study for fighting—especially with such a ferocious chap as Gussy. Follow me."

"I am quite weady to go into the gym."

"Lead the way, then. It's up to a D'Arcy to lead, isn't it?"

Arthur Augustus sniffed and marched out of the study with his nose in the air.

Monty Lowther whispered for a moment to his chums, and they followed, chuckling.

At the door of Study No. 6 they halted, and Lowther looked in. Blake, Herries, and Digby were at work on their prep.

"You're wanted," said Lowther.

"Hallo! What's up?"

"Gussy," said Lowther—"up on the high horse and out for scalps. He is going to thrash us three, and then you three. Whether he is going to thrash the rest of the School House as well I don't know."

"Lowthah, you ass!"

"He's beginning with the Fourth and the Shell, and after that I suppose it will be the Fifth and the Sixth, winding up with the Housemaster and the Head."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"We're going into the gym to take it like little men," said Lowther. "You fellows had better come and get it over."

"Certainly!" said Blake, rising as Lowther closed one eye, unseen by the wrathful swell of the Fourth. "Come on, you chaps—like lambs to the slaughter!"

Study No. 6 followed the Shell fellows, and as the news spread a numerous army of School House fellows followed them, and they swarmed into the gym.

CHAPTER 9.

Beaten Hollow!

THE gym was crowded. School House and New House fellows had turned up in swarms at the news that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth had six fights on his hands.

Arthur Augustus, elegant as he was, was quite in the front line as a fighting man; but six fights in one evening was rather a "tall" order.

The St. Jim's fellows were anxious to see how he would get through them, and especially what he would look like when he had got through.

There had been a little whispering among the six victims, and now they were all looking very grave—like fellows who realised that they were in for a very serious business indeed.

Perhaps Arthur Augustus realised that it was rather a serious business, too, to undertake to "thwack" six of the best fighting men in the Lower School.

But the word "retreat" was omitted from the D'Arcy vocabulary. Nothing would have induced the swell of St. Jim's to admit that he had bitten off more than he could masticate. Besides, there was the outrage in Study No. 6 to be avenged.

Some of the onlookers were grinning, and others looked puzzled.

Arthur Augustus took off his elegant jacket and donned the gloves.

Figgins of the New House, after a whispered consultation with the six victims, undertook to keep time. Figgins was seen to grin joyously for a minute, but he was soon quite grave again as befitted the solemnity of the occasion.

"I am weady, you wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus.

Figgins took out his watch. "First victim forward," he said.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Shush! Don't you interfere with the referee!" said Figgins sternly. "Don't you know the rules of the ring? Who's the first giddy victim?"

"I am goin' to thwash Tom Mewwy first."

"On with the motley," said Figgins—"I mean, on with the gloves! Have you made your will, Merry? Good! Seconds out of the ring."

Tom Merry, with a face of preternatural gravity, advanced with the gloves on. He held out his hand in the usual way.

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"I wefuse to shake hands with you, Tom Mewwy, unless you apologise for your wascally conduct."

"A Merry never apologises," said Tom solemnly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time!" rapped out Figgins.

Arthur Augustus rushed in to the attack. It was really a sweeping attack, and perhaps it was not surprising that Tom Merry fell at the first assault.

LAUGH THESE OFF!

— with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!
"Ice hockey players are the cream of the country's manhood," writes a sports reporter. Ice creams?

Said the steward aboard the steamer to Gore, who was seasick: "Your lunch will be up in a tick, sir." "So will my breakfast!" groaned Gore.

Try this: A bore is a chap who is here to-day and here to-morrow.

I hear a plumber in Wayland has decided to go on the stage. Why not try tap-dancing?

Story: Irishman saw a coat outside a Jewish tailor's, priced fifteen shillings. Took it inside, said to the Jew: "I'm just a lad from Dublin—how much is this worth?" The Jew shrugged. "Not more than seven bob," he replied. "I'll take it," said the Irishman. "Take it?" gasped the Jew. "I thought you had come to sell it!"

I see a heavyweight boxer is advertising a cure for insomnia. He claims to have put seventy-two men to sleep already!

Have you read "Queen of the Gangsters," by Ima Croke? "A Thousand and One Crashes," by Carbur Etter? The new manual, "Learning to Skate," published by Messrs. Bump & Bruise? Or, "I Stand for the Redskin," by Sitting Bull?

Story: "Why are you driving up and down in front of the hospital?" asked Biggs of his friend Jones. "For safety," replied Jones. "You see, I only began driving today!"

'Nother: "I am going to raise the rent," snapped the landlord. "That's great!" grinned the tenant. "I'm sure I can't raise it myself!"

In which month does a Form-master talk least? February. There are only twenty-eight days.

What's better than a promising youngster? One who pays up.

"What do you think I should get on my new home-made ten-valve set?" asks Bernard Glyn. Possibly five bob.

A local circus advertised the shortest man in the world. Fatty Wynn now disputes the title. He says nobody could be any shorter than he is. He's broke!

All the best, chums!

There was a bump as he sat down on the floor of the ring.

Figgins began to count. "One—two—three—four—"

Arthur Augustus waited impatiently for Tom Merry to rise. He did not rise. He sat cheerfully on the floor.

"Five—six—seven—eight—"

"Get up, you wottah!"

Tom Merry did not move.

"I didn't hit you!" shouted Arthur Augustus excitedly. "You fell down of your own accord, you feahful funk! Gewwup!"

"Nine—out!" said Figgins. "Gweat Scott!"

"Knocked out in the first round," said the referee, with a shake of the head. "I'm surprised at you, Merry! What is St. Jim's coming to? Help him out of the ring."

Julian of the Fourth came into the ring and helped Tom Merry out. Arthur Augustus gazed at them in bewilderment.

"But I have not thwashed him!" he ejaculated.

"You've won the fight, according to the rules. Merry has been counted out. Next man in," said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

Monty Lowther came into the ring with the gloves on.

"Anybody got a little whisky?" he asked faintly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time!"

Arthur Augustus' eye gleamed as he charged at Monty Lowther. Tom Merry had got off very easily; but Gussy was determined that Lowther should go through it. His fists lashed out like flails.

Crash!

Monty Lowther landed on the floor and groaned deeply. As Arthur Augustus' furious drives had hit everything except Lowther, the reason of his sudden collapse was not clear. But he had collapsed, there was no doubt about that.

Figgins, with a solemn eye on his watch, began to count.

"One—two—three—four—"

"Lowthiah, you funk'n' boundah, gewwup!"

Lowther groaned dismally, and did not move.

"Five—six—seven—eight—nine—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Out!" said Figgins. "I congratulate you, D'Arcy! You're knocking 'em out in fine style! Help Lowther out of the ring."

"But there hasn't been a fight yet!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"There has been a fight, and you've won. What on earth more do you want?" demanded the referee.

Lumley-Lumley came into the ring, and helped Lowther away. Lowther groaned deeply as he went.

Manners stepped into the ring in his place.

The "true inwardness" of that peculiar combat was dawning upon the juniors now, and the crowd was chuckling.

They were not surprised now to see Manners of the Shell crumple up before Arthur Augustus' attack, and fall at the first drive—which missed him, as a matter of fact.

"One—two—three," counted Figgins—"four—five—six—"

"Get up, Mannahs, you funk!"

"Seven—eight—nine—out!"

Kerruish came in and helped Manners away. There was a roar of laughter in the crowded gym. The juniors were enjoying Arthur Augustus' easy victories.

D'Arcy ought really to have enjoyed them, too; never had those doughty fighting men of the Shell been so easily licked.

But D'Arcy was frowning darkly. It was beginning to dawn even upon his noble brain that his aristocratic leg was being pulled.

"Next man in," said Figgins.

Jack Blake came into the ring with the gloves on. He was looking as grave as an owl.

Digby wiped away a tear, and Herries shook hands with Blake as if for the last time. Then Blake faced his adversary, his knees knocking together.

"Time!" said Figgins.

Crash!

Blake landed on the floor even before Arthur Augustus reached him. He lay at full length and groaned.

"One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I pwotest!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "This is a wotten plant! The wottahs are not fightin' at all!"

"Nine—out!"

Ray of the Fourth came and helped Blake out. Blake leaned heavily on his shoulder, and sobbed as he went.

Arthur Augustus was crimson with wrath. Digby came in, in Blake's place, with his teeth chattering.

"Dig, you uttah wottah—"

"Time!" rapped out Figgins.

Arthur Augustus attacked hotly. But he had time only for one drive which was knocked up before Dig bumped on the floor.

Figgins began to count amid yells of laughter.

"One—two—three—four—five," chanted Figgins—"six—seven—eight—nine—out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is a wotten jape. I wefuse—"

"Next man in, please!"

Reilly helped Digby away, and Herries came into the ring. It was "last man in."

The crowd were chuckling joyously now. Five easy victories had fallen to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and it was evident that the sixth adversary was going the same way.

But Arthur Augustus was a little quicker this time, and he caught Herries' nose with his glove with a terrific drive, and Herries roared.

Quite forgetting the humorous programme mapped out by Monty Lowther, Herries hit out, and Arthur Augustus sat down.

"Gwoogh!"

"Count!" yelled the crowd, delighted by this variation in the programme.

"You ass, Herries! Play the game!" shouted Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries rubbed his nose.

"All right; I forgot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jumped up like a jack-in-the-box, and charged at Herries. Herries went over with a bump, unresisting.

"Get up, you wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus, dancing round him. "I wefuse to let you be counted out. I insist upon your gettin' up. Hewwies. I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"One—two—three—four—five—six—"

"Shut up, Figgins, you duffah! I insist—"

"Seven—eight—nine—out! Gussy wins!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse—"

The roars of laughter drowned Arthur Augustus' voice. Kerr helped Herries

away, and the swell of St. Jim's stood victorious in the ring—monarch of all he surveyed, so to speak. But he did not seem satisfied.

Leaning heavily on the shoulders of their seconds, the six vanquished juniors tottered out of the gym amid shrieks of merriment.

Arthur Augustus glared after them in almost speechless wrath. It was only too plain now that his noble leg had been pulled.

"You uttah wottahs, I pwotest—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins, you wottah, I—"

"Hallo! Do you want to fight me now?" ejaculated Figgins. "All serene! Who'll keep time for me? It won't take long."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus did not fight Figgins. He had had enough easy victories. He snorted, put on his jacket, and stalked out of the gym in great wrath. He left the merry crowd howling like hyenas.

CHAPTER 10.

A Wire Entanglement!

AFTER all they had done for him it might have been supposed that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would show some tincture of gratitude towards his old chums. But he didn't. Even the "thwashing" he had bestowed upon them in the gym had not placated him.

That as sacred a matter as an affair of the heart should become the subject of jesting and japing was not to be forgiven.

Arthur Augustus felt that it was the limit. Thrashing the juniors seemed no good. But Arthur Augustus maintained an attitude of frozen and chilling reserve.

He had dropped the acquaintance of Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three. They still persisted in addressing cheery remarks to him, just as if nothing had happened.

They even made kind inquiries as to how his love affairs were getting on, and whether he suffered from palpitation of the heart, and whether he had purchased a ring, and so on. To all of which inquiries Arthur Augustus replied only with disdainful sniffs.

The long-delayed fiver had arrived at last from Lord Eastwood, with a letter admonishing his hopeful son, and preaching economy.

Arthur Augustus changed the fiver in time to settle for that box of chocolates, when it arrived again from Blankley's. This time he met the porter at the side gate, where the van stopped.

He explained to the girl from Blankley's that that saved her the trouble of coming up to the School House. Fortunately, the van was waiting, and the driver was impatient, or Arthur Augustus would have kept the girl from Blankley's in conversation till calling-over.



There was a bump as Tom Merry sat down under D'Arcy's not rise. He sat cheerfully on the floor. "I didn't hit you, accord, you feahful!"

As he came back across the quad he met Blake, Herries, and Digby.

"At it again—what?" said Blake.

"I wefuse to speak to you, Blake!"

"So you're not cured yet?" growled Herries. "De chuck up playing the giddy ox, Gussy, and come down to the footah."

"I decline to come down to the footah."

"What about the Rookwood match next week?" howled Blake. "Do you want to be quite off your form when we play Jimmy Silver's team?"

"I have already remarked that I shall not be playing in the Wookwood match."

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus stalked away. Blake looked at his chums with an excessively exasperated expression.

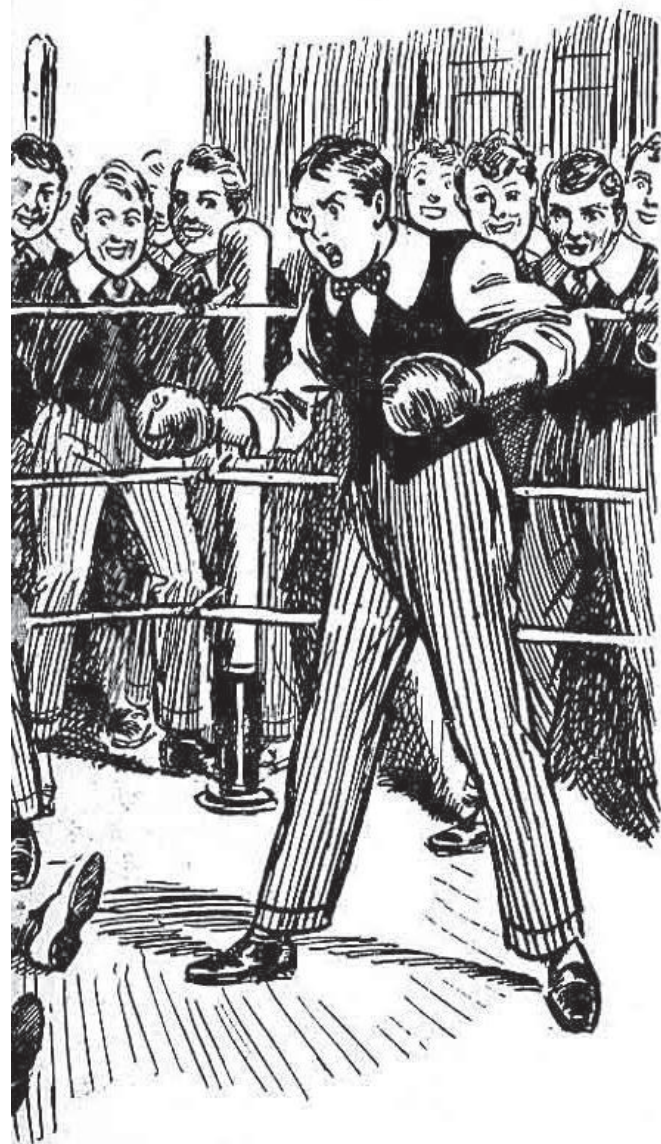
"Isn't it enough to make a saint savage?" he exclaimed. "The silly ass! He knows we're fed up, too!"

"He wants some more," said Herries darkly.

"He's jolly well not going to miss the Rookwood match," said Dig. "He's got to be cured before then."

There was a consultation on the subject, the Terrible Three joining in it heartily. They were quite keen to help in curing Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They felt that it was their duty, as old chums.

The consultation was long and serious,



First assault. Figgins began to count, but Tom Merry did not shout Arthur Augustus. "You fell down of your own junk! Gewwup!"

but the chuckles with which it concluded hinted that the juniors had arrived at a satisfactory decision.

They grinned as they saw Arthur Augustus coming away from the school letter-box, a little later. Evidently he had sent another order to Blankley's.

As he could not go to see the charmer it seemed to Arthur Augustus an awfully good dodge to send Blankley's a daily order. At this rate, his fiver was not likely to last him very long. But what were fivers in comparison with interviews with the charming porter from Blankley's? Less than nothing.

Arthur Augustus retired to Study No. 6 without glancing at his old pals. He had lines to do. He was grinding through Virgil—pausing every now and then to think of a bright face under a porter's hat—when Julian of the Fourth looked into the study.

"You're wanted, Gussy!"
"Yaas, deah boy."

"Somebody's asking for you on the telephone," said Julian, regarding the swell of St. Jim's curiously. "Kildare sent me to tell you."

"Thank you, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus rose, and laid down his pen. He descended to the prefects'-room. Kildare was in the doorway.

"Somebody's calling you, D'Arcy," said the captain of St. Jim's. "Something about an order you've sent to Blankley's."

D'Arcy jumped.
"While you're about it, you may as well tell Blankley's that juniors are not supposed to be called up on the telephone," said Kildare, rather sarcastically, and he walked away.

Arthur Augustus hurried to the telephone. His heart was thumping. Certainly, the girl-porter was not likely to be speaking on the Blankley's telephone. But—

D'Arcy's hand shook as he took up the receiver.

"Yaas," he said. "Are you there? Is that Blankley's?"

"Who is speaking?" came back a voice on the telephone—a voice that was a little high-pitched and sounded feminine to D'Arcy's ears.

"D'Arcy, St. Jim's."
"I am so glad."

"Yaas. Is it somethin' about an order?"

"Are you alone?" came the voice.

"Yaas."
"Nobody can hear us?"

"No."
"I'm so glad. I want to speak to you so much. We have so little time when the van is waiting, don't we?"

D'Arcy's eyes danced. Evidently it was the girl from Blankley's who was speaking over the wires. He did not quite recognise the voice, but it sounded feminine, and, of course, the telephone disguises the voice very considerably.

"How vevy good of you to wing me up!" said Arthur Augustus, in a faltering voice.

"Not at all, Arthur. May I call you Arthur?"

"Pway do, dear gal."
"You may call me Dorothy, if you like."

"Thank you vevy much, Dowothy!"
"Can I see you, Arthur?"

"Yaas, wathah!"
"I am in need of a friend. Something in your eyes has told me that you will be a good friend to me."

"How vevy good of you to say so!"
"You will help me? You will let me tell you my tale of woe—I mean, all my troubles?"

"I shall be delighted, Dowothy."
"I am sure you will be able to advise me. I am certain that you are a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Yaas, wathah! Where shall I see you?"

"I will meet you at the bridge on the Rhyll—you know the place? At six I will be there. Will you come?"

"What-ho!"
"You are sure it will not be a trouble, Arthur?"

"It will be a pleasuah, deah gal."
"What a dear boy you are, Arthur!"
"What a deah gal you are, Dowothy!"
"Au revoir!"
"Au wevoir, deah gal!"

Arthur Augustus hung up the receiver, looking like a fellow in a trance. He quitted the prefects'-room as if he were walking on air.

Monty Lowther stepped out of the

telephone-box at Wayland Post Office, and yawned.

"Well," said Tom Merry, Manners, Blake, Herries, and Dig all at once.

"All serene!" said Lowther cheerfully. "I asked him if I might call him Arthur!"

"You ass!"
"And I told him he could call me Dorothy, if he liked."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"No harm in his calling me Dorothy, if he likes," said Lowther. "He can call me Isabella, or Gloxiana, if it makes him happy. He's going to meet me at the bridge on the Rhyll. Blessed if I know what for, but I dare say he's got some reason or other. Come on!"

Tom Merry & Co. quitted the post office, chuckling, and strolled away to keep the appointment Arthur Augustus had made with such delight.

CHAPTER 11. Sister Anne!

"O H, what a picture!"
Talbot of the Shell made that remark, with a smile, as Arthur Augustus came out of the School House.

The swell of St. Jim's was dressed to kill. Solomon in all his glory would have been put completely in the shade.

"Something special on?" asked Talbot, smiling.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"
Without vouchsafing any explanation, Arthur Augustus descended the steps into the quad, and walked away to the gates. Talbot looked after him, smiling, but perplexed.

Arthur Augustus certainly was a picture, from the tips of his beautifully polished boots to the crown of his gleaming topper. But he was going out when the van from Blankley's was almost due to make the usual delivery at St. Jim's. Apparently he was going to miss the girl from Blankley's this time.

More than one admiring glance was cast on Arthur Augustus as he strolled out of the gates. He was more than keeping up his reputation as being the best-dressed fellow at St. Jim's.

He glanced at his watch as he quitted the school. It was twenty minutes to six. Since the telephone call, Arthur Augustus had been busily occupied in adorning his elegant person. Naturally, he wished to do full justice to the occasion.

He had left himself barely time to get to the Rhyll bridge by six, and he hurried down to the towing-path and walked along quickly. It would never do to be late for such an appointment.

A meeting in such romantic surroundings was ever so much better than a few minutes' chat when the van came from Blankley's to the side gate at the school. Arthur Augustus would be able to say many things, and enlighten the fair Dorothy as to the true state of his heart—if he found nerve enough. Probably he would not, when it came to the test.

Arthur Augustus hurried on so effectively that he reached the rendezvous five minutes before the hour. He was in good time.

He gave a sudden start as he came on the old stone bridge.

On the low parapet six juniors were sitting in a row, under the shade of a big tree that grew on the bank below. Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three were all there, chatting cheerily, and apparently unaware of the approach of Arthur Augustus. They seemed to be enjoying the sunset.

D'Arcy halted in dismay.
The bridge over the Rhyll was usually
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a solitary spot; very little traffic passed that way. It was distinctly unfortunate that six juniors of St. Jim's should have chosen the very hour of his rendezvous to sit themselves on the parapet and chat.

In a few minutes Dorothy would be there—and how could he possibly meet the girl from Blankley's under the gaze of six pairs of mocking eyes?

Arthur Augustus coughed.

Then Blake looked round and seemed surprised to see him.

"Gussy, by Jove!" said Blake. "How decent of you to come out and meet us, Gussy! How did you know we were walking home this way?"

"I—I did not know," stammered Arthur Augustus, fervently wishing that the juniors had been walking home some other way.

"Dropped on us quite by chance, then?" said Blake affably. "Well, there's room for one more. Come and squat down and have some of this toffee."

"You seem to forget that we are not on speakin' terms, Blake," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"Always forgetting something," assented Blake. "But after thrashing a chap you ought to make it up with him, Gussy. That's only playing the game, you know. After the frightful licking you gave me in the gym the other day—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"This is good toffee," said Blake temptingly. "Squat down, Gussy. We're only staying here another half-hour or so."

D'Arcy's heart sank. Six o'clock was chiming out from Rylcombe. At any moment now the girl from Blankley's might come tripping on the bridge—at least, so Arthur Augustus supposed.

As a matter of absolute fact, at that very moment the girl from Blankley's was delivering a parcel at St. Jim's. But that was one of the many things that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not know.

Blake and Dig made room for D'Arcy between them on the parapet; but D'Arcy did not sit down. He had not come there to sit down with six juniors and eat toffee. He stood blinking uneasily at the smiling row of juniors.

"Anything the matter, old scout?" asked Monty Lowther, with affectionate solicitude. "You look rather worried."

"Nothin'."

"If it's tin," said Tom Merry, "I've had a remittance to-day. Anything up to ten bob, my son."

"I am not short of money, Tom Mewwy."

"Lucky bargee!" said Manners. "I can't get any more films till I get another remittance."

"The—the fact is, deah boys—"

"Go ahead!" said Blake encouragingly.

"Don't you think you had better get on to the school?" suggested Arthur Augustus.

"Lots of time before locking-up."

"Yaas; but—but you might catch cold, or something, sitting there like that."

"We'll risk it," said Blake. "We're not going till we've finished the toffee; but if you want to start at once we'll come with you."

"I—I do not want to start. I—I am not goin' back just yet."

Blake looked puzzled.

"You want us to start, and you're not starting yourself?" he asked. "What's the game? Are you meeting one of Levison's bookmaker friends here?"

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"Weally, Blake—"

"He's up to something," said Monty Lowther seriously. "I can tell it by his blushes. Confide it to your old pals, Gussy."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Any more toffee there, Blake?"

"Here you are."

"Thanks!"

The six juniors munched toffee and looked blandly at Arthur Augustus. They showed no sign whatever of moving. Apparently they were enjoying the cold winter evening on the river. Arthur Augustus looked at his watch.

Ten minutes past six! Dorothy was late!

Arthur Augustus looked along the road towards Wayland. Dorothy was not in sight, but at any moment she might appear. What was to be done?

"I twust you will go!" said Arthur

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London, E.C.4.

Augustus at last. The time had come for speaking plainly.

"You want us to go?" asked Tom Merry, looking puzzled.

"Yaas!"

"What for?"

"Ahem!"

"Behold he blushes!" murmured Lowther.

"You—uttah ass, Lowthah!" Arthur Augustus was crimson. "The—the fact is, Tom Mewwy, I—I—I—"

"You—you—you—" assented Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I will tell you the circs and twust to your delicacy as gentlemen!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I am meetin' a lady on this bwidge."

"The murder's out!" gasped Lowther. "It's an elopement. Where is the motor-car waiting, Gussy?"

"You uttah chump! There is no motah-car waitin'."

"No motor-car!" ejaculated Lowther. "Do you mean to say that you're going to elope in a cart or a wheelbarrow?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You know perfectly well that I am not goin' to elope at all!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to listen to your wibald jokes!"

"Gentlemen," said Blake, looking round with owl-like solemnity, "Gussy has depended on our delicacy as gentlemen. We must play up. There's only one thing for us to do, and that's to retire from the scene and leave Gussy to wait alone for the charmer."

Arthur Augustus' knitted brows relaxed.

"Blake, that is vewy decent of you," he said. "I withdraw some of the things I have said about you."

"Gussy, you do me proud!" said Blake. "Gentlemen, we will retire!"

The six juniors slipped off the parapet. They retired with solemn faces, much to the satisfaction of Arthur Augustus. Only Monty Lowther paused for a moment.

"You don't want me to be best man, Gussy?" he asked.

"Pway clear off, you ass!"

"Or to help in any way?" said Lowther. "If you have chartered a pirate craft to carry off the fair one—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Once aboard the lugger and the gal is ours, you know!" urged Lowther.

"You wibald beast—"

Monty Lowther sighed and followed his chums. They sauntered away towards the school, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the bridge, like Patience on a monument. He needed all his patience for the vigil that was before him.

"It's jolly nearly too bad!" exclaimed Tom Merry, when they were out of hearing. "Suppose we cut back and tell him—"

"Bosh!" said Blake. "Hasn't he got to be cured?"

"Well, yes; but—"

"Nothing like marking time on a bridge to cure a chap," said Blake. "He will get fed-up. Of course, we will tell him when he comes in; we mustn't let him think that nice girl has played him a scurvey trick. But if he waits there an hour or two he will have time to meditate on his fatheadedness. It may do him no end of good."

"And he never even called me Dorothy!" said Lowther plaintively.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's bound to come in for calling-over," said Manners. "Then we'll stand him a tea and tell him who was calling him Arthur on the telephone. He will thank us for all this some day."

"Ahem! Perhaps!"

"As that Indian chap at Greyfriars has it, the perhapsfulness is terrific," said Monty Lowther. "Still, we're doing our duty by a pal. We can't do more than that. My hat! He's still there!"

The juniors looked back from the towing-path. The figure of Arthur Augustus was silhouetted against the darkening sky. He was waiting and watching the road from Wayland.

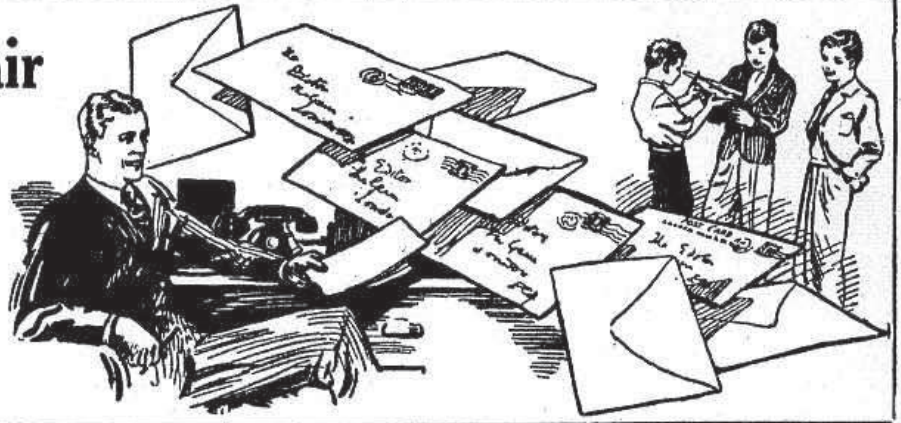
"Sister Anne, Sister Anne, is the girl from Blankley's coming?" chuckled Monty Lowther.

And the juniors grinned, and went on their way, leaving the swell of St. Jim's to play Sister Anne to his heart's content.

(Continued on page 18.)

The Editor's Chair

Let the Editor be your pal. Drop him a line to-day, addressing your letters: **The Editor, The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.**



HALLO, Chums! Christmas is a few weeks away yet, but already I have found myself in a Yuletide atmosphere. For I have just been preparing next week's programme, and both the St. Jim's and the Greyfriars yarns have a Christmas flavour. In

"TOM MERRY'S HOLIDAY PARTY!"

the first story of a grand Christmas series—you will find Tom Merry and his chums, having broken up a few days in advance of the rest of the school, bound for Paris for their holidays. Ten juniors make up the party, and they are all very excited about the trip across the Channel.

Of course, Gussy's with them, and he distinguishes himself by causing the juniors to miss the boat train at Charing Cross—because he insists on buying some new clothes! As a result, the party has to catch a later train and cross the Channel at night. Of their voyage to Calais, and the fun and adventure en route to Paris, I will say nothing, but leave Martin Clifford to tell you all about it next Wednesday.

Join Tom Merry & Co. on their holiday excursion. You'll have the time

of your lives! So make sure you don't miss the boat!

"THE GREAT CHRISTMAS PUDDING COMPETITION!"

What time the St. Jim's juniors are bound for Paris, the chums of the Greyfriars Remove, getting the Yuletide spirit, run a competition to see who can make the best Christmas pudding. Harry Wharton & Co. pool their resources for the purpose, but each one has his own ideas about what ingredients the pudding should contain. If they all have their way—well, I shouldn't like to eat any of their pudding! Harry Wharton himself insists on adding a spot of brandy, but the getting of that spirit has a startling outcome—for Harry and Bob Cherry find themselves accused of pub-haunting!

Frank Richards has really excelled himself with this great yarn of ice-skating, pudding-making, fun, and adventure. Readers will enjoy every word of it—as I did.

Another St. Jim's jingle, featuring Ernest Levison, more fun from Monty Lowther, and four more illustrated

jokes, set the seal on another tip-top issue. See your GEM is reserved for you.

A GRAND GIFT BOOK.

Before I come to the end of my limited space, I want to remind readers about that grand old favourite, the "Holiday Annual." Christmas presents will probably be discussed in many homes during the coming weeks, and as ever they will provide something of a problem. But one gift problem can soon be solved—the "H. A." is the answer. No present is more acceptable, provides more enjoyment, and gives more satisfaction than a good book. To those readers who have read previous volumes, the "H. A." will need no recommendation. But if any GEM readers have not yet had this popular book, then I strongly advise them to try the 1938 issue, which is now on sale, price 5s. It is, in my honest opinion, the best of the nineteen volumes which have been published.

I'll be seeing you, chums!

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS

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PEN PALS COUPON
20-11-37

CHAPTER 12.
Sticking It Out!

"D ALTON!"
"Adsum!"
"Darby!"
"Adsum!"

"D'Arcy!"

No reply.

Mr. Railton, who was taking the roll-call, raised his eyes and glanced at the ranks of the Fourth. He repeated in a slightly louder tone:

"D'Arcy!"

But there was no voice to answer "Adsum!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not present. Blake thought of risking it for the sake of his chum, but the Housemaster's eyes were too keen. Silence reigned.

Mr. Railton waited for an instant, and then marked down Arthur Augustus as absent from calling-over, and went on with the list.

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked at one another in some dismay. The Terrible Three did not look happy. Arthur Augustus had missed calling-over. Did that mean that he was still waiting on the bridge?

The practical jokers had taken it for granted that Arthur Augustus would come home in time for calling-over. After spending an hour or so waiting, surely he must have realised that Dorothy was not coming to the rendezvous.

But they had not counted upon the determined character of Arthur Augustus. He had gone to the old bridge to meet a lady. The lady was late, but it was up to a romantic cavalier to wait till she turned up.

Whatever delay might have arisen, and however late the lady might be in keeping her appointment, it was Arthur Augustus' business to wait till she did come. Weighed in the balance against his duty as a devoted cavalier, calling-over was a mere nothing.

"Well," said Blake, as the juniors left the Hall when the roll was called, "what do you think of that?"

"He can't be still waiting on the bridge, surely?" exclaimed Manners.

"Bet you ninepence to fourpence that he is!" said Blake gloomily. "And I shouldn't wonder if he misses bed-time as well as calling-over!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But—but—but he couldn't be such a howling ass!" ejaculated Lowther, in dismay.

"There's no telling how big an ass he might be!" growled Blake. "He's still there, you can bet your hat. I thought he'd come in for roll-call, of course. But he hasn't. If he sticks it out till bed-time there'll be a fearful row."

"Somebody will have to go and fetch him," said Tom.

Blake made a grimace.

"Breaking bounds after dark," he said.

"Can't be helped. We can't leave Gussy on the bridge all night. It would be just like him to stay there all night and come home with the milk in the morning."

The juniors grinned at the idea. But the matter was serious.

"I'll go," said Lowther, "It was my little joke, after all. It's up to me."

"Rot!" growled Blake. "I'll go; he's our pet lunatic. I dare say I can manage it without being spotted."

Blake sauntered out into the dusky quadrangle. With great care he sauntered out of sight in the dusk, and as soon as he was sure that he was not

observed, he clambered up the slanting oak and dropped over the wall into the road.

Then he started for Rylcombe bridge.

It was a good walk to the bridge. Blake ran most of the way. Punishment was certain and severe if he were found out of bounds after dark, and the expedition was not an agreeable one. He anathematised Arthur Augustus and his obstinacy a dozen times as he tramped through the dusky winter evening down the river.

The old stone bridge came in sight at last. Blake peered round him as he tramped on to it. A dim figure loomed up before him in the darkness.

"Is that you, deah gal?"

It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You fathead!"

"Blake!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, you ass!" growled Blake. "I've come to fetch you home. Do you know that Railton's missed you at call-over?"

"I had to wisk that, deah boy!"

"Well, come on!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I cannot come yet, Blake. I am sowwy you took the twouble to come here for me. Pway weturn to the school before you are missed."

"I am not going back without you, you chump!" shouted Blake.

"I wefuse to be called a chump! I cannot come at pwsent. As I have informed you, I am here to wait for a lady," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"And you expect her to come out at this time in the evening?" asked Blake sarcastically.

"I wegard it as certain that she will keep her appointment. Somethin' has happened to delay her for a few hours."

"And how long are you going to wait?" grinned Blake.

"I could not possibly go away, and pewwaps let her come and not find me," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I shall wait till midnight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to cackle at, Blake. You will oblige me by weturnin' at once to St. Jim's," said Arthur Augustus frigidly.

"You howling ass, come along!" yelled Blake. "There isn't any lady coming. It was Monty Lowther jawed to you on the telephone!"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Wha-a-at! Wats! Wubbish!"

"He told you you could call him Dorothy!" shrieked Blake. "It was a jape! Do you understand now, you champion idiot?"

"Bai Jove!"

"And there's a parcel waiting for you at St. Jim's. The girl from Blankley's delivered it at six o'clock."

"Oh, you feahful wottahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, convinced at last. "Then I have been waitin' here for nothin'!"

"Nothing, excepting a wiggling from Railton for missing call-over!" grinned Blake. "We didn't think you would be fathead enough to miss call-over, of course. Now, are you coming?"

"I am not comin' with you, you wottah! I wefuse to wecognise you. I wegard you with uttah despision—I mean contempt!"

"Look here, Gussy, old duffer—"

"Pway do not address your wemarks to me, Jack Blake!"

Arthur Augustus sauntered away with knitted brows, leaving his chum quite overcome by the "Jack Blake."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Blake, and he walked after Arthur Augustus.

Not a word was spoken during the return to St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus seemed unconscious of the existence of his old pal.

Arrived at the school, Blake re-entered by climbing the wall. Arthur Augustus marched up to the gates and rang the bell, and Taggles let him in.

"Which you are to report yourself to Mr. Railton," grunted Taggles.

Arthur Augustus walked on to the School House. With perfect calmness he tapped at Mr. Railton's door and entered.

The Housemaster regarded him severely.

"You have just returned, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Why have you stayed out so late?"

Arthur Augustus coloured. He did not feel inclined to confide to Mr. Railton why he had played Sister Anne on the bridge. It was quite certain that the Housemaster would not be sympathetic.

"I—I stayed out, sir," he said feebly.

Mr. Railton's brow grew sterner.

"You will kindly acquaint me at once, D'Arcy, with your occupation during the time you have spent out of gates!" he exclaimed.

"I have been waitin' on the bwidge, sir."

Mr. Railton started.

"Waiting on the bridge? All the time?"

"Yaas, sir."

"And for what reason?"

"I—I was led to suppose by a wotten pwactical jokah that somebody was comin' to meet me there, sir."

Mr. Railton's face relaxed a little. "You have been the victim of a practical joke, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir; a wotten joke in the vevy worst of taste."

"You should not have missed calling-over, D'Arcy. You will take two hundred lines. You may go."

"Thank you, sir."

Arthur Augustus quitted the study. In the passage he was surrounded by his old chums. They were repentant and remorseful.

"Licked?" asked Tom Merry with great solicitude.

"I decline to speak to you, Tom Mewwy."

"Lines?" asked Manners.

"Pway do not address me, Mannahs."

"We didn't know you'd miss call-over," explained Lowther. "How were we to guess that you'd be such a howling ass? I put it to you."

"Let me pass, Lowtah."

"Don't be ratty about it, Gussy," urged Blake. "Don't bear malice, you know. We thought you'd come in for calling-over."

"I'm not watty, Blake. I simply wegard you as a set of unspeakable boundahs, and I wefuse to know you."

"Not if we let you call us Dorothy?" asked Monty Lowther in a wheedling tone.

There was a yell of laughter.

"You—you wottahs!" shouted Arthur Augustus, losing all at once his dignified calm, and he made a rush at the humorist of the Shell.

Monty Lowther fed for his life.

CHAPTER 13.

The Only Way!

"HALLO!" said Figgins in surprise.

Figgins & Co. were in their study in the New House when the visitors arrived.

There were six visitors—the Terrible Three and Blake and Herries and Dig. Figgins & Co., as it happened, were busy.

Kerr was making up his face with grease-paint before the glass; Fatty Wynn was trying on a wig; and Figgins putting stitches into a costume. Evidently they were getting ready for another effort by the New House Junior Amateur Dramatic Society.

"Busy?" asked Blake.
 "Yes," said Figgins affably. "Good-bye!"

"And we've done our best to cure him," said Tom Merry; "and we've only succeeded in putting him on the high horse."

"Hard cheese!" said Fatty Wynn. "Have you tried walloping him?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No. It may come to that," said Blake, "but we've thought of a dodge. Kerr is going to help us."

"Anything to oblige," said Kerr. "You can't do better than leave it to the New House if you're in difficulty."
 "Bow-wow! Now, the idea is this,"

he come here?" asked Figgins, in surprise.

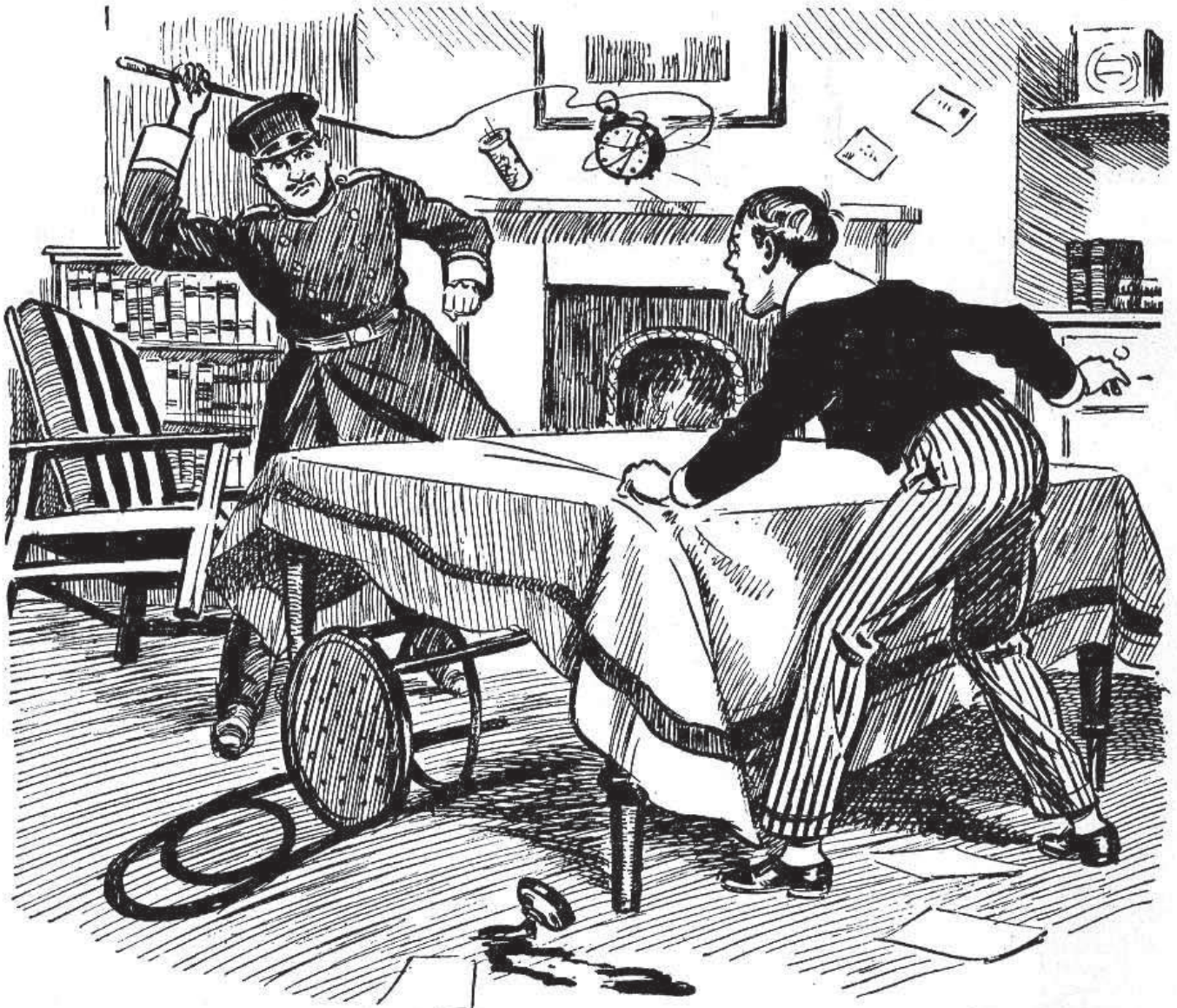
"That's where Kerr comes in," explained Blake. "Kerr can make himself up as anything, except a good-looking chap—"

"You silly ass—" began Kerr warmly.

"My idea is that—"

"My idea, you mean!" interjected Monty Lowther.

"Our idea," amended Blake. "Our idea is that Dorothy should be engaged to a rather rough specimen, who gets



"I came 'ere to give you a 'iding, Mister Swanking D'Arcy," said Mr. Harker. "Then p'r'aps you'll let another man's girl alone—wot?" The man flourished the whip, and there was a crash as it caught the clock and hurled it into the fender. "Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus, and he hastily backed round the table.

The School House juniors grinned and came into the study; they were there on business.

"How's Gussy getting on?" asked Kerr, looking round from the glass with a seventy-year-old face, made up with the skill for which the Scots junior was famous.

"My hat! What a chivvy!" said Blake. "We've come to speak to you about Gussy. He's still doing it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kildare's stopped him using the telephone, but he does it with postcards now. An order to Blankley's regularly every day, and he waylays Dorothy at the gate. She must be getting fed-up. I know we are."

said Blake impressively. "We've done all we can, and Gussy keeps on doing it. There's got to be a radical cure. We've jawed it ever and we've got on to a topping wheeze. Suppose Gussy found out that the girl from Blankley's was engaged?"

"Is she?"

"Blessed if I know! She may be. Nice girl, you know. Whether she is or not, suppose her fiance heard about Gussy's goings-on and came here to interview him. Gussy, learning that Dorothy is private property, in a way of speaking, would get off the grass at once. He's awfully honourable, you know."

"But if she hasn't a fiance, how can

wild at the idea of Gussy chucking the glad eye at her. He comes to St. Jim's with a big horsewhip to thrash Gussy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kerr's awfully clever at theatrical rot, and that kind of thing, and we think he could do it. So there you are."

"We're a deputation," said Tom Merry. "We've come to request the services of your tame Scotsman."

Figgins chuckled.

"Kerr could do it on his head," he remarked. "Of course he'll do it. It's a jolly good idea, and if that doesn't cure Gussy nothing will."

"I'm on!" said Kerr. "When and where? That's all I want to know."

"Saturday . . . afternoon," said Tom
 THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,553.

Merry. "There's no match on, and we can give up the afternoon to Gussy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a go," said Kerr. "I'll think out the character, and we'll take the things out to the old barn after dinner on Saturday, and Figgy and Fatty will help me to make up there. Rely on us."

"Thanks!"

"Not at all. As cock House of St. Jim's, it is up to us to help you School House kids when you're out of your depth."

"Rats!" said the deputation cheerfully; and they departed, highly satisfied.

It was really a stunning idea, and it had cost Gussy's friends a great deal of thought. But Blake declared that they had really hit upon an effective wheeze at last. At all events, it would be very interesting to watch the interview between Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Miss Dorothy's fiance.

They found Arthur Augustus watching the clock in the tower as they crossed over to their own House. They knew why he was interested in the passage of time. It was getting near the time of the afternoon's delivery from Blankley's.

Blake slapped his noble chum on the shoulder, eliciting a yelp from Arthur Augustus.

"Parcel from Blankley's to-day?" asked Blake.

"Ow! Yaas. Pway don't bothah!"

"Anything left out of your fiver?"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus walked away.

"What about the Rookwood match on Wednesday?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Blow the Wookwood match!"

Jack Blake breathed hard through his nose.

"That's what it comes to!" he said.

"He ought to be scragged, and then boiled in oil. Never mind. Wait till Dorothy's fiance comes along."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

When Arthur Augustus came into Study No. 6 he had a parcel under his arm and a beatific smile on his face. Evidently he had seen the girl from Blankley's at the gate. He tossed the parcel carelessly on the table.

"What's in that?" asked Blake.

"Weally, I forget. Somethin' ffrom Blankley's."

"You don't know what you paid for?" demanded Blake.

"It's somethin' I've ordered," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't bothah!"

"You silly ass—"

Arthur Augustus quitted the study.

He was still not on speaking terms with his old chums, but they persisted in being on speaking terms with him.

In the dormitory that night they bade him good-night in affectionate tones, receiving only a sniff by way of response.

The usual postcard had been dispatched to Blankley's; there was to be another delivery on the morrow.

Gussy was still "doing it," as Blako expressed it. But before the next delivery came from Blankley's, something was going to happen.

The next day there were six juniors in the School House who were smiling a good deal.

They were anticipating the happenings of the afternoon.

Arthur Augustus was anticipating the evening, and he also was smiling—beatific smiles, which his chums described as idiotic.

After dinner, Figgins & Co. of the New House might have been seen



"I see the milk train's late again, Bert!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Shaw, 42, Chard Street, New Bedford, Notts.

strolling out at the gates, Kerr carrying a large and well-filled bag.

Tom Merry observed them, and chuckled gleefully. The plot was working.

"Coming down to footer practice, Gussy?" Tom Merry asked, as he encountered the swell of St. Jim's.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus went to his study. When Blake looked in, he found him deeply engaged with a pen and a sheet of impot paper. He was not doing lines, however.

Blake caught sight of a line or two: "Her eyes are like the blue of summer's skies!"

Her voice is like the sweetest zephyr sighs."

Arthur Augustus hastily covered up the paper with a blotting-pad.

"Sticking in here all the afternoon?" demanded Blake. "Why can't you come down and have a go at the ball?"

"Pway don't wowwy!"

"Fathead!" said Blake; and he walked out of the study.

He joined a cheery group of juniors who were waiting in the Lower Hall.

"He's sticking in the study, writing poetry," said Blake. "Safe as houses! I wonder how long Dorothy's fiance is going to be?"

The juniors chuckled and waited. It was time for Kerr of the Fourth to arrive upon the scene. They watched the gates.

"Hallo!" said Lowther suddenly.

"What's that? Surely—"

"Phew!" said Tom Merry.

All eyes were fixed upon a figure that had entered the school gates and was striding towards the School House.

The newcomer looked about twenty-five years old, though a little short for his age. He wore a small black moustache, and his face looked red and weather-beaten. He was dressed in a uniform resembling that worn by Messrs. Blankley's porters—of a masculine variety. Under his arm he carried a big whip.

Tom Merry & Co. stared at him hard as he came up. He was so exactly like one of Blankley's porters that they could not believe that it was Kerr. They waited to discover.

The young man stopped, and touched his peak cap to the juniors.

"This 'ere is St. Jim's?" he asked.

"Yes," said Blake, in wonder.

"Can I see a young gentleman, name of D'Arcy?"

"Certainly! Follow me."

"Thank you!"

The young man followed Blake into the House and up the stairs.

Tom Merry & Co. followed behind in great wonder. Was it Kerr, or was it a genuine man from Blankley's who had business with Arthur Augustus? They could not tell. They were soon to see.

CHAPTER 14.

The Man From Blankley's!

"B AI Jove! I weally think that is wathah good!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in Study No. 6, was surveying his poetic efforts with considerable satisfaction. The sonnet was completed.

Arthur Augustus pondered. Should he hand that sonnet to the girl from Blankley's when she came with the next parcel? Or should he send it by post, care of Blankley's? It was a knotty problem.

He was still pondering over it when there came a knock at the door.

"Come in!" said Arthur Augustus, hastily throwing the blotter over the poem.

He started a little as the young man from Blankley's entered. His eyes dwelt for a moment on the big whip.

"Master D'Arcy—wot?" said the visitor.

"That is my name."

"I s'pose you've 'eard of me?"

"I am not aware that I have the honah of your acquaintance," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Name of Harker," said the young man—"hemployed at Blankley's."

"You have called wespectin' my wecent ordah to Blankley's?" asked Arthur Augustus, puzzled.

"No, I hain't!" said Mr. Harker emphatically. "I've called respecting your goings hon, young man!"

"I fail to undahstand you," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Will you kindly explain your business with me, Mr. Harker?"

"Ain't I hexplaining of it?" demanded Mr. Harker belligerently. "Wot I've got to say is this 'ere, that I hain't standing it. You mark my words, young fellow, I hain't standing it! Not at no price! Is that plain enough?"

"I weally do not compwehend—"

"When a feller is engaged to a gal," said Mr. Harker, "a feller don't like a young torf a-giving that gal the glad eye. Natural, ain't it? I hain't a torf, I hain't! I'm a 'ard-working man. But I'm as good as any torf whatever braved, young feller, and don't you forget it!"

Arthur Augustus felt an inward sinking.

"Weally, Mr. Harkah—"

"You keep horf the grass!" said Mr. Harker. "You let another feller's gal alone! That's wot I want, and that's wot I'm a-going to 'ave!"

Arthur Augustus sank into his chair. He was not afraid of Mr. Harker, truculent as that young gentleman looked. That was not the trouble at all. But he could no longer doubt the meaning of Mr. Harker's remarks.

"Do you mean to imply that you are engaged to Miss Dowothy Fane?" he asked, in a faint voice.

"Which you knows it well enough," said Mr. Harker darkly. "And you thinks as because you are a torf you can do as you like—wot? But you can't! This 'ere is a free country, and a 'ard-working man 'as 'is rights. I come 'ere to give you a 'iding, Mister Swanking D'Arcy, and that's wot I'm going to do."

Then p'r'aps you'll let another man's girl alone—wot?"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus jumped up as Mr. Harker flourished the big whip. There was a crash as the whip caught the clock, and hurled it into the fender.

Arthur Augustus backed round the table.

"Weally!" he gasped.

"Don't you dodge me!" roared Mr. Harker. "I'm a-standing up for my rights, I ham! Which I knows the ole game, sending horders hevery day to bring the van 'ere—wot? A-giving of my gal the glad eye when she comes with the parcel. Well, you may be a torf, but I call it dishonourable, I do, and I'm going to wallop you to teach you manners!"

"Oh deah!"

The whip sang through the air as Mr. Harker made a rush at the dismayed swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus dodged again.

"Pway be calm!" he gasped. "I—I assuah you, Mistah Harkah, that I weally was not aware—"

"Gammon!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, rushing into the study and collaring the truculent Mr. Harker. "Draw it mild, old chap!"

"You lemme alone!" roared Mr. Harker. "I'm a-going to wallop the young scoundrel!"

"Scoundwel! Bai Jove!"

"Rescue!" gasped Tom Merry.

Lowther and Manners, and Blake and Herries and Dig crowded in. They gathered round the young man from Blankley's, and strove to pacify him.

"Quiet, for goodness' sake!" urged Blake. "We shall have a master up here if you make such a row!"

"I don't care a rap! I'm going to wallop that young deceiving villain!" shouted Mr. Harker. "I'll give 'im the glad eye, I will! 'Cause he's a blessed

torf, 'e thinks 'e can do wot he blessed well chooses—eh? I'll show 'im!"

"Hold on, Mr. Harker! Gussy didn't know—he really didn't know—"

"Gammon!"

"Keep behind the table, 'Gussy!" shouted Dig. "We'll hold him off."

"I wefuse to keep behind the table, Dig. I am not afwaid of this—this person," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Mr. Harkah, there is no need for you to make a widiculous scene. You are actin' undah a misappwehension."

"Lemme get at the young scoundrel!"

"I wefuse to be called a young scoundwel!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I was not aware that Miss Fane was engaged, as she does not weah a wing."

"Ow could she wear a wing, you young hidiot?" exclaimed the man from Blankley's.

"Gussy means that she's an angel, you know, and, therefore, might be expected to wear a wing," explained Lowther.

"I do not mean anythin' of the sort, Lowthah, you ass! I was alludin' to an engagement-wing."

"Wot does 'e mean by 'is engagement-wing?" demanded the man from Blankley's. "Is 'e orf his onion?"

"He means an engagement-ring," chuckled Blake.

"Ho! And 'ow is a 'ard-working man to buy engagement-rings in these 'ard times?" demanded Mr. Harker.

"Course, that young torf could afford it. 'E don't 'ave to work with a van, 'e don't, for twenty-one shillings a week. 'Tain't his business, I suppose, whether my gal wears a ring or not, is it? Young rascal!"

"Certainly not, Mr. Harkah," said Arthur Augustus. "I did not mean that remark as impertinent. I was explaining how it was that I did not know that Miss Fane was engaged. In the circs, of course, I shall nevah see

the young lady again. I twust you are sufficiently intelligent to see that I am an honourable chap."

"You have Gussy's word, Mr. Harker," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "The word of a D'Arcy is as good as gold or currency notes."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I give my word of honah to Mr. Harkah," said D'Arcy, with lofty dignity. "But I wish him clearly to undahstand that I am not afwaid of him. I am quite pwepared to thwow him out of the study."

"My heye! Lemme get at 'im!"

"Peace, my child, peace!" said Monty Lowther. "This way! We'll see you to the gates. Lend a hand, you fellows!"

Tom Merry & Co. gathered round Mr. Harker, and marched him out of the study.

As he went down the passage, Mr. Harker repeatedly requested to be allowed to "get at" Arthur Augustus.

But he was escorted safely off the premises.

Tom Merry & Co. returned to the study a few minutes later.

Arthur Augustus was stooping at the grate, with a lighted match in his hand.

A sheet of impot paper blazed up and was consumed.

It was the poem.

Arthur Augustus crimsoned as he turned and met the accusing gaze of his chums.

"Is he gone?" he faltered.

"Gone," said Blake gravely. "Gussy, I must say I am shocked at this. I never thought anybody in this study would be capable of—of—"

"You must know, Blake, that I was quite unaware of the twue posish of affairs," said Arthur Augustus, "and I twust you can wely upon me to do the wight thing. Pway excuse me. I must go and telephone."

(Continued on page 28.)

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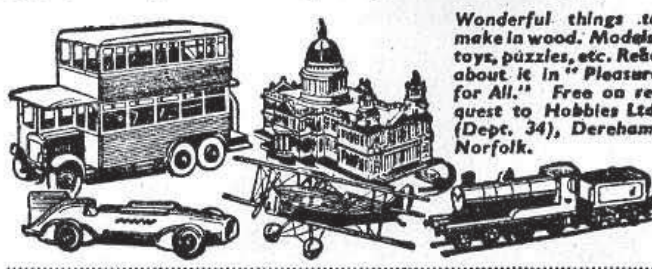
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THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE THAT STARTED AN UPROAR AT THE REHEARSAL OF THE REMOVE VARIETY SHOW!

RIVAL ENTERTAINERS!

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

With Christmas drawing near, the chums of Greyfriars consider it time to set things moving for a Yuletide show by the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society. A meeting of members is therefore fixed for seven o'clock in Study No. 1.

Billy Bunter, unaware of this, arranges to hold a ventriloquial entertainment in the same place, at the same time. Bunter's ventriloquism is a joke in the Remove, but it gives Bulstrode & Co. an excuse to go along and spoil the W.O.D.S. meeting, under the pretence of wanting to hear Bunter's show.

But Harry Wharton & Co. defeat their amiable object by letting Bunter go ahead with his entertainment first. Bulstrode & Co. thereupon depart, and the W.O.D.S. proceed with their meeting. After a long discussion, a variety show is decided upon, and the amateur actors are just about to talk over the items of the programme, when a terrific din is heard in the passage. Harry Wharton strides angrily to the door and flings it open.

(Now read on.)

A Rival Meeting!

BULSTRODE, the Remove bully, stood on a chair placed within a few feet of the door of Study No. 1. A score of Removites surrounded him, cramming in the passage. Bulstrode was speaking, and his hearers cheered him at every word, adding to the effect by stamping their feet.

"What's all that row about?" demanded Harry Wharton angrily, as he looked out of Study No. 1.

"Hurrah! Hip, pip!"

"Get farther along, can't you?"

"Hurrah!"

Stamp, stamp, stamp!

"What I say is—" said Bulstrode.

"Hip, pip, hurrah!"

"What's all that row about?" shouted Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurrah!"

Bulstrode turned towards the captain of the Remove with a grin.

"Can't I address a meeting of the Form if I like?" he demanded.

"Is that a meeting of the Form?"

"Of course it is!"

"Then why can't you meet in your own study?"

"No room. I suppose the Remove passage is free to all members of the Remove, isn't it?" said Skinner, with an aggrieved look.

"Of course it is!" said Bulstrode. "Get on with the meeting. I have the honour of again putting the question to the honourable meeting—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Are we downhearted?"

"No! Hurrah!"

"Are we free to make as much row as we like in our own passage?"

"Yes, yes! Hurrah!"

Stamp, stamp, stamp!

Harry Wharton looked vexed, but he could hardly help laughing. The operatic society were decidedly wrathful.

"Look here—" exclaimed Wharton.

"Hurrah! Go ahead, Bulstrode!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,553.

By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")



"Gentlemen of the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

Stamp, stamp, stamp!

"Faith, and they'll have a prefect up if they don't draw it mild!" exclaimed Micky Desmond. "What price clearing the passage of the spalpeens?"

"We can't hold a discussion while they're making that row!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "Let's go for the rotters!"

"Right you are!" said Wharton. "They're two to one, but there isn't much room for punching in the passage. Shoulder to shoulder!"

"We'll back you up, Wharton!"

"Altogether!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Give 'em socks!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove," repeated Bulstrode, "I say—what I say is—gentlemen of the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove— Oh! Ger-r-rooh!"

Bulstrode fell headlong off the chair as the operatic society made their rush. The Study No. 1 phalanx broke right



Ragging the Remove variety show proves a painful part of the programme—for the ragers!



through the yelling and stamping crowd and sent them flying. Half the rioters were knocked down, and the other half went reeling and running.

The victory was sudden, but, unfortunately, it was not complete. Bulstrode staggered to his feet and yelled to his backers to rally.

And they rallied—they rallied and came back with a furious rush, hitting out right and left.

"Shoulder to shoulder!" shouted Harry Wharton.

And his followers backed him up manfully, showing that they could easily have become as distinguished a pugilistic society as they could in the operatic and dramatic line.

But the odds were against them.

Fighting desperately, they were swept back to Study No. 1 and hurled in, sprawling across one another on the floor.

Wharton was last, and he stood his ground in the doorway alone for a full minute, holding his own against the crowd; but finally a concerted rush hurled him in, though he left many swollen and streaming noses behind him.

Round the doorway the Removites howled with glee.

The operatic society staggered up, looking decidedly the worse for wear. They lined up to resist an invasion of the study if it should be attempted, but the victorious rioters were not disposed to venture into the lions' den. They

contented themselves with crowding outside the door and hooting and cat-calling.

"My only hat!" murmured Nugent. "I suppose this would be called an operatic meeting with variations."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come out!" roared Bulstrode. "Why don't you come out and clear the passage? Yah!"

"Yah! Come out!"

"What is all this dreadful noise?"

It was the voice of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, on the stairs. The shouting mob outside the door of Study No. 1 melted away like snow in the summer sun.

Mr. Quelch reached the top of the stairs, and found the passage quite untenanted. He looked round in surprise, and tapped at the door of Study No. 1 and looked in.

"Ah!" said Mr. Quelch grimly, as he noted the signs of combat in the faces of the operatic society. "I suppose this terrible din is due to you juniors? You have been fighting among yourselves?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Harry Wharton.

Mr. Quelch looked at him searchingly. "You certainly look as if you had been fighting, Wharton."

"Not among ourselves, sir."

"Ah! You have been fighting with some other party in the Lower School, I suppose? Well, don't let me hear any more noise this evening, my boys."

And Mr. Quelch went away. The juniors felt considerably relieved. They would not have been surprised at getting a hundred lines each. But the Remove master, though usually severe, was just. He knew that it would be impossible ever to get at the rights of the matter, and so he allowed it to drop.

The members of the operatic society looked at one another. There was not much likelihood of Bulstrode & Co. coming back, but they did not feel in much trim for an operatic discussion. Eyes and noses were swelling visibly.

"The meeting had better be adjourned, I think," said the president, looking round.

And as every member of the operatic and dramatic society assented, the meeting was adjourned forthwith.

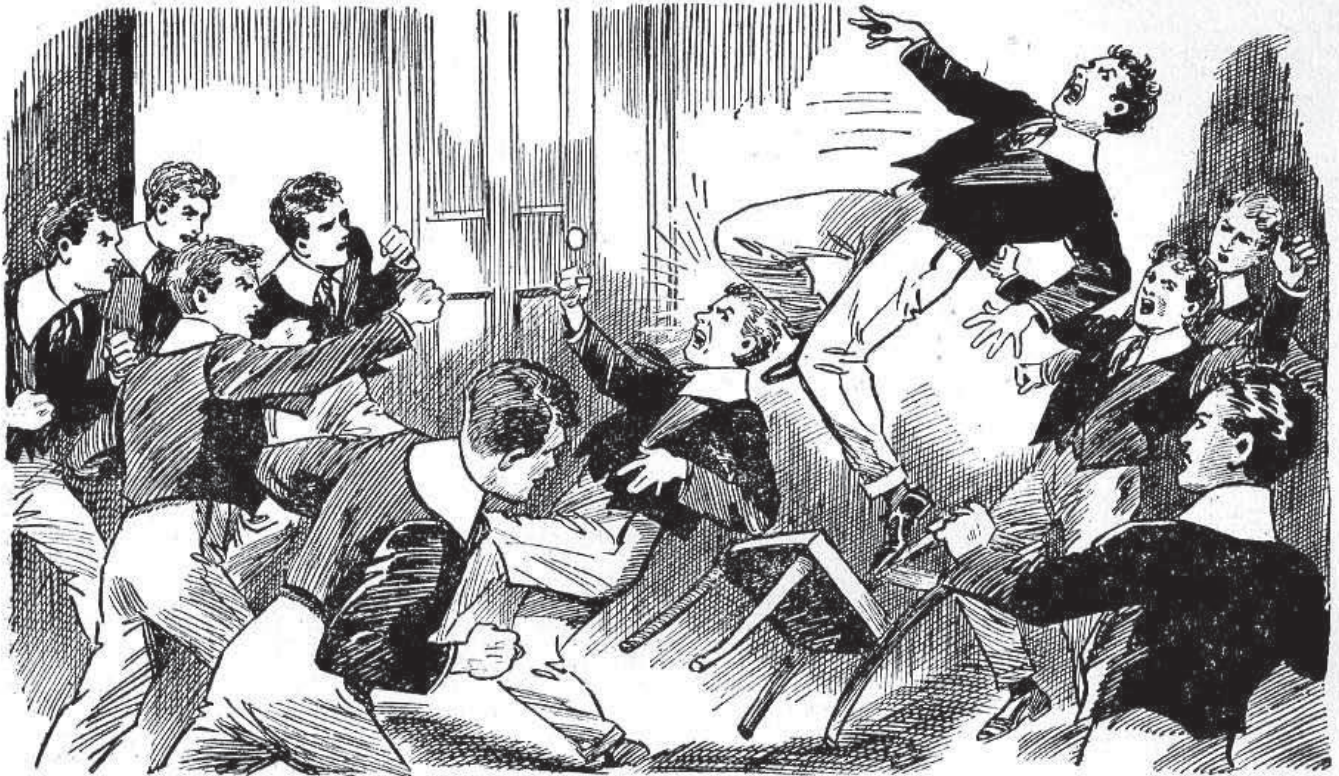
Plotting a Plot!

THE Greyfriars Remove looked somewhat the worse for wear when they appeared in the classroom the next morning. Almost every member of the operatic and dramatic society had a bruise or a cut, some of them black eyes and swollen noses.

Bulstrode and his friends were quite as plainly marked, and when Mr. Quelch came in and saw half his class displaying the signs of recent combat, his expression grew grim for a moment. But he made no remark, and the lessons proceeded as usual.

Billy Bunter was not damaged, having carefully kept out of the scrimmage the previous evening. The fat junior was wearing an aggrieved expression that morning. Why the chums of the Remove should refuse to admit a ventriloquial display among the items of their programme was a mystery to him,

THERE'S NOT A DULL MOMENT IN THIS TIP-TOP TALE OF THE EARLY ADVENTURES
OF HARRY WHARTON & CO.



"All together!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Give 'em socks!" "Gentlemen of the Remove—" began Bulstrode. "Oh! Ger-r-rooh!" The Form bully fell headlong off the chair as the Study No. 1 phalanx charged the rioters, hitting out right and left.

only explicable on the grounds of jealousy. But Bunter could be obstinate when he liked. He was a member of the operatic society himself, and he didn't see why he should be left out of the entertainment.

Bulstrode didn't see it, either. Bulstrode was always willing to back up anybody in anything, so long as it was against Harry Wharton. And most of the Removites, though they liked Wharton better than Bulstrode, were ready enough for any rag.

Bulstrode tapped Billy Bunter on the shoulder as the Remove came out after morning school. The fat junior blinked round him.

"Hallo, Skinner!"

"It isn't Skinner, Owl!"

"Oh, is that you, Bulstrode? Are you hungry?"

"I'm getting ready for dinner. Why?"

"I thought you might feel inclined to come along with me and have a snack at the school shop," said Bunter. "I'm feeling rather peckish myself."

"I don't mind if I do," said Bulstrode. "Are you in funds for once in your life, then?"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode!"

"Has that celebrated postal order come at last?"

"Well, as a matter of fact it hasn't, and I'm rather short of money, Bulstrode. I thought you wouldn't mind lending me half-a-crown till it came. I can promise it back for to-morrow morning for certain."

"I dare say you can promise it," assented Bulstrode, in a tone that implied considerable doubts about the performance of the promise.

"Oh, it's all right, I assure you! I hope you don't think I'm the kind of fellow to run into debts I can't pay!"

Bulstrode grinned.

"Nobody who knows you would think that of you, Bunter—I don't think!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode! If you don't want to lend, I'm sure I don't want to borrow!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "I think I'll run along and speak to Wun Lung."

"Oh, leave the Chinese alone!" "He lent me a pound the other day," said Bunter impressively. "There are some fellows who can trust me, and Wun Lung is one of them."

"Did you pay it back?" asked Bulstrode sarcastically.

"I'm letting it stand over till I get my next postal order. If you like to lend me a pound, Bulstrode—"

"Yes, I'm likely to stand you a fortnight's pocket-money!" said Bulstrode. "I'll tell you what I'll do. Come along to Mrs. Mimble's, and I'll stand you some cream puffs."

"Thanks awfully, Bulstrode! Some cream puffs now would give me an appetite for dinner. It's very thoughtful of you!"

"I say, Skinner, come this way—"

"No need to ask Skinner," muttered Bunter anxiously. "I can do with all the cream puffs you can stand, Bulstrode, and—"

"Shut up! Come on, Skinny, and have some cream puffs."

"Well, rather!" said Skinner, joining them.

The three juniors walked over to the tuckshop, which Mrs. Mimble, the gardener's wife, kept within the precincts of Greyfriars.

Bulstrode was in funds, as he usually was. He ordered a dozen cream puffs. Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles. Skinner knew that Bulstrode must have some object in feeding Bunter, and he wondered what it was.

"I say, you fellows, these puffs are ripping!" said Billy Bunter. "Are

you going to have any ginger-pop, Bulstrode?"

"Three gingers, Mrs. Mimble, please!"

"Won't you want any for yourself?" asked Billy Bunter innocently.

Skinner chuckled, and Bulstrode glared at the fat junior.

"That's one each," said Bulstrode.

"Oh, I see! I can always manage three myself."

"You'll manage one now."

"Oh, very well! I say, don't those jam tarts look ripping?"

"I dare say they do. Now, about that ventriloquial entertainment, Bunter—"

"Yes, wasn't that a sell?" said Bunter. "If you fellows hadn't buzzed off as you did, I should have given you a ripping entertainment."

"Well, of course, that was due to Wharton's interruption," said Bulstrode, with a wink at Skinner. "We felt we couldn't very well see it through!"

"Did you really, Bulstrode? Bob Cherry was trying to make out that the fellows couldn't stand my ventriloquial entertainments at any price."

"That's all rot on the face of it! Now, I put it to you, Bunter?"

"You're right there. With my wonderful abilities as a ventriloquist, I don't see how my entertainment could fail to be—"

"Entertaining," suggested Skinner.

"Appreciated," said Billy Bunter; "that's what I meant to say. I don't see, in the circumstances, how my entertainment could fail to be appreciated. My idea is that it would give their show a leg-up if they included it in their programme."

"Oh, they're making up a programme, are they?"

"Yes. Wharton suggested an

oratorio; but I didn't think much of that, so the idea was dropped. Then he brought forward an act from Shakespeare, but I had to bar that, too. I felt that it wouldn't do, you know. A variety entertainment is the thing. Now, my idea would be to have a few songs, and then about an hour's ventriloquism, and then a few songs to finish with."

"And a jolly good idea, too!" said Bulstrode heartily, while Skinner smiled into his glass of ginger-beer.

"But the others don't care for it. I suppose it's jealousy. They don't care about me getting the bulk of the show, you know."

"Then the ventriloquism is going to be left out?"

"So they say; but I don't see why they should have their way about it. I don't want to be hard on them, but a fellow must think of himself sometimes. It came into my mind to bust up their show for them, just to give them a lesson."

"Could you do it?" asked Bulstrode eagerly.

"Oh, easily enough! I say, I'm jolly thirsty!"

"Another ginger, Mrs. Mimble, please! Now, then, Bunter, how could you bust up their show?"

"Why, I was thinking that I would put up a notice on the board, announcing a ventriloquial entertainment for the same evening," said Bunter modestly. "That would draw all their audience away, and they would be left to sing to an empty room."

Bulstrode and Skinner exchanged glances. The fat junior was in danger at that moment of having his ginger-beer poured down the back of his neck, but Bulstrode restrained himself.

"I suppose they're going to have some rehearsals?" he remarked.

"Oh, yes; they were talking about that this morning."

"Last time, when they were doing an opera or something, they had a rehearsal in public, the Form being admitted," Bulstrode remarked carelessly. "Anything of that sort on this time?"

"Yes, that's the idea! They're going to rehearse in private at first, and when they are up to form, they're going to have a rehearsal in public—a sort of preliminary performance, just a few select friends. Then if it goes all right, you see, they'll feel fit for the public performance on the day before breaking-up."

"A few select friends, eh?" said Bulstrode. "I suppose that means anybody in the Remove, Bunter?"

"Well, I don't know. I don't suppose they'll ask you."

"Why shouldn't they ask me?" said Bulstrode, rather savagely.

"You might make a row and interrupt. Of course, it wouldn't matter much if a rotten show like that was interrupted. Without my ventriloquism to give it a tone, I don't see how the operatic society's entertainment can amount to much."

"Certainly not. Now, where is the thing to be given, Bunter? I suppose you know?"

"Yes. Wharton has decided on the box-room—the old one, you know, at the top of the house. There's plenty of room there if the lumber is cleared back, and not much chance of being interrupted."

Bulstrode's eyes glimmered.

"And when?"

"Oh, that isn't settled yet! Soon, I think—any evening."

"Of course, you'll hear in time to let us know."

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"Oh, yes! I say, those jam tarts look ripping."

"Give Bunter a couple of tarts, Mrs. Mimble."

"And not stale ones," said Billy Bunter. "I'm paying ready cash for these, Mrs. Mimble—or Bulstrode is, which amounts to the same thing—and I want 'em fresh."

"Of course, you'll let me know?" said Bulstrode. "I should like to be there."

"Oh, I'll let you know! It's not a secret. Wharton says that if there are any interruptions the interrupters will go out on their necks."

"Now, Bunter, I've thought of an idea to get your own back on those rotters—"

"Oh, I don't call them rotters, though they do show a lot of jealousy over my ventriloquism."

"What I mean is—"

"And I don't know that I exactly want to get my own back, either. All I want to do is to show them and all Greyfriars that I can give a jolly good entertainment, and that I can't be left off the programme without disadvantage to all concerned."

"That's exactly what I was thinking. Of course, you'll be at the show?"

"Yes, unless I'm giving a rival entertainment."

"Good! But why not give a rival entertainment on the spot?"

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"Eh? Wharton says that all interrupters will go out on their necks. I shouldn't like to quarrel with Wharton."

"I was thinking of your ventriloquism. Suppose you mimic all the singers, and if you do it well, of course, they won't know that you're doing it. Wharton won't throw you out on your neck if he doesn't know what you're at."

"Yes, Bulstrode, there's something in that. But—"

"You see, you would be able to tell them afterwards, and prove to them what a ripping ventriloquist you are, and that they couldn't afford to turn you out of their show," said Bulstrode blandly.

"Well, that's true enough!"

"Only keep it dark till it comes off, Bunter, or they'll scalp you."

"Of course, I shouldn't tell them what I was going to do. I shall certainly think it over, Bulstrode."

And the tarts and ginger-beer being finished, and no more forthcoming, Billy Bunter walked out of the tuckshop, his brows knitted in thought, showing that he was deeply pondering over the valuable suggestion he had received. Skinner looked at the Remove bully in amazement.

"Blessed if I can see what you're getting at, Bulstrode!" he remarked. "You know as well as I do that the young ass can't ventriloquise for toffee!"

"I know he can't!" grinned Bulstrode. "But I don't see why mysterious ventriloquist voices shouldn't interrupt the show, all the same."

"How? I don't catch on."

"The box-room is just the place—"

"Just the place for Wharton's purpose, but—"

"Just the place for us, too. The walls are all wooden, and it's easy enough to bore holes through them from the lumber-room on one side, and the staircase on the other. Then it would be easy, too, for fellows to be hidden in some of those old packing cases that are stacked in the box-room—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner went off into a roar of laughter as the possibilities of the scheme dawned upon him. Bulstrode grinned with satisfaction.

"I rather fancy we shall be able to muck up the rehearsal a treat," he remarked. "We shan't be invited, so if we're not visible there, that won't make 'em suspect anything. It will be the joke of the season."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the two practical jokers of the Remove strolled out of the tuckshop, quite satisfied with their idea, and chuckling over it as they discussed it.

The Programme!

HOW are you fellows getting along with your show?" Billy Bunter inquired, a few days later, as he came into Study

No. 1 and found the Famous Four there, with several other members of the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society.

"None the better for being interrupted by a silly ass!" said Trevor crossly. Trevor was just taking the general opinion upon his rendering of "Star of Eve" from "Tannhauser," and Billy Bunter had stopped him on a high note.

"Oh, really, Trevor—"

"Shut up, ass! I'll try that little bit over again, you chaps."

"Certainly," said the chaps politely.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Kill him, somebody!"

Bob Cherry picked up an ebony ruler. Billy Bunter dodged away, and remained quiet for a little bit, with an indignant blink round the study to show that it was under protest.

"Oh, star of eve, thy tender beam
Shines o'er my spirit's troubled
dream—"

"How's that?" asked Trevor.

"Out!" said Nugent.

"Eh?"

"I mean you were off your stroke in the 'star.' Try it again, and don't get so flat."

"Oh, star of eve, thy tender
beam—"

"Good! That hit it fairly in the centre!"

"Think it will do?"

"Quite! We can consider the 'Star of Eve' passed," said Harry Wharton. "It's a rather ambitious song for a kid, but all the better if it's done well. Only, if you get nervous before an audience and muck it up, we shall look bigger asses than if we had contented ourselves with small fry."

"Well, there's a rehearsal in the box-room before a select audience," said Trevor. "If you can stand an audience of personal friends, you can stand anything."

"Well, yes, that's quite true."

"Now, what about that bass song that Elliott was going to do?"

"The People that Walked—"

"Oh, no! We're leaving sacred music out of it, and the fellows wouldn't understand—"

"They would in Wales," said Morgan.

"Well, we're not in Wales now, old chap. Leave Handel alone for a bit. You were thinking of doing an operatic song, Elliott—one of the songs from Wagner's 'Lohengrin,' I think."

"Good! 'The King's Prayer,'" said Elliott. "It suits me down to the ground."

"You have to get nearly down to the ground to get the bottom notes," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, I don't know about that! I can manage F, you know. I wish I could get up to the E flat as easily," said Elliott. "Now, just see how I manage the F."

The operatic society prepared to listen. Nugent held on to the table, but as he was standing behind Elliott, the bass did not see that playful action.

"'Dass Trug und Wahrheit klar erweist,'" sang Elliott. On "klar" he seemed to be on the point of expiring, that being the F. He brought it out with a croak like a frog, and there was a general gasp.

"How was that?" he asked.

"Out!" replied the operatic society, with one voice.

"Oh, I say!"

Elliott tried again, and the result was a more ghastly croak than the first. Nugent stopped his ears.

"I say, that wasn't flat, was it?" said Elliott anxiously.

"Ha, ha! No, it wasn't flat, certainly, old man. It was sharp enough, though, and it was a ghastly row."

"Look here, Nugent—"

"You'll have to try the song a bit higher, if you're going to sing it," said Nugent. "You can't go on the stage croaking like a giddy foghorn."

"Can't be did," said Elliott ruefully. "That's the worst of Wagner—the bouncer catches you at the top as well as at the bottom. I can only just do the E flat now, and if we shoved it higher, I should bust there."

"Then you'd better let Wagner alone for a bit, old man, and take something a bit more simple," said Harry Wharton. "I must say I can't stand your F."

"I'll try it once more," said Elliott. "I can do it, you know."

"Worse than ever," said Nugent, as Elliott, gathering all his powers, brought out a croak that would have done credit to a raven with a severe cold in the throat. "Better chuck it. I'll tell you what—you can sing a Border song—something they sing in Teviotdale, or wherever it is you come from. That will give variety to the show."

"Good! I'll look out for one. I'll have another go at that F, though, presently."

"So far, we've only got the 'Star of Eve' settled," said Trevor. "I really think that will go down all right. My aunt says I sing that sweetly."

"Bless your aunt! Stick that down, Harry. What's next?"

"What price my recitation?" said Gaunt. "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings! Look on my works, ye mighty—"

"Well, I don't know—"

"Look on my works—"

"Oh, blow your works! What works are you talking about?"

"Ass! I mean Ozymandias' works."

"Then what do you mean by saying your works?"

"Dummy! That is how it goes—"

"Oh, never mind how it goes!" said Bob Cherry.

"I'm explaining to that ass Nugent. 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings! Look—'"

"Ring off!"

"Look on my works"—Ozymandias' works—'ye mighty, and despair!'"

"That doesn't explain what the works were," said Hazeldene. "If you mean the works of a watch—"

"I don't mean anything of the sort!"

"The fellows will want to know what you are talking about—I mean, they will expect even a recitation to have some sense in it. You ought to make it clear what works you mean."

"Of all the idiots—"

"Oh, we'll pass Ozymandias!" said Harry Wharton, interrupting the argument, which was growing warm. "It's short, anyway, and that is a recommendation. If the audience don't make out what it's about, they'll think it's something awfully deep, and the name of Shelley on the programme will bear it out."

"Well, there's something in that."

"Faith, and ye're right. Now, are ye ready to put down my item, darling?"

"What's your item?"

"Sure, I'm thinkin' of doin' 'The Widow Malone.'"

"Who's she?" asked Gaunt.

"Have ye heard of the Widow Malone?"

"No, I haven't."

"Have ye heard of the Widow Malone, ochone?"

"Don't I keep telling you I haven't?"

"Ye howling gossoon, that's the recitation!"

"Oh, I see! Why couldn't you say so at first?"

"Have ye heard of the Widow Malone, ochone,

Who lived in the town of Athlone, all alone?"

"Good!" said Harry Wharton.

"That's comic, and it suits Micky. But you can't have two recitations next to one another—something else must go in between."

"What price an instrumental solo?" asked Nugent.

"Good! That would make variety."

"Then shove down the 'Prelude to the Third Act of Lohengrin.' Everybody knows that by heart, and it's a ripping lively thing."

"My dear chap, we haven't an orchestra. You want flutes, oboes, clarionets, bassoons, trumpets, trombones, drums and the dickens knows what else for that, and we haven't my flute to represent the wind instruments—"

"My dear ass, I wasn't thinking of an orchestra. I was thinking of playing it on my mouth-organ."

"Oh!"

"You were thinking of playing a Wagner march on a mouth-organ?" said Hazeldene. "Why don't you try the 'Moonlight Sonata' on a tin whistle?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean what I say," said Nugent obstinately. "I can do it. Of course, you have to pick up the dominant melody, and shove that in strong. I'll give you a specimen—"

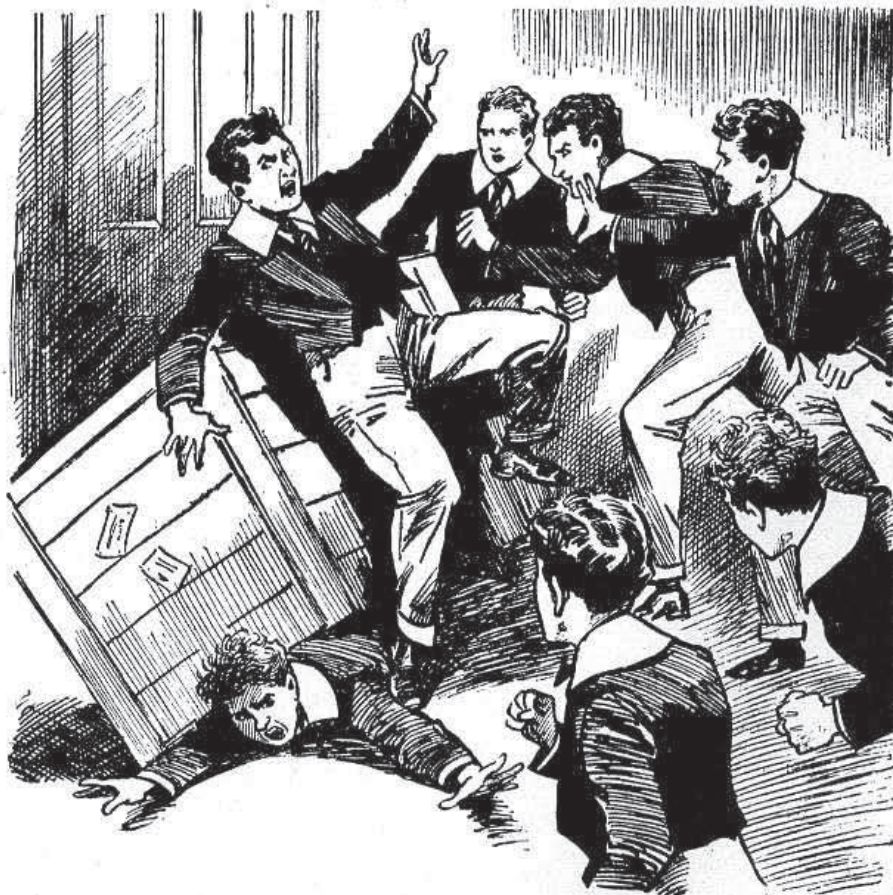
"No, you won't!"

"Yes, I will," said Nugent, taking out his mouth-organ. "You've got to imagine that my mouth-organ is the trumpets, bassoons, and trombones."

"Ha, ha! You want a big imagination for that."

"Well, anyway, an orchestra would make too much row for the box-room, if we had one. Now, just you listen to this."

And Nugent blew away. As a matter of fact, his performance was a very



Harry Wharton and two or three members of the operatic society rushed at Russell, and he was sent reeling against a packing-case. There was a startled yell as the case went over, revealing Bulstrode hiding underneath!

creditable one, and the juniors listened to it with pleasure. Harry Wharton nodded as Nugent finished blowing out his faint reproduction of the blare of that famous prelude.

"That will do," he said. "We'll shove it in. I'll put 'Organ Solo' on the programme—that will sound better than mouth-organ solo."

"Ha, ha! Right!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't interrupt, Bunter. Now, about Hazeldene."

"I was thinking of doing a duet with Marjorie," said Hazeldene. "There's a good one we know pretty well, and I'll write to Marjorie to look out her part afresh. It's the duet between Elsie and Point in the 'Yeomen of the Guard,' you know. I know it's a jolly hackneyed thing, but it will be fresh enough to the Greyfriars fellows. And it's simple and musical, too—real music."

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "I shouldn't wonder if that goes down the best of the lot. Anything from Gilbert and Sullivan is bound to be appreciated."

"It goes like this—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up! 'I have a Song to Sing, oh—'"

"I dare say you have, Vaseline, but—"

"I have a Song to Sing, oh! Then Marjorie sings, 'Sing me Your Song, oh!' And then—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Choke that porpoise, somebody!"

"Yes, but I say—"

"Will you ring off?" bawled Bob Cherry. "We don't want any ventriloquism. We don't want you to improve

the show by giving an hour's entertainment in the middle of it. We don't want anything. Shut up!"

"Yes, but—"

"My only Aunt Maria! Isn't that plain enough? Then I shall have to use the ruler."

"Hold on, Cherry! I—I say, you fellows, I don't want to interrupt, but—"

"Quick, then, what is it?"

"It's tea-time," said Billy Bunter. "I don't think we ought to keep tea late. I've got a rather delicate constitution, and if I have my meals late, it has a very bad effect on it. As a matter of fact, I only keep myself going by taking plenty of nourishing food, though owing to the meanness of some people, I can't always have as much as I really want."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at in that. It's tea-time—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"So it is," he agreed. "We'd better have tea and leave the rest of the discussion till after. Will all you fellows stay to tea? We've got a rather decent feed on."

"Faith, and it's a pleasure it will be!"

"Yes, rather."

And the whole operatic society accepted cordially. There was a crowded tea-table in Study No. 1 that evening.

Billy Bunter Talks!

"I SAY, Bulstrode—"

The Remove bully stopped as Bunter spoke to him. It was a few days later, and the Owl of the Remove was looking as if he had something to communicate.

"Well, what is it?" said Bulstrode. "Any news about the operatic society?"

"I—I'm feeling rather faint, Bulstrode."

"Have you stopped me to tell me that?" asked Bulstrode, with a rather ugly look on his face.

"Oh, no!" said Billy Bunter hastily.

"I—I haven't exactly stopped you to tell you that, Bulstrode, you know. I've got some news about the operatic society, but—but I feel so faint that I don't know whether I shall be able to tell you."

"Oh, don't be a glutton, if you can help it!" said Bulstrode. "Have they fixed the time for the rehearsal in the box-room?"

"Yes, that's it."

Bulstrode's eyes glimmered with satisfaction.

"Good! When is it?"

"I—I'm feeling so faint—"

"Is it to-night?"

"I'm so jolly hungry that—"

"Oh, come to Mrs. Mumble's!" said Bulstrode, with a growl. It was pretty plain that he would get nothing out of Billy Bunter unpaid for, and he could not try his usual resource of bullying, as in that case Bunter would be certain to tell the whole matter to Harry Wharton, and the scheme would be spoiled. "Blessed if you're not a regular shark, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Oh, come and be fed!"

"If you put it like that, Bulstrode, I shall have to refuse to accept a treat from you," said Bunter, without slackening pace, however. "I don't want you to imagine that I'm telling you Wharton's affairs for the sake of getting a feed out of you."

"Oh, come on!"

"I should regard such a line of action as utterly mean, and I hope you don't think me capable of it, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode grunted.

"I'm telling you these things as a friend," said Bunter, with dignity, as they entered the tuckshop. "If you like to stand me a feed as a friend, too, there's nothing to be objected to in that. Jam tarts, please!"

"Give this young glutton a dozen tarts, please, Mrs Mumble."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode!"

"Wire in and tell me the news!"

"If you put it like that I shall refuse the feed, so I warn you," said Bunter, with his mouth full. "If you think I'm eager for a few jam tarts—"

"What's the news?"

"I really don't know whether I can tell you," said Bunter, as he was travelling through the tarts. "You have such a mercenary way of putting things—"

"Have some lemonade?" said Bulstrode, more graciously, "and some more tarts. I like to see you feed, Bunter. It's as good as paying for admission at the Zoo!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Go ahead! Tuck in! Now, what's the news from Study No. 1, old chap?"

"They're giving the rehearsal to a few select friends this evening, after tea," said Billy Bunter. "They've asked about a dozen fellows in the Remove."

"They've forgotten me, somehow," said Bulstrode, with a grin.

"They think you'd make a row—"

"Quite right. I probably should. Now, Bunter, it's settled about the programme, isn't it?"

"Yes; they've drawn it up—"

"Ass! I mean about our programme. You're going to do the ventriloquist business, and make your voice appear to come from the boxes, and the walls, and the roof, and so on?"

"Yes, rather!"

"It will be splendid proof to them

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that you can really do as you say, and that it's not all gas."

"That's what I was thinking, Bulstrode. I'm sorry you can't be there to see it," said Bunter. "Perhaps if you asked Wharton—"

"I'm not going to ask Wharton for anything!"

"But you'd like to be there?"

"Never mind me. I've got an engagement for this evening, as it happens. Don't forget the ventriloquist business, Bunter. You're such a marvel, you know. So-long!"

"I say, I'm still hungry—"

But Bulstrode was gone. Billy Bunter blinked after him, and then blinked at Mrs. Mimble. He eyed the jam tarts lovingly.

"I say, Mrs. Mimble—"

"Well, Master Bunter?"

"I suppose you wouldn't care to trust me with a few jam tarts till Saturday?"

"You're quite right, Master Bunter—I should not."

"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble! I don't want to put it to the old account, you know. This is to be an entirely fresh account, to be settled up in cash on Saturday."

Mrs. Mimble walked into her parlour without replying, and Billy Bunter sighed and drifted out of the tuckshop. A youth with a quaint face and a pig-tail was passing, and Billy Bunter poked him in the ribs. Wun Lung, the Chinese, turned round.

"I say, Wun Lung, if you're having tea in your study—"

"Me havee tea allee light."

"I don't mind coming to tea with you," said Bunter.

"Velly good!"

"What have you got for tea?"

"Nicee-nicee lats!"

"Rats?"

The Chinese junior nodded.

"Nicee-nicee stew. Lats!"

Billy Bunter made a grimace of disgust.

"Then you can keep it!" he said.

The Chinese junior walked away grinning. Bunter blinked at him doubtfully. He knew that cat soups and dog stews were regarded as appetising by the Celestial, but he had imagined that even Wun Lung would draw a line at rats.

He could not help suspecting that the heathen had been "pulling his leg." It was quite probable that Wun Lung was not particularly anxious to entertain the cormorant of the Remove to tea. But Bunter felt that he could not risk it.

He found the Famous Four busy when he came into Study No. 1. Bunter set about getting tea with an air of suppressed but superior knowledge that drew attention to him at last. Bob Cherry gave him a playful dig in the ribs.

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

"What's the matter with you?" asked Bob Cherry. "Have you discovered a new wheeze, instead of ventriloquising, or found some unexpected grub in the cupboard, or are you simply looking forward to the show to-night?"

"Oh, I'm looking forward to the show!" said Bunter, with a grin. "I've no doubt that it will be very entertaining."

"What are you grinning about?"

"Oh, nothing! We shall see what we shall see."

"Did you work that out in your head, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"We shall probably see what we shall see," agreed Bob Cherry. "We often do. But that isn't such an astounding discovery, you know, Bunter, that it's

worth while bursting with suppressed glee over it."

"Well, that's all right then," said Bunter. "We shall see what we shall see."

"Go hon! What's all right?"

"Never mind," said Bunter mysteriously. "Ha, ha! Never mind!"

The Famous Four stared at him rather anxiously.

"Not off your rocker, I hope?" said Bob Cherry, with solicitude.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Then what's the matter with you?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"The matterfulness is great, and is only equalled by the asininefulness of the esteemed Bunter."

"Well," said Bunter, "we shall see what we shall see."

"We're getting to know that. Hand over the eggs, and don't jaw so much, Bunter."

"Why, you were asking me—"

"Oh, don't argue! Let's have some tea."

And they had tea.

An Interrupted Entertainment!

HARRY WHARTON rose from the tea-table in Study No. 1, glancing at his watch. It was a quarter to seven, and the entertainment in the box-room had been fixed for seven. It was high time for the chums to be on the ground, as Bob Cherry expressed it.

"You fellows all ready?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, rather!"

"Then come on!"

And Harry Wharton led the way to the narrow staircase at the end of the passage, and up to the disused box-room. They overtook several juniors on the way, some of them belonging to the Wharton Operatic Society, and others being members of the select audience invited to witness the final rehearsal of the variety show.

The box-room was a large apartment. It was a room in the old building of Greyfriars, and had been disused since additions had been made to the school. The narrow staircase made it very inconvenient to approach, and it was very suitable for the purpose of the operatic juniors.

The box-room had been swept and garnished, so to speak. Although it was disused, a good deal of lumber was packed in it, including a number of old packing-cases. Some of the old boxes had been arranged as seats for the audience. Of the latter there were only a dozen. The audience was select.

The room looked very clean and cheerful. There was no stage, but a ribbon was tied across the floor from two nails to mark off the supposed line of the footlights. In front of this were ranged the more or less comfortable seats for the select audience.

Before seven struck from the school tower the audience were all in their places. Whether they were looking forward to the entertainment joyfully could not be said, but they certainly appreciated the compliment of being regarded as select. They were on their best behaviour, and some of them had put on clean collars.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, who was not on the list of performers on this occasion, took his seat among the audience next to Wun Lung, the Chinese. There was a friendship between the two Orientals, and they frequently talked to one another in an Asiatic jargon incomprehensible to the Remove fellows.

The operatic society were seated in a row on a long form on the "stage."

There were no scenes to get behind. They were to sit there, and rise in turn to "do their little bit," as Bob Cherry put it. Harry Wharton, as president of the society, spoke a few words to the select audience.

"Gentlemen of the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!" said the select audience.

"Gentlemen, we are about to submit to you the main features of an entertainment arranged by the Wharton Operatic Society, to be given the day before the school breaks up for the Christmas holidays."

"Hear, hear!"

"You are all aware that on that day the upper Forms give a concert, and it has occurred to us that the junior Forms ought not to be left out, especially the Remove, which may be regarded as the most important of the junior Forms."

"Good old Remove!"

"This present show is merely a rehearsal of what will be given on the date I've mentioned. As the operatic society is wholly composed of amateurs, we solicit your kind indulgence."

"Hear, hear!"

"Go ahead!"

"On the bawl!"

Billy Bunter rose in his place in the audience. There was a roar.

"Sit down!"

"I want to speak one word to the president of the operatic society."

"Sit down!"

"I want to speak—"

"It is not in order," said the president of the operatic society. "But you may say it. Buck up, though!"

"Would the society care for me to improve the programme by introducing a splendid ventriloquist turn?"

"No! Certainly not!"

"Put it to the audience."

"Gentlemen, would you care for a ventriloquial turn by Bunter to be introduced into the programme?" asked Wharton, with a smile.

There was a roar.

"No! Turn him out!"

"Is that plain enough for you, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up, and sit down!"

"Very well. I don't think this show will be a success, that's all!" said Bunter.

And he sat down.

Trevor was first on the programme with the "Star of Eve" from "Tannhauser." The song suited Trevor very well, and he expected to make a hit. He coughed a little.

It was a disadvantage to sing without an accompaniment, and, of course, getting a piano into the box-room had been out of the question. Nugent's kind offer to accompany the singers on his mouth-organ had been unanimously refused.

However, there would be a piano when the great performance was given just before the holidays; this was only a preliminary canter, so to speak. Trevor started.

He sang pretty well, though not in the correct key; but all of a sudden there was an interruption.

He had just reached "Oh, star of eve, thy tender beam," when a curiously strained voice proceeded from the audience:

"Draw it mild!"

Trevor started and stopped. Harry Wharton rose to his feet. Of course, he had immediately recognised Bunter's ventriloquial voice, though Bunter imagined that he had made the words proceed from Russell.

"Bunter!"

"En—did you speak to me, Wharton?"

"Yes, I did! Get out!"

"What am I to get out for?"

"For interrupting the singer!"

"I—I—I—"

"You young ass! Do you think anybody would imagine that squeak came from anybody but you?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Get out at once!"

"I—I—I—"

"Do you want me to come and chuck you out?" roared Trevor.

Bunter made a rush for the door. His ventriloquial efforts were over for the evening. The voice-throwing had not been such a howling success as he had anticipated. He could not make it out, but finally came to the conclusion that there was something wrong with the acoustics of the box-room which rendered that apartment unfavourable for the ventriloquial act.

He darted out of the door, just escaping a cushion hurled after him by Bob Cherry, and Trevor was requested to "get on with the washing."

He did so, and the song was finished to great applause. Then came Gaunt with his recitation. All went well until he came to:

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings—"

"Rats!"

The voice interrupted the reciter, and there was a buzz of indignation in the room.

"It's that ass Bunter!"

"No, it isn't; he's gone."

"Then who is it?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Really, gentlemen," said the president of the operatic society, "I appeal to you to keep silence for the reciter."

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings."

"Look on my works—"

"More rats!"

Wharton rose to his feet, scarlet with rage.

"I call upon the interrupter to clear out—"

"Clear out yourself!"

"Who said that?"

"Yah!"

"Was that you, Russell?"

"No, it wasn't!" said Russell, looking amazed. "The voice seemed to come from this box behind me; but, of course, that's impossible. There isn't a giddy ventriloquist in the room."

"Well, get on with the recit, Gaunt, old man."

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings"

"Look on my works—"

"Cheese it!"

"Who said that?"

"Chuck the rotter out!"

"It was Russell!"

"It wasn't! I—"

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings"

"Look on my works—"

"Oh, ring off!"

ANOTHER TRIUMPH FOR FRANK RICHARDS!

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"It was Russell that time!" yelled Bob Cherry. "I saw his lips move."

"I was sucking a bullseye!"

"Chuck him out!"

"Hold on! I—"

Harry Wharton and two or three other members of the operatic society rushed at Russell. The latter, amazed and indignant, struggled fiercely, and he went reeling against a packing-case behind his seat.

"Hold on, I tell you! I— Oh!"

Crash! Russell and his assailants crashed on the packing-case, and it went over.

There was a startled yell and a roar:

"Bulstrode!"

It was Bulstrode who had given that startled yell, as his hiding-place was knocked over. The audience roared his name in amazement. But in a moment they understood.

"The cad! He was hidden here all the time"

"Sorry, Russell!" muttered Harry Wharton. "Lend a hand here."

"Oh, it's all right!" grinned Russell. "I almost thought it was myself—the voice was so near me. Chuck him out!"

"Leggo!" roared Bulstrode, as a dozen hands grasped him. "I— Leggo! Hold on!"

"Open the door!" The door was quickly opened. Bulstrode went out of the box-room on his neck. He came charging back, blind with fury, and was hurled forth again, and this time he rolled down the stairs.

Then the Removites looked through the packing-cases for more.

They found Skinner and Stott; and the two jokers, in spite of their struggles, were dragged to the door and hurled out of the room. They rolled down the stairs after Bulstrode, and the victorious operatic society and their audience re-entered the box-room, closed the door, and rested from their labours.

"Gentlemen—" said the president.

"Hear, hear!"

"The Wharton Operatic Society greatly regrets this unseemly interruption. The intruders have been ejected, and the proceedings will now proceed."

"Hear, hear!"

And the proceedings proceeded; and as there were no more interruptions, they proceeded without a hitch. And when the entertainment came to a close, the applause was hearty and unanimous, and the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society felt justly proud that they had scored a success.

(Next week: "THE GREAT CHRISTMAS PUDDING COMPETITION!" Look out for this lively yarn of the chums of Greyfriars—it's a scream!)

GUSSY'S IN LOVE AGAIN!

(Continued from page 21.)

"Telephone!" ejaculated Tom Merry. Arthur Augustus hurried out of the study.

The Co. followed him to the prefects' room.

Arthur Augustus took up the receiver, and rang up Blankley's.

"If it's another order for Blankley's, he's going to be seragged," murmured Blake.

"Shush!"

Arthur Augustus was speaking into the phone.

"Blankley's? Yaas, good! This is D'Arcy, St. Jim's. You are sendin' me

some goods by this aftahnoon's delivery. Are they dispatched? No? Vevy good! Pway do not send them! I find I shall not wequiah them now. Thank you vevy much!"

Arthur Augustus hung up the receiver.

The girl from Blankley's had paid her last visit to St. Jim's.

During the next two or three days Arthur Augustus was very quiet and subdued.

But he was on the old terms with his chums. Discord in Study No. 6 was a thing of the past.

And after a few days the smiles returned to the noble countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He had made the discovery that he was not so hard hit as he had supposed, and that

at fifteen it was more difficult than easy to be crossed in love.

His chums witnessed his recovery in satisfaction, and they chuckled when they heard him inform Tom Merry that he would be available for the Rookwood match.

Arthur Augustus played in the Rookwood match with great distinction.

In Study No. 6 the girl from Blankley's was mentioned no more. But it was a long time before Arthur Augustus' devoted chums told him the story of the true identity of the man from Blankley's.

(Next Wednesday: "TOM MERRY'S HOLIDAY PARTY!" Who says a ripping holiday in Paris? Join up with the chums of St. Jim's next week—and have a good time! Order your GEM early.)

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