

THEY CALLED HIM A FUNK!



The white feather! It's not like Gussy to show cowardice—yet what other reason could he have for leaving his chums in the lurch in a snow-fight?

By
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THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE MAN WHO RAN!

BACK up!" roared Tom Merry.
Whiz! Whiz! Squash!

The snowballs were flying.

It was quite a surprise.

Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther, of the Shell at St. Jim's, were walking down to the river, when it happened—suddenly. The Rhyl was frozen hard, and they were going to skate. But they forgot all about skating as a volley of snowballs came whizzing from among the frosty trees. The three School House juniors were caught napping.

"New House cads—ow!" gasped Manners, as a snowball caught him under the chin.

"That ass Figgins——" gurgled Lowther, sitting down suddenly with a snowball in each ear and another landing on his nose.

Skates were dropped and snow grabbed up. On either side of the path a dozen New House juniors showed up among the trees, whizzing snowballs hard and fast. Tom Merry and Co. had walked right into the ambush. Whiz! Squash! Smash! Squash!

"Back up—oooch!" gasped Tom Merry. Five or six squashy snowballs landed on him at once, and he stumbled and fell over Monty Lowther.

"Give 'em beans!" roared Figgins of the New House.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

Snowballs fairly rained on the School House trio. They scrambled up, and hurled back snowballs. But the odds were altogether too heavy. Figgins and Co. were in great force. There were more than a score of the New House, and they had piles of ammunition ready. George Figgins had planned that ambush with great astuteness. The School House three were surrounded, and fairly overwhelmed.

"Chase them back to their House!" yelled Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cut, you School House ticks!" chortled Fatty Wynn. "We're coming after you!"

But Tom Merry and Co. did not cut. They stood in the path, targets for innumerable snowballs, and returned the fire as well as they could.

"Rescue, School House!" yelled Tom Merry, as several caps appeared in sight on the path in the direction of the school.

Four juniors came cutting up the path. Luckily they were School House men — Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy of Study No. 6.

"Bai Jove! What's up?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as his eyeglass gleamed at the startling scene under the wintry trees.

"House row, fathead!" hooted Blake. "Come on!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Come on, ass!"

Blake burst into a sprint. Herries and Dig rushed after him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stayed only to jam his eyeglass a little more firmly into his eye, and then cut after his friends.

Reinforcements were badly needed. The three Shell fellows looked almost like snowmen by this time, smothered from head to foot by squashing snowballs. Blake and Co., grabbing up

snow as they ran, rushed into the fray.

"Back up, School House!" gasped Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! Oh, cwikey!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, as a snowball squashed in his noble ear, and he tipped over.

Whiz! Squash! Smash! There were seven of the School House now; but the enemy were three to one, and they were hard pressed. Figgins and Co., chuckling gleefully, rained missiles on them, coming out from the trees into the path, and pelting from close quarters.

They were going to put the School House men to flight if they could, and chase them back to St. Jim's under showers of snowballs. But Tom Merry and Co. were not thinking of flight. They were fighting a losing battle, but they fought it gamely.

"Roll 'em home!" roared Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figy and Kerr grabbed Tom Merry. Tom grabbed Figgy and Kerr, and the three rolled in the snow together. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy charged to the rescue, and Fatty Wynn put out a foot, and the swell of St. Jim's went headlong over it. He landed on his face, burying his nose in the snow and gurgling.

"Gwoooogh!" came in muffled accents from Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Roll 'em home!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Leggo!"

"Take that——"

"And you take that——"

"Ooogh!"

Snowballing ceased. It was hand-to-hand now! If the School House fellows could not be snowballed home, they were going to be rolled home!

But they were not easy to roll!

With such heavy odds against them, they ought really, like Iser in the poem, to have rolled rapidly! But they did not! They resisted with great energy, disputing every inch.

Two or three New House fellows grasped every School House man, excepting Arthur Augustus, who was half-buried in snow, and struggling for breath. Both sides trampled on him wildly in the struggle. Arthur Augustus gasped and gasped.

"Roll 'em home!" howled Figgins. "Here, lend me a hand with Tommy—Tommy's fractious!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you New House rotters!" gasped Tom Merry. "Leggo! I'll—oooh!"

Three or four pairs of hands grasped Tom, and he rolled at last. After him rolled Manners and Lowther, Blake, Herries and Digby. They

rolled slowly—but they rolled, still scrapping. The uproarious mob surged away down the snowy path towards the school.

Then Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at last succeeded in getting on his feet. He had been rather overlooked in the excitement, and was left behind. He leaned on a tree, gurgling for breath, and groping for his celebrated eyeglass, which fluttered at the end of its cord. Two or three New House fellows turned back for him.

Blake, dragging himself loose from the grasp of Kerr and Fatty Wynn, bounded to his feet. He jumped away, gasping, and hit out right and left as they grasped him again. Five or six of the enemy rushed at him.

"Gussy!" yelled Blake. "Back up, you fathead! Lend a hand, you dummy!"

"Collar Gussy, some of you!"



"Back up—ooch!" gasped Tom Merry. Squashy snowballs landed on the Terrible Three as they walked into the New House ambush, and Tom and Lowther collapsed in the snow. "Give 'em beans!" roared Figgins.

shouted Figgins, glancing up from the Herculean task of rolling Tom Merry.

What happened next was a surprise to all parties.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was expected, naturally, to rush back into the fray. Instead of which he rushed at top speed in the opposite direction.

School House and New House had a view of his back as he tore away up the path towards the river.

In a few seconds he vanished from sight, dodging out of the woodland path, and cutting along the tow-path up the Rhyl.

"Gussy!" shrieked Blake.

"D'Arcy!" howled Herries.

"Come back!" raved Digby.

But answer there came none! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was gone!

"Oh crumbs! What a funk!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Here, roll these bounders home before any more of them run away!"

Blake went over again, struggling. He punched right and left with great vigour; though, at that moment, he would rather have punched Gussy for letting his pals down than the New House enemy.

"Hang on to them!" chortled Figgins. "They'll bunk if they can! They're funky in the School House."

"I'll give you funk!" gasped Tom Merry; and he got one hand loose and landed it, clenched, in Figgy's eye.

"Oh! Ow!" roared Figgins, rolling over.

Tom struggled to his feet. But it booted not! He was rushed over again, and rolled. The heavy odds told; and six School House fellows, resisting vainly, went rolling through the snow, gathering it up as they rolled. Snow filled their hair and their ears, and slid down their necks and covered them as if with a garment.

Not till they came out into the road

did the New House release them; and then they gathered fresh snowballs and pelted the sprawling, gasping six. But in sight of the school gates fresh reinforcements arrived—Talbot of the Shell came up with a rush, followed by a dozen more School House men.

After which the battle raged loud and long—till Kildare of the Sixth came out at the gates with his ash-plant in his hand—at which it ceased suddenly, and the breathless rivals of St. Jim's scattered to their Houses.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

FUNK!

"FUNK!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy started.

He was coming up the Fourth Form passage in the School House, heading for Study No. 6 for tea, when that unpleasant word reached his ears.

It was uttered by Baggy Trimble of the Fourth, grinning at him from the doorway of No. 2 Study.

Arthur Augustus stared at him, adjusted his eyeglass, and stared again, and then looked round him, as if seeking the person to whom Baggy alluded.

Five or six of the Fourth were in the passage, and they were all looking very curiously at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Mellish was grinning—Lumley-Lumley sneering—Bates shrugging his shoulders—Tompkins turning up his nose. Arthur Augustus was perplexed.

"Funk!" hooted Trimble.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "Are you talkin' to yourself, Twimble?"

"Wha-a-t?" ejaculated Baggy.

"I mean, you are the only funk pwsent!" explained Arthur Augustus. "Mellish is wathah funkay, if

you don't mind my mentionin' it, Mellish—but you are a weal corkah in that line! But what are you callin' yourself a funk for, deah boy?"

"Why, you cheeky rotter!" gasped Trimble.

"Weally, Twimble——"

"Funk!" yapped Mellish.

"Weally, Mellish, you should not call Twimble such names, considewin' that you are vewy fah fwom bwave yourself!" said Arthur Augustus chidingly.

"You silly ass!" howled Mellish.

"I'm calling you a funk, see?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Me!" he ejaculated in astonishment.

"Yes, you! Who ran away from the New House bounders?" hooted Mellish.

"Who bolted and left his pals in the lurch?" squealed Trimble.

"Funk!" squeaked Tompkins.

"Anybody got a white feather for Gussy?" called out Bates.

Arthur Augustus gazed at the Fourth-Formers, his noble face gradually assuming the hue of a newly-boiled beetroot.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "You cheeky wottahs——"

"Got your feet cold in this weather, D'Arcy?" inquired Lumley-Lumley.

"Yaas, my feet are wathah cold, deah boy—why?"

"I thought so!" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you mean to imply that I am funkay, you wottah!" roared Arthur Augustus, suddenly catching on.

"I don't mean to imply it, old bean. I mean to say so out plain!"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther appeared at the end of the passage, on their way to their study in the Shell.

They glanced down the passage at the Fourth-Formers; and all three frowned at the sight of Gussy. The latter turned his eyeglass on them.

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy——" he called out.

"Well, what?" asked Tom gruffly.

"I am sowwy I had to leave you so suddenly when you were scwappin' with the New House boundahs. You see——"

"Oh, yes, I see!" grunted Tom.

"We all see!" snapped Manners.

"You and I and all of us, the great, the short, the tall of us!" said Monty Lowther. "We all see—quite! I recommend fur-lined boots."

"Bai Jove! For what, Lowthah?"

"Cold feet!"

"I fail to undahstand this," said D'Arcy, his eye gleaming through his eyeglass. "Some of these sillay asses have started callin' me a funk——"

"What did you expect them to call you?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

The three Shell fellows passed on their way, Arthur Augustus staring blankly after them.

Then he turned his eyeglass on the grinning Fourth-Formers.

"You uttah asses!" he said. "If you think I wan away fwom the New House wottahs——"

"Well, sort of," said Lumley-Lumley. "All the fellows saw you do it, and everybody knows."

"I did not!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"You had pressing business in another direction, all of a sudden?" asked Reilly.

"Yaas, exactly."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Funk!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle a little more firmly in his

noble eye, and surveyed the fellows in the passage with ineffable scorn. Then he turned his back on them and walked into Study No. 6. A hiss followed him as the door closed.

Three juniors in that study sat at tea—and all three looked round glumly and grimly at D'Arcy as he came in. Blake, Herries and Digby were suddenly silent as their chum entered. They had been, as a matter of fact, discussing Gussy's unexpected and surprising display of funk in the House row, and the disgrace he had thereby brought on that celebrated study.

They gave him grim looks, which he did not, at the moment, notice. How and why Gussy had developed funk, they could hardly guess—he had never, so far as they knew, shown the white feather before. But there was no doubt about it and it was a severe knock at the prestige of the study. Over in the New House the enemy were making a standing joke of it. Kerr was reported to have already composed a limerick on the subject. It was up against the House, as well as the study; and Blake and Co. gloomily expected never to hear the end of it.

"Oh, you've come back, have you?" grunted Blake.

"Yaas! I have been wathah delayed——"

"Waiting to see whether the New House cads had gone into their House?" asked Herries sarcastically.

"Eh! Why should I have waited for that, Hewwies?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently.

"They might have snowballed you!" said Herries, with intensifying sarcasm. "They might have punched you! You might have had to sprint again!"

"There's one thing," said Digby. "We can put up a man from this study for the school hundred yards, next time. D'Arcy will win it hands down."

"Bai Jove! Do you weally think so, Dig?" asked Arthur Augustus, flattered. "I weally think I am pwetty good at wunnin', myself."

"You are!" snorted Blake.

"Fearfully good!" said Herries.

"Your long suit," said Digby. "If you put up for the hundred yards, D'Arcy, you'll win! We'll stand there and call out that Figgins is coming! Then you'll cover the ground all right!"

The true meaning of all these remarks was rather slow in dawning on the aristocratic brain of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But it did dawn!

His face changed as it dawned. An expression came over it as grim as the expressions on the faces of his three comrades.

"Pway make your meanin' cleah, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, very quietly. "Some cheeky asses in the passage have just been calling me a funk, appawntly because I cut off while that House wow was goin' on. Am I to undahstand that you wepeat this offensive wot!"

"I don't know whether you understand it," snorted Blake. "I don't expect you to understand anything, with a brain like yours! Nobody expects you to have any sense! But a man in this study is expected to have a spot of pluck."

"Yes, rather," said Herries. "You can't help being a goat, D'Arcy—you were born one, and it's too late to worry about that! But you can help being a funk—at least, you ought to."

"What was there to be afraid of,

if you come to that?" demanded Digby. "You've never shown up like this before! Can't you face having your silly head punched, like any other fellow?"

"Nothing in it to get damaged if you got a punch or two!" said Blake. "Did you think Figgins might knock your silly head off your silly shoulders, or what?"

"A funk in this study!" said Herries with a deep breath. "We shall never hear the end of it! They're yelling over it in the New House."

"We'll give them something else to yell for, to-morrow!" said Blake savagely. "We'll jolly well show them that we're not all cowards."

Arthur Augustus stood very still, his eyeglass turning from one face to another. He did not speak.

"Why did you do it?" asked Blake helplessly. "You've been in House rows before—lots of times! Sudden panic, or what? But what about?

What the thump was there to frighten you?"

"Are you suggestin' that I was frightened, Blake?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, no!" said Blake, with fierce sarcasm. "I dare say it was pluck that made you run away! Just bursting pluck!"

"Are you accusin' me of wunnin' away, Blake?"

"Didn't I see you running?" yelled Blake. "Didn't I yell to you to help me, scrapping with those New House cads, and didn't you turn your back and bolt off to the tow-path?"

"Yaas!"

"Well, then, what did you do it for if you weren't scared out of your seven senses—if you've got seven, or any?" hooted Blake. "Can't you see that you've disgraced the study and the House?"

"Certainly not."



What happened next was a surprise to all the juniors. Instead of joining in the snow-fight and helping his chums, Arthur Augustus rushed off at top speed in the opposite direction!

"Do you think we're going to be proud of having a funk in the School House?" roared Herries.

"Pway do not woar at me, Hewwies! I have wemarked more than once that I dislike bein' woared at!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy calmly. "I was goin' to tell you fellows why I cut off——"

"Think we don't know?" snorted Dig.

"Yaas, wathah! But I wefuse to uttah a word to any fellow who calls me a funk! I wequiah to know, plainly, whethah you fellows are wegardin' me as a funk or not," said Arthur Augustus in his most stately manner. "I wequiah a plain answah—yaas or no!"

"Look here, boot him!" said Herries. "Funks ought to be booted."

"Very well," said Arthur Augustus, setting his lips. "That teahs it. I am sowwy to have to bah you fellows, as we have been fwriends, but fwriendship, of course, is quite impos. now. I am bound to wemark that I wegard you with feahful scorn. That is the vewy last wemark I shall make to you."

With that, Arthur Augustus turned to the door.

"Look here——" roared Blake.

"Wats!"

"You silly, howling ass——"

"I wefuse to heah anythin' furthah fwom you, Blake. Our acquaintance dwops fwom this moment! Pway do not address me again."

Arthur Augustus opened the door, passed out of Study No. 6, and shut the door after him with a bang. Blake, Herries and Digby were left exchanging exasperated stares. Arthur Augustus, with a set face, went down to hall to tea—having shaken the dust of Study No. 6 from his noble feet.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

THE WHITE FEATHER!

TOM MERRY rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

He was perplexed.

It was the morning following the House row, and the St. Jim's fellows were out in break. And Tom's eyes fixed on a solitary figure—pacing lofty and lonesome in the quad.

It was the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Seldom left on his own, the great Gussy was now deserted.

Blake, Herries and Dig came along and seemed about to speak to him. Wrathful and resentful as they were, it seemed that they were not disposed to turn their backs wholly on the fellow who had disgraced the study.

But D'Arcy had no such compunction.

He glanced at the three, turned on his heel and walked away, giving them a view of his elegant figure as seen from the south, as it were.

Whereat Blake, Herries and Dig breathed hard. And Tom Merry, looking on, was puzzled and perplexed.

Had Study No. 6 turned down Gussy, that was no more than any fellow might have expected after what had happened. But for Gussy to turn down Study No. 6 was, in the circumstances, rather remarkable.

"Look here, you men," said Tom to Manners and Lowther, who were also staring curiously. "Is there some mistake? We all thought yesterday——"

"Same as we think to-day!" said Lowther. "Don't be an ass, Tom. A fellow who scuds off in a scrap and leaves his pals in the lurch——"

"Beastly funk!" said Manners, with a nod.

"Well, yes," said Tom. "It did look pretty bad—even Trimble would

hardly have done it. But—I—I wonder— Look here, what has Gussy got his back up for if he knows—

“Cheeky ass!” suggested Lowther.

“He’s coming this way,” said Tom.

“I’m going to speak to him. I can’t help thinking— Hallo, Gussy!”

Arthur Augustus came to a halt. He screwed his eyeglass into his eye and surveyed the Shell fellows with lofty, calm disdain.

“Did you speak to me, Tom Mewwy?” he inquired frigidly.

“Getting deaf?” asked Tom. “I did!”

“Then pway do nothin’ of the kind! I have dwopped your acquaintance, and desiah to have nothin’ whatevah to say to you.”

“What did you bunk for yesterday?” hooted Tom. “You’ve made all the school think you a rotten, howling funk—”

“I have wequested you not to address me, Tom Mewwy!”

“Even Trimble wouldn’t have done what you did!” roared Tom. “Why, what are you grinning at, you ass?”

Arthur Augustus grinned. But in a moment his face was serious and scornful again.

“Did I gwin?” he asked. “Nevah mind! I wegard it as vewy pwob. that Twimble would not have acted as I did! I think you might—”

“You think I might?” exclaimed Tom.

“Yaas, wathah! I twust so.”

“You trust so?” gasped Tom.

“Gone off your rocker? Have you ever seen me run away from a scrap, you cheeky ass?”

“Wats!”

“Look here, Gussy, if you’ve got anything to say about it—”

“Nothin’ at all!”

“You ran away, and kept out of sight—never turned up all the time

the scrap was on—never came in at all till a couple of hours afterwards!” exclaimed Tom Merry hotly. “Why didn’t you?”

“How could I come in, you ass, when I had to dwy my clobbah?”

“Eh! Did you get wet?”

“Natuwally.”

“Well, we all got a bit damp rolling in the snow! Mean to say you went off somewhere to dry your clothes?”

“I don’t mean to say anythin’!” declared Arthur Augustus. “Only I wequest you to keep your wemarks to yourself! You are a fellow I no longah know, and I wefuse to speak to you.”

“I’ve a jolly good mind—”

“Wubbish! If you had a jolly good mind, you would do some thinkin’ with it, and then you would wealise what a sillay ass you are!” retorted Arthur Augustus.

And with that, the swell of St. Jim’s turned once more on his heel, and walked off, with his noble nose in the air.

Baggy Trimble came cutting across the quad, and barged, apparently by accident, into D’Arcy as he walked away. He clutched at the back of Arthur Augustus’ jacket for support, and hung on to him, gasping.

“Oh! Sorry!” gasped Baggy.

“Bai Jove! Pway do not hang on to me, Twimble—your paws are always vewy sticky!” said Arthur Augustus. “I weally dislike you to touch me, Twimble.”

Trimble backed away, grinning.

“Yah! Funk!” he yapped. And he dodged round Tom Merry and Co. as Arthur Augustus’ eyes gleamed at him.

With a set brow, the swell of St. Jim’s walked on. A roar of laughter followed him.

He was happily unaware of what the fat and mischievous Baggy had done while he was hanging on. Arthur Augustus was wearing a cap that morning. Now, at the back of his cap, a feather was sticking up in the air, nodding as he moved.

It was a white feather! The artful Baggy had had that feather all ready, with a pin through the stem—and now it was pinned to the back of D'Arcy's cap—invisible to Gussy, but visible to every other fellow in the St. Jim's quad.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from all sides.

Arthur Augustus glanced round him. His very eyeglass gleamed with wrath and indignation.

Unaware of the feather in his cap, he was aware that the outburst of merriment was addressed to him. On all sides, laughing faces regarded him.

His face grew redder and redder.

"Look here, that's too bad!" muttered Blake.

"Well, he's asked for it!" grunted Herries.

"Yes, but——"

"Let's kick Trimble!" suggested Dig.

"Good egg!"

Baggy Trimble was chuckling with glee at the success of his trick. He ceased to chuckle as Blake and Co. bore down on him. They kicked him hard, and they kicked him often, and Baggy fled yelling.

"Hallo! White feather!" yelled Figgins, coming out of the New House.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What on earth is he wearing that white feather for?" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, in wonder. "Does he want to show off that he's a funk?"

"Looks like it!" chuckled Kerr.

"Unless some joker's stuck it on him! Hallo, Gussy, feet warmer this morning?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus disdained to reply. He walked loftily away—but wherever he walked yells of laughter greeted him, surrounded him, and followed him.

His face was crimson, and his eyes gleaming. But his lofty pride upheld him. He was not going in till the bell rang for third school; nothing would have induced him to dodge the public view. Whether the other fellows were satisfied with him or not, Arthur Augustus was quite satisfied with himself; and he walked on his lofty way regardless.

Still, he was not enjoying himself, and he was glad when the bell rang. A procession gathered round him when he headed for the House, howls of laughter awaking the echoes of the quad.

With his head erect and his noble nose in the air, Gussy was the picture of lofty scorn. But there was no doubt that the white feather nodding over his head spoiled the effect. His unconsciousness of that adornment made the fellows shriek.

Kildare, of the Sixth, in the doorway of the House, stared at him blankly as he came up. It was the first time he had seen a junior parading the quad with a tall feather nodding over his head.

"You young ass!" exclaimed the St. Jim's captain. "What's the game?"

"Weally, Kildare——"

"What have you got that feather stuck in your cap for?" demanded Kildare.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"A—a—a feathah in my cap!" he gasped. "Are you dweamin'."

Kildare? I should not be likely to walk about with a feathah in my cap! What do you mean?"

Kildare stared at him—and laughed.

"Oh! A rag, I suppose!" he said. "You'd better take it out, you young ass!"

Arthur Augustus took off his cap. Then he jumped again, at the sight of the white feather pinned to it.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

A LONG LIST!

"COME in!" sang out Tom Merry as a tap came at his study door after tea.

"Oh! You!" he added, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy appeared in the doorway.

"You needn't come in!" said Manners.

"Run away!" suggested Monty



"Funk!" exclaimed the Fourth-Formers. Arthur Augustus surveyed them with ineffable scorn, and then turned his back on them and walked away. A hiss followed him.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell.

Arthur Augustus glanced round. His face, which had been crimson, became quite pale. He realised the significance of the white feather. He stood with it in his hand, looking at it for a moment or two. Every eye was fixed on him. Then, quietly, he tossed it away, and walked into the House. The crowd of juniors in the quad followed him in, still chuckling over the joke.

Lowther. "Your long suit, you know!"

"I have no intention of entahin' this study!" said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "I have a few words to say to you fellows."

"The fewer the better!" remarked Manners. "Why any?"

Arthur Augustus disdained to reply to that question. He had a notebook in his left hand, and a little gold pencil in his right. Why he had brought those articles with him the chums of

the Shell could not guess. But they were soon enlightened.

"You wottahs have been callin' me a funk!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Guilty, my lord!" said Monty Lowther.

"I am goin' to thwash ewevy wottah who has called me a funk!" pursued Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, my hat!"

"To-morrow is Wednesday," said D'Arcy, in the same icy tones. "It is a half-holiday, and there will be plenty of time to thwash you all wound. I am makin' a list of the sneakin' boundahs I am goin' to thwash! Shall I put your name down, Tom Mewwy?"

"Not in a list of sneaking bounders," said Tom, laughing.

"Are you afwaid to put your hands up, Tom Mewwy, and answah for your wotten impertinence?"

"You ass——"

"I have been called a funk!" said Arthur Augustus, his voice trembling for a moment. "Some cad stuck a white feathah in my cap in bweak this mornin'. I am goin' to give ewevy one of the wottahs a feahful thwashin'. That is the only way to set the mattah wight. I am challengin' you wottahs to a fight."

"Not to a fight?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I wefuse to answah wibald wemarks, Lowthah! I am goin' to put down the name of ewevy fellow who has pluck enough to stand by what he has said, and to put in the word 'funk' for ewevy fellow who wefuses to do so. Shall I wite you down as a funk, Tom Mewwy?"

"You howling ass!" roared Tom. "You couldn't fight one side of me! And if you're so keen on scrapping, why didn't you scrap with the New

House cads on Monday, instead of running away?"

"I am waitin' for your answah, Tom Mewwy!"

"Rats!" said Tom.

"Vevy well, I will wite you down a funk!" said D'Arcy. And in full view of the captain of the Shell, he wrote down in the notebook, "Tom Merry, funk." "Now, are you afwaid too, Lowthah?"

"You cheeky ass!"

"Am I to wite you down a funk, like Tom Mewwy?" asked D'Arcy calmly.

"No, fear!" said Monty. "Put my name down, and I'll turn up and watch you run."

"Vevy good! What about you, Mannahs?"

"Oh, put me down!" grinned Manners. "Are you going to run away from Monty before you run away from me, or run away from me before you run away from Monty?"

"I disdain to wreply to that, Mannahs! You are suah you pwefere to be labelled a funk, Tom Mewwy? I have nevah wegarded you as a funk before; but we live and learn!"

"You burbling fathead!" said Tom. "Are you going to fight three fellows in one afternoon?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ass!"

"I am puttin' you fellows first in the list, that is all; there are more to come——"

Tom Merry gasped.

"Oh, put me down, then!" he said. "Don't leave me out of the running!"

"Gussy will do the running!" said Monty Lowther. "Still, we'll run after him! Don't forget your running shoes, D'Arcy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's thwee!" said Arthur

Augustus. "Pway turn up in the Wivah Meadow not latah than half-past two to-morrow aftahnoon, deah boys—I mean, you cads! This scwap will have to take place outside the school, or we shall have the pwefects buttin' in. It will be on wathah a large scale!"

"We'll be there!" said Tom, laughing. "I don't think you will, though."

"I wegard that wemark with contempt, Tom Mewwy."

And Arthur Augustus closed his notebook with a snap, walked out of the study, and banged the door. The Shell fellows looked at one another—Manners and Lowther grinning, Tom Merry perplexed.

"Blessed if I make this out!" said Tom. "Look here, we weren't dreaming yesterday—Gussy did run away, didn't he?"

"Just a few!"

"Well, then, what does he mean?" said Tom. "I—I suppose there can't be any mistake! He cut off towards the river—he was nearer the river than we were—might something have been going on that he saw, and we didn't see?"

"Well, what?"

"Well, somebody might have fallen over, or something, skating——"

"And Gussy rushed off to help him, leaving us to be mopped up by the New House!" said Lowther sarcastically. "Don't be an ass, Tom!"

"Well, I suppose it's rather thin," said Tom. "But—I can't make the chap out! If I showed the white feather, which I hope I never shall do, I should want to get into a hole and pull it in after me—not walk about with my nose stuck up in the air, as if I'd done something to be proud of! If Gussy's funky, what's the big idea of challenging fellows to scrap?"

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"Gammon!" he said. "All right till the time comes—then we shan't see his heels for dust!"

"I'm not going to punch him!" said Tom.

"That's all right; he won't wait to be punched."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, meanwhile, arrived at Study No. 6 in the Fourth. He'd had tea in the hall; Blake and Co. in the study. They eyed him rather uncertainly as he presented himself.

"I am makin' up a list of wotten cads," said Arthur Augustus. "Shall I put your names down?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I am goin' to thwash you all wound for callin' me a funk!" explained D'Arcy. "Pway do not suppose that I have come here to speak to you as a fwiend. I am speakin' to you, not as a fwiend, but as a fellow who weguards you with fwightful scorn!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I have thwee names on my list so fah—Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah. You thwee come next, if you are not afwaid to put your hands up."

"Afraid?" bawled Herries.

"Yaas!"

"You burbling idiot——"

"I have wequested you before, Hewwies, not to wear at me. Am I to put your names down as fellows who are goin' to fight me to-morrow, or as funks?"

They gazed at him.

"If you are not suffewin' fwom cold feet," said Arthur Augustus sarcastically.

"Oh, put us down!" gasped Blake. "There will be a lot of you left for us when Tom Merry's done with you—I don't think."

Arthur Augustus wrote three names down on his list, and quitted No. 6—leaving Blake and Co. staring at one another.

He left the School House, and walked across to the New House. Figgins and Co., who were adorning the doorway of that building, grinned at him as he came.

"Where's your feather, Gussy?" called out Fatty Wynn.

"I have come ovah here to challenge you fellows—" began D'Arcy.

"Running match?" asked Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothin' of the kind, you cheekay wottah! I am makin' up a list of wotten wascals, and I am goin' to put your names down—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Unless you are afwaid! You New House cads haven't much pluck, I feah. Howevah, I am givin' you a chance! Will you turn up in the Wivah Meadow to-morrow aftahnoon, and have the gloves on?"

"The three of us?" yelled Figgins.

"Yaas! I am goin' to thwash the thwee of you, aftah I have thwashed Tom Mewwy, Mannahs and Lowthah and Blake, Hewwies and Digby," explained Arthur Augustus. "There are some othahs to come aftah you."

"You—you—you're going to thrash us three after you've thrashed six other chaps?" gasped Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, my hat! We'll come!" gurgled Figgins.

"Vevy well, I will put you on the list! I am vevy glad to see that you have pluck enough to put up your hands, and answah for your wascally impertinence!"

"Is this a joke, or what?" asked Kerr.

"You will not find it a joke, Kerr, when I get goin'. I am goin' to give you somethin' like what my ancestahs gave yours at the Battle of Bannockburn."

"Just about!" chortled Kerr, whose knowledge of history was a little more accurate than Gussy's. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus elevated his noble nose and walked off. The New House trio, watching him go, saw him stop Lumley-Lumley, and then Bates, and then Reilly, and then Kerruish, and then Gore of the Shell. Each time he wrote a name down in his notebook.

Returning into the School House, Arthur Augustus met Talbot of the Shell in the doorway. He stopped, with a stern brow.

"Talbot, deah boy—or—or you beastly wottah—" he began.

"Wha-a-t?" ejaculated Talbot.

"I mean to say, deah boy, if you do not wegard me as a funk. You are a beastly wottah if you do!" explained Arthur Augustus. "You have made no wemarks on the subject so fah. Do you wegard me as a funk, Talbot?"

"Not at all, old bean."

"You are suah?"

"Absolutely, definitely, and with knobs on!" said Talbot, with great gravity.

"Vevy well! Then I will not put you on my list, deah boy! I have fourteen fellows down alweady—to thwash to-morrow aftahnoon—"

"Eh!" gasped Talbot. "What? You—you're going to thrash fourteen fellows in one day!"

"I twust so, Talbot! I am vevy glad not to have to put you down as numbah fifteen! I weally dislike the idea of knockin' you about, old chap!"

Arthur Augustus passed on, leaving

Talbot blinking. In the junior room, he found Baggy Trimble.

"Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "I am makin' up a list of wascally wottahs that I am goin' to thwash to-morrow, and your name is goin' on the list."

"Oh, draw it mild, you know!" said Baggy anxiously. "I—I say

"You need say nothin', Twimble! I insist upon thwashin' you, and you are goin' down as numbah fifteen."

"Number fifteen!" gasped Baggy.

"Yaas; you will have to take your turn, you know," explained Arthur Augustus. "I shall thwash you after I have thwashed Tom Mewwy, Man-nahs and Lowthah and Blake, Hewwies and Digby and Figgins, Kerr and Wynn and Weilly, Bates, Kewwuish, Lumley-Lumley and Gore

"He, he, he!" gurgled Trimble.

"What are you laughin' at, Twimble?"

"He, he, he!" chortled the fat Baggy. "Put me down! He, he, he!" Even the fat Baggy was not alarmed at the prospect of being tackled after Arthur Augustus had worked through that formidable list. Baggy's name went down.

With fifteen fellows on his warlike list, Arthur Augustus put his notebook away. There were other offenders, it was true; but he considered that, in the circumstances, they could wait. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy feared no foe, and his confidence in his fistical powers was unlimited. He saw himself like Cæsar of old, coming, and seeing, and conquering. Still, he felt that fifteen scraps in one afternoon would be enough. It was quite within the bounds of possibility that they would be too much!



"You wottahs have been callin' me a funk!" said Arthur Augustus. "Guilty, my lord!" said Monty Lowther. "I am goin' to thwash every wottah who has called me a funk," pursued D'Arcy, "and I am makin' a list of their names."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

THRASHING TOM MERRY!

"ARE you weady?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"I asked you if you were weady, Tom Mewwy."

"And I told you not to be an ass!" answered Tom.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came out of the House on Wednesday afternoon with a little bag in his hand. That bag contained boxing gloves, a sponge, and a towel, ready for the fray.

He found Tom Merry and Co. in the quad, talking football, and apparently forgetful of their warlike engagement for that afternoon.

Exactly what Arthur Augustus meant by this extraordinary stunt the St. Jim's juniors really did not know.

No doubt a fellow accused of "funk" could set himself right by thrashing all his detractors, one after another; there could not, indeed, be a clearer way of proving the matter.

But that a fellow, who only a couple of days ago had run away from the enemy, intended anything of the kind, was not easy to believe.

Moreover, at least half a dozen of the fellows on Gussy's list were quite capable of knocking Gussy into a cocked hat in a couple of rounds. This, it was true, was quite unknown to Gussy, but it was known to everyone else. Few juniors in the School House could stand up to Tom Merry; and, in the New House, Figgins reigned supreme in the fistical line. Either of them could have made rings round Gussy; so it was really hard to believe that Arthur Augustus was seriously undertaking to thrash both of them, and a dozen more fellows to follow.

But Arthur Augustus' noble countenance expressed deep and deadly

determination. His eye, and his eyeglass, gleamed scorn at the captain of the Shell.

"Cold feet?" he asked, with a curl of the lip.

"Fathead!"

"You have accepted my challenge, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ass!"

"If you are afraid to turn up——"

"Idiot!"

"I shall pull your nose, here in the quad——"

"Oh, my hat! Look here, you blithering chump," said Tom, "if I take the trouble to walk as far as the River Meadow—it's half-way to the mill, you ass—I shall jolly well whop you when you get there. See?"

"I do not think you will last vewy long, Tom Mewwy, when I get goin'," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"If you are not suffewin' fwom funk, come along."

"Blitherer!" said Tom. "Come on, you fellows! I want you to keep an eye on D'Arcy, and don't let him cut."

"We'll watch him!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"What-ho!" agreed Manners.

"Evevwy fellow who fails to turn up will be bwanded as a wotten funk!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is possible that I may not be able to thwash the lot of you—I do not mean that it is pwobable, but it is possible—and in that case I shall thwash as many as I can, and begin again on the west on Saturday."

"Little man, you're going to have a busy day!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Wats!"

"Look here, you ass——" bawled Blake.

"I wefuse to look there, Blake!

I am waitin' for you to start—if you are not gettin' panicky——”

“Oh, crikey! Come on, you men!” gasped Blake. “We'll jolly well all stand round and see that he doesn't bolt!”

“He, he, he!” cachinnated Baggy Trimble.

Figgins and Co., grinning, joined the School House crowd as they started for the gates. Not only the fifteen challenged victims, but twice as many other fellows, followed Arthur Augustus out. Quite an army of fellows were interested. A crowd of both Houses marched down the road after Arthur Augustus, grinning as they went.

Gussy marched on ahead, his nose in the air. For the moment, clearly, he was not afflicted by “funk.” But everyone expected a different tale to be told when they reached the scene of combat. Then, it was generally expected, Gussy's courage would ooze out at his finger-ends, and he would put up a show similar to his performance on Monday.

And then, it was agreed all round, he was not going to be allowed to get away with it! Having asked for it, he was going to get that for which he had asked.

Still, it was certain that the swell of St. Jim's was displaying absolutely no sign of uneasiness so far.

He turned off the road into the woodland path that led to the river, and the grinning army marched after him.

He marched along the tow-path to the meadow selected for the scene of this tremendous fray. It was quite a suitable spot for proceedings that did not require interference from masters or prefects. It was half-way between St. Jim's and the old mill. On one side was the frozen river; on

the other, wintry woods shutting off the view. The mill loomed over the trees in the distance. Except for an occasional passer-by on the tow-path, nobody was likely to come along.

“Here we are,” said Arthur Augustus. He set down his bag and opened it, and drew the boxing-gloves therefrom.

More than forty pairs of eyes were fixed on him. Calmly, the swell of St. Jim's took off his jacket, pushed up his cuffs, and donned the gloves.

His eyeglass dropped to the end of its cord.

“You first, Tom Mewwy!” said Arthur Augustus.

Tom looked at him. So did every other fellow. If Arthur Augustus fancied that he could scrap with Tom Merry, it showed, certainly, that he was an ass! But it showed that he was anything but a funk. Really, it was getting perplexing. This was the fellow who had raced away from the House row, and left his comrades in the lurch. A whole crowd round him were ready to stop any attempt at bolting now. But it really seemed that nothing was farther from Gussy's thoughts.

“Weady?” asked Arthur Augustus calmly.

“Look here, you ass!” said Tom uneasily.

“I have not come here to talk, Tom Mewwy! It is wathah too cold to stand woud talkin'. I have come here to thwash you! If you are funkay——”

“Oh, I'll push your silly face through the back of your silly head, if you like,” said Tom resignedly.

“Lowthah, you may as well be gettin' weady—you come next aftah Tom Mewwy!” said Arthur Augustus.

“Help!” gasped Lowther.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

"I shall not allow you to back out of it, Lowthah! You may as well get weady, too, Mannahs—you come next aftah Lowthah!"

"Why not take the three of us at once and save time?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"I am not suah that I could handle the thwee of you togethah, Lowthah! Two, pewwaps——"

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Somebody had bettah keep time," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally do not mind, but Tom Mewwy will need a west——"

"Thanks!" said Tom, putting on the gloves. "You keep time, Talbot, as you're not on the list for slaughter. Have you gone barmy, Gussy?"

"Certainly not, you cheekay ass!"

"Then what do you mean by standing up to a scrap to-day, when you ran away from one on Monday?"

"Wats!"

"Oh, he was running away from us, you know!" remarked Figgins. "Even a funk would hardly run away from School House ticks."

"Why, you cheeky New House fathead——"

"You silly School House ass——"

"I'll jolly well——"

"And I'll jolly well——"

"Pway do not start anothah House wow now!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "I am waitin' for you, Tom Mewwy!"

"Oh, all right! Where will you have it?" asked Tom.

"Time!" called Talbot.

"Well, this beats the band!" said Blake, as Arthur Augustus stepped up briskly at the call of "time." "Look at him! He can't scrap with Tom Merry's little finger, and everybody knows it but Gussy—but look at him! That's the same chap who

bolted on Monday and left us in the lurch. Anybody understand it?"

"I give it up," said Digby.

"If he bolts now, I'll jolly soon stop him!" growled Herries.

"Does he look like it, fathead?"

"Well, no, but he did——"

"Go it, Gussy!" sang out Blake.

Arthur Augustus was going it. He was going it hot and strong. He really had not even a sporting chance against Tom Merry, who was older, bigger, stronger, and a better boxer. But Gussy, like Gallio of old, cared for none of these things! Regardless of the fact that he was outclassed; indeed happily unconscious of it, he attacked hotly, hitting out right and left.

"Ow!" gasped Tom as a fist came home on his nose. "Wow!" he added as the other landed on his chin.

Then Tom piled in. What happened next, Gussy hardly knew. He found himself sitting in damp grass, gasping.

"Oh cwumbs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Man down!" grinned Figgins.

"Call it a day, what?" asked Tom Merry.

"Certainly not!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have not thwashed you yet."

"Oh, my hat!"

The swell of St. Jim's scrambled up. His aristocratic countenance was red with wrath and excitement. But there was, as all eyes could see, no sign of funk! Not a spot of it! He rushed on.

For a long minute there was wild slogging. Tom Merry blinked and blinked again, as a couple of knocks came home.

Then Arthur Augustus, again to his surprise, found himself sitting in the grass once more, without quite knowing how he had got there.



Tom Merry piled in, and what happened next Arthur Augustus hardly knew. He found himself sitting in damp grass, gasping. "Oh cwumbs!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Call it a day, what?" asked Tom Merry.

"Time!" called Talbot.

Arthur Augustus had a much-needed rest. He spent it in gasping for breath. His noble face was very serious now. Perhaps it was dawning on his powerful intellect that his waiting list would have to wait a considerable time before he finished thrashing Tom Merry!

"Time!"

Arthur Augustus rushed in. He got in a good one, and Tom Merry rallied and hit.

Bump!

"Oh cwikey!"

Arthur Augustus sat down on Sussex, with a bump that almost made Sussex shake. He sat and gasped. Talbot counted ten, and might have counted twenty or thirty; Gussy was still sitting and gasping.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

JUST LIKE GUSSY!

A MAN in a white coat came down the tow-path from the direction of the mill, and stopped at the edge of the meadow, to look on at the interesting scene there. He seemed specially interested in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. None of the St. Jim's crowd noticed the miller for the moment; all eyes were fixed on Arthur Augustus.

He tottered up at last.

He dabbed his noble nose, from which a thin stream of red oozed over his boxing-glove.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus breathlessly. "Oh cwumbs! I mean, I am weady, Tom Mewwy! Come on, you wottah!"

Tom Merry laughed, peeled off the gloves, and threw them aside.

"Call it a day, fathead!" he said.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the kind!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have not thwashed you yet, Tom Mewwy! I came here to thwash you."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You're counted out, old man!" said Talbot.

"I wefuse to be counted out!" roared Arthur Augustus, in great wrath. "I am goin' to finish thwashin' Tom Mewwy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fight's over!" said Tom, laughing. "Keep off, Gussy—or I shall run away, same as you did on Monday!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you wefuse to go on with the swap, Tom Mewwy——"

"I do—I does!"

"Vewy well," gasped Arthur Augustus. "Lowthah is next on the list! Are you weady, Lowthah?"

"You silly ass!" roared Lowther. "Tom hasn't left enough of you for me to wallop!"

"Wats! If Tom Mewwy has had enough, I am willin' to let him off."

"Oh crumbs!"

"And I am goin' to thwash you next——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a ferocious funk!" chortled Blake. "Look here, Gussy, where do I come in?"

"You come aftah Mannahs, Blake, who comes aftah Lowthah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And poor little me?" gurgled Figgins.

"You will take your turn, Figgins! I am waitin' for you, Lowthah! Will you put those gloves on or not?"

"Oh, all right!" sighed Lowther.

He put the gloves on. Talbot called time. Arthur Augustus, breathless and

a little dizzy, but game, rushed to the attack. It was a terrific rush, and Gussy landed out with both fists as he rushed.

Monty Lowther nimbly side-stepped and the swell of St. Jim's rushed past him. But his hefty blows were not wasted. The miller had stepped into the meadow, coming towards the spot, and had nearly reached it, when Arthur Augustus rushed past Lowther as he landed out.

Bang! Bang! The miller got one on his nose and one in his neck.

"Ow!" roared the miller.

"Wow!"

He went over backwards.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the St. Jim's crowd, almost in hysterics as the miller sat down, roaring, and Arthur Augustus blinked at him blankly.

"Oh cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Awf'ly sowwy, Mr. Milsom—I didn't see you behind that wottah—oh cwumbs!"

"Oh!" roared Mr. Milsom. "Ow! My nose! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am weally feahfully sowwy—I assuah you that I did not see you——" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Lowthah, you wottah, what do you mean by dodgin' away, and makin' me punch Mr. Milsom? I wegard it as a wotten twick!"

"Oh, help!" moaned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Three or four fellows rushed to help the plump miller of Rylcombe to his feet. Mr. Milsom stood gasping for breath and rubbing his nose.

"Pway accept my apology, Mr. Milsom!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Weally and twuly I did not intend—I weally hope you are not offended."

"All right, sir!" gasped the miller.

"Accidents will happen! Ow, my

nose! I wish you hadn't hit quite so 'ard, but it's all right! I shouldn't be likely to be offended with you, sir, after what you did on Monday! Ow!"

"I twust the little boy is all wight, Mr. Milsom?"

"Quite all right, sir, thanks to you—only a bit of a cold!" said the miller. "I'm sorry to see you fighting like this, Master D'Arcy. I've seen you with most of these young gentlemen, and thought you were all friends."

"Yaas, but——"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What's that about Monday?"

"Ain't Master D'Arcy told you about getting my boy out from under the ice?" asked the miller.

"On Monday afternoon?" shrieked Tom.

"Yes. You see——"

"Gussy, you born idiot!"

"Weally, Tom Mewvwy——"

"Tell us about it, Mr. Milsom!" exclaimed Tom.

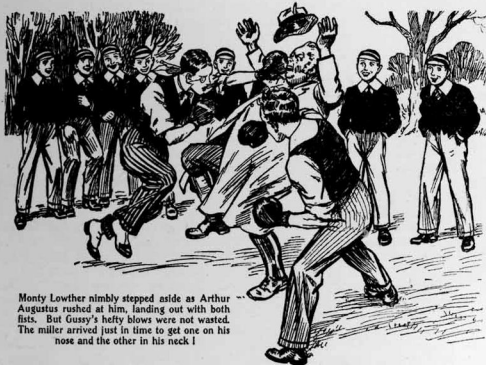
"The kid had gone sliding," explained Mr. Milsom. "The ice cracked and let him through. I saw him from the mill—but you know the distance—it was near your school—and you can fancy what I felt—seeing him go through, and me too far off to help him. And then I saw Master D'Arcy rush out of the wood and go in for him——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Gussy, you potty old ass——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"I tell you, I ran as I've never run before," said Mr. Milsom. "But they were both in the water, and Master D'Arcy was holding him up, and couldn't get out—holding on to the edge of the ice—both of them near frozen——"



Monty Lowther nimbly stepped aside as Arthur Augustus rushed at him, landing out with both fists. But Gussy's hefty blows were not wasted. The miller arrived just in time to get one on his nose and the other in his neck!

"And us playing the goat with snowballs all the time!" gasped Figgins. "If we'd known——"

"I got them out, and hurried them to the mill, to get them warm and dry," said Mr. Milsom. "If I'd been a few minutes later, both of them would have been gone! And Master D'Arcy ain't told you."

"Not a word, the fathead——"

"Well, he's a plucky lad, he is," said the miller, "and you young gentlemen ought to be proud of him instead of fighting with him." He rubbed his nose.

"I twust your nose is not much hurt, Mr. Milsom?"

"That's all right, Master D'Arcy!" said the miller. "But this here fighting——"

"There's not going to be any more, Mr. Milsom!" said Tom Merry.

"Glad to hear that, Master Merry!" And the miller touched his hat, and went on his way down the tow-path.

"You born dummy, Gussy!" roared Blake. "Why didn't you tell us? Did you expect us to guess?"

"So that was why you rushed off?" roared Figgins.

"I could scarcely leave a small boy to ddown. I saw him through the twees, and there was no time to lose, though I was, of course, sowwy not to stop and thwash you New House wottahs——"

"Why didn't you tell us?" bawled Blake.

"I came up to the study to tell you, and you called me a funk, and aftah that, of course, I disdained to explain! It was a mattah of dignity. A fellow has to considah his dig."

"I've a jolly good mind to wallop you, you blithering ass!" hissed Blake. "Letting the whole school think there was a funk in Study No. 6 when——"

"You are goin' to take your turn, Blake! I have not thwashed Lowthah and Mannahs yet——"

"You—you—you burbling cuckoo!" gasped Lowther. "Do you think anybody is going to scrap with you now we know?"

"Yaas, watah! You have called me a funk——"

"You ought to have told us——"

"Well, we never really gave him a chance!" said Tom Merry. "Of course, we never knew——never dreamed——though I did think there must be some mistake—— But we might have known old Gussy better! He's never been a funk, though he's always been a silly ass——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Shoulder high!" said Tom. "Up with him!"

"Hurray!"

Arthur Augustus' gloves were jerked off, and his jacket jammed on. Then he was swept off his feet to the shoulders of Tom Merry and Figgins. He groped for his eyeglass, jammed it in his eye, and blinked at the cheering crowd.

"Bai Jove! Does this mean that you fellows take it back?" he gasped.

"Yes, ass!" hooted Blake.

"Oh, all wight! In that case, I shall westore you to my fwienndship," said Arthur Augustus graciously; "and I am sowwy that I thwashed you, Tom Mewwy!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Tom Merry.

"March him home, you fellows——triumphal march for the giddy hero!"

"Good old Gussy! March! 'See the conquering hero comes!'" chanted Blake.

"Hurray!"

.

And all was calm and bright!

THE END