

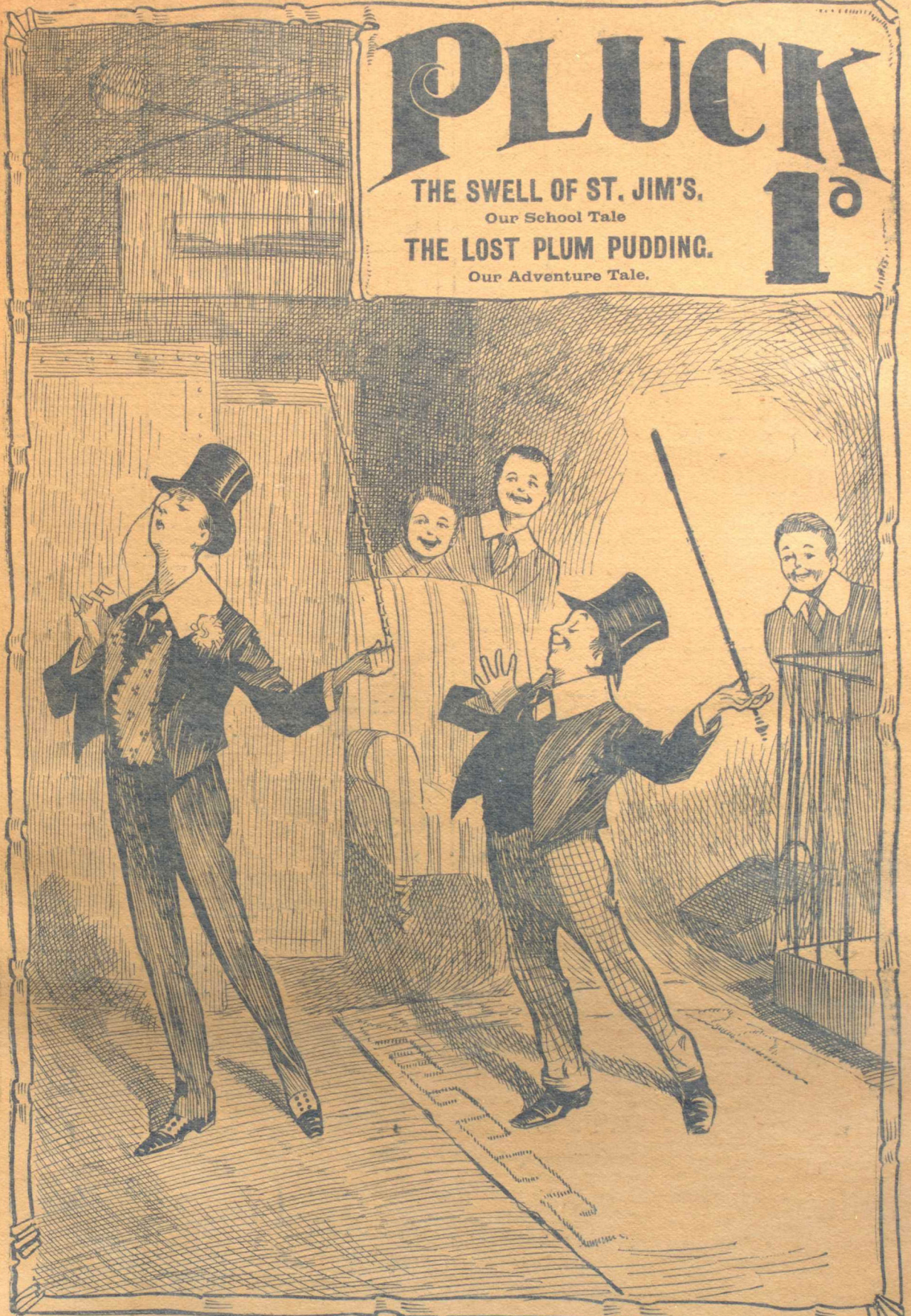
A Grand Long School Tale Every Saturday.

PLUCK

THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S.
Our School Tale

THE LOST PLUM PUDDING.
Our Adventure Tale.

1^d



THE THIRD FORM YOUNGSTER STRUTTED ALONG BEHIND THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S, TWIRLING A POKER IN LIEU OF A CANE, AND KEEPING A SHILLING SCREWED INTO HIS EYE IN IMITATION OF THE NEW BOYS' MONOCLE. (See page 6.)

NO. 112. VOL. 5. NEW SERIES.

A WELCOME BUT ENTIRELY UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIAL:

"To the Editor of *PLUCK*.—Dear Sir,—I am an old man, and an old sailor, living miles away from the sound and smell of the 'deep, blue sea.' A few days ago I got hold of 'Captain Handyman's Christmas.' I read it with unfeigned pleasure—I lived my days over again; and, personally, I thank you for that story for several reasons: Its high moral tone; its true British courage, shown in its noblest characteristics; its proof of the old adage, 'Honesty is the best policy.' Every boy should read it. And I wish you godspeed in providing good, sound, pure reading for the youth of Britain. Every boy who reads *PLUCK* will be the better for it."

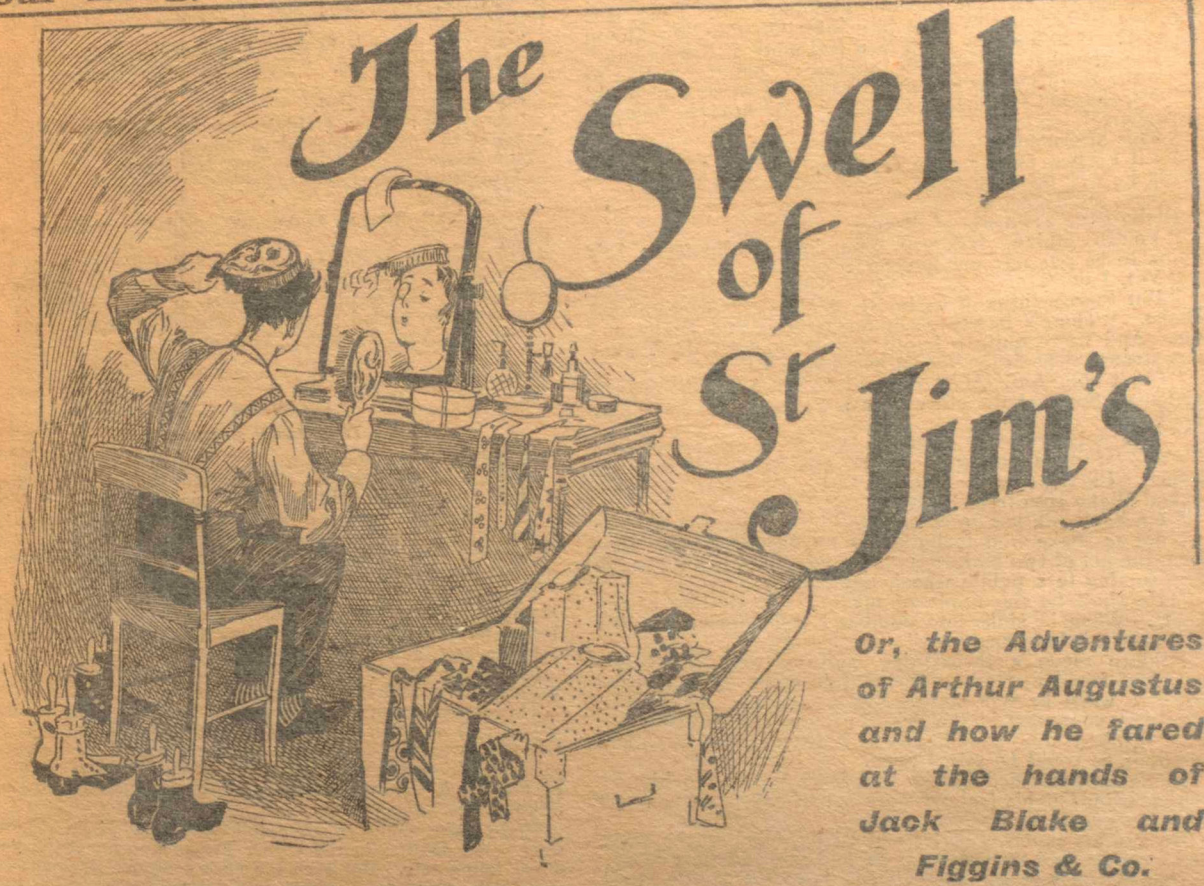
EVERY
SATURDAY.

PLUCK

ONE
PENNY.

[VOL. 5, No. 112, NEW SERIES.]

Our Long, Complete School Tale!



Or, the Adventures
of Arthur Augustus
and how he fared
at the hands of
Jack Blake and
Figgins & Co.

CHAPTER 1.

The Captain Asks a Favour.

"COME in, Blake!"
Jack Blake of St. Jim's entered Kildare's study with a very doubtful expression upon his face. Kildare, besides being head of the School House, was captain of the school, and the most popular fellow at St. Jim's. He was worshipped by the juniors of his own house, and Jack Blake was the foremost of his admirers. Yet there was a very noticeable absence of alacrity about the way Blake accepted the captain's invitation to enter his study. Kildare observed it, and smiled amusedly.
"Don't be uneasy, Blake. I am not going to haul you over the coals this time."

Blake's face cleared, and he grinned. He was oftener in hot water than any other junior in the School House, and he had frequently been called into the captain's study, with painful results to himself. When Kildare called him in his palms had tingled in anticipation, and he was agreeably surprised by the captain's assurance.

"That's all right, Kildare," he said cheerfully. "I wondered what it could be this time. Lickings are off, then?"

"Yes," said Kildare, smiling, "lickings are off. I called

you in because I wanted to speak to you, Blake. Sit down."

Blake sat down. He was fully sensible of the honour of being asked to sit down in the study of the captain of St. Jim's, but his manner was as cool and unconcerned as ever.
"Right you are," he said. "If you want my opinion—"

"I don't."
"Oh," said Blake, "well, what do you want, then?"
"There's a new boy coming to St. Jim's, Blake!" said Kildare seriously.

Blake elevated his eyebrows.
"Nothing astonishing in that, is there?" he queried. "I was a new boy myself once."

"This new boy is a little out of the common."
"Is he coming into the School House?" asked Blake.
"If there's anything no-class about him he ought to be shoved into the New House, you know, along with Figgins."

"He is coming into the School House, and will be in your Form," said Kildare. "His name is D'Arcy—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!"

"As a matter of fact, Blake, the doctor has asked me to keep an eye on him to some extent, as he has suffered from a very indiscreet training. It is probable that he will get into trouble with the other juniors at first, and I don't want

him put upon. Now, I depend upon you, Blake, to see that there is no bullying, no ill-natured persecution.

"Oh!" "I don't mean that I want you to dry-nurse him," said Kildare hastily. "He will learn in time to look out for himself, like the rest of you; but at first I want you to bear with him a little, and not be too rough on him. There are very few boys in your Form, Blake, to whom I could speak like this; but I think I know you well enough to be sure that you will take it in the right spirit."

"I'd do anything you asked me, Kildare!" said the junior hastily.

"Then you'll bear in mind what I've told you?" "Certainly. I suppose from what you say he's a queer sort of a merchant; but I'll take him under my wing, Kildare."

"That's right. You see, he'll probably get quite enough chipping from the New House youngsters."

"Oh, my hat!" said Blake, in dismay. "Is he such a rank out-and-outer as that? We don't want Figgins & Co. getting up on their hind legs and giggling at us. I say, is it too late to arrange to have him sent into the New House instead?"

"I'm afraid it is," said the captain; "but if you like to go to the Head's study and put it to him, I've no doubt—"

"No, thanks!" said Blake hastily. "When is the bouncer expected?"

"This afternoon."

"I'll keep a peeper open for him. Do you know which study he will be stuck into?"

"Yes; Study No. 6."

Blake gave a whistle of dismay. "You're joking, Kildare. You don't really mean he's going to be put into our quarters?"

"Yes, I do."

"But there's three of us in No. 6 already," expostulated Blake. "There's barely room for Herries and Digby and me. And we're quite a happy family, and we don't want any strange dogs in the kennel, you know."

"Can't help that. He's coming into No. 6, for the present at least. Some of the other Fourth Form studies have four in them."

"Yes, only we're so comfy in No. 6 on our own," said Blake. "Still, anything to oblige, especially if it can't be helped. I'll tell Herries and Dig."

And Blake rose from his seat.

"I needn't ask you to be civil to him," remarked Kildare—not to make him feel like an intruder, I mean. He's been the pet of two maiden aunts, so he'll find it a bit rough first coming to a public school, anyway."

"He shall be the apple of my eye, the darling of my heart. When he sinks into slumber I will imprint a tender kiss upon his baby brow—"

Kildare made a threatening gesture, and the junior vanished from the study. The captain of St. Jim's laughed heartily when he was alone. Blake was the coolest and cheekiest youngster in the School House, and probably the most healthy and good-hearted. Kildare liked him, and felt that he could be relied upon.

Blake was gratified by the confidence reposed in him by the captain, but his feelings were not wholly pleasant as he took his way to Study No. 6.

He and his chums, Herries and Digby, filled up the study comfortably, and they were, as he had said, a happy family in No. 6. It was not agreeable to have the family circle broken in upon by the intrusion of a stranger, especially such an individual as the new boy appeared to be by Kildare's description.

Then there was the fellow himself to be considered. The School House—or, at least, the junior section of it—was at war with the other house at St. Jim's, and Blake and his chums were the leaders in the contest.

If the new recruit to their ranks was some extraordinary out-and-outer, Blake knew how joyfully the New House juniors would seize upon the occasion to mercilessly chip No. 6 Study.

Still, as it couldn't be helped, it was best to take it cheerfully, and Blake seldom allowed his serenity to be long disturbed.

His chums, Herries and Digby, were in the study when he went in. Digby was making toffee, and Herries was sitting on the table, giving him advice, which was not very gratefully received, considering that it was given free, gratis, and for nothing. Digby responded only with unintelligible grunts.

"Hallo, you chaps!" said Blake. "I've just had some news from Kildare. There's a new chap coming, and he's stuck in here with us."

"Rats!" "Fact! His name's Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and he's some sort of an out-and-outer, and we've got to be kind to him."

"Bosh! If they shove anybody in here there will be a row!"

"There ain't much room, that's a fact," said Blake, looking round. "If you could take a smaller size in boots, Herries, it would make a difference. You'll have to leave some of your feet outside when you come in, that's all. The worst of it is, that if the new kid is a funny merchant, Figgins & Co. will get hold of it, and chip us no end."

"They've already got a point ahead of us," said Digby, looking up, with a beautiful, crimson countenance, from his toffee-making. "You know Figgy has started the New House Amateur Dramatic Society. They say Kerr is a born actor, and makes up ripping."

"Yes," said Herries, "and later on they're going to give a performance of 'Hamlet,' and the masters are invited. Figgy will take a lot of biscuit over that."

"Oh, rats!" said Blake, rather uneasily. He felt that the New House would score a little with the Amateur Dramatic Society. "They'll get up and make asses of themselves, you'll see; and very likely the whole thing'll fall through."

"They're doing it in deadly earnest," said Herries, with a shake of the head. "They're holding rehearsals in the wood-shed, I hear."

Blake's eyes sparkled. "Are they? Then I think some of us had better be on hand at the next rehearsal to help them through. If they won't invite us, we'll invite ourselves. All guests expected to bring their own pea-shooters."

"Ha, ha!"

"And—" Blake broke off suddenly. "What's the giddy row?"

There was a sound of laughter and many voices in the quadrangle. Study No. 6 was in the fortunate position of overlooking the quad. Blake was at the window in a moment. He looked forth, and uttered an exclamation.

"Oh, my Aunt Tabitha! The new kid!"

CHAPTER 2. The Swell Arrives.

"HERE'S a game!"

It was Figgins, of the New House, who uttered the words. He had just come out of the New House, with his chums, Wynn and Kerr. The three were known all over St. Jim's as Figgins & Co., and they were the leaders in all the alarms and excursions against the School House.

Figgins was long-limbed and lank, the fastest forward among the New House juniors. Wynn was short and fat, but a mighty man in goal. Kerr was of medium size, a reliable half, and a jolly good fellow.

"Here's a game!" repeated Figgins, and the Co. looked up joyfully. "What sort of a giddy kipper is that, chaps?"

The station hack from Rylcombe had driven in at the gates, and stopped. There were trunks piled on the roof till they were in danger of toppling over. There was a lurking grin on the stubbly face of the driver. But the eyes of Figgins & Co. were fixed upon the individual who had alighted from the vehicle.

There were some swagger fellows at St. Jim's. There were some dandies in the Upper Forms who fancied themselves immensely. But even the most gorgeous Brummel in the Sixth would have paled into insignificance beside the new-comer.

He was evidently a new boy, and a junior. He was rather tall for his age, and slim. He was clad in Etons that fitted him like a glove. He wore the silkiest of silk hats, the fanciest of fancy waistcoats, the shiniest of shiny patent leathers, the most delicate of lavender kid gloves. He wore an eyeglass; he had screwed it into his eye, and was looking around him with languid interest.

Figgins took him in at a glance, eyeglass and all. It took the New House chief one second more to realise that this gorgeous stranger was going into the School House. Then he fell round the necks of the Co. and almost wept with joy.

"Oh, dear! Oh, scissors! What is it?" "Ask me another," said Kerr.

"Oh, my aunt!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "And it's going to belong to the School House! Oh, my eye! What larks!"

"Is this—aw—the School House?" asked the stranger, in a languid voice. "Where is the portah to—aw—take in my twunks?"

"His twunks!" said Figgins, in a hollow voice. "Tug that? His twunks! Don't laugh. Let's go and talk to him. He's good and kind schoolmates. There's Blake and his lot at their window, and it's sure to please them."

The Co. chuckled joyously, and they bore down upon the new boy. Blake and his chums from the window of Study No. 6 were surveying the new-comer in dismay. In their

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THE WITCH'S HEADLAND: A Fanciful Tale of Dr. Evade.

IN "PLUCK," P.



The British

wild imaginations they had never calculated for anything like this.

Figgins approached the new boy with an air of deference. A crowd was already gathering round, looking on joyfully. The new-comer turned his monochrome upon Figgins.

"Are you the portah?"

Figgins nearly choked. But he restrained his impulse to massacre the stranger as the spot.

"No," he said, "I am not the portah; I am the portah's aide boy. May I humbly inquire your lordship's name?"

"Certainly. My name is Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Figgins appeared to be suffering from some infernal pain, for he doubled up in the most curious manner.

"His name," he said, turning to the Co., "is Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. This is when we look-ow."

Down went the three in a really excellent performance of the Chinese low-ow.

D'Arcy surveyed them in amazement.

"This is most curious," he said. "What extremely peculiar little boys!"

A roar of laughter from the fellows around him seemed to increase his surprise. He gave them a haughty stare.

"How very rude!" he exclaimed. "Divvah, please wait until someone fetches my twinks."

He handed the jinn's coin, and the man gasped with amazement as he saw that it was a half-sovereign. Half-sovereign tips from schoolboys were rare to the driver of the station taxi, and he promptly transferred it to his pocket, after lifting it to assure himself that it was a good one.

"Thanky kindly, sir!" he said. "You're a gent, you are!"

D'Arcy received this tribute with a haughty nod, and walked towards the School House. His carriage was lotty, not to describe it as a strut. The grunting boys made way for him. Up jumped Figgins & Co., and fell in behind him in file, Figgins carefully imitating his strut, and the Co. behind carefully following his example.

The sight was too ridiculous for words, and the boys yelled. Thus they passed in procession up the steps of the School House, D'Arcy quite unconscious of his admiring following.

Mr. Kidd, the master of the New House, came out of his study to see what the uproar was about, and met the procession at the door.

"Dear me!" ejaculated the housemaster.

He tried heroically not to laugh, but it was no use. The sight of D'Arcy strutting along, and Figgins & Co. strutting behind him, with solemn faces, was too much, and he burst into a roar.

"Dear me! Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy had allowed his eyeglass to fall. He now screwed it into his eye again, and surveyed the housemaster.

"Am I lost to prevent the cause of your merriment," he remarked. "May I beg of you to direct me to the quarters of the housemaster?"

"Yes, certainly! Ha, ha! Figgins, how dare you! Leave off this instant!"

Figgins & Co. vanished. From the quad came howl on howl of laughter. The New House Boys were enjoying the joke immensely.

"I am the housemaster," said Mr. Kidd impressively. But it he expected Arthur Augustus to be impressed, he was mistaken.

"Aw—wally!" said D'Arcy. "My name is D'Arcy—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and I am a new boy. I am very pleased to make your acquaintance."

And he extended his hand, condescendingly to the housemaster.

Mr. Kidd looked at it as if it were some peculiar zoological specimen submitted for his inspection.

"Dear me!" he said to himself. "So this is the new boy the Head told me about. He is more absurd than I thought. I shall have to—"

"Kindly give directions for my twinks to be taken to my rooms," said D'Arcy, with a wave of the hand. "I should like my tee sent up immediately. The tee must be strong, and the muffins hot. If the muffins are cold I shall complain to the doctah. Where are my quarters?"

Mr. Kidd gasped feebly.

"Blake!"

Blake was coming downstairs.

"Yes, sir."

"This is D'Arcy, who is to share your study. Take him up. Take him into the dining-room at tea-time. Take him can make him understand things. See if you can."

And the housemaster returned into his study and closed the door. Another Augustus was a little too much for him.

"Come on, kid," said Blake.

D'Arcy stared at him.

"Are you addressing me?"

"Yes, I am, lutead! I told you to come along."

"You are insolent. Unless I am treated with great respect I shall be compelled to—"

Blake gasped.

Arthur Augustus never knew how near he was at that moment to having his tall hat flattened on his head, and his head knocked against the wall.

Blake remembered his promise to Kildare in time, and restrained himself from committing assault and battery.

"You are to share our study—Study No. 5," he explained patiently. "I want to show you the way. Please follow me."

"You should have spoken like that at first," said D'Arcy. "Lead the way, I will follow. I trust my wooms are not very high up."

"Not very," said Blake faintly. "Come along, for goodness' sake!"

D'Arcy followed him up to the second corridor, to the door of No. 5 Study. When Blake showed him into that famous apartment he looked about him with an expression of calm disapproval, which got Herries' and Dig's backs up at once.

"You don't mean to say that these are my quarters?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I do."

"It is very inconsiderate of Doctah Holmes to give me so extremely small a woom," said D'Arcy. "I suppose I must submit, however. My aunts said I should have to submit to many discomforts at a public school."

"Your aunts were really sensible women," said Blake. "They were quite right. Did they tell you also that if you put on side you might get your neck wrung?"

"N-no."

"Ah, that was an oversight on their part. Did they warn you that if you turned up your nose at a fellow's study you might have that same nose rubbed in the ashes in the grate?"

"N-n-no."

"A pity! They ought to have warned you of that," said Blake, shaking his head.

D'Arcy looked at Blake woodenly, evidently not quite knowing what to make of him.

"What are these boys doing in my woom?" he asked. "I cannot have my quarters crowded up like this!"

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"Please, sir, I'm the new boy."

"THE WITCH'S HEADLAND"
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Up to this moment sheer amazement had held Herries and Digby silent. But this was too much. With one accord they rushed upon the stranger to slay him.

Blake jumped in the way just in time.

"Hold on," he exclaimed—"hold on, you chaps! No ball—I mean, you're off-side! Kildare asked me to see that he wasn't slain, or I'd have slain him myself before this. Shut up, and let the prig alone!"

"Look here, Blake," said Herries wrathfully, "if you think I'm going to put up with that—that thing in this study you've made a big mistake!"

"He wants killing!" said Digby, equally incensed. "He wants killing very badly!"

"Oh, do shut up, you two! Leave him to your uncle," said Blake. "We shall have to educate him somehow if he's going to remain in this study. But it's no good punching his head; though, of course, there would be some satisfaction in it. We must do it all by kindness." He turned to the new boy again. "Master D'Arcy, you are going to share this study with us three. You'll have a bed in the big dormitory upstairs."

"Impossible! I must have a bed-room to myself. And as for sharing this study, I weally could not. There would not be woom enough. Besides, my aunts warned me most particularly to be careful what company I kept at this school; and weally—"

"I shall slay him—I know I shall!" said Herries wildly. "Blake, you beast, what did you want to take him under your wing for?"

Blake was looking rather worried.

"How was I to know he was such an out-and-outer?" he exclaimed. "Kildare admitted that he was a funny sort of beast, but I never anticipated anything like this. Perhaps," he went on, cocking his eye thoughtfully at the new boy—"perhaps it would be better to give him a hiding to start with."

Arthur Augustus made a hurried movement towards the door.

"Weally," he exclaimed, "you must not do anythin' so bwuttal! I object."

Blake grinned.

"Hallo! What's all that thundering row on the stairs?" he exclaimed suddenly.

A loud thumping and bumping was audible from without. The three chums rushed from the study.

The school porter was coming up with a heavy trunk, which he bumped down viciously on every second stair. Down in the hall were trunks and hat-boxes in numerous array. The porter was perspiring and murmuring expressive words.

"Hallo, Taggles!" said Blake. "Who does all that giddy luggage belong to?"

"Ask 'im," said the porter, with a far from amiable look at D'Arcy.

Blake gave a whistle.

"All that stuff yours, D'Arcy?"

"Those few boxes are mine," said D'Arcy. "The west is at the station."

"The rest! You don't mean to say there is any more?" said Blake feebly. "Oh, hold me up, somebody! What's in 'em?"

"My clothes," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "My aunties thought I had bettah bring only a few things with me."

"Only a few things! Phew!"

"Yes. I have only three silk hats, and not more than six pairs of boots. Of course, I had to bring dress-clothes; but I limited myself to ten waistcoats. Then there are my football things—"

"Your what?" gurgled Blake. "You don't mean to say you play footer?"

"I have never yet played," said D'Arcy, "because it is a wuff game. I do not approve of wuff games. But I am told that football is a great feature at public schools, and so I shall probably play in the first eleven."

Blake held on to the banisters.

"He'll probably play in the first eleven!" he said faintly. "Pinch me, somebody, and let me see if I'm awake."

Digby obliged, with what seemed to Blake unnecessary zest.

"Leggo, you howling idiot! What do you want to take a lump out of me for?"

"Well, you asked for it," said Digby. "Don't be unreasonable. Hallo, there goes the giddy tea-bell!"

"Come on, chaps! Do you hear, D'Arcy? Tea. T-e-a—tea!"

"But I have already ordered my tea to be sent up," said D'Arcy.

"Whom did you order?"

"The housemash."

"Oh, my Aunt Matilda! Chaps, it's no good talking to him. This is a time for action, and not for words."

So saying, Blake seized D'Arcy by the collar and ran him down the stairs. Herries and Digby followed, laughing. "Leggo!" roared D'Arcy, his languid drawl quite forgotten for the moment. "Leggo, you brute! You'll—you'll disawwange my necktie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a howl from the boys on the stairs. "Mind you don't disawwange his necktie, Blake!"

Headless of D'Arcy's frantic expostulations, Blake ran him down into the dining-hall, and plunged him hot and breathless into a seat at the Fourth Form table.

"Now, sit still and hold your tongue, for goodness' sake!" he exclaimed.

And D'Arcy, speechless with amazement and indignation, set to work restoring his rumpled necktie into its place, and trying to smooth his crumpled collar.

CHAPTER 3,

Arthur Augustus Does Not Enjoy Himself.

MR. LATHOM, the master of the Fourth, was in charge of the table. Mr. Lathom was a little gentleman in glasses, extremely short-sighted, a circumstance of which the boys at his table were generally not slow to take advantage. He was a solemn little man, much given to imparting wisdom in the form of aphorisms.

"You must be more quiet, boys!" he said, raising his hand. "Silence is—ah—golden. Let the meal proceed in silence."

He had noticed an unusual amount of whispering and giggling, but Arthur Augustus had not yet dawned upon him. There was silence for about two seconds after Mr. Lathom's admonition, and then the buzz of suppressed talk broke forth again.

"What is it, Blake?" murmured Percy Mellish. "Where did you pick it up?"

"I found it in the hall," replied Blake.

"What's its name?"

"Arthur Augustus D'Arcy."

"My hat!"

Arthur Augustus sat with speechless indignation listening to the comments passed with schoolboy freedom upon his personal appearance.

"What a giddy collar!"

"And that necktie!"

"My eyes, did you ever see a waistcoat like that before!"

"And look at our twousers! How nicely they are cweased!" said Percy Mellish.

"And our giddy boots!"

"And, oh, chaps, seek his spots—I mean, spot his socks!"

"And a giddy gold watchchain!"

"And an eyeglass!"

"And diamond studs!"

Arthur Augustus glowered. He was getting annoyed. The tea was weak and half cold, the bread and butter was tasteless to one so pampered in his training. It was the custom at St. Jim's for the boys to supplement the somewhat plain fare out of their own pockets, but as it was D'Arcy's first day at the school, he knew nothing about that. He eyed his plate with disdain, and sniffed with disgust when he tasted his tea; and the running commentary upon him up and down the table was very trying.

"I think you are extremely wude boys!" he said, looking round him. "I am accustomed to bein' tweated with respect."

"We must tweat him with respect!" said Percy Mellish.

"How's that for a start?"

He jerked a pellet of bread across the table, and caught Augustus in the eye. D'Arcy jumped up, startled and hurt.

"Sit down, there," said Mr. Lathom—"sit down!"

"He thwew somethin' at me!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I am extremely hurt!"

"Sit down!"

Arthur Augustus sat down.

"You beastly little sneak!" hissed Percy across the table. "I'll wring your beastly little neck presently!"

"No, you won't!" said Blake. "Let him alone. Fun's all very well, but you don't want to chuck things at him."

"Mind your own business!"

"Silence!" said Mr. Lathom. "If there is any more talking, I shall cane the next offender!"

This threat had the effect of restoring a brief silence. Arthur Augustus, for the moment relieved of his tormentors, gave his attention more fully to his tea. He had come a long way, and he was hungry. There was nothing so fastidious that he really fancied, but hunger knows no fastidiousness. He decided to make the best of what he could get.

Percy Mellish was helping himself from a little jar of strawberry-jam, and D'Arcy thought that some of that would be an improvement upon his dreadfully tasteless

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IN "PLUCK."

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bread and butter, so in the politest way he requested Percy to pass the jar across. Percy stared at him.

"What did you say, you horrid bouncer?"

"I requested you to pass me the jam," replied D'Arcy.

"Catch me!"

"You are wude. Kindly pass me the jam."

"Rats!"

As Percy evidently didn't intend to oblige, Arthur Augustus rose and reached across for the jar, and brought it to his own side of the table. He proceeded to help himself, while Percy stared at him in rage and astonishment.

"Give me my jam, you thieving little beast!" he exclaimed, reaching across.

"What's the matter there?" said Mr. Lathom, frowning.

"This new kid is scoffing my jam, sir, and he won't give it back to me!" howled Percy.

"Dear me! Boy, what is your name?"

"Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, my good man!"

"Your—your what? Are you mad, boy? How dare you address me like that? Call me 'Sir'!"

"Weally—"

"How dare you take Mellish's jam? Return it to him instantly!"

D'Arcy obeyed. As he had already taken a big spoonful on his plate, the obedience did not cost him much. He passed the jar back, and Percy received it with burning indignation.

He could not wreak his vengeance while Mr. Lathom's eye was in that direction, but as soon as the master's attention wandered Percy lowered himself on his seat, reached under the table with his foot, and gave D'Arcy a kick on the shin.

This sudden attack from below completely upset D'Arcy. He gave a yell of surprise and pain, and jumped up, knocking over backwards the form upon which he was sitting. There were three other boys on the form, and they went down, sprawling and yelling with alarm.

One of them was in the act of raising his teacup to his mouth, and in his fall the cup jerked from his hand, and the contents went over D'Arcy—all over his beautiful waistcoat—and he gave a howl of woe unspeakable.

Percy Mellish, a little alarmed at the unforeseen result of his reprisal, sat looking as innocent as he could. Mr. Lathom jumped up, and came along the table.

"What do you mean by pushing this form over, D'Arcy?" he exclaimed, seizing the new boy by the collar. "How dare you, sir, behave like a savage at a public school—how dare you?"

Poor D'Arcy coloured to the roots of his hair. That he—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—should be accused of acting like a savage—he whose charming manners were the admiration of countless maiden aunts! It seemed like a ghastly dream! "Sir," he gasped—"sir, you are—aw—insultin'! I—aw—shall complain to the doctah! I did not come to this—aw—school to be insulted!"

Mr. Lathom shook him.

"Is this impertinence, or is this boy weak in the head?" he gasped. "Boys, how dare you laugh? There is nothing comical in such absurdity!"

But the juniors evidently thought otherwise, for they simply yelled.

"Pway welease me, my good man!" said D'Arcy. "You are soilin' my collah and disawwanging my necktie!"

Mr. Lathom breathed hard.

"I think," continued D'Arcy, "you should punish the boy who kicked me so brutally undah the table. It is weally vewy painful!"

"Oh, who kicked you?"

"That wude and bwntal boy!" said D'Arcy, pointing to Mellish. "I think he should be flogged, or expelled from the college!"

"Mellish, did you kick D'Arcy?"

"Pardon me!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "That question, sir, seems to imply a doubt of my—aw—vewacity, and I am not accustomed—"

"Silence! Boys, I insist that you cease laughing! Mellish, answer me!"

"I may have knocked against him, sir," said Percy.

"You could only have done it on purpose. Come into my study after tea."

Percy looked daggers at D'Arcy. Mr. Lathom, passing his hand over his brow, went back to his seat. The form was replaced, and the boys sat down again.

"Oh, you little sneak!" whispered Percy as soon as he dared. "I'll be even with you for this! I'll jam your rotten eyeglass down your throat!"

"Who is that speaking?" asked Mr. Lathom, peering down the table.

"It is that disagweeable boy again!" said D'Arcy. "He is threatening to jam my eyeglass down my throat, and I protest—"

"You again, Mellish! I shall not forget this!"

Percy was simply furious, but he did not venture to renew his threats to D'Arcy. He contented himself with giving him ferocious glances.

That eventful meal was finished at last, and the boys trooped out. Percy Mellish wanted badly to interview the new boy, but he could not neglect Mr. Lathom's kind invitation to follow him to his study. Arrived there, the master of the Fourth gave him a couple of cuts on each hand and a few words of warning.

"You appear to have picked upon this new boy because he is simple," he said. "I will not have such conduct! If I hear of anything of the kind again I shall cane you severely."

And Percy left the study in a white heat. After Mr. Lathom's warning, he dared not openly "go for" the new boy, but he was determined not to be deprived of his vengeance. He set his wits to work to plot and plan. Percy Mellish was not a good-natured boy. He was Jack Blake's rival for the leadership of the School House juniors; but he had no chance against Blake, for his qualities were not such as to endear him to his schoolfellows.

The chums of Study No. 6 were always ready for fun of a wholesome and good-natured kind, but to Percy Mellish a joke never seemed really a joke unless someone was hurt. When he felt himself aggrieved he generally contrived to get his own back somehow, very often by "ways that are dark." And now, as he schemed how to obtain vengeance upon D'Arcy without risking a caning, it was not long before he hit upon an idea. The troubles of that day were not yet over for the new boy.

CHAPTER 4.

Taking the Stranger In.

KILDARE met Blake in the hall.

"Well, what do you think of the new arrival, Blake?" he asked.

Blake made a grimace.

"He's a—a—well, there's no word to describe him!" he said. "I never met anything exactly like it before. He's a scorcher! He's a terror! Every chap in the Form wants to boil him in oil!"

Kildare laughed.

"But you won't let them do it, Blake?"

"That's all right," said Blake. "I've taken him under my wing. I will try to educate him and show him what's what, and I won't let him be bullied. I'll bring him up in the way he should go, don't you worry—what?"

"I rely on you, Blake."

Blake sought out the new boy, and piloted him to Study No. 6. D'Arcy's numerous boxes had been taken up to the dormitory, but the biggest of all had been shoved into the study by the porter, who wanted to get out of carrying it up the next flight. It pretty well filled up the room, and Herries and Digby were holding a counsel upon it when Blake arrived with the owner. Herries had borrowed a wood chopper, and he was banging at the box when D'Arcy came in.

"Whatevah are you doin'?" exclaimed D'Arcy, in dismay. "Leave off, leave off. My dwess clothes are in that trunk!"

"Are they?" said Herries. "Well, I'm sorry for your dwess clothes, because I'm going to use the trunk for firewood."

"You must not; you must not, weally. If you touch my trunk again, you will weally pwovoke me to violence!" exclaimed D'Arcy excitedly.

Herries dropped the chopper, and jumped up with a warlike look.

"That's just what I want. Come on. Get out of the way, Blake, you beast! He's challenged me to fight him, and I'm going to."

"You keep your wool on. You mustn't hit him."

"I'll hit you if you don't mind!"

"You can hit me if you like," said Jack, "but you must let that maniac alone. I tell you I've promised Kildare."

Herries looked as if he would hit him for a moment, but he thought better of it. He took up the chopper again.

"No, chuck that," said Blake. "Hang it, you mustn't chop up his trunk."

"Do you think we're going to have it in here?" demanded Herries, in wrath. "The brute will take up enough room himself, without his beastly trunk."

"Give me a hand with it into the box-room, then."

"I'm not going to carry his blooming boxes about."

"Don't be a pig. Lend me a hand."

Herries reluctantly consented, and the offending trunk was borne away. D'Arcy raised an ineffectual protest.

When Blake returned he gave the new boy a serious talking to. He was beginning to get a little out of patience himself.

"Look here, D'Arcy," he said, "your manners and customs may be all right in the monkey-house you seem to have come from, but they won't do for St. Jim's. You'll have to change 'em or you'll be ragged. Do you understand?"

D'Arcy stared at him.

"I've stood up for you," continued Jack, "because you don't know the ropes, and I want to make things easy for you."

"You have been vewy good," admitted D'Arcy. "I am extremely obliged to you, and I regard you as a friend."

"Well, take a friend's advice," said Blake. "Don't put on side. Don't act the giddy goat more than you can help. Don't sneak. You told tales in the dining-hall. What sort of a pig do you call yourself?"

"The disagreeable boy kicked me."

"Yes, and if you had punched his head for it, that would have been all right, but you told tales and got him a caning. That was mean, cowardly, no class, and ungentlemanly."

The last word moved D'Arcy more than all the others.

"I do not know the wules of this college," he said. "If you say that it is considered ungentlemanly here to complain when one is brutally assaulted, I can only express my surprise. I will avoid a repetition of the action."

"That's right. Stick to that, and don't be a beastly sneak," said Blake encouragingly; "and don't start wolfing another chap's tommy, either."

"But—"

"You see, the college provides only bread and scrape, and we buy the other things ourselves. Mellish laid out sevenpence-halfpenny on that pot of jam, and he naturally didn't want it scoffed. You've got plenty of money to buy things for yourself if you want them."

"Certainly—certainly, I was not aware that the jam was private property," said D'Arcy. "I weally owe the person an apology, though he was so disagreeable."

"You see, he ain't such a howling bounder after all, chaps," said Blake, very pleased with the new boy's docility. "When he understands things better, he will leave off playing the giddy ox, you'll see. You can go and work off that apology, D'Arcy."

D'Arcy left the study in search of Percy. He met him in the passage, soon after his caning. Percy glowered at him. Arthur Augustus screwed his eyeglass into his eye, and approached Mellish with his best bow.

"I owe you an apology," he said gracefully. "I was not aware that the jam I took was your private property. I apologise."

Percy's face cleared. It was necessary for the success of the scheme of vengeance he had formed that he should make it up with D'Arcy, and win his confidence. This gave him an opening.

"Don't mention it," he said gracefully. "I was a little hasty. I have just had a licking, but bless you, I don't mind that in the least! It was like my cheek to kick a superior person like yourself. I hope you will forgive me."

"With pleasuah," replied D'Arcy.

"By the way," continued Mellish, "where are you going to sleep to-night? Of course, a fellow like you will have a bed-room to himself. Only us common chaps sleep in dormitories."

"Blake says I must sleep in the dormitory like the othahs."

"That's all my eye. Don't you trust that chap, D'Arcy. He's jealous of you because you're so superior, and wants to keep you out of having a bed-room to yourself. Now, I put it to you—is it likely that Dr. Holmes would put a fellow of your class to sleep in a dormitory along with a lot of riff-raff?"

"Weally, it did seem to me vewy impwobable."

"I should say so," said Percy emphatically. "The fact is, the doctor asked me to show you to your room to-night. In case of any rough horse-play from the common boys here, you are to have a bed-room to yourself in the other building. Don't say a word to any of the others, or they may start on you before going to bed. Just before bedtime, I'll show you where you are to go."

"I am extremely obliged to you," said D'Arcy.

"Don't mention it. It's always a pleasure to a boy of my humble class to do anything for a superior person."

"I suppose so," assented D'Arcy simply.

Percy ground his teeth, but he managed to smile, and D'Arcy left him without a suspicion. He did not return to No. 6 Study, but wandered into the common-room. There he beheld a scene that filled him with indignation.

A number of Third Form youngsters were amusing themselves with a new game. One of them strutted up and down with an enormous silk hat on his head, twirling the poker in lieu of a cane, and keeping a shilling screwed into his eye in imitation of the new boy's monocle. The rest were

screaming with laughter, which was redoubled as D'Arcy was sighted.

"How dare you laugh?" exclaimed Miggs Minor, whose performance was exciting the youngsters to such mirth. "Don't you know who I am? My name—aw—is Arthur Augustus Julius Caesar D'Arcy. Get off the earth, all you common people."

D'Arcy beat a retreat from the room, the junior strutting behind him.

Mr. Kidd, the housemaster, spotted him and called him into his study. He gave him some sound advice, which had about the same effect upon him as water on a duck's back, and asked him questions concerning his scholastic attainments which really frightened him. Then he gave him some preparation to do for the morrow's work, and sent him to his study.

D'Arcy was looking very blue when he came into No. 6. He had been under a tutor at home, who was too much afraid of his dotting aunts to make him work, and though he was not naturally a fool, his training had almost made him one.

At St. Jim's, however, work was evidently the order of the day. It was a change that was beneficial, but which he did not appreciate.

He came into the study looking doleful. The table was completely occupied by the three chums, who were also preparing their lessons. Herries and Digby showed no inclination to move, but Blake made room for him.

"Get along, you chaps," he said. "Don't be pigs. Sentez-vous ici, mon garcon. I'll lend you a hand if you like."

"Thank you," said D'Arcy gratefully.

Blake lent a hand, as he termed it, and made the new boy's ordeal a good deal easier. When their prep was finished, the chums left the study, and D'Arcy was left alone. Blake felt that he had well fulfilled his promise to Kildare, and he did not feel inclined to burden himself with a helpless duffer for the rest of the evening.

D'Arcy soon grew tired of the study, but a doubt as to the reception he would get outside kept him there for some time. Finally, growing dreadfully bored, he put on his hat and walked out.

A senior came down the passage and stared at him in passing. Without a word he reached out and knocked D'Arcy's hat off. The shiny topper went rolling along the passage, and D'Arcy uttered an exclamation of dismay and rage.

"Don't do that again," said the Sixth Former, pausing on.

D'Arcy stared after him in amazement, and then picked up his hat and put it on again. He walked on, past the Sixth studies, and the door of one of them opened, and Hadden, of the Sixth, came out. He glanced at the junior, and knocked his hat off.

"Don't do that again," he said, frowning.

And he passed on.

D'Arcy staggered against the wall in sheer astonishment. That the big boys should knock his hat off was unpleasant, but not inexplicable. But what they could possibly mean by telling him not to do it again was past his comprehension. He walked on as soon as he had replaced his topper, and as he entered the hall, again the unfortunate hat was knocked over his eyes. He swung round fiercely to find a stalwart Sixth Former glowering at him.

"What do you mean by it, kid?" exclaimed the latter.

"Mean by what?"

"Don't do it again, that's all!"

And the senior scowled at him and strode away.

D'Arcy gasped with amazement. He began to think that he had come into a lunatic asylum in mistake for a school. His hat was beginning to show signs of wear and tear, and for it had not been handled gently. He smoothed down the ruffled nap as well as he could with his sleeve, and replaced the hat on his head, and left the schoolhouse. He heard voices in the gym., and the light was inviting, so he strolled in there.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was there. He was talking to a thin-faced, rather sour-looking fellow, whom D'Arcy did not know, but whom anybody else there could have told him was Monteith, the head prefect of the New House at St. Jim's, generally known among the schoolhouse youngsters as "Cad Monteith."

Monteith glanced at D'Arcy, a sneer upon his face.

"Is that how you allow your juniors to behave, Kildare?"

He asked, shrugging his narrow shoulders.

Kildare bit his lip and glanced at D'Arcy.

"D'Arcy, come here."

D'Arcy obeyed.

"Take that hat off!"

"What?"

"Take that hat off!"

"What's the matter with it?"

"Take it off!"

D'Arcy was inclined to refuse, but the glint in Kildare's eye decided him. He removed the offending headgear and held it in his hand.

"I think you're all mad here!" he exclaimed. "I'm d'wivvy I came. The school isn't fit for a gentleman!"

"By Moses!" said Monteith. "If a junior of my house spoke to me like that, I'd take the skin off his back!"

"He doesn't understand," said Kildare shortly. "D'Arcy, you must not speak like that. You can go and put your hat away. Juniors are not allowed to wear silk hats except upon Sundays, or when taken out by the masters."

"I am—aw—accustomed to pleasing myself in such matters," said D'Arcy, "and I certainly do not feel inclined to welinquish—"

"Take that hat away instantly!" Kildare looked savage, and D'Arcy stopped short in his remarks and obeyed in a hurry. He made his way to the door through a grinning crowd.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Figgins, the New House chief. "Did you ever see anything like it? I say, Aubrey, are there any more at home like you?"

"My name is not Aubrey," said D'Arcy, "and I consider your question—aw—impertinent!"

"Oh, I'm impertinent, am I, you juggins? Gimme that topper!"

"I wefuse!" The hat was jerked away before he could finish.

He made a spring to rescue it, but Figgins held it fast, and the Co. seized hold of D'Arcy, and held him back.

Figgins examined the hat critically.

"H'm! This fife wants brushing," he remarked. "I'll brush it for you, Aubrey. You can trust it to me, Adolphus. See me brush it, Algernon."

He brushed it with his sleeve; but as he brushed it the wrong way, its appearance could not be said to be improved.

Arthur Augustus gave a howl.

"Give me my hat, you wuffian!"

"Certainly, when I've finished with it. There's a dent in the side; I must straighten that out for you."

Figgins straightened it out, and made a big bulge in the place of a little dent. Arthur Augustus tore himself loose from the Co., and seized his hat and tried to wrench it away. Figgins held it fast, and the result of the tug-of-war was that the brim came off in D'Arcy's clutch, and the rest remained to Figgins.

"Dear me!" said Figgins. "You've quite spoiled this hat. Permit me to return it to your highness."

He returned it, jamming it down tight over the new boy's ears. D'Arcy, with some difficulty, dragged it off, and beat a retreat from the gym. Almost in tears, he returned to the School House. There he met Percy Mellish.

"Hallo!" said that bright youth. "Getting near bed-time. Would you like to go to your room, my lord?"

"Yes," quavered D'Arcy. "The hwutes have spoiled my hat! I nevah met such wuff hwutes in all my life! I think I should like to go to my woom."

"Come along, then, sir." And Percy led the way. He crossed the quadrangle towards the New House, and the unsuspecting new boy followed him. Arthur Augustus knew nothing of the rivalry between the two houses at St. Jim's, or what was likely to befall a boy of one house found wandering in the other.

"You see," explained Percy as he went along, at the same

time keeping a wary eye open for New House fellows, "the Head has arranged for you to have a room in the other house, so as to be sure there's no horse play. It would hurt him awfully if you were treated with disrespect by any of the juniors. If anybody comes into your bed-room, don't stand on ceremony with him. Tell him to get out, and if he begins any nonsense, shy a pillow at him. That's how you have to treat these fellows."

"Very good," said D'Arcy.

They entered the New House, and Percy led the way to Monteith's room. He knew that the New House prefect was in the gymnasium, and so the room was sure to be empty. D'Arcy surveyed the cosy apartment with much satisfaction. Its aspect was very different from that of the long, white-walled dormitory assigned to the juniors.

There were curtains to the windows, bookshelves on the



Figgins allowed the School House Juniors to get within easy range, and then directed a stream of soda-water full at them. Arthur Augustus caught it fairly in the neck. (See page 13.)

walls, a handsome desk, and a table. The bed was let into a recess in the wall, and a big flowered screen shut it off from view.

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy, "this is vewy comfortable! It is more like home. I am extremely obliged to you, my lad!"

Percy's teeth came together at being called "my lad" by the new boy, and for a moment he looked as if he could eat D'Arcy. But he controlled himself.

"I hope you'll sleep well," he said. "Please ring when you want your hot water in the morning. Don't forget what I said about not standing any nonsense if you are disturbed. Just shy a pillow or a bolster."

"I will wemembah. Good-night!"

"Pleasant dreams!" said Percy sardonically.

Arthur Augustus might have pleasant dreams, but he was

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certain to have an unpleasant awakening when Monteith came to his room.

Percy escaped unnoticed from the New House. Arthur Augustus proceeded to undress and get into bed. He was tired, and he was soon sleeping as sound as a top. Nor did he awake at the sound of voices and footsteps.

CHAPTER 5.

Arthur Augustus on his Mettle.

JAMES MONTEITH, the head prefect of the New House, came into his room. His chum Sleath, the treasurer of the school clubs, followed him in, and closed the door. Monteith looked in some surprise at the gas, which was turned low.

"Hallo! Somebody's lighted my gas!" he said, turning it up. "My fag, I suppose. Unusually thoughtful of Figgins. Sit down and make yourself comfy, Sleath. I've got some new smokes in that drawer."

"No chance of any beastly master poking his nose in, I suppose?"

"No, not to-night." Monteith opened the drawer and drew out a packet of cigarettes. "Here you are, Sleath—help yourself."

"Right-ho!"

Sleath selected a cigarette, and took up the matchbox. He put the cigarette between his lips, and struck a match. And then his hand stopped half-way.

"What's that?"

"What's what?"

"Thought I heard something."

"You're as nervous as an old woman when you're going to have a smoke!" said Monteith scornfully.

"Well, it would be no joke to be spotted," said Sleath uneasily. "It would be worse for you than for me, because you're a prefect; and you'd get the sack quick enough if you were found smoking."

"Well, I'm not going to be found. Give me a match."

Sleath struck another vesta, and then blew it out, and started to his feet.

"I tell you I heard something then!"

"So did I!" said the prefect uneasily, looking round. "Like somebody breathing. Can there be a fag hidden in the room watching us?"

"By Moses, if there is we'll skin him alive!"

The smokes were hurriedly put out of sight. The two Sixth Formers began to search the room. Monteith jerked away the big screen, and gasped in astonishment at what he saw. There, folded neatly upon a chair, were the clothes of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. There, peacefully slumbering in the bed, was Arthur Augustus himself.

Monteith could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Do you see him?" he gasped.

"Rather!" said Sleath, grinning. "My word! I've heard of some cheeky things, but for a junior to go to sleep in a prefect's bed—well, my word!"

"Who is it?" muttered Monteith. "It's not one of the juniors of our house."

"Surely a School House kid would never dare—"

"It is a School House kid!" interrupted Monteith. "Yes; I know him now. It's a new boy that came to-day—a soft sort of silly goat. He checked Kildare in the gym, but I never thought he'd have nerve enough for this!"

"I say, somebody must have put him up to it—fooled him, perhaps."

"Perhaps, I'm going to give him a lesson, all the same. Hand me that cane. Now jerk the bedclothes off."

Sleath did as directed. The bedclothes came off with a jerk, and D'Arcy, suddenly startled out of his slumber, sat up, shivering and blinking. He had taken Monteith's night-shirt, finding it on the bed, and his own night-garments being he knew not where. He blinked at the two seniors.

"How dare you?" he exclaimed angrily. "How dare you disturb me? Go away at once!"

"Yes, I can see myself doing that!" said Monteith. "Take that, you cheeky young scoundrel, and that, and—"

He began to lay the cane about the new boy. The cuts stung the unprotected skin terribly, and the boy roared with pain. He remembered Mellish's advice, and caught up a pillow and hurled it at the prefect.

Monteith had expected nothing of the sort, and the missile caught him in the face and sent him flying backwards. He went reeling against the table. The table wasn't built to stand that kind of usage; it went over with a crash, hurling books and papers and inkpot far and wide.

Sleath made a spring at D'Arcy. The new boy's blood was up. He let Sleath have the bolster with all his force, and the senior was bowled over like a ninepin, falling on top of Monteith.

"Get out of my woom, both of you!" cried D'Arcy indignantly. "I shall complain to the doctah of this!"

Monteith jumped up. He was hurt; his dignity was hurt,

and his legs were hurt. He rushed at the boy on the bed and began to thrash him with the cane in the most brutal manner.

D'Arcy yelled and wriggled. He skipped out of bed, catching two or three stingers on his bare legs as he did so, and dodged round the room, yelling like a Red Indian.

Monteith, blind with rage, chased him, cutting at him savagely.

Round the over-set table they went, D'Arcy yelling with pain as the cane made active play on his back and legs. Desperate with the pain, he seized a chair and hurled it at the prefect. Again Monteith was bowled over, and D'Arcy made a dash for the door. Sleath interposed and caught him, and dragged him back, yelling. He tore himself free again as he saw Monteith making for him, and bolted for the door.

At that moment the door opened, and Mr. Ratcliff, the housemaster, strode in. The yelling of the unfortunate junior had reached all through the New House, and the master had come on a voyage of discovery. His face as he entered showed that he was angry. But his reception made him angrier still, for D'Arcy, bolting blindly, rushed right into the master of the New House, and sent him staggering back into the passage.

Then Arthur Augustus would gladly have bolted down the corridor, but Mr. Ratcliff's grip closed upon him, and he was dragged, kicking, into the study.

"What is the meaning of this?" shouted the housemaster. "How dare you make such a disturbance here! How comes this junior here, Monteith? He is not a New House boy!"

"I found him asleep in my bed!" howled Monteith. "When I fetched him out he buzzed a pillow at me! He's a School House kid. He's done it for cheek!"

"What do you mean by being out of your house, boy?"

"I was told this was my room!" sobbed D'Arcy, beginning to realise how matters stood; and, in his pain and terror, he even forgot to hiss. "I was told to sleep here, and that that was my bed-room."

"You are a new boy?"

"Yes."

"Yes, what?"

"Yes, sir!" faltered D'Arcy.

"That is better. You must be an extremely simple soul to be deceived so easily."

"It's all lies, sir!" said Monteith savagely. "It was just cheek. Those School House kids are always getting up to some jape like this!"

"Pardon me, Monteith, I am inclined to believe the boy. The matter shall be inquired into. You say you were told to come here, boy. Who told you?"

D'Arcy was about to blurt out the name, when he remembered Jack Blake's caution. He mumbled something indistinctly.

"Answer me!"

"I—I'd pwefer not to say, if you please."

Mr. Ratcliff shook him angrily.

"Answer me immediately!"

D'Arcy was silent. He could be obstinate when he liked. "I do not quite understand this boy!" said Mr. Ratcliff, breathing hard. "The matter shall be cleared up. Get your clothes on, and come with me to the School House."

D'Arcy obeyed. He dressed himself, and followed Mr. Ratcliff from the study. Straight across to the School House marched the housemaster. When he entered, a good many boys looked curiously at him and the wet-eyed Arthur Augustus.

It was near bed-time for the Fourth Form, and Blake was wondering what had become of D'Arcy. Great was his surprise to see him marched into the School House, with Mr. Ratcliff's hand on his collar.

"My hat! What has the silly ass been getting up to now?" he muttered.

"Looks as if he had been trespassing in the New House, remarked Percy Mellish. "Just like the silly ass, too!"

Mr. Ratcliff marched the junior up to Mr. Kidd's study, knocked, and entered. The master of the School House looked at him in some surprise. There had been friction between the two housemasters more than once.

Mr. Kidd was inclined to look upon the rivalry between the houses with a good-tempered eye, recognising that it was not without its advantages to the school when not carried too far. But Mr. Ratcliff took an exaggerated view of it, and was always heavily down upon the contending juniors.

"I have brought this boy to you," said Mr. Ratcliff, with great dignity. "He had the astounding impudence to go to bed in Monteith's room, and to assault the prefect when he was disturbed. He declares that he was the victim of a practical joke, and with characteristic impudence refuses to give the name of the person who deceived him. He is not under my jurisdiction, Mr. Kidd, and so I leave him in your hands."

"You may trust me to do all that is necessary," replied

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Mr. Kidd coldly. "If you choose to stay, you can be a witness to the punishment of the individual concerned. I have not the slightest doubt that this foolish boy has been the victim of a practical joke."

"I will leave the matter entirely in your hands," said Mr. Ratcliff, with chilly dignity. "Good-evening!"

And the master of the New House returned to his own quarters. Mr. Kidd turned a stern look upon D'Arcy. He was deeply annoyed at Mr. Ratcliff having an excuse to complain of the discipline of his house.

"Why did you go to Monteith's room, D'Arcy?"

"I was told it was my bed-room, sir."

"By a School House boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know his name?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

D'Arcy was silent.

"Did you hear me, D'Arcy?" said Mr. Kidd, raising his voice a little.

"Yes, sir."

"Then why do you not answer me?"

"I would pwefer not to do so, sir. Do you considah that it would be honourable and gentlemanly in me to betray the—aw—chappie?"

Mr. Kidd drew a deep breath.

"If you cannot give me the name of the boy, D'Arcy, I shall have to conclude that you have not spoken truthfully."

"To doubt a gentleman's word is not the act of a gentleman!" replied D'Arcy. "You have no wight to hint a doubt of my vewacity!"

"D'Arcy, I am sure you do not mean to be impertinent, or I should cane you severely. You heard me tell Mr. Ratcliff that the culprit should be punished. It is necessary for you to give me his name. I can respect honourable scruples, but there must be a limit. I command you to give the name!"

"I wegwet vewy much, sir, that I cannot meet your wishes," said D'Arcy, with a bow. "It would not be gentlemanly. It would not be owicket, sir."

"D'Arcy, I really do not know how to deal with you! I must think over this matter. Come into my study in the morning after prayers."

"With gweat pleasuah, sir!"

And D'Arcy walked out. He left the housemaster wearing a worried look. Mr. Kidd had had to deal with all sorts and conditions of boys in his time, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a little too much for him.

CHAPTER 6.

Fun in the Fourth.

"COME on, D'Arcy; it's bed-time! What on earth have you been doing in the New House?"

"I went to bed there. Mellish told me that the woom there was mine, and then a beastly prefect came in and pulled me out, and tweated me most bwutally!" said D'Arcy. "I have nevah been tweated so in my life before!"

"Who was the prefect?"

"They called him Monteith."

Jack gave a whistle.

"Phew! You must have had a warm time if he caught you snoozing in his quarters. He's the biggest bully in St. Jim's. But what a giddy donkey you must be to be taken in so easily! I told you that you were to sleep in the dormitory."

"Yes, but Mellish said—"

"Well, you were an ass! Look here, Mellish, that was a beastly mean trick to play on an innocent, bleating lamb like this kid!"

Percy Mellish sneered.

"As mean as his telling tales of me and getting me a caning?" he inquired.

"He's got you there, D'Arcy! By the way, didn't they ask you who sent you there?"

"Yes."

"And you told?" exclaimed Mellish anxiously.

"No, I said I pweferred not to, as it was not gentlemanly to tell tales," said D'Arcy, with great dignity.

Jack Blake nearly choked.

"Fancy telling a housemaster that! What did he say?"

"I am to see him aftah pwayers in the morning."

"That means a licking!"

"And then he'll blab it all out!" said Mellish nervously.

"I shall not!" said Arthur Augustus. "I think that you ought to be punished for your—aw—caddish behaviour, but I shall say nothing."

"We shall see," said Percy, who was feeling very uneasy.

The Fourth Formers trooped up to bed. The long dormitory, with its rows of white beds and washstands, did not seem half so cosy to Arthur Augustus as the prefect's study he had been compelled to vacate; but he had no choice in the matter, and so when Blake pointed out his bed he proceeded to undress again and tumble in.

There was a heap of luggage beside his bed. The master in charge of the dormitory had not yet decided what was to be done with it. D'Arcy opened one of the trunks in quest of his night-garments. When he had arrayed himself in his pyjamas he was the wonder and admiration of the whole dormitory.

"Oh, my eye!" said Percy Mellish. "Spot my pyjam's!"

"What a giddy pattern!" said Herries.

"How gorgeous are we!" sighed Digby. "Oh, Aubrey, how can you!"

D'Arcy took no notice of these rude remarks, but tumbled into bed. He was soon fast asleep, and this time he was not disturbed. There would probably have been some jokes played on the new-comer, but it was known that Blake had taken him under his wing, and that was his safeguard. He was allowed to sleep in peace.

When the rising-bell went the next morning it seemed to D'Arcy, as to most of the boys, that he had only just closed his eyes. He opened them, yawned, and closed them again. Blake, who was always first out of bed, gave him a shake.

"Jump up!"

D'Arcy opened his eyes again.

"It's not time to get up yet. I nevah get up till nine."

Blake grinned.

"Then it's time you started, my son. If you're not out in five minutes there will be a prefect along with a cane, and you'll have to go down half dressed."

"Have they sent up my hot watah?"

"No, they haven't sent up your hot watah—a most unaccountable oversight!" grinned Blake. "You'll have to do without it this morning, and every other morning that you're at St. Jim's."

"You don't mean to say that you wash in cold watah?" said D'Arcy, shivering.

"Yes, I do. It's all right when you get used to it. Buck up, or you'll have to go down without washing at all."

That terrible possibility was worse to the fastidious D'Arcy than the cold water, and so he got out of bed. He washed and dressed himself very carefully, taking care to put on a new waistcoat in the place of the one that had been spoiled the day before. He had plenty to select from. His toilet was a lengthy operation, and was evidently a labour of love. He had not finished when the others were ready to go down.

"Buck up, D'Arcy!" exclaimed Blake. "Shove the things on somehow!"

"I'm afraid my jacket would be cweased," replied D'Arcy. "It is weally most inconsiderate to hurry us like this! I am—aw—accustomed to taking my own time."

"Then it's time you learned better!"

D'Arcy was the last one down, but he got down at last. At the appointed time he made his way to Mr. Kidd's study. The housemaster gave him a severe look.

"I trust you have thought better of your obstinacy, D'Arcy. I should regret to be compelled to punish you. What is the name of the boy who sent you to the New House last night?"

"I wegwet that I cannot inform you, sir."

Mr. Kidd took down a cane.

"Very well. I shall not be severe with you, as you are a new boy, and do not yet seem to know the respect due to a housemaster; but I cannot allow your impertinence to pass unpunished. Hold your hand out!"

"You are not going to cane me, sir?"

"I am."

"Oh dear, I pwotest! I do not appwove of such bwutality. My aunt would nevah have let me come here if she had known that I should be subjected to such tweatment!"

"Hold out your hand!" said the housemaster, in a voice of thunder.

D'Arcy jumped, and reluctantly obeyed. He received a cut that made him wriggle.

"Now, the other!"

"The othah, sir?"

"Yes, the other!" exclaimed Mr. Kidd. "Don't waste my time!"

The other hand was held out, and received a cut. Then the housemaster put away the cane.

"You may go now, D'Arcy. I trust that upon another occasion you will not think of disputing the orders of a housemaster."

D'Arcy left the study. Unaccustomed to punishment as he was, he felt the tingling of his palms a good deal more acutely than the average boy, and he was strongly inclined to weep as he went.

NEXT SATURDAY:

"EXPULSED!"

Our Long, Complete School Novel

AND

"THE WITCH'S HEADLAND,"

A Long, Thrilling Tale of Dr. Nerada.

IN "PLUCK," 1st

When he joined the class a good many eyes were turned upon him curiously. Most of the Fourth knew why his visit had been paid to the housemaster's study, and the general opinion was that he would save his skin by sneaking.

The sight of him squeezing his hands together showed that he had been caned, and as Mellish was not sent for, it was evident that the new boy had not given him away.

"He's not such a bad sort," whispered Blake to Herries, who sat next to him. "He only wants to know the ropes, you see, and then he'll be all right. If Mellish had been in his place, I fancy he would have told."

And Herries nodded assent. Percy Mellish was a good deal relieved in his mind, and as the new boy, after all, was not a sneak, however great a muff he might be, Percy saw his way clear to playing a good many more ill-natured tricks upon him.

Mr. Lathom was taking the Fourth in history, and D'Arcy, whose knowledge was just extensive enough to enable him to scrape into the Fourth, waited in extreme uneasiness for his turn to come.

He hoped the master would miss him, but it was not to be. Mr. Lathom was fighting the battle of Hastings over again for the benefit of the class, but he was not getting much attention. Figgins was talking to Kerr, next to him, on the all-absorbing topic of football, taking advantage of the master's short-sightedness. Some of the boys were throwing paper pellets at each other.

"Give me attention!" rapped out Mr. Lathom. "Attention is the date of the—ah!—foundation of learning. D'Arcy! Tell me the date of the—ah!—Conquest."

D'Arcy looked round helplessly.

"Cannot you answer that simple question, D'Arcy?"

Percy Mellish leaned over his desk and whispered to the new boy.

"Shall I tell you?"

"Please," breathed D'Arcy.

"The forty-fourth of February, nineteen-ninety!"

D'Arcy was too confused to perceive the absurdity of the answer till he had rendered it to the master. Mr. Lathom gave him a paralysing look.

"What did you say, D'Arcy?"

"The—the forty-fourth of February, sir, in the year nineteen-ninety."

"D'Arcy! Have you no sense at all, sir? Are you a fool, sir? Or are you playing a joke upon your master in class, sir?"

"I—I—I—"

"Go down to the bottom of the class."

D'Arcy obeyed.

Mr. Lathom breathed hard. He glared through his spectacles at the grinning class, and at last saw the animated conversation passing between Figgins and Kerr.

"Figgins!"

"Yes, sir."

"You have been paying strict attention to the lesson, I hope?"

"I hope so, sir."

"You were speaking to Kerr. What were you talking about that was so interesting?"

"Football, sir," said Figgins candidly.

"Good old Figgy!" murmured Blake. "No fibs from Figgy."

Mr. Lathom looked at Figgins witheringly.

"So you were talking football? We will see if you know as much about the battle of Hastings as you do about football. If you do not, it will be my painful duty to give you an imposition upon the subject. Now, what were the opposing forces at the battle of Hastings, and who were the commanders?"

"Normans and Saxons, sir," said Figgins promptly. "The home team were captured by Harold, and the visitors—"

"The what?"

"The invaders, I mean, sir; they were led by William. The Normans kicked off—"

"The—the Normans did what?"

"I mean they got going first," said Figgins; "but the home team defended their goal, and the visitors could not get through. At half-time—"

"Figgins!"

"Yes, sir. At half-time the score-sheet was blank, and the Saxons had the best of the game in the first half."

"The—the—"

"In the second half the visitors drew the defence. The home team attacked, and the visitors' forwards got through and—"

"Figgins!"

"And the visitors pulled off the match, sir."

"Figgins! Is this stupidity or impertinence?" gasped Mr. Lathom. "In order that you may learn that there is a time for study and a time for football, you will kindly write

out this sentence: 'I must not talk football in class' one hundred and fifty times."

"Yes, sir," said Figgins.

The class were in convulsions over Figgy's description of the battle of Hastings. It was in vain that Mr. Lathom strove to fix their attention after that, and he was glad when he dismissed them.

Figgins wrote out his impot, but it did not take him long. Figgins could be stupid when he chose. He presented himself at Mr. Lathom's study that evening with his impot. The master of the Fourth took it and looked at it, and then looked at Figgins.

Figgins had written down one line.

"I must not talk football in class one hundred and fifty times."

"Figgins!" Mr. Lathom looked hard at the boy, whose face was absolutely wooden in expression. "Figgins, what do you mean by this?"

"Isn't the writing good, sir?" said Figgins anxiously. "I wrote it very carefully, sir."

"I told you to write out this sentence: 'I must not talk football in class' one hundred and fifty times."

"That's what I've done, sir. I hope the spelling is good."

"The spelling is correct, Figgins."

"Then what is wrong, sir?"

"I meant—you must surely have understood me—but no matter. You may go, Figgins."

"Thank you, sir."

And Figgins departed. He left Mr. Lathom wondering whether he was the biggest fool or the deepest scamp in the school. Other masters had wondered that before about Figgins without being quite able to make up their minds.

CHAPTER 7.

A Rehearsal Under Difficulties.

"NOW then, you kids, pull up your socks and follow your uncle!" exclaimed Jack Blake, coming into No. 6 Study, a few days later.

"What's the matter?" queried Herries.

"It's time to get our own back on those New House wasters," replied Blake; "and now's our chance. They haven't given us a minute's peace since D'Arcy came. They call him the swell of the school, and chip us about him no end. They've taken to calling the schoolhouse a lunatic asylum. Are we going to take it lying down?"

"Certainly not; but what's the jape?"

"Those New House bouncers are holding one of their giddy rehearsals in the wood shed, and this is where we come in."

Herries and Digby jumped up at once.

"Get your pea-shooters," said Blake. "I spotted Figgy and the others going there with bundles under their arms, and we shall be in good time."

"May I come?" asked D'Arcy timidly.

"You'll only be in the way, fathead!" said Digby.

"Rats, let him come," said Blake. "He won't do any harm anyway. Have you a pea-shooter, D'Arcy?"

"N—no."

"I have one I can lend you. Do you know how to use it? No? Dear me, where ever were you brought up? Think of that, chaps, a fellow with seventeen fancy waistcoats and not a single pea-shooter!"

"Not seventeen, Blake; only ten."

"Only!" grinned Blake. "Well, here's the shooter. This is how you use it. Shove a pea in your mouth—so—and so—"

"Oh!" gasped D'Arcy, as the pea caught him on the nose.

"Oh! I see."

"Shall I show you again?"

"Nunno, I can understand perfectly."

"Then come along."

And the four left the study for the warpath. The wood shed was a secluded spot, seldom if ever visited by the boys, for which reason the New House Dramatic Society had chosen it for rehearsals. Figgins meant to stagger humanity with a performance of "Hamlet" later on, and he kept his caste well up to the mark so far as rehearsal was concerned. He had chosen "Hamlet" for representation with a calm assurance that the New House Amateur Dramatic Society was equal to the task. Himself, of course, he had cast for the Prince of Denmark.

Blake and his chums reached the scene of action. Deep voices within the shed warned them that the rehearsal had started.

Blake stepped silently to the door of the shed, which opened outwards, and forced a wedge of wood under it. So long as that wedge remained there, no efforts of the inmates could open the door. Then he led the way to the

window. The window was a small one, but there was room for the four sharpshooters.

Within the shed a couple of bicycle lanterns burned, hung upon the wall. Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Pratt of the New House was there. Figgins was declaiming.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Is that right, Kerr?"

"That's right. Get on."

"I can't remember the next. Did we cut it there?"

"Of course, we did. If we acted all that was written we should be all the term about it. The next is: 'Be thy intents.'"

"Be thy intents wicked or charitable?"

"Thou comest in such a questionable—questionable—questionable—' What on earth is it he comes in, Kerr? Is it sheet?"

"Shape, fathead!"

"Thou comest in such questionable shape," said Figgins.

He was addressing Wynn, who had a sheet over his head, and was evidently intended for the ghost of Hamlet's pater.

"Why don't you answer?"

exclaimed Hamlet impatiently.

"Silly ass!" replied the

ghost. "I don't answer here.

You go on."

"Do I go on, Kerr?"

"Of course you do; and then

Pratt comes in as Horatio."

Figgins consulted a closely-

scribbled paper.

"All right. My mistake:

"What may this mean,

That thou, dead corse, again

in complete steel,

Revisitest thus the glimpses

of the moon,

Making night hideous—"

"That's another cut," said

Kerr. "Go it, Pratt!"

"There's something scratched

out here."

"Where do I come in?" asked

Pratt.

"It beckons you to go away

with it."

"Who does?"

"Idiot! That's what you've

got to say."

"Have I? All right. 'It

beckons you to go away with

it.'"

"Ass! You've got to say it

to Figgy."

"It beckons you to go away

with it, Figgy," said Pratt.

Kerr tore his hair.

"It's enough to make an

angel weep to stage-manage for

such a blithering set of

cuckoos!" he exclaimed.

"Figgy isn't Figgy, you silly

ass; he's Hamlet!"

"Oh, I forgot! Sorry. 'It

beckons you to go away with it,'

Hamlet."

"You don't call him Ham-

let."

"What do I call him, then?"

"Nothing at all. Just spout

and have done with it."

"It beckons you to go away

with it," said Pratt. "How's

that?"

"That's all right. Why haven't you got your written

part?"

"I left the blessed thing in my study."

"Silly goat! Now Marcellus is supposed to talk, but we

leave him out. Now, Hamlet."

"Right you are," said Figgins. "It will not speak, then

I will follow it. You didn't beckon me, though, Wynn.

You ought to have beckoned me."

"Never mind," said the stage-manager. "Go on, Horatio."

"Don't go, Figgy," said Pratt. "I mean, do not go, my lord. I keep on forgetting you're Hamlet."

"I'll punch your giddy head if you forget again," said the stage-manager. "Your turn, Hamlet."

"Why, what should be the fear?" spouted Figgins.

"I do not eet my wife at a pink kuca."

"What?"

"That's what's written here."

"It can't be. Let me look at it. Oh, 'I do not set my life at a pin's fee.'"

"Your writing is so rotten, Kerr. I thought it didn't make sense. 'I do not set my life at a pin's fee.' I'll follow it."

"Buck up, Horatio!"

"What if it tempt you towards the flood, Figgy—I mean, my lord?" said Pratt. "Oh, crickey!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"Something stung me."

"Rats!"

"It wasn't rats; it was a wops—I mean a wasp—or some-

thing."

"A wasp at this time of the year!" said Kerr witheringly.

"Oh, you silly ass! Oh, scissors!"

He clapped his hand to his ear.

"What's the matter?"

"Something stung me!"



The Third Form youngster strutted along behind the swell of St. Jim's twirling a poker in lieu of a cane. (See page 6.)

"Nonsense!" said Figgins warmly. "Let's get on with the rehearsal. Oh, my nose!"

"What's the matter with your nose?"

"I felt a sudden pain—like a sting!"

"You're all off your rockers!" exclaimed Wynn impatiently. "You're doing all the talking, and I haven't had a chance. Look here, where am I to begin? I've got it all

by heart, too. I— Oh lor!"

He clapped his hand to his cheek.

"He's got it, too!" said Kerr. "It can't be wopses. It

felt like—"

"Ha, he, ha!"

It was a roar of laughter from the window. Instantly the eyes of the Amateur Dramatic Society turned in that direction. Four grinning faces, one of them adorned with an eyeglass, were looking in at the window.

"The School House cads!" exclaimed Figgins & Co. in a breath.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Oh, what giddy actors we are! Hear me smile! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear us smile!" chimed in his comrades. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins made a dash at the window.

A volley of peas from the shooters met him, and he stopped short. Kerr sprang to the door.

"Come on," he shouted—"come on! We'll wipe up the ground with them!"

But the door refused to budge.

The New House juniors threw their weight against it, but it would not move. Then it dawned upon them that they were trapped.

Meanwhile the marksmen at the window kept up a shower of stinging peas.

The New House juniors, panting with wrath, charged at the window. Blake and his chums retreated out of reach, and still kept up the shooting. Figgins grabbed the window and slammed down the sash. The peas rattled upon the panes.

Crash!

A pane of glass was not likely to protect Figgins & Co. when Study No. 6 was on the war-path. The pane flew into a thousand pieces, and through the opening the peas came in fast, stinging wherever they hit.

Figgins & Co. jumped and yelled and threatened. A peashooter is a really effective weapon in skilful hands, and Blake and his chums made every shot tell.

Figgins made an heroic attempt to clamber through the little window.

"Be thy intents wicked or charitable,

Thou comest in such a questionable shape,"

chortled Blake, as he gently rubbed his hands, which he had filled with earth for the purpose, over Figgy's flushed face.

Figgins gasped and choked, and dropped back into the shed.

The prisoners made another attempt upon the door, but it would not budge. All the time Blake's party kept up an effective fire. Suddenly an idea darted into Figgins's mind.

He blew out the lanterns, and the shed was in darkness.

"Now, you beasts!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, all right!" said Blake, putting away his peashooter.

"Good-night!"

"I say, you're not going, leaving us fastened up here?" exclaimed Figgins, in dismay.

"Why not? You'd go for us if we let you out."

"Yah! You're afraid!"

"Not a bit of it, Figgy; but we're masters of the situation now, and there's not a bit of a reason why we shouldn't remain so."

"Don't be a cad—let us out!"

"Are you willing to knuckle under, and make it pax?"

"We'll make it pax; but as for knuckling under—"

"Rats! You're done brown, so why not own up to it?"

"I'll make you sit up for this!"

"All in good time. What are you going to do?"

"We give in," said Figgins reluctantly. "Now let us out."

And Blake removed the wedge, and the door opened. The Amateur Dramatic Society came out, looking red and furious. But they did not attack their conquerors; they had made "pax" with them, and honour held them to the truce.

"But just you wait!" said Figgins & Co., as they turned away towards the New House. "Just you wait, you horrid bouncers!"

And, as it happened, a time was coming for Figgins & Co.

CHAPTER 8:

Figgins & Co. Take the Cake.

"WHAT are we going to do this afternoon?" said Blake on Saturday.

It was a half-holiday, and the chums of Study No. 6 were considering their plans. The four of them were putting their heads together upon the subject, for by this time Arthur Augustus was tacitly admitted to a share in the fellowship of the study. He had been little more than a week at St. Jim's, but he had already dropped a good deal of his nonsense, and was beginning to see things more sensibly. Nothing would ever cure him of his dandyism, probably; but that was not a crime so long as it was kept within bounds. And he had learned to take good-naturedly the fun the boys were never tired of poking at him. And, strange as it may seem, he was in the way of becoming popular in the School House.

Perhaps his liberality in money matters had a little to do with it. Not, of course, so far as Blake and his chums were concerned. But a good many of the boys were willing to forgive a lot to a fellow who could, and would, stand un-

limited treat at the school tuck-shop. And Arthur Augustus's devoted relations kept him well supplied with pocket-money he had, in fact, much more than was good for a boy of his age.

"No footer this afternoon," continued Blake. "The ground ain't fit. And there's no chance of a row now."

Figgins & Co., because they're gone out. I saw them go."

"That's rotten!" said Herries. "I should like to call another of their giddy rehearsals. What a ally as Wren looked, got up as the ghost of Hamlet's governor! I say, what do you say to a visit to the Den?"

"Bit chilly this weather," said Digby.

"Oh, if you're afraid of the cold you can stay at home and get into the oven!"

"I'm not afraid of the cold, fathead! It will be damp in the Den, too."

"Oh, wrap yourself up in cotton-wool and have done with it!"

"What's the Den?" asked D'Arcy. "I have nigh heard of it."

"Of course you haven't," said Blake. "It's a secret retreat. It's up on Castlehill, and out of bounds. That's the charm of it."

"Bai Jove! How did you discover it?"

"We discovered some Third Form fags there one day. They had gone there to smoke cigarettes on the sly," explained Blake. "Thought themselves no end doggin'. We boxed their ears and kicked them out, and appropriated the place. Now it's our den. We'll go there, chaps, and show it to D'Arcy. We can take some grub along."

"Vewy good idea!" said D'Arcy. "Let me stand treat. You chaps have been awfully good to me. And I had a fiver from my aunt to-day."

"Bless your aunt!" said Blake. "I wish I had a few like her. What do you say, kids—shall D'Arcy stand a feast?"

Herries and Digby promptly agreed, and the four immediately adjourned to the tuck-shop. There D'Arcy made purchases that opened the eyes of the chums. They were accustomed to limited pocket-money, but D'Arcy "blew" his fiver like a millionaire. Every good thing the tuck-shop provided—and a good many had one—D'Arcy gathered in, and when he had finished, a big basket was crammed with the purchases.

"Come along," said Blake; "we'll carry that basket in turns. It will be lighter coming home—that's one comfort. Allons donc."

The quartette set off. They left St. Jim's behind, and followed the footpath through the wood, crossed a stream of moorland, and came in sight of the ruined castle, which was a familiar landmark in the district. This was the western limit of the bounds even on a half-holiday; but the chums kept on. Beyond the castle rose the Castlehill, and on its fazy side was the Den.

In one spot the hillside rose abruptly, so that climbing was a matter of some difficulty. There was a thick growth of bush and bramble, green enough in summer, but now dry and rusty. Through the thicket went the path to the Den, and D'Arcy made a wry face as Blake led the way, pushing through the bushes. He was nervous for his immaculate attire. But there was no help for it now, and he followed Blake.

The path through the thicket was muddy and tangled. It ended at a place where the hill rose like the wall of a house, and there a wide opening appeared. It was a path running back some distance into the hill, and overhead masses of vegetation formed a kind of roof, through which the sunlight thinly filtered.

Blake stopped breathless before the opening. He put down the basket he had been carrying to rest for a moment.

"That's the Den," he said.

"What a jolly place!" said D'Arcy. "I suppose you chaps have feasts up here in summer?"

"We hadn't found it out last summer," replied Digby.

"Of course, it would be more jolly in summer. But it's all right. The chief charm about it is that it's a secret. No chance of any of the New House cads finding us here."

"Suppose they followed you some time?"

"Blake laughed.

"I wish they would," he said. "At the top of a steep path like this, one chap could keep a dozen from coming up."

"If Figgy knew anything about it," remarked Herries.

"He would be more likely to get ahead of us and keep us out."

"Well, he doesn't know about it," answered Digby.

"Figgy is smart, but he doesn't know every thing. But he goes!"

He lifted the basket again and carried it into the Den.

His eyes, unaccustomed to the dimness within, failed to note anything unusual in the aspect of the Den. He set the basket down. The next moment he gave a yell.

From the dimness sprang three forms, and he was seized and hurled forth in the twinkling of an eye.

He went with a crash right into the trio, who were following him into the Den.

The utter unexpectedness of the shock was too much for them; they simply went flying. Herries lost his footing and rolled headlong down the slope, and brought up in a mass of foul-smelling bushes a dozen yards down. Digby staggered backwards down the path, vainly clutching at nothingness to restore his balance. Blake fell on his back, and lay dazed, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fell on top of him.

Three forms appeared in the opening. Three voices were raised in triumph.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear me smile!"

"Who's cock-house now?"

The unexpected had happened. Figgins & Co. were on the spot.

Jack Blake jumped up in wrath. Before he was fairly on his feet a shove from Figgins sent him spinning down the slope. He crashed into Herries and rolled over in the damp bush. Kerr sent Arthur Augustus flying after him in a jiffy.

Again Figgins & Co. chortled joyously.

"Yah! Who's cock-house now, you cads?"

The chums picked themselves out of the bushes. Herries was smothered with mud; Digby was little better; and Blake was muddy from head to foot, and had his collar torn out, and had lost his cap.

Arthur Augustus was on his knees, searching frantically for his eyeglass, which had become detached from the cord and rolled he knew not where.

Blake stood on the path, and looked up the steep. At the mouth of the Den stood Figgins & Co., kissing their hands to the defeated School House juniors.

"My hat!" said Blake, breathing hard—"my hat!! This is a little bit too much!"

"I never dreamed they were there!" said Digby. "They must have found out the Den, and seen us coming, and laid in wait for us."

"The question is, how to get them out of it. They've got all our grub in there."

Figgins waved his hand with mocking politeness.

"Many thanks for the basket!" he called out. "Going to have a little picnic, were you? We are much obliged."

"Extremely!" said Wynn.

"Wahaw!" chimed in Kerr.

"Run away and play, like good little boys!" continued Figgins. "Don't you know that this hill is out of bounds, and it would make your kind teachers angry to know that you were here? Run away and wash yourselves!"

"Give us our grub, you measly bounder!" said Herries wrathfully.

"Can't; we want it ourselves. Open the basket, Kerr, and see what's inside!"

Kerr obeyed. Blake and his comrades looked at each other in silent wrath.

"My giddy Aunt Maria!" exclaimed Kerr. "Here's a feast! Cold chicken, ham and tongue, pork-pies, jam-tarts, apple-dumpling, cherry-pie, red-currant wine, soda-water! My hat! The bounders were going to do themselves very well this journey!"

"To the victors the spoils!" said Figgins serenely. "Gimme the soda-water; it may come in useful here. You're a carver, Fatty; carve the chicken."

"Right you are, Figgy!"

"They're going to wolf our grub!" said Blake desperately. "Come on; we can't stand that!"

The chums of Study No. 6 scrambled desperately up the steep path.

"Ware, Kids!" called out Figgins. "Shoulder to shoulder, New House!"

The Co. sprang promptly to back up their leader. Figgins had the syphon of soda-water in his hands. He allowed the School House juniors to get within easy range, and then he directed a stream of soda-water into Blake's face. Blake gasped and choked, and Figgins turned the stream upon Arthur Augustus, catching him fairly in the neck.

When he considered that Herries had had his share, he turned his attention to Digby. Digby roared, as the stream caught him full in the face.

"Ow, you cads!"

"Gr-oo-oo-oo!"

"Grr-r-rrh!"

Their reception might have daunted bold hearts, but the School House boys were seeing red just then. They came on fiercely; but the disadvantages of the attack were too great.

The path was so steep that it was not easy to keep their balance, and Figgins & Co. had only to shove them from above.

Herries soon went rolling down through the wet bushes, and he was a pitiable object when he reached the bottom

of the slope. Blake, with a desperate bounce, flung himself upon Figgins, and bore him backwards into the Den. Digby tried to follow his example, but he was clutched by Kerr and Wynn, and sent flying. D'Arcy, who was coming on behind, met him in full career, and both of them went rolling down together.

Blake had gained the Den, but his last state was worse than his first, for Figgins struggled with him till the Co. came to his help, and then the three of them pinned Blake to the ground.

"Surrender!" panted Figgins. "Give in, you silly cuckoo!"

"Rats!"

"Hold him tight!" said Figgins. "By Jove, what a catamount he is!"

"Yah, you cads! Give us our grub!"

"He wants his grub," said Figgins, as the Co. sat on Blake, and allowed their chief to jerk himself free from the School House leader. "He wants his giddy grub. He's had his soda-water, but he's greedy, and wants his grub, too. We'll let him have it—some of it."

He picked a jam-tart from the basket, and flattened it in Blake's face.

"Oh—ooch—you beast!"

"Well, you asked for it. Anything to be obliging. Now you shall have a marmalade-tart if you are a good boy."

"I—I—oh—yah—beast!"

The marmalade-tart was jammed upon his mouth, effectually silencing him.

"Now for some wine!" said Figgins. "You can't drink our healths just now, so you must take it externally. Say when!"

He began to pour one of the bottles of red-currant wine on Blake's head. The unfortunate junior struggled and yelled.

"Say when!" repeated Figgins. "By Moses, he wants it all! Well, he can have it; there's plenty more for us."

He emptied the bottle. Blake was looking a deplorable object by this time, but he was still struggling.

"Obstinate pig!" said Figgins. "He won't be quiet. Luckily, there's plenty of wine. I'll start with a fresh bottle."

The threat was too much for Blake.

"Here, chuck it!" he exclaimed. "Don't be a beast!"

"Do you surrender, then?"

"No—yes!"

"We've got the whip-hand now!" chuckled Figgins. "I thought we'd make you sit up for that pea-shooting business. You wouldn't make it pax unless we caved in. This is where we make you sing small. Are you sorry you interrupted that rehearsal?"

"No."

"Very well. Where's that blessed corkscrew?"

"Yes," exclaimed Blake—"I mean, yes!"

"Ah, I thought you did. Don't you think we are jolly good actors, all of us?"

"No—yes!"

"Will you promise to be a good little boy in future if we let you go?"

"Hang you—no!"

The contents of the second bottle descended in a steady stream into Blake's face. He opened his mouth to expostulate, and it was filled in a moment. He gurgled and choked and gasped. The stream suddenly stopped.

"Now," said Figgins, "will you be a good little boy if we let you go?"

"Oh, my aunt, yes!"

"Chuck him out, chaps!"

So Blake was "chucked out." Herries and Digby were scrambling up the path again, and Blake landed upon them. In a few moments the three found themselves at the bottom of the slope, without exactly knowing how they got there. Blake staggered up.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a shout of laughter from the Den. Blake looked up. Figgins, Wynn, and Kerr were seated in the opening, feasting royally upon the contents of the basket.

"Hear us smile!" shouted Figgins, with his mouth full.

"Yah! Who scores this time?"

Blake and his comrades looked weakly at one another, and without a word turned their faces towards St. Jim's, and stole silently away.

It was one to the New House, with a vengeance!

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CHAPTER 9.

A Lesson in Boxing

FOUR wretched juniors, feeling that life was not worth living, crawled in at the gates of St. Jim's. Their utterly woe-begone appearance attracted general attention at once, and they were escorted to the door of the School House by an admiring crowd.

Fortunately they escaped the notice of any masters, who would certainly have wanted to know how they came to be in such a state. They bolted into the first bath-room, and began to clean themselves.

Blake's task was the longest and hardest. He was simply in a shocking state, and it was a long time before he was presentable.

Blake was too great a general to attempt to disguise his defeat. He frankly admitted that Figgins & Co. had got the best of it.

"But there'll come a time," he said, "and it sha'n't be long. We'll make it come. Figgins & Co. sha'n't crow for long. I can tell you!"

"I wish we could catch them at another giddy rehearsal!" said Herries as he towelled his face.

"No chance of that. They hold 'em in the New House now, in a room old Ratcliff lets them have," said Blake. "They don't risk it in the wood-shed any more. I should like to see them. Old Figgy as Hamlet is too funny for words. They say Kerr is awfully clever at making up, though. Hallo, Gussie! What's your trouble?"

"I've lost my eyeglass."
"All the better. You'll look considerably less of a silly owl without it! There, I feel a bit cleaner now. I wish I could think of some way of getting even with those New House brutes. But it'll come."

By the time Study No. 6 had cleaned up and changed their clothes the hungry boys were coming in to tea. Figgins & Co. came in, but they were not hungry. They met the School House champions in the quadrangle, and smiled at them.

"Thanks!" said Figgins. "It was a ripping spread!"
"We've enjoyed it immensely!" said Kerr.

"Ah, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "It was great!"
"Aw—it was weally kind of you!" went on Kerr, screwing an eyeglass into his eye, and imitating Arthur Augustus's manner. "So considewate, don't you know. You must have guessed we should be—aw—hungry, and so you b'wrought us all those nice things, deah boys!"

"Why, that's my eyeglass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, making a dash for it.

Kerr gave him a push on the chest.
"Hands off!" he said. "It's the spoils of war. Get off the earth, all you common people! Make way for Arthur Augustus Aubrey!"

And he strutted off, the eyeglass screwed in his eye, amid shouts of laughter. D'Arcy, enraged at seeing his property thus carried off before his eyes, made a leap at Kerr, and caught him by the hair.

Arthur Augustus was not wanting in pluck, but he had never learned to fight, and his only idea of attacking anybody was to claw at him, and he clawed at Kerr. Kerr went down with a yell, and Arthur Augustus sprawled over him.

"Give me my eyeglass!"
"Let me get up!" roared Kerr. "I'll pulverise you!"
"Give me my eyeglass, then!"

"I'll give you socks! Pull him off, chaps!"
Figgins and Wynn clutched at D'Arcy, and Blake and Digby rushed in between. In a moment School House and New House were mingled in a struggling mass. In the midst of them there was Kerr on his back, with D'Arcy astride of his chest.

"Are you going to give me my eyeglass?"
"No."

"Then I will tweak your nose for you!" said D'Arcy. "I am extremely sorry to have to use violence, but I must have my property returned."
"I'll—I'll—I'll—"

D'Arcy, suiting the action to the word, gave his enemy's nose a tweak. Kerr struggled desperately, but the advantage was all on Arthur's side, and he kept him pinned down by sheer weight.

"Now, will you give me my glass?"
"Take it, you little beast! I'll slay you for this!"

D'Arcy took the precious eyeglass, and slipped it for safety into his pocket. At the same moment the tea-bell began to ring, and a master's voice was heard—the acidulated tones of Mr. Ratcliff.

"What is the meaning of this disgraceful scene?"
The uproar ceased as if by magic. D'Arcy allowed Kerr to rise. Mr. Ratcliff surveyed the group in contemptuous anger.

"Some more of this absurd house quarrelling, I suppose. You boys are a disgrace to the school. Who started it?"
"There was no reply."

"I think I can guess who the leaders are," said Mr. Ratcliff, much incensed at receiving no answer. "Figgins and Blake, I have no doubt."

The two juniors named exchanged a grim look, but did not speak.

"I shall punish you both!" said Mr. Ratcliff severely. "Pardon me, sir," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, coming forward with his best bow, "you are slightly under a misapprehension. Figgins and Blake are entirely blameless in the matter."

Mr. Ratcliff stared at him.

"Indeed?"
"Yes, sir, indeed. It was I who began the row."

"The what? Oh, the row! Why did you begin it?"
"I—oh! Somebody took my eyeglass—"

"The boy you were pommelling on the ground, I suppose. So you are to blame for this disturbance, Kerr?"

"Yes, sir," said Kerr sullenly, with a vicious look at D'Arcy.

"Come with me, then. I shall cane you. The rest of you go in to tea."

And Kerr followed the house-master. His face was lower than he knew how hard Mr. Ratcliff could hit. When he came out of the house-master's study, he was wriggling painfully.

"That interfering little beast got me the jacking," he said when he rejoined his friends. "I'll pay him out for it!"

"You can't lick him," said Figgins. "You couldn't stand up to a Third Form infant."

"I'm not going to lick him. I've got an idea."

That that idea was Kerr refused to say, only saying that they would see in time if they lived long enough, which was unsatisfactory. However, as it was some joke up against the School House, his chums were willing to let him "have his head," as Figgy expressed it. Meanwhile Blake was giving the swell of the School House a lecture.

"Look here, you ass!" he said politely. "I can't have you bringing Study No. 6 and the whole House into disgrace."

Where did you learn to fight?"

"I never learned," said D'Arcy. "I don't know how."

"I should say so. You mustn't catch a chap by his topknot and sit on his chest when you get him on the ground."

"What am I to do, then?"
"Don't you know anything about boxing?"

"Nothin'," replied D'Arcy dolefully.

"Well, after tea I'll give you a lesson in the study."

"Will you?" said D'Arcy, brightening up. "I shall be extremely obliged. My aunts always taught me that fighting was brutal; but where all the othahs are brutal, I shall have to be brutal, too. I think Kerr will be awgwy."

Blake grinned.

"You may bet your giddy socks on that, kid. He's pretty certain to go for you, but I'll put you up to some tricks in boxing."

After tea they adjourned to No. 6 for the instruction.

Arthur Augustus commenced by trying to put the boxing gloves on the wrong hands, but Blake set him right, and showed him how to hold himself.

"Now," said Blake, "I'm going to hit you on the nose as often as I can, and you've got to stop me. See!"

Arthur Augustus admitted that he saw.

"Well, there's for a start."
Blake gave him a light tap on the nose. Then he began to spar. He did not hit hard, but Arthur Augustus gave a great jump whenever the glove plumped upon his nose. The desire to escape that punishment, light as it was, made him buck up, and in a surprisingly short space of time he was guarding his face well.

"You're to hit me if you can," said Blake. "Never mind how hard; I can stand it."

"You don't mind it if I hurt you?"
"No," grinned Blake. "I don't mind."

But Arthur Augustus was picking the thing up very quickly. Blake came on carelessly. Arthur Augustus guarded and let out his right, and caught Blake on the nose with a force that brought a rush of water to his eyes, and made him sit down in a hurry.

"Was that tight?" asked D'Arcy anxiously. "Did I hit you properly?"

Herries and Digby roared.

"Did he hit you properly, Blake?" asked Digby.

Blake rose. He was rather hurt in his feelings, but perfectly good-tempered.

"That's all right," he said. "See if you can do it again."

D'Arcy tried his best, but he could not do it again, not that Blake was looking out. For a beginner in the noble art, however, his performance was very creditable, and Blake pronounced that he was a promising pupil.

"You'll do!" he exclaimed, as he peeled off the gloves. "You'll improve; and I fancy you'll need it, for Kerr's certain to go for you, and he can use his fists. And, of course, we can't interfere when it's one to one."

But Blake was surprised on the morrow to see that Kerr kept his distance. He showed no sign of contemplating an attack on Arthur Augustus that day or the following. As a matter of fact, he was biding his time. Blake did not neglect his pupil. Every evening the boxing lessons continued in No. 6 Study, and D'Arcy rapidly improved; and though Kerr as yet lay low, a time was coming when Arthur Augustus would need all his knowledge of the manly art.

CHAPTER 10.

The Walk of the Fourth—Kerr's Little Joke.

ON Wednesday afternoon there was joy in the breast of the swell of the school, and in no other breast in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. For Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, was taking advantage of an unusual spell of sunshine to take his Form for a walk.

To Arthur Augustus the news brought pleasure, for it gave him the chance of appearing again in all the glory of a silk topper. To the rest of the boys it brought feelings too deep to be expressed by mere words. For that promenade of a whole form in twos, with a master at the head, was an abomination in the eyes of the Fourth Formers.

They hated marching along like a lot of giddy convicts with a warder, as Figgins expressed it. They hated having to speak in decorous tones, and to listen patiently to Mr. Lathom whenever he chose to prose to them. They hated wasting part of the half-holiday, which they would have preferred to spend their own way. Above all, they hated to be defencelessly exposed to the chaff of the village boys, who often collected in crowds to see them pass, and assailed them with rude remarks, and asked them if they were going into the Ark and things like that.

But there was no help for it, and when the word went forth that Mr. Lathom intended to take out the Form, the boys savagely dressed themselves for the promenade, put on their silk hats, and formed up in the quadrangle.

"Nice set of blithering asses we look, don't we?" said Figgins, who happened to be near Blake. A common grievance had made peace between them for the time being. "The funniest part of it is that the old donkey thinks we like being taken for a walk like a parcel of blooming kids."

"Oh, it's too rotten to talk about!" said Blake. "To think that we might be on the footer ground instead of being marched about the lanes like this. Fancy a master not having more common-hoss-sense than that! I wish I could get out of it somehow. I thought of shamming ill, but it wouldn't be quite playing the game. I don't see Kerr. How has he escaped the ordeal?"

Figgins grinned.

"He checked Monteith and got an impot to keep him in."

"My aunt! I never thought of that."

"Oh, I don't know! I'd rather toddle round like this than stay in on a sunny afternoon," said Figgins. "I shouldn't wonder, though, if Kerr goes out after the coast is clear and stands a licking to-night. It's almost worth it. Hallo! This is where we start."

The procession marched out of the school gates and turned into the lane towards Rylocombe. Two or three country youths in the lane stopped to stare at them. The column marched on, pretending not to hear the remarks made to them.

Mr. Lathom strode ahead, peering through his glasses, now and then halting the column while he expatiated learnedly upon some object of interest in the landscape.

"Why can't he get on?" murmured Percy Mellish. "It wouldn't be so bad if he'd let us get it over, and not stop to talk that giddy rot."

"What did you say, Mellish?"

"I was saying to D'Arcy, sir, that it's very kind of you to take us out for walks like this and explain things to us," said the veracious Percy.

Mr. Lathom gave a gratified smile.

"I am truly glad to afford my boys this harmless and innocent pleasure!" he exclaimed. "So you prefer a gentle and thoughtful promenade, Mellish, to the rough and boisterous hilarity of the football field."

"Infinitely, sir," replied Percy, and this time he spoke the truth, for he was a slacker of the first water and avoided all manly games. "I wish you knew, sir, how the whole Form regards your kindness in taking us out like this."

"It would be a shock to his system if he did," murmured Blake, sotto voce. "Mellish, you cad, stop telling lies, or I'll give you away to the Lathom-idiot!"

"It is vewy w'ong to tell untruths, Mellish," said D'Arcy. "My auntie says—"

"Oh, blow your auntie!" said Mellish crossly.

"If you speak disrespectfully of my auntie," said Arthur Augustus, "I shall punch your head, Mellish."

And Percy, who had heard about those boxing lessons in No. 6 Study, said no more.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Figgins suddenly. "Who's that ragged merchant?"

A boy was standing in the road looking intently at the column of schoolboys. He was a decidedly ragged and unkempt youth. His clothing was in tatters, his hair was a tangled mop, his face was caked with dirt and patched with court-plaster. He stood with his hands in his ragged trouser's pockets regarding the boys as they passed.

"Well, he's a beauty!" said Fatty Wynn. "See how he's staring at D'Arcy. Looks as if he knows the swell of the School House."

The ragged youth suddenly started forward.

Before a hand could be raised to stop him, he had flung himself upon the horrified Arthur Augustus, and clasped him round the neck.

"My cousin Arthur!" he sobbed. "Oh, Arty—Arty! 'Ow glad I am to see yer again!"

D'Arcy struggled to free himself.

"How dare you!" he cried indignantly and excitedly.

"How dare you, you howwid person! You are spoiling my waistcoat! Get away!"

"Arty!"

"You are wumpling my tie; you are dirtying my collah!"

"Wot's a tie, wot's a collar, compared wiv lamely affection?" cried the stranger. "It can't be, Arthur, that you won't reckernise your own cousin 'cos you're along o' these young swells."

"I nevah saw you before in all my life."

The stranger dug a grimy knuckle into his eyes.

"Oh, Arty, how can yer? I never thought it of yer—I never did, really. Oh, Arty, your own cousin Bob, wot played wiv yer in childhood! Oh, Arty!"

"Go away!"

"Not till yer tells me yer glad to see me, Arty. Ain't yer ashamed of yer 'ard-eartedness, Arty? Ain't I good enuf fur yer swell friends?"

"There is some dweadful mistake," gasped Arthur Augustus, in dismay and distress, while the others stared on in sheer amazement. "I assuah you, upon my word, that I nevah set eyes upon you before, my good boy."

The stranger wept copiously.

"Is own flesh and blood!" he exclaimed. "Oh, Arty!"

Mr. Lathom was hurrying to the spot.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed, adjusting his spectacles and staring at the ragged youth. "Who are you, boy?"

"Me? I'm Bob, I am—this bloke's cousin."

"His cousin? Absurd!"

"Many's the time," said the ragged stranger, "that 'im and me 'ave played marbles in our alley, afore his pa made 'is money and sent him to a class school."

"Impossible!"

"It's not true, sir!" gasped D'Arcy. "He is—aw—waving!"

"What do you mean? What is he waving? I cannot see him waving anything."

"He is waving mad, I mean, sir."

"Oh! Boy, there is some mistake—"

"There ain't no mistake, sir," sobbed the youth. "I know 'im well. Ain't 'is name Arthur Augustus D'Arcy? How should I know it if he wasn't my cousin? He's got a mole on his left arm just above the elbow."

The Fourth Formers stared at one another.

This was proof convincing to the most sceptical. If the stranger was not what he claimed to be, how could he possibly know anything about the mole on Arthur Augustus's left arm just above the elbow?

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "Have you such a mark, D'Arcy?"

"I—I—I—"

"He has, sir," struck in Percy Mellish maliciously. "I saw it when he had his jacket off in the bike shed one day."

"He has," a dozen others bore witness.

"Then this lad's tale appears to be true. However—"

"It is not true!" wailed D'Arcy. "I haven't a cousin named Bob. I never saw this beastly boundah before in my life."

"Shame!" rose from the crowd of schoolboys.

Arthur Augustus glared round wildly.

"I tell you I never saw the beast before!"

"Shame!"

Some of the boys were serious, but most of them took the affair as a huge joke. Arthur Augustus had put on so much

side since coming to St. Jim's that all enjoyed this terrible fall to his pride—especially the New House boys.

What a come-down for the swell of the school to be publicly claimed as a relation by this terribly ragged and dirty wasterl of the slums!

"If this is true, however," resumed Mr. Lathom, almost convinced and wholly astounded, "you must know, my good boy, that you have no claim upon Master D'Arcy. If you have any idea of extorting money—"

"Who wants 'is money?"

"I—I imagined that—"

"I don't want to look at 'is money. I only want to see 'is dear face again, and to 'ave him own up to me before his friends. I never was ashamed of 'im. Wot does he want to go for to be ashamed of 'is own flesh and blood for?"

This was a clincher.

If this stranger did not want money, no further proof could be asked of his genuineness.

"This is most unfortunate," said Mr. Lathom. "It would have been more to your credit, D'Arcy, if you had been more frank to Dr. Holmes with respect to your relations."

"My relations!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "I tell you he isn't a relation of mine. He is a dirty howwid boundah! I nevah saw him before—nevah!"

"I can hardly believe that in the face of the proofs he has advanced. But—"

"You can ask my papa! Ask my amties! Oh, that I should be insulted like this!" moaned Arthur Augustus. "It is too, too dreadful. I shall nevah wecovah fwom it, I know I shall not! And the howwid boy has quite spoiled my waistcoat!"

"My good boy, whatever relation you are to Master D'Arcy, you can see that he does not desire your presence—"

"Oh, Arty, Arty, 'ow can you?" sobbed the stranger.

"Go away, you beast! I don't know you."

"Yes; go away, my boy," said Mr. Lathom soothingly.

"Go away, please, like a good little boy. Here is a shilling for you."

"I don't want your money, sir," said the outcast. "I've tramped down from London to see my cousin, wot used to play marbles with me before his pa made his pile. He won't own me! Wot is the good of a shillin' to a breakin' 'eart!"

"Sticking-plaster would be better," said Percy Mellish.

Mr. Lathom frowned at him.

"That is a heartless remark, Mellish. I hope you all feel for an unfortunate boy brought up in such deplorable circumstances, so much less fortunate than your own. Most of all, I should expect his cousin to feel for him, D'Arcy."

"He isn't my cousin. I nevah—"

"That will do. Unfortunately there appears to be no doubt of it. I—"

"Oh, Arty!" cried the stranger, in an uncontrollable burst of emotion. "Oh, Arty! Gimme a kiss before I leaves yer for ever!"

And he rushed upon Arthur Augustus again and clasped him round the neck. Beside himself with indignation, D'Arcy gave him a punch which sent him flying.

The boys broke into a shout:

"Shame!"

D'Arcy glared round him.

"I swear he is not my cousin," he said feebly. "Blake, don't you believe me?"

Blake was silent. Overwhelming evidence was against D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus saw the disbelief in Blake's face, and he gave a groan. If Blake wouldn't believe him, he was sure not one of the others would.

"Own up, D'Arcy!" said Mellish. "Own up! It's clear enough."

"Clear as daylight," said Figgins. "Fancy a chap being ead enough to disown his own relation. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, D'Arcy!"

"The swell of the school!" jeered another. "Good old swell! We know now where he comes from, and how much his side is worth. Good old School House!"

"Ha, ha! Good old swell!"

The strange youth was sobbing bitterly, his face hidden in his hands. He was shaking from top to toe. Blake looked at him curiously.

A peculiar thought had come into his mind that the stranger's emotion resembled merriment rather than grief, and that his hands were put to his face to conceal laughter not tears. Was it possible that it was a trick, after all?

Blake stepped quietly towards the ragged youth and jerked his hands suddenly away from his face. The ragged stranger sobbed violently, and his face was twisted up into an expression of suffering.

But Blake did not think it genuine. He was sorely puzzled.

If the ragged boy's tale was not true, who and what was he?

"Let him alone, Blake!" exclaimed Mellish. "Haven't you got any heart? I say, chaps, the swell ought to give him something. D'Arcy, give your cousin a fiver at least. That's the very least a decent fellow could do."

"I won't give him anything. He's an impostah! I never saw the howwid boundah before in my life!"

"Oh, chuck that! Nobody believes you. What are you grinning at, Blake? Where are your giddy feelings for misfortune in distress?"

"I must say good-bye to Arty!" cried the ragged youth.

"I'll go, but I must say good-bye to Arty." D'Arcy tried to avoid him, but the youth seized him in an embrace, from which this time he could not escape.

"How could you? But I forgives yer!"

And then the outcast's lips approached Arthur Augustus's ear for a moment, and he whispered rapidly and then released him.

Many saw the action and wondered what it implied. The effect of that whisper upon Arthur Augustus was astounding. He staggered back, his jaw dropping, his eyes wide open in amazement, and a look of mingled wonder and relief on all his features.

He stared at the ragged youth blankly. The latter moved away, leaped through a gap in the hedge, and disappeared.

Astonished as the Fourth Formers were, they would have been still more astonished if they could have heard what the stranger whispered to D'Arcy. For these were the whispered words:

"Now I'm even with you, you beast!"

And Arthur Augustus had recognised the voice! A voice he knew! The voice of Kerr! And then the whole trick had dawned upon him.

"This is a most painful incident," said Mr. Lathom.

"We will now proceed with our walk, and I trust, D'Arcy, that we shall not meet any more of your relations."

To the surprise of the others, D'Arcy laughed. The master of the Fourth looked at him with extreme severity.

"I am pained and shocked to see you laugh, D'Arcy. This is certainly not a matter for laughter."

"I beg your pardon, sir; but he is not a relation of mine."

"You need say no more on that point," said Mr. Lathom stiffly. "I have my own opinion about that, Master D'Arcy."

"I mean, sir, he admitted it just now. He gave himself away," said D'Arcy eagerly. "It was all a joke. It's a fellow playing a trick upon me!"

"Indeed! You have acquaintances, then, if not relations among the class that unfortunate youth belongs to?"

"Nanno, sir. He was got up like that. It was part of the joke."

"Hem! And the person's name, D'Arcy?"

D'Arcy was silent.

"Follow me," said Mr. Lathom, with a disdainful glance at D'Arcy, whom he evidently suspected of departing from the path of truth. "Follow me, boys."

And he marched on. Eager whispers showered upon Arthur Augustus.

"I say, was that true?"

"Who was it, then?"

"I believe Blake knows. What's he grinning for like a Cheshire cat?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gurgled Blake. "Hear me smile! Of course, I know who it was. I recognised him just before the finish. Oh, my hat!"

"Look here," said Figgins, "if you know who it was, spout it out."

"Do you mean to say you don't know, Figgy?"

"I? Of course, I don't!"

"Then he didn't tell you what he was going to do?"

"Tell me! How could he tell me?"

"Well, I thought the 'Co.' generally didn't keep secrets from Figgy."

"The Co.! What do you mean? You don't mean to say that it was—was—"

"Kerr!"

"Impossible!"

"Fact! Only don't let on to the Lathom-ass, or he'll get flayed for this. Didn't he do it well? I was taken in at first."

"Kerr! Great Juggins! Was it Kerr, D'Arcy?"

"Yes. I didn't know till he whispered in his natural voice at the end," said D'Arcy. "I shall punch his head for his impertinence when we get back to St. Jim's!"

"Will you? I expect Kerr will be there when the punching begins," said Figgins disdainfully. "Good old Kerr! So that was the wheeze he wouldn't tell up about, Wynn! He's a born actor. What a jape! Blessed if I don't let him

take Hamlet's part instead of me when we bring off the play."

The whole line were giggling, and Mr. Lathom cast many severe glances behind him when he heard the—as it seemed to him—untimely merriment.

But Arthur Augustus, relieved as he was to find that the claimant to kinship was only a joker in disguise, was extremely indignant at the liberty that had been taken with him, and he repeated that it was his intention to visit chastisement upon the offender as soon as he returned to the college. And Figgins, having made a note of that declaration, to be repeated to D'Arcy, there was no chance of the swell of the School House getting out of it, even if he wanted to.

CHAPTER II. The Quality of Arthur Augustus.

FIGGINS and Wynn found Kerr in their study when they returned from the walk. He was in his own clothing, but a bundle on the floor, from one end of which the leg of a ragged pair of trousers protruded, proved, if that was needed, that he had really been the claimant to kinship with the house of D'Arcy. They flung themselves upon him and hugged him.

"Oh, chappy, I never dreamed you had it in you!" gasped Figgins. "It was great!"

"It was glorious!" said Wynn, with tears of joy in his eyes. "It was ge-lorious!"

"It was ripping!"

"It was spiffing!"

"Well, it wasn't a bad jape," said Kerr modestly. "I thought I'd take the boulder down a peg or two!"

"And you did—you did!"

"They all swallowed it whole. They'd believe it now if you hadn't given it away."

"I say, I hope the Lathom bird hasn't scented anything!" said Kerr anxiously. "There would be no end of a giddy row if he spotted the whoeze."

"That's all right. He doesn't know anything. By gum, I can forgive him for once for taking him out on a giddy walk. Which reminds me, D'Arcy is going to punch your head, Kerr, for taking such a liberty with his royal highness, and spoiling his collah!"

Kerr grinned.

"Let him! It will give our house a leg up for a New House chap to lick a School House cad, even so funny a merchant as that fellow. I could lick him with one hand."

"I don't know. I hear he's been taking boxing lessons of Blake lately; and you know Blake's a cough-drop."

"Let me alone!" said Kerr confidently. "If he has the cheek to challenge me I'll wipe up the dust with him!"

"Tap! It was a knock at the door of the study."

"Oh, come in!" said Figgins.

Jack Blake walked in.

"A truce, ye giddy kippers!" he exclaimed. "Behold a messenger of peace or war! D'Arcy wants to know if Kerr is going to apologise."

"Does he want an answer to that?" asked Kerr.

"Certainly."

"Tell him to go and eat coke!"

"No good telling him that; he wouldn't," said Jack serenely. "I suppose you've got no objection to meeting him, then?"

"I don't want to hurt the poor beggar, that's all!" said Kerr loftily.

Jack Blake grinned.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of that. He's willing to risk it. Now, what will suit you as to time and place?"

"Any time and any place you blooming well choose!" said Kerr angrily. "What a fuss to make over whacking a silly ass like D'Arcy!"

"All serene. Shall we say behind the five-court, in ten minutes from now?"

"Yes, if you like."

"Right ho! You'll find us there."

And Jack Blake made his bow, and departed.

"I suppose they mean business," said Figgins. "Well, it's one comfort that you'll easily knock that duffer into the middle of next week, Kerr, if you try."

"Oh, I'll make short work of him, Figgy, no fear!"

And at the appointed time Figgins & Co. repaired to the rendezvous.

They found half the Fourth Form there, boys of the two houses being mingled in about equal numbers. Blake,



The ragged youth flung himself upon the neck of the horrified swell of St. Jim's. "Oh, Arty, Arty, ow glad I am to see yer again. (See page 15.)"

Herries, and Digby were, of course, on the spot, with Arthur Augustus.

"Hallo!" said Kerr, as he came up. "How's your Cousin Bob, Algernon?"

There was a laugh. Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and stared severely at Kerr.

"You have behaved most impertinently!" he exclaimed. "It is due to my own—aw—dignity to inflict some slight—aw—chastisement upon you, in ordah that you may know bettah than to twifle with—aw—your bettahs again."

Kerr shrank back behind Figgins, pretending to be terribly frightened.

"Hold him back!" he gasped. "He's dangerous. I can tell he's dangerous by the gleam in his eye. Have pity on my tender years, Algernon Aubrey!"

"Cut the cackle, and come to the 'osses!" said Blake, interposing. "We shall have some giddy prefect down upon us if we don't buck up!"

"Right! Let's get to business!" agreed Figgins. "Strip, ye cripples!"

The two boys removed their jackets. Kerr flung his to Figgins, and then threw off his waistcoat. Arthur Augustus carefully folded his jacket and laid it down, and then tenderly deposited his waistcoat upon it. His collar and tie followed, and last, but not least, his eyeglass.

The juniors watched these proceedings with considerable interest. Arthur Augustus was evidently in deadly earnest. The two combatants toed the line, and shook hands. This

was done cordially enough, for though they were going to fight, there was nothing like real malice on either side.

"Three-minute rounds!" exclaimed Herries. "I'm going to keep time. Now, are you ready? Go it, ye cripples—go it!"

Arthur Augustus showed at once how much he had benefited by his steady course of instruction in the manly art in Study No. 6.

His guard was good, he kept his eye upon his adversary's, and his glance was firm and steady. Kerr circled round him looking for an opening, but could not find one. When he rushed in impatiently, determined to get to close quarters, he succeeded in planting his fist upon D'Arcy's cheek; but Arthur Augustus countered smartly and with force, and Kerr staggered back before a slogging drive on the chin.

"My giddy aunt!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, dear," said Arthur Augustus, "I am sorry if I have hurt you, dear boy!"

Kerr grinned.

"I'll hurt you in a minute!"

He came on more cautiously. This time he got his fists home, and Arthur Augustus reeled into his second's arms.

"Time!" said Herries.

The combatants stopped for a rest. They were both breathing rather hard.

"Good for you!" whispered Blake. "Stand up to him like that, kid, and you're all right. He's stronger than you, but you're a bit longer in the reach, so keep him off, and don't let him get close enough for any in-fighting. You must lick him."

"I shall—aw—lick him!" replied D'Arcy composedly.

"Time!"

They faced each other again. D'Arcy did not forget Blake's advice, and he kept Kerr at arm's length through the second round, and got home twice as many blows as the New House champion. Blake patted him on the back when

"Time!" was called.

"You'll do!"

Figgins was not so well satisfied with his man.

"You must buck up, Kerr!" he said. "It would be a disgrace we should never recover from if you got licked by a School House chap, and that chap the biggest muff in the school."

"Who's going to get licked?" asked Kerr crossly.

"Well, it looks as if you are!"

"Rats!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, dry up!"

Figgins looked wrathful. It was new to him to be so addressed by either of the Co.; but Kerr was beginning to have a secret doubt as to whether he would succeed in licking the swell of the School House, and that made him cross.

"Time!"

They stepped up again. The third round was exciting. The juniors, crowded round in a ring, looked on with keen interest. Both combatants received a good deal of punishment, but both stuck to it gamely, and at the end of the round it was hard to say which had had the best of it.

The fourth round was decidedly, however, in favour of D'Arcy. He drove Kerr round the ring twice, and finished up by a slogging drive on the jaw which flung him fairly off his feet.

It was the first time either had really gone to grass, and the School House boys raised a cheer for Arthur Augustus.

"Good old School House!"

"Who's cock-house now?"

Figgins picked up his man, and sponged his face.

"Do you hear what they're saying?" muttered Figgy.

"I'm not deaf!"

"They think you're licked!"

"And you think so, too. Say it out, and have done with it!"

"Well, I really think it looks like it, if you're not more careful. Get close to him and punch hard. That's your only chance. You mustn't be licked."

"Oh, shut up!"

And Kerr toed the line again. His doubts about victory were stronger than ever, but he was obstinately determined to go on to a finish.

He watched his chance, and perhaps D'Arcy was a little careless after his success. Kerr found an opportunity, and rushed in, and some sharp in-fighting followed, and D'Arcy was not able to break away till the end of the round. When he did so, he was gasping for breath, and looking decidedly the worse for wear. Kerr went back to his second looking triumphant.

"What price that?"

"Better, my son. Keep that up."

Blake sponged over his principal's heated face.

"Another round like that, and you're done!" he said.

"Keep him off and hit hard, and the next round ought to finish it."

"I—I feel a little out of breath!" gasped D'Arcy.

"You can go on!"

"Oh, yes, I shall go on till I win."

"Bravo!"

The next proved, indeed, to be the last round. All through it was seen that D'Arcy was getting the better of it, though Kerr resisted obstinately, and would not own himself beaten.

With a desperate effort Kerr managed to clinch; but D'Arcy, exerting himself, hurled him back, and followed that up with a heavy drive from his right, which caught Kerr fairly between the eyes.

Kerr staggered, and D'Arcy's left came briskly up, and landed on his lower jaw, and he went down like a log. D'Arcy stood a little unsteadily, waiting for him to rise.

Figgins picked him up.

"Done?" he asked sympathetically.

Kerr gasped for breath.

"Yes."

"Well, you put up a good fight, old chap," said Figgins,

"and no one could do more than that. Let me help you on with your coat. We're done, Blake. Your man wins."

"Right-ho! Arthur Algernon Aubrey, you're the giddy victor!"

"Weally!" Arthur Augustus stepped over rather timidly towards Kerr. "I say—"

Kerr looked at him through his swelling, half-closed eyes.

"What do you want?"

D'Arcy held out his hand.

"Will you please shake hands with me, dear boy? I don't

bear any malice, and I'm sure you don't. And you would weally have beaten me hollow if Blake hadn't taught me

how to use my hands, so you needn't mind this."

Kerr grinned faintly.

"You ain't a bad sort, Aubrey," he said. "Give us your

list!"

Arthur Augustus gladly shook hands with him.

"That is weally good of you," he said. "I am so glad.

Except when there is a house wow, you know, there is no

reason why we shouldn't be friends."

"Cheero!" said Figgins, giving him a slap on the back

that took his breath away. "Blake, this funny merchant

will do you credit yet."

And Figgins and Wynn marched off with the defeated

champion. Blake gave Arthur Augustus an arm back to the

School House. The juniors, eagerly discussing the fight,

and expressing their wonder at the quality shown by Arthur

Augustus, dispersed. As they went towards the School

House the chums of Study No. 6 met Kildare. The captain

of St. Jim's looked curiously at Arthur Augustus.

"What is the matter with D'Arcy's face?"

"Only a little friendly argument with a New House

chap," replied Blake cheerfully. "I'm bringing this kid

out, Kildare. You know what he was when he came to

St. Jim's, and look at him now!"

Kildare laughed.

"Well, I can't say that his personal appearance is im-

proved," he remarked. "Run along, D'Arcy, and get

something done to your face. Well, Blake, are you sorry

you did as I wished, and took the new boy under your wing

instead of ragging him?"

"Not a bit of it, Kildare!" said Blake frankly. "You

were right. We're educating him in Study No. 6, and

making a man of him. He isn't half the ass he was when

he came, and he's got real good qualities, too. He has,

Kildare. We're making a man of him."

"Yes," said Kildare; "and if you want to know, Blake,

that is why I put him in your study. You were the friend

in need that he wanted, my boy."

And the captain, with a pleasant nod, passed on.

"My giddy hat!" muttered Blake. "Fancy me as an

educator of youth! Well, I'll keep it up, and I'll guarantee

that Arthur Augustus turns out all right and sixteen ounces

to the pound, although he's the swell of the school."

And we shall see that Blake was right.

THE END.

(Another tale of Jack Blake, Figgins & Co. and Arthur Augustus next Saturday week in PLUCK. It will be entitled "Staunch Chums of St. Jim's," next Saturday, grand school tale, by H. Clarke Hook, entitled "Expelled; or, His Word of Honour." Also "The Witch's Headland," a Tale of Dr. Nevada.)

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