

# TOM MERRY'S TRIUMPH



By **FRANK RICHARDS**  
Author of the Billy Bunter Series

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*Frank Richards*

Tom Merry and his friends are the most famous schoolboys in the world, and their adventures delight hundreds of young people everywhere.

In this story we meet again the 'toff' of St. Jim's – Arthur Augustus D'Arcy – who, in endeavouring to get his young brother, Wally of the Third, out of a scrape, finds himself compelled to do something of which he normally 'disappwoves vewy stwongly.' Blake, Digby and Herries, the other members of Study 6, have a busy time trying to keep Arthur Augustus out of trouble.

Tom Merry and Co., of the Shell, also rally round Arthur Augustus in his dilemma, and as the result of a plucky effort by Tom Merry everything is eventually straightened out.

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*By Frank Richards - Uniform with this Volume*

TOM MERRY & CO., CARAVANNERS

JACK OF THE CIRCUS

JACK'S THE LAD

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*Frank Richards*

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TOM MERRY'S  
TRIUMPH

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## CHAPTER ONE

### GUSSY GOES!

'WATS!' Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, made that remark.

He made it emphatically.

'Now, look here, Gussy ——!' said Jack Blake.

'Wats!'

'Look here ——!' roared Herries.

'I wepeat, wats!' said Arthur Augustus, firmly.

Six fellows, in Study No. 6 in the School House, gave Arthur Augustus exasperated looks. Those looks had no effect on the swell of St. Jim's. On the matter in dispute, whatever it was, Arthur Augustus's noble mind was evidently made up.

When Gussy's mind was made up, it was made up!

Blake and Herries and Digby, his comrades in Study No. 6, argued in vain. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, of the Shell, in the study doorway, added their arguments: equally in vain.

'I am goin' ——!' said Arthur Augustus.

'You're not!' hooted Digby.

'I certainly am, Digby.'

'You can't!' said Tom Merry.

'Wats!'

'Head's orders, Gussy,' said Manners.

'Have a little sense, old chap,' said Monty Lowther.

'You can't kick against an order from the Head, specially posted on the board.'

'I should wegard it as vewy bad form to kick, as you

wathah slangily expwess it, against an ordah fwom my head-mastah,' said Arthur Augustus. 'But in the circs, I am bound to walk ovah to Wayland this aftahnoon, to keep an appointment — a vevy important appointment.'

'What's so jolly important about it?' asked Tom Merry.

'It is an appointment with my tailah!'

'Oh, my hat!'

'Couldn't be anything more important than an appointment with a tailor!' remarked Monty Lowther, with deep sarcasm.

But sarcasm was a sheer waste on the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

'Pwecisely!' he agreed, 'I am glad that you can see that, Lowthah, if the othah fellows cannot.'

'Fathead!'

'Weally, Lowthah ——!'

'Now, do listen to reason, Gussy,' said Tom Merry, persuasively. 'The Head has placed Wayland Wood out of bounds for this week, while the Abbotsford races are on. There's a lot of rough characters about, and a St. Jim's man was stopped on the footpath the other day by a Cosh boy, and there have been several other cases. It's not safe ——'

'Wats!'

'Suppose you ran into a Cosh boy on that lonely footpath, image!' hooted Blake.

'I wefuse to be called an image, Blake, and if I wan into a Cosh boy, and he cut up wuff, I should give him a feahful thwashin'.'

'I can see you doing it!' remarked Monty Lowther.

'Wash it out, and come down to the cricket!' urged Tom Merry. 'You want to keep in form for the Carcroft match, Gussy?'

'Yaas, wathah! But ——'

'Well, come down and change, and let's get going.'

'I should be vewy glad to do so, Tom Mewwy, but I have to keep my appointment at Wayland ——!'

'You're not going!' roared Blake.

'Pway do not wear at me, Blake! I have told you more than once that it thwows me into a fluttah, when a fellow wears at me.'

'I tell you you're not going ——'

'Wats!'

'No good talking to him!' said Tom Merry, 'and actions speak louder than words. What about up-ending him, and sitting on his head?'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Weally, Tom Mewwy ——!'

'Good idea!' agreed Dig.

'Weally, Dig ——'

'We can't stick in the study sitting on Gussy's silly head!' growled Blake, 'but he's not going. Ten to one he lands in trouble with some of those roughs who come down here for the races, like Cutts of the Fifth the other day. And Railton will give him six if he breaks bounds, anyway.'

'Wailton won't know anythin' about it, Blake,' said Arthur Augustus, 'I am vewy sowwy to have to diswegard the Heads ordah, but my appointment with my tailah was made before the ordah was put on the board, so it cannot be helped. But I shall not mention the mattah to my house-mastah.'

'You're not going ——'

'I am goin', and I am startin' now!' said Arthur Augustus firmly, and he made a move towards the doorway.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther blocked the doorway. They did not move. Arthur Augustus had to pause.

'Will you fellows kindly step aside, and permit me to leave my study?' he asked, with dignity.

'Not at all,' said Tom Merry, affably.

'Not so's you'd notice it!' remarked Lowther.

'Hardly!' concurred Manners.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble eye gleamed behind his eyeglass.

'I shall be sowwy to use wuff measures,' he said. 'But if you do not step out of that doorway, I shall have no wecourse but to push you out.'

'Ha, ha, ha!' roared the Terrible Three of the Shell; and Blake and Co., exasperated as they were with their noble chum, grinned. Really, it was rather a large order for the slim and elegant swell of St. Jim's to push three sturdy Shell fellows out of the doorway.

'I fail to see any cause for laughtah,' said Arthur Augustus icily. 'Pway get out of the way, Tom Mewwy, befoah I wesort to wuff measures.'

'Go ahead with the rough measures, Gussy,' grinned Tom. 'You're not going, old chap - if you haven't sense enough to do the sensible thing, you've got pals to see that you do it. Will you come down and change into flannels?'

'I am not goin' to walk ovah to Wayland in flannels, Tom Mewwy.'

'You're not going to walk over to Wayland at all.'

'I wepeat ——!'

'Don't keep on repeating yourself, old scout! Will you come down and change for the nets, or not?'

'Not!' snapped Arthur Augustus.

'Then we'll take you down and change you,' said Tom. 'Collar him!'

'Good egg!' agreed Blake.

'What-ho!' said Herries.

'Bai jove!' Arthur Augustus jumped back, as actively as a kangaroo. 'If you fellows have the cheek to twy to stop me - ow! Leggo! Leggo my arm, Dig - will you leggo my othah arm, Blake - will you leggo my ear,

Hewwics? Tom Mewwy, you wottah, will you leggo my neck? Mannahs, you swob, Lowther, you tick, if you do not leggo, I shall — ow! ooogh! Gwoooogh!

No fewer than six pairs of hands were laid on the noble person of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Head's orders or no Head's orders, Arthur Augustus was determined to keep that appointment at Wayland. His friends were equally determined that he shouldn't. And it looked as if the majority had it, for Arthur Augustus struggled in vain in those six pairs of hands.

'Coming down to the cricket?' grinned Tom.

'No!' panted Arthur Augustus. 'I am goin' ovah to Wayland ——'

'Hike him along,' said Tom. 'If he won't change, we'll change him — and we'll keep an eye on him till lock-ups. Sorry, Gussy, old man, but we really can't let you go out hunting for trouble.'

'Welease me ——!'

'Come on!' grinned Blake.

A bunch of juniors, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the middle, exuded from Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus, pink with wrath, struggled. But with so many pairs of hands grasping him, he had no chance. His six loyal pals marched him down the passage.

Five or six fellows, on the landing, stared at them, as they came along in a rather breathless bunch.

'He, he, he!' cackled Baggy Trimble.

'What on earth's that game?' asked Talbot of the Shell.

'Ow! wow! ooogh!' gasped Arthur Augustus.

'Welease me!' roared Arthur Augustus. 'You cheekay wottahs, I ordah you to welease me at once. If you do not welease me immediately, I shall give you a feahful thwashin' all wound!'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Come on!'

'Push him along!'

'It's for your own good, Gussy ——'

'Heave ahead, my hearties!' chuckled Monty Lowther.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

The bunch of juniors surged across the landing towards the stairs. Then there was a sudden call from Gore of the Shell.

'Ware beaks!'

'Oh, my hat!'

'Look out!' panted Blake.

But it was too late to 'look out'. Mr. Railton, the house-master of the School House, came across the landing from the Fifth-form studies. He stopped, and stared, at the exciting scene.

'Boys!' rapped Mr. Railton.

'Welease me!' Arthur Augustus's voice was on its top note. 'You uttah wuffians, will you welease me at once'!

'Stop this!' rapped Mr. Railton.

Six pairs of hands fell away from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He stood free, panting for breath. The house-master gave the six juniors a grim look.

'What does this horseplay mean, Merry?' he snapped.

'Oh!' gasped Tom. 'We - we - we ——' He stopped. Really, it was impossible to explain to a house-master that they were using persuasive measures to keep D'Arcy of the Fourth from breaking bounds.

'Such horsepláy in the House is intolerable!' said Mr. Railton, sternly. 'Go to your studies - Merry, Manners, Lowther, Blake, Herries, Digby - go to your studies immediately, and write out fifty lines of the first book of the Aeneid! And let there be no more of this!'

Six juniors, with deep feelings, trailed away to their studies. - Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther to No. 10 in the Shell, Blake and Herries and Digby to No. 6 in the Fourth. Arthur Augustus had to be left to his own devices. Mr. Railton, frowning, went down the stairs:

and Arthur Augustus, breathless but smiling, went down after him. Arthur Augustus was, after all, keeping that appointment in Wayland, in spite of the well-meant efforts of his friends; and six juniors, grinding out Latin lines in their studies while he was gone, could only console themselves with the prospect of kicking Gussy, hard, when he came back.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE GAME ONE!

‘**O**LD on, you!’  
‘Oh!’ ejaculated Arthur Augustus.  
He held on.

Arthur Augustus really had no choice about that. With a bull-necked, low-browed, muscular ruffian standing directly in his path, he had to hold on. And his heart beat a little faster as he did so.

Arthur Augustus had carried on with his arrangements for that afternoon: he had walked over to Wayland, he had seen his tailor, Mr. Wiggs; he had spent a happy hour in the midst of trouserings and waistcoatings, and all was calm and bright, from Gussy’s point of view. Now he was walking back to St. Jim’s, by the lonely footpath through Wayland Wood – all the more lonely now that it was, temporarily, out of bounds for St. Jim’s juniors. But Arthur Augustus was not thinking of danger, as he sauntered cheerily onward; he was still thinking of trouserings.

He was aware that the Abbotsford races drew a rough and very undesirable contingent to the neighbourhood. He was aware that some of the racing roughs had caused trouble in lonely spots. But he did not expect to fall in with any of them: and, if he did fall in with any, he had no doubt about his ability to take care of himself.

Perhaps a slight doubt of that ability crept into his mind, however, as the bull-necked man emerged from the thickets beside the footpath, and gruffly ordered him to ‘old on!’ Arthur Augustus, slim as he was, was sturdy:



he was a good man of his hands, for a junior schoolboy: he was a good boxer for his age, size and weight: and he feared no foe. But the bull-necked man could have picked him up under one arm: and he had a knuckly fist that looked like a leg of mutton. And he was not alone. A second rough fellow, in a red necktie, emerged from the trees on the other side of the path, a moment later: and he looked almost as muscular as the bull-necked man. If those two rough characters intended trouble, even the cheery Gussy realised that he was in a bad box.

But he was cool. He backed away a little, warily.

'What do you want?' he asked.

The bull-necked man grunted.

'Only all you've got about you,' he said, 'and we want you to 'and it over, sharp. That's all.'

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

It dawned upon his noble mind that it was not without reason that Dr. Holmes, the head-master of St. Jim's, had placed Wayland out of bounds during the race-week. Gerald Cutts, of the Fifth Form, had been stopped on that path by a Cosh boy, and Arthur Augustus had been rather disposed to curl his lip when he heard that Cutts of the Fifth had taken to his heels. But at that present moment, it dawned on him that his best guess was to take to his own heels, if he could!

But he had no chance of that. The bull-necked man, and his comrade in the red necktie, were ready to grab him if he tried to bolt. Breathing hard, Arthur Augustus backed against a tree, so that he could not be taken from behind, and pushed back his cuffs.

'If that means that you think you are goin' to wob me ——!' he exclaimed.

'Jest that! 'And it over,' growled the bull-necked man.

'I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!' exclaimed Arthur Augustus, indignantly. 'I uttably wefuse to be wobbed.'

'It him, Alf!' said the man in the red necktie.

'I'll 'it 'im 'ard enough, if he gives me any of his jor!' growled Alf. 'Look 'ere, young shaver, we got no time to waste on you. Are you 'anding it over, or are you waiting to 'ave your face pushed through the back of your silly 'ead?'

'You wascal ——!'

'Nuff said! Nail him, Jemmy.'

The two closed in on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Either of them could have knocked out the elegant swell of St. Jim's with one hand. But that made no difference to Arthur Augustus. He was not going to be robbed if he could help it – not tamely, at all events.

'Keep off, you wottahs!' he panted. 'I certainly will not be wobbed – I wefuse to allow anythin' of the sort! I shall stwike you if you venchah to lay hands on me, and I warn you that I shall stwike you vevy hard.'

'Slog 'im!' growled Alf.

Arthur Augustus was as good as his word. As they closed in to grasp him, he hit out, with all the strength of his arm: and a loud yell echoed among the trees of Wayland Wood, as his aristocratic knuckles crashed on Alf's nose, drawing a spurt of crimson from it.

The next moment Alf was on him, punching, while the other ruffian grasped him by the collar. Punch, punch, punch!

'Oh, cwikey!' gasped the hapless Arthur Augustus. 'Oh, cwumbs! Help! Help!' He shouted at the top of his voice. 'Help! Oh cwikey! Help! Oh, scissahs!'

There was a sound of pattering feet on the footpath. The man in the red necktie stared round uneasily

'Old on, Alf – somebody's coming,' he breathed.

'You look arter 'im while I 'andle this young wildcat!' growled Alf.

'Help!' yelled Arthur Augustus.

A savage punch knocked him over the next moment. He sprawled dizzily in the grass. The bull-necked man

stooped over him, with thievish hands ready to go through his pockets. The man in the red necktie faced towards the approaching footsteps. The newcomer was hidden, for the moment, by the winding of the path: but whoever he was, it looked as if he had heard D'Arcy's cry for help, and was hurrying on the scene.

He appeared in view the next moment: and Jemmy, who had been looking uneasy, grinned with relief. For the newcomer was little more than a lad, only two or three years older than Arthur Augustus, and he did not look at all dangerous to the racing rough. A closer inspection might have revealed that the lad, young as he was, was remarkably well developed, extremely muscular, and looked as fit as a fiddle. And, as he took in the scene at a glance, he did not hesitate for a moment — he came right on, evidently not in the least fearful of the two racing roughs.

"Ere, you ——!" began Jemmy, lifting a heavy fist. He had no time to get further. The newcomer came straight at him, Jemmy's big fist was brushed aside like a fly, and a fist that felt like a chunk of lead landed in the midst of Jemmy's features. And the man in the red necktie, almost up-ended by that unexpected and terrific jolt, went spinning backwards, and crashed down in the grass, yelling.

'Cor!' ejaculated the bull-necked man, staring round. And leaving Arthur Augustus sprawling, he leaped up, and made a rush at the stranger who had so effectively dealt with Jemmy.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up dizzily.

He had captured several hard punches, and his aristocratic head was singing, and almost swimming, and there was hardly an ounce of breath left in him. He sat and gasped and stared.

He could hardly believe his dizzy eyes at what he saw. For the newcomer, instead of being rushed off his feet

by the burly Alf, stood up to Alf like a rock, and gave him right and left: with the result that Alf went sprawling headlong over Jemmy.

'Bai Jove!' breathed Arthur Augustus, faintly.

He fairly blinked at his rescuer. Little more than a boy, he had knocked over the two roughs, one after the other: and never turned a hair. He grinned down at the gasping Gussy.

'Okay, sir!' he said, cheerily. 'Lucky I heard you, and stamped on the gas, what? Hope you're not hurt. I came as fast as I could when I heard you.'

'Oh! Yaas! No!' gasped Arthur Augustus. 'I am vewy much obliged to you! Bai Jove, you seem to pack a twewific punch.'

'My line of country, sir!' grinned the young man. 'If I didn't pack a good punch, I wouldn't be much use in Handler's Ring!'

'Handlah's Wing!' repeated Arthur Augustus. He had heard of Handler's Ring, when there were boxing shows at Wayland. 'Bai Jove! Are you a boxah?'

'Sort of! Name of Johnny Jones, but I'm the Game 'Un on the bills! You're all right now, sir. Glad I 'appened to be taking a walk in the wood this afternoon ——'

'Look out!' almost shrieked Arthur Augustus. Jemmy and Alf were scrambling up: and as soon as they were on their feet, they made a savage rush at the lad who had knocked them over. 'Look out! Bai Jove! I'm goin' to help you.'

Arthur Augustus scrambled breathlessly up. But his help did not seem to be needed by Johnny Jones, alias the Game One.

Johnny Jones stood up to the two roughs as they rushed. He did not recede an inch, and there was a grin on his face as he faced them. His hands moved like lightning. Jemmy and Alf fairly hurled themselves at him, and it looked as if he must be rushed over, and

hammered black and blue. How it happened that their knucky fists were dashed aside, without a single tap reaching the Game One's cheery grinning face, they never knew. But they knew that their savage blows went nowhere, and that Johnny's fist came smiting like a flail – his right crashing into Alf's eye, his left smashing on Jemmy's nose. And there was tremendous force in both punches, almost lifting the two roughs off their feet, and strewing them helplessly in the grass on the footpath. Arthur Augustus could only gaze on in wonder.

Johnny grinned down at them.

'Have a few more?' he asked.

They blinked up at him: Alf caressing an already darkening eye, Jemmy rubbing a nose that streamed red.

'Keep orf!' moaned the bull-necked man. 'You keep orf! I give you best! You jest keep orf.'

'You leave a bloke alone!' groaned Jemmy. 'Ow! My nose! Wow! My boko! Ooogh, my smeller! Wooooooh!'

'Bai Jove!' said Arthur Augustus.

'I don't think those two beauties will give you any more trouble, sir!' said the Game One, grinning. 'But mebbe you'd like me to walk with you to the end of the footpath.'

'Thank you vewy much, deah boy!' gasped Arthur Augustus. 'It was feahfully decent of you to come to my wescue like that! I should have been knocked about and wobbed but for you. I could nevah have handled those wuffians as you did, Mr. Jones.'

Johnny Jones stared at him for a moment, and then chuckled.

'No!' he said, 'I sort of fancy not, kiddy. Come on – I'll see you out of the wood – there may be some more rowdies about: they're thick as flies when the races are on.'

'Yaas, wathah.'

Arthur Augustus, still panting for breath, walked on,

in company with Mr. Jones. Alf and Jemmy were left lying in the grass, caressing their damages, mumbling and moaning: evidently having had enough, and a little over, from the young boxer of Handler's Ring at Wayland.

'Here you are, sir!' said Johnny Jones, as they reached the stile on Rylcombe Lane. 'Okay now, sir.'

'Yaas, wathah! But I should have been vewy fah fwom okay, if you had not come to my help,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I really do not know how to thank you, Mr. Jones. It was vewy, vewy good of you.'

'Not at all, sir!' said Mr. Jones, cheerily. 'Glad I 'appened along. Good-bye, sir.' He touched his cap.

Arthur Augustus extended his hand. It almost disappeared in the boxer's brown fist, and Gussy involuntarily winced at the grip that Mr. Jones gave it. Then they parted, the Game One strolling back through the wood, whistling: and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy heading for St. Jim's - feeling extremely glad that Johnny Jones had been taking a walk in Wayland Wood that afternoon: a feeling that was not in the least shared by Messrs. Jemmy and Alf, as they limped away with the blackest eye and the reddest nose ever seen in the county of Sussex.

## CHAPTER THREE

### EGGY!

'YOU young ass!' exclaimed Tom Merry.  
'Oh!' ejaculated Wally of the Third.  
He stared round.

Tom Merry was sauntering under the old elms, when he came on Wally of the Third Form. The Latin lines awarded by Mr. Railton for the 'horse-play' on the landing in the School House had been duly written, and handed in to the house-master. After which, Manners and Lowther had gone down to the gates, to see whether Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was coming in – with the fell intention of planting their boots on the most elegant trousers at St. Jim's, as soon as Gussy appeared. Tom Merry left them to it. The junior cricket captain was thinking out his team for the coming match with Carcroft School: a more important matter than booting Arthur Augustus. But he forgot cricket as he came on Wally.

Walter Adolphus D'Arcy, the younger brother of Arthur Augustus of that ilk, was as unlike his major as a minor could be. There was no elegance about Wally: he was generally a little untidy, and always cheeky: and very often in a row with his form-master, Mr. Selby, or with other fags in the Third, and sometimes with senior men. Often and often trouble came Wally's way: and it looked to Tom Merry as if the fag was now hunting for more: for Wally of the Third was ensconced behind the trunk of an elm, watching the path in the direction of the School House, and in his right hand was gripped an

egg. An egg was a very unusual article for any fellow to carry about the quad: and the fact that D'Arcy minor was clutching it, and peering out from behind a tree, indicated that Wally was in ambush, for some person expected to come along that path from the House. Tom, coming from the other direction, spotted the fag from the rear, and hastened his steps.

'You young ass,' he repeated, as Wally stared round. 'What are you up to?'

'Snuff!' answered Wally.

'What are you going to do with that egg?'

'Well, I'm not going to boil it for tea,' said Wally. 'It's a bit too ancient for that. Niff!' He held out the egg, and Tom took a step back as its aroma reached him. There was no doubt that that egg was an ancient one: and that it had seen better days, and seen the last of them.

'For goodness sake, chuck it away,' said Tom.

'I'm going to chuck it.'

'Look here, you little ass,' said Tom, 'I can see that you're waiting here for somebody to come along. You'll get into a frightful row if you buzz that egg at him, whoever he is. Some fag in your form?'

'No fear!' answered Wally. 'If a man in my form got my goat, I'd punch his head, not heave mouldy eggs at him.'

'Then who ——?'

'Can't punch a senior man,' said Wally. 'But there are other ways of getting level, see? Better cut off, Tom Merry, or Cutts may think you had a hand in it, when he gets this egg.'

'You utter little fathead!' exclaimed Tom. 'Are you thinking of buzzing that mouldy egg at a Fifth-form man?'

'Just that!' said Wally, with a nod.

'Cutts will skin you alive, if he gets that egg.'

'I shan't hang around waiting for him to do it, you



know,' said Wally, sarcastically. 'You mind your own business, Tom Merry. You don't like that Fifth-form cad any more than I do.'

'But look here ——!'

'Pack it up!' said Wally.

Tom Merry breathed rather hard. Tom, certainly, was not a senior man: he was a junior in the Shell. But all the same that was not the sort of answer for a Third-Form fag to make to his elders and betters!

However, he refrained from smacking Wally's cheeky head. He was concerned about Arthur Augustus's young brother. What would happen to Wally, if he did 'buzz' that egg at Gerald Cutts, of the Fifth Form, hardly bore thinking of. Cutts was rather given to bullying: and he was far from a good-tempered fellow: and even the best-tempered fellow might have gone right off at the deep end, on receiving a mouldy egg as a missile.

'You're asking for it, Wally,' said Tom.

'Cutts has asked for it already,' said Wally. 'Begged and prayed for it, and now he's going to get it.'

'But what has Cutts done?' asked Tom. It was evident that Cutts of the Fifth had somehow roused the deep ire of Wally of the Third.

'He pulled my ear!' Wally's voice thrilled with indignation. 'Why, I wouldn't stand it from old Kildare — not that old Kildare would! Cutts has got it coming.'

'What did you do to Cutts, though?' asked Tom. Cutts of the Fifth was no doubt an overbearing fellow, with little regard, if any, for the feelings of small fry in lower forms. But it seemed improbable to Tom that even Cutts of the Fifth had pulled a fag's ear without cause.

'Nothing,' answered Wally.

'Um!' said Tom, dubiously.

'He heard me talking to Reggie Manners and young Levison,' explained Wally. 'I didn't know he was coming up behind us, or I wouldn't have said it. And all I said

was that it was pretty thick for a St. Jim's senior man to run away from a tramp.'

'Oh!' said Tom.

'And so it jolly well was,' said Wally. 'Everybody knows that a rough stopped Cutts in Wayland Wood, and Cutts took to his heels. Lots of fellows have said just what I was saying to Reggie and Frank. Only Cutts happened to be coming up behind us, and he heard me.' Wally gave a reminiscent wriggle. 'Think I'm going to stand it without giving him something back for it?'

'But ——?' said Tom.

'Oh, sheer off, and don't butt in,' exclaimed Wally, irritably. 'Cutts may be along this path any minute now —— I'll give him pulling a man's ear!'

'Better forget all about it, kid,' said Tom, soothingly. 'You'd get into a fearful row – Cutts would skin you alive, and if Railton heard of it, he would give you six – chuck that egg away, and forget all about it.'

'That your advice?' jeered Wally.

'Yes, kid.'

'Then you can keep it. Cutts of the Fifth is going to get this egg, right in the middle of his chivvy,' said D'Arcy minor, emphatically. 'And you can talk till you're black in the face, and it won't make any difference.' Wally peered out round the tree again. 'Look here, he's coming – shut up and clear, will you.'

Tom Merry hesitated.

He had no particular objection to Cutts of the Fifth capturing a mouldy egg with his features, so far as that went. Gerald Cutts' manners and customs did not make him popular in the lower forms at St. Jim's. But he was deeply concerned about the outcome for Wally of the Third. Obviously the reckless fag was asking for more trouble than he could handle.

'Look here, Wally—— !' he said, again.

'Give us a rest!'

'Better chuck it——'

'I'm going to – at Cutts!'

'It will upset your major if you land in trouble, kid,' said Tom. 'You don't want to worry old Gussy.'

'Bother old Gussy!' retorted Wally. Brotherly regard, it was evident, was at a discount with D'Arcy minor, at the moment.

The sound of a voice came up the path under the leafy elms. Cutts of the Fifth was humming a tune as he came along, sauntering with his hands in his pockets – little dreaming of what awaited him a little further on.

'He's coming!' breathed Wally. 'Quiet!'

'But look here——'

'Will you shut up?' hissed Wally. 'Didn't you hear me say he pulled my ear?'

He peered out again. Cutts of the Fifth, still unconscious of his danger, was within range. Up went Wally's right hand, with the egg in it.

Another moment, and that unattractive missile would have whizzed through the air, to find a target in the midst of Gerald Cutts' rather hard features. But at that moment, Tom Merry made up his mind to intervene, and save the reckless fag from himself, as it were. He grasped Wally's wrist and pulled it back just in time, with a sharp jerk.

That stopped the hurling of the egg at Cutts, as Tom intended. But it had another result which Tom certainly had not intended. For the egg was leaving Wally's hand, as Tom clutched: and it flew, owing to that backward clutch, backward instead of forward. It did not go anywhere near Gerald Cutts' face. It landed in the middle of Tom Merry's.

'Oooooogh!' gasped Tom, as it landed and burst.

'Oh, my only aunt Jane!' gasped Wally.

'Grooogh!' Tom Merry tottered, his face smothered

with egg, and surrounded by a scent that could almost have been cut with a knife. 'Gurrgh! Ooooh!'

'Ha, ha, ha!' yelled Wally.

'Ooogh! You mad young ass - oooch! Ooooooooooooh!' Tom dabbed frantically at streaming egg. 'Why, you young villain, I - I'll - groooogh!'

'Ha, ha, ha!' yelled Wally. 'You had to chip in! Now you've got it! Ha, ha, ha.'

'Urrrggh!' gurgled Tom.

Cutts of the Fifth came round the big elm, staring. He grinned at the sight of Tom's eggy face, and Tom wildly clawing egg. Wally, almost doubled up with merriment, yelled with laughter. Cutts grinned at Tom Merry: then he frowned at Wally.

'Chucking eggs about, what?' said Cutts. 'You fags are the limit! Selby doesn't whop enough in his form! Take that!'

Thud!

'Yow-ow!' roared Wally, as he took it. Wally ceased to be amused, all of a sudden, as Cutts' foot landed on his trousers. 'Wow!'

'And that ——!' added Cutts.

But Wally did not stay for a second lunge of the Fifth Form man's foot. He bolted. Cutts frowned after him, and then, looking at Tom Merry, grinned again.

'You'd better get a wash, Merry,' he remarked. And with that, Cutts of the Fifth sauntered on, laughing.

On that point Tom was in agreement with Cutts: he certainly needed a wash. With deep feelings, he cut off to the House to get one. And as he rubbed and scrubbed, and scrubbed and rubbed, at that malodorous egg, Tom would not have been sorry to hear that Cutts had kicked Wally of the Third all round St. Jim's - and indeed would not have been unwilling to kick him all the way back again.

CHAPTER FOUR

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS  
ON THE WAR-PATH

'BLAKE!'

'You image!'

'Weally, Blake ——'

'You ditherer!'

'I wefuse to be chawactawised as a ditherah, Blake,' exclaimed Arthur Augustus, warmly, 'I considah ——'

'Copped out of bounds?' asked Digby.

'I was not copped out of bounds, Dig.'

'Serve you right if you had been!' grunted Herries.

'Weally, Hewwies ——'

'What have you been doing to your face?' demanded Blake. 'Scrapping, or what?'

Blake and Herries and Dig were at tea, in No. 6, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came into that celebrated study. All three stared at him. There were signs on Gussy's aristocratic countenance that looked as if trouble had accrued during his excursion out of bounds. His noble nose looked red and slightly bulbous: there was a shade under one eye, and other outward and visible signs that there had been a spot of liveliness.

'Yaas, wathah!' said Arthur Augustus, 'I was set on, in the footpath, by a couple of wuffianly wascals.'

'Some of those racing roughs from Abbotsford?' asked Blake. 'Well, you jolly well asked for it. Perhaps it's dawned on you, now, that the Head knows better than you do, and that little boys have to toe the line at school.'

'As a mattah of fact, deah boy, I wealise that it was

somewhat thoughtless to disweguard the Head's ordah,' said Arthur Augustus, 'and I twust it will be a lesson to you ——'

'Why, you howling ass ——'

'I should have had a vewy wuff time, if a vewy decent chap hadn't twotted up and helped,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I have no doubt that I could have handled one of these wuffians: but the two were too much for me. It was vewy fortunate that Mr. Jones was takin' a walk in the wood.'

'Mr. Jones?' repeated Blake.

'Johnny Jones, he said his name was,' said Arthur Augustus. 'He is a boxah at Handlah's Wing at Wayland, he told me. He certainly can box — he knocked out those two wascals like anythin'.'

'Oh, that chap,' said Blake. 'The Game One, they call him — young boxer? They advertise that he takes on all comers in the ring at Handler's, and there's a prize offered for any man that can stand up to him for three rounds.'

'Jolly decent of him to chip in, and save a silly ass from getting what he asked for,' said Herries.

'Well,' said Blake, 'as you seem to have got some of what you asked for, Gussy, we won't boot you ——'

'Weally, Blake ——'

'Sit down and have your tea,' said Blake. 'You're let off the booting.'

'I should uttahly wefuse to be booted, Blake,' said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, 'and I am not thinkin' of tea. I want you to be my second.'

'Eh?'

'When I came in,' said Arthur Augustus, a tremble of wrath in his voice, 'Lowthah and Mannahs were waitin' at the gate. Both of them kicked me.'

'Good!' said Blake, heartily. 'Hard, I hope?'

'Do you good!' concurred Dig.

'You got us all fifty lines all round,' said Herries. 'I've

a jolly good mind to boot you myself. I would if you hadn't got yourself a pink nose and a blue eye already.'

'Wats! I am sowwy you fellows had fifty lines all wound, but I certainly shall not allow Shell fellows to kick me on the twousahs, and get away with it,' said Arthur Augustus, hotly. 'I am goin' to thwash Mannahs and Lowthah.'

'Oh, my hat!'

'I would have thwashed them on the spot,' continued Arthur Augustus. 'But they collahed me, and bumped me down on the ground, and walked off——'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'I am vewy glad that you are amused,' said Arthur Augustus, with dignified sarcasm. 'But I can assuah you that I am not in the least amused, and Mannahs and Lowthah will not be amused when I am thwough with them. I am not the sort of fellow to be kicked on the twousahs with impunity. I am goin' to thwash them, one aftah the othah: and I wequiah a second to fix up the scwap. Are you goin' to act as my second in this mattah, Blake?'

'Forget it,' said Blake.

'If Blake does not desiah to act as my second, pewwaps you will act as my second, Dig?'

'Not in these trousers!' said Digby.

'Will you act as my second, Hewwies?'

'Not till the cows come home,' said Herries.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his celebrated eye-glass into his noble eye, and surveyed his three faithless friends. Like the elder Hamlet, he gazed at them more in sorrow than in anger.

'Vewy well,' he said, with freezing dignity. 'If my own fwiends wefuse to act for me, I will look for a second elsewhah. I will go and ask my welation, Cardew, in No. 9. Wats to you.'

And Arthur Augustus turned on his heel.

Blake and Herries and Dig exchanged glances. Arthur Augustus, evidently, was very deeply incensed. Certainly, in other circumstances, Gussy's pals would have been more than willing to back him up, in dealing with any person who had planted an impertinent foot on his aristocratic trousers. But in the present circumstances, Manners and Lowther had only done what Blake and Co. had fully intended to do, and their opinion was that Gussy had only received what was justly coming to him.

'Hold on, fathead!' rapped Blake, as Arthur Augustus turned to the door.

The eyeglass gleamed back at him.

'Does that mean that you are goin' to act as my second, Blake, and awwange mattahs with those two Shell boundahs?' asked Arthur Augustus, coldly.

'No!' roared Blake. 'It means that you jolly well asked to be booted, for getting fellows impots. Now sit down and have your tea and don't talk rot about scrapping with Tom Merry's gang, see?'

'I am goin' to thwash Mannahs ——'

'Fathead!'

'And I am goin' to thwash Lowthah ——'

'Ditherer!'

'And I am goin' to ask Cardew to be my second. I uttably wefuse to be booted on the twousahs by a Shell fellow without thwashin' him.' And again Arthur Augustus turned to the door.

Jack Blake gave him an exasperated glare, which had no effect whatever on Gussy's back. Gussy's hand was on the door-handle.

'Hold on, Gussy!' snapped Blake.

'I wefuse to hold on,' answered Arthur Augustus over his shoulder.

'Oh, let him run on,' said Herries. 'Lowther will make potato-scrappings of him, and Manners will mop up the pieces he leaves over.'



'I wegard you as an uttah ass, Hewwies ——' hooted Arthur Augustus. 'I shall certainly mop up the pah of them, one aftah the othah.'

'I can see you doing it!' grinned Dig.

'You will have the pleasuah of seein' me do it, Dig, in a vewy short time. I am goin' to ask Cardew to act for me, and he will fix it up at once.'

'Bless Cardew!' said Blake. 'Leave it to this study, Gussy!' He winked at Herries and Digby, with the eye furthest from Arthur Augustus. 'We'll fix it up! If you're really determined on a scrap with Manners and Lowther ——'

'I am as firm as a wock about that, Blake.'

'Then I'll be your second,' said Blake.

'I'll be your third!' said Digby.

'And I'll be your fourth!' grinned Herries.

'Pway be sewious, deah boys,' said Arthur Augustus, frowning. 'This is a sewious mattah. If you are goin' to be my second, Blake, pway get along to Tom Mewwy's study, and fix it up without delay.'

'Okay,' said Blake, resignedly. 'You can have your tea while I'm gone. After tea you can strew the hungry churchyard with their bones! What are you grinning at, Dig? What are you grinning at too, Herries? Didn't you hear Gussy say that this was a serious matter?'

Dig and Herries chuckled. Serious as the matter was, from the aristocratic point of view of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, two members of Study No. 6 did not seem to be able to take it very seriously. And perhaps Jack Blake was not quite so serious as he contrived to look.

'Tuck in, Gussy,' said Blake. 'I'll fix it up!'

Blake left the study, leaving Herries and Dig still chuckling: and did not chuckle himself till he was out of the study. And there was a grin on his face as he made his way to No. 10 in the Shell: which did not indicate that, serious as the matter was, it was going to turn out

very seriously. Arthur Augustus's noble wrath was roused, and he was on the war-path: and whether Gussy was firm as a rock, or obstinate as a mule, it was useless to argue with him when his noble back was up. Fortunately, it was always easy to pull his noble leg: and perhaps some idea of that kind brought the cheery grin to Jack Blake's face as he walked away to Tom Merry's study in the Shell.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EASY VICTORY!

THERE was quite a crowd in the junior day-room after tea. School House juniors had gathered there, at the news that a 'scrap' was on – on rather unusual lines. 'Scraps' happened sometimes: there were occasions when fellows felt that they could not quite settle their differences minus the punching of noses. But it was not at all usual for a fellow in the Fourth Form to undertake to scrap with two Shell fellows, one after the other: and that was what Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth had undertaken to do. And most of the juniors were grinning at the idea.

Arthur Augustus, certainly, was sturdy, with all his slim elegance: he was a good boxer, and his pluck was unlimited. And he was in deadly earnest. His personal dignity had been seriously ruffled: and his dignity was a very serious matter with the swell of St. Jim's. Two boots had landed on his well-fitting trousers, and he had been bumped in addition. Obviously, the offenders had to suffer for their sins. But how Arthur Augustus was going to inflict just punishment on two fellows, older, bigger, and heavier, both of whom were pretty good in the boxing line, was rather a mystery. Arthur Augustus himself had no doubt about it. He was the only fellow who hadn't.

The 'Terrible Three', among the crowd of juniors, were not looking alarmed, at all events. Tom Merry was smiling: Manners and Lowther seemed quite at ease, in spite of the thrashings that impended over them.

Jack Blake, playing up as Gussy's second, had duly fixed up the arrangements for the scrap; though exactly how he had fixed them up he had not confided to his noble chum. But they were, at any rate, fixed up: and all was ready. The crowd were only waiting for Arthur Augustus to arrive and get on with it.

Talbot of the Shell came over to the Terrible Three, with a rather grave look on his face.

'Look here, you chaps, what's all this about?' he asked. 'You fellows can't really have any real trouble with old Gussy.'

Tom Merry laughed.

'It's not fearfully awfully serious, old scout,' he said. 'I don't think anybody's going to be knocked into a cocked hat.'

'Well, a scrap's a scrap,' said Talbot. 'Can't it be washed out.'

'Impossible!' said Monty Lowther, shaking his head. 'Gussy has got his back up. Nothing short of deadly strife will bring it down again. He's going to thrash Manners and poor little me, and he won't be happy till he's done it.'

'Why not make him happy?' said Manners, blandly.

'That's the big idea!' explained Tom Merry. 'Don't worry, old chap - nobody's going to get hurt.'

'Oh!' said Talbot. 'Is it a leg-pull?'

'Sort of,' said Tom, laughing.

'Look out, you Shell chaps,' called out Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth. 'Here comes his Nibs.'

'This is where we tremble!' murmured Monty Lowther.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

Study No. 6 came in, in a bunch. One face among the four was serious, indeed grim. But three of them were smiling. Arthur Augustus was speaking as he came in with his devoted pals.

'This is wathah wot, Blake,' he said. 'It would be much bettah to have the scwap behind the gym, where pwefects wouldn't spot what was goin' on. Suppose a pwe. came buttin' in.'

'That's all right, old tulip,' said Blake.

'It is not all wight, Blake! I do not want a pwefect buttin' in and stoppin' the scwap befoah I have thwashed Mannahs and Lowthah,' said Arthur Augustus, severely. 'I should vewy much pwefer to scwap behind the gym.'

'Challenged party chooses time and place,' said Blake.

'Yaas, wathah! But ——'

'Never mind butting - come on! Half the House is here, waiting to see you chew up a couple of Shell fellows.'

'Weally, Blake ——'

'You men ready?' called out Blake. 'Gussy's ready, and spoiling for the fray.'

'We're ready,' called back Tom Merry. 'Everything ready except an ambulance, to carry away my pals after Gussy has finished with them.'

'Weally, Tom Mewwy ——!'

'Off with your jacket, Gussy,' said Blake.

'Vewy well! but I think ——'

'Gammon! You never have, and you're not beginning now. Off with your jacket, and put those poor fellows out of their misery.'

'Weally, you ass ——'

'Which of you fellows is going to be slain first?' asked Blake. 'It doesn't matter which - you're both booked.'

'Little me,' said Monty Lowther, peeling off his jacket. 'Hand over the gloves, Tom. You keep time, Talbot.'

'Any old thing,' said Talbot, smiling. It had dawned upon him that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the only fellow who was in earnest about this unusual scrap. It

had dawned on other fellows, too, and most of them were grinning, as they formed a ring for the combatants.

Arthur Augustus donned the gloves.

'Pway shut the door, Hewwies,' he said. 'We do not want beaks or pwefects intewwuptin' us.'

Herries, grinning, shut the door. It was very probable that if masters or Sixth-form prefects learned that a fight was going on in the junior room, it would be interrupted. Arthur Augustus did not want to see his house-master, or his form-master, or Kildare or Darrell of the Sixth, appearing on the scene. However, the door was banged shut, and Arthur Augustus was satisfied.

'You first, Lowthah?' he asked.

'Little me!' agreed Monty.

'Vewy well: I am weady, if you are.'

'Seconds out of the ring,' said Talbot. 'Ready? Time!'

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood stern and erect, facing Monty Lowther of the Shell. But as he advanced to the attack, Monty Lowther backed away. He backed all round the ring, with Arthur Augustus following him up. Judging by appearances, Monty saw no use in standing up to the warlike Gussy, and relied on dodging.

But Arthur Augustus was not to be dodged. He made a rush, and hit out, and a boxing-glove tapped on Monty Lowther's chin.

It was not a hard tap! It was, in fact, merely a flick. It would hardly have bothered even Baggy Trimble to receive it. But its effect on Lowther of the Shell was remarkable. He went over backwards as if a cannon-ball had hit him: sat down on the floor, and then rolled over, and groaned deeply.

'Bai Jove!' ejaculated Arthur Augustus, staring down at him in astonishment. 'What is the mattah with you, Lowthah?'

Groan!

'You are not weally hurt, Lowthah ——'

Groan!

'Bai Jove! I did not hit you vevy hard,' said the puzzled Gussy. 'It was weally nothin' at all ——'

Groan!

'Man down!' chuckled Kangaroo of the Shell.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

Talbot of the Shell proceeded to count. Monty Lowther, stretched on the floor, seemed to make an effort to rise: but sank back again. He gave another groan as he collapsed.

'One, two, three, four, five, six ——!' Talbot was counting. 'Seven, eight, nine - OUT!'

'Bai Jove!'

Monty Lowther was counted out! Tom Merry came forward, and helped him up, and helped him out of the ring. Lowther leaned very heavily on him as he was led away. Tom plumped him into a chair.

Arthur Augustus gazed at them, in astonishment, and some contrition. Arthur Augustus was on the war-path: he was wrathful, and like the prophet of old, he felt that his wrath was justified. But he was a kind-hearted fellow and he felt quite concerned for Lowther. He came over to him, as Monty sagged in the chair.

'I twust you are not feelin' vevy bad, Lowthah,' he said.

'What did you expect?' moaned Lowther. 'You slog a fellow, and then say you hope he isn't feeling very bad!'

'But I weally did not hit vevy hard, Lowthah ——'

'You don't know how hard you hit, Gussy,' said Tom Merry, solemnly. 'I only hope this isn't a hospital case.'

'Bai Jove!'

'Some slogger, Gussy!' said Blake. 'Poor old Manners! You've got it coming, Manners. Think you can face up to it?'

'I'll try,' said Manners, heroically. 'If Gussy slogs me like that, I'm done. But I'm going through it.'

'Ready, Gussy?' asked Tom Merry.

'Yaas, wathah! But I weally cannot understand Lowthah goin' down like that - I am suah I did not hit him very hard. Howevah, if you are weady, Mannahs, I am weady!'

Manners stepped into the ring with the gloves on. Talbot called time. He was keeping his face as serious as he could. But almost every other face wore a grin, and there was a sound of chuckling.

'Time!'

Manners did not retreat and dodge as Monty Lowther had done. He came on with a rush, hitting out. But his right missed Gussy on one side, and his left on the other, and Gussy's boxing-glove landed on his chest. As he was backing away when it landed, it could not have landed very hard: but its effect was as remarkable in Manners' case, as the tap on the chin had been in Lowther's. Manners went staggering back, and back, and back, till he bumped into Tom Merry backwards and Tom caught hold of him.

'Hold me!' gasped Manners. 'I'm knocked out.'

'Bai Jove!'

From Tom's grasp, Manners slid to the floor. He sat there and gasped for breath. Talbot began to count.

'One, two, three, four ——!'

'Bai Jove! Look heah, Mannahs, get up and come on!' exclaimed Arthur Augustus. 'You Shell fellows must be made of putty.'

'——five, six, seven, eight ——'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Nine - OUT!' pronounced Talbot.

'Bai Jove!'

Tom Merry helped Manners to a chair. There he sat, beside Lowther, both of them apparently in a state



of collapse. Arthur Augustus gazed at them. The swell of St. Jim's had announced his intention of thrashing Manners and Lowther, and he had fully intended to carry out that design. But he certainly had not expected so easy a victory as this! It really was amazing!

But there it was! Both his opponents had been counted out, and Arthur Augustus was undisputed victor in the fray. He peeled off the gloves in a state of great astonishment. Blake, grinning, helped him on with his jacket. And in the crowded day-room, the only fellow who did not know that the playful Shell fellows had been pulling Arthur Augustus's aristocratic leg, was the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy himself!

## CHAPTER SIX

### SHIPPING A STUDY!

‘DON’T!’ said Frank Levison.  
‘Better not!’ advised Reggie Manners.

Wally of the Third looked obstinate.

The three fags were at the corner of the Fifth form study passage. Wally of the Third was peering round that corner, apparently to ascertain whether the coast was clear. Levison minor and Manners minor, apparently, were striving to exercise a restraining influence on the irate Wally. Wally looked as if he had no idea whatever of submitting to restraint.

‘If Cutts catches you in his study ——!’ said Frank Levison.

‘He’s gone out!’ answered Wally.

‘It’s St. Leger’s study too – he might butt in ——’

‘He went out with Cutts.’

‘Well, suppose they come in ——’

‘Suppose your grandmother!’ retorted Wally.

‘It’s jolly risky, ragging in a senior man’s study!’ said Reggie Manners, shaking his head.

‘Did he pull my ear, or didn’t he?’ demanded Wally. He gave the appendage a reminiscent rub. ‘Did he pull my ear yesterday, or did he not?’

‘Yes: but ——. Well, that was yesterday!’ argued Reggie.

‘Think I’m going to have my ear pulled? Just because he heard me saying what twenty other fellows have been saying ——’

‘They didn’t let Cutts hear them ——’

'Well, how was I to know he was just behind us? Are men in the Third going to have their ears pulled by cads in the Fifth?' snapped Wally. 'I'll show him!'

'If you rag his study ——'

'No "if" about it,' said Wally. 'I'm going to. I was going to let him have a mouldy egg in his chivvy, but that cheeky ass Tom Merry barged in, and he got the egg instead of Cutts. Well, I'm going to ship his study. Perhaps he'll be sorry he pulled a Third Form man's ear, when he finds all his things in a heap and ink sprinkled over them ——'

'Oh, my hat!' said Reggie Manners. 'Why, Cutts would raise Cain ——'

'Let him!' said Wally.

'Might go to the House beak about it.'

'I don't care.'

'You'd care if Railton gave you six.'

'Oh, rats!'

'But look here, Wally, old chap,' urged Frank Levison. 'It's too jolly risky, and it will land you in an awful row. Cutts is a beast, but you can't rag a Fifth Form man ——'

'Can't I?' Wally seemed to think that he could!

'After all, senior men do throw their weight about,' argued Reggie Manners. 'Knox of the Sixth kicked me yesterday.'

'Cutts pulled my ear!' said Wally.

'I know he did. But ——'

'Forget all about it,' urged Levison minor.

'Not till I've given Cutts what he's asked for,' said Wally. 'I'll show him whether he can pull my ear or not.' Wally peered round the corner again. 'It's all right – not a man about! If you fellows like to come and lend me a hand shipping Cutts's study ——'

'No fear!' said Reggie Manners, promptly.

'Better not, Wally ——!' said Frank Levison.

'Oh, pack it up,' said Wally. 'Cut off, if you don't feel

like taking a hand. I'm going to get through before Cutts comes in.'

'Look here, old chap ——'

'Now, look here, Wally ——'

Wally of the Third did not heed. Leaving his friends still remonstrating, he whipped round the corner, and cut up the passage to Cutts's study. As Cutts of the Fifth had gone out with St. Leger, the coast was clear, for the time at least. Cutts, certainly, might come in: but that was a risk that the vengeful Wally had to take.

'He's gone in!' muttered Reggie, peering round the corner after Wally. The door of Cutts' study had opened, and shut behind Wally of the Third. 'Young ass!'

And the two fags departed, leaving the obstinate Wally to his own devices. They had done their best to dissuade him from that perilous enterprise, and could do no more.

Quite heedless of their excellent counsel, Wally of the Third stepped into Gerald Cutts' study, and closed the door after him. His heart beat a little fast, as he found himself in the Fifth Form man's quarters. It was, in fact, a dangerous game for a fag to rag in the senior studies: and if Cutts came in and caught him there, Wally knew what to expect. A caning from his form-master, Selby, or even 'six' from his house-master, Railton, would have been as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine, compared with what he was likely to receive from Gerald Cutts.

But Wally, for the moment at least, did not care. Cutts had pulled his ear – an unpardonable indignity. Cutts had it coming!

The warlike fag did not lose time. He was there to 'ship' that study, and he was going to 'ship' that study, whatever the consequences: but he did not want to be caught there by Cutts if he could help it. Once that study was shipped, and the shipper safe off the scene, Cutts

could wonder who had done the shipping: he had plenty of fellows to choose from. But even if he found out that it was Wally, Wally did not – for the moment – care! Cutts had pulled his ear – and Cutts was going to be made to sit up! The ears of Third Form men were not to be pulled with impunity.

There were books and papers on the table: among them an unfinished Latin prose, which no doubt Cutts had to hand in later to his form-master, Ratcliff. Wally gathered books and papers into a heap, picked up the inkpot, inverted it, and streamed out ink over the heap.

He grinned. Inky books would undoubtedly make Cutts sit up: and that Latin prose was now in no state to be shown up to Mr. Ratcliff. Cutts would have to do it again – and serve him jolly well right – had he not pulled Wally's ear?

But Wally of the Third was not finished yet.

He stepped across to Cutts's desk, which stood in a corner by the study window. The window was wide open, letting in the sun and the breeze: and Wally put his head out for a moment, to take a survey below. He looked towards the gates. But there was no sign of Cutts coming in. It did not occur to Wally, at the moment, that Cutts might have come in already: in which case, he would naturally not be in sight outside the House!

Reassured, Wally turned to the desk. He threw it open. There were a number of little drawers in the desk. Cutts, no doubt, kept things in them. What he kept in them, Wally neither knew nor cared. Whatever the contents, Cutts was booked for a lot of sorting out, later. Wally jerked out drawer after drawer, tossing them one after another across to the table, where they, and their contents, were added to the inky heap of books and papers.

Wally chuckled.

He was finding this amusing. Cutts, it was certain,

would find it anything but amusing, when he discovered the havoc wrought in his study. There was no doubt that Wally was exacting full retribution for the pulling of his ear!

It was a rather windy afternoon. With the window wide open, loose papers were liable to flutter about. A sheet of postage stamps floated off the table and fluttered to the carpet. Apparently Cutts kept postage stamps in one of the little drawers Wally had pitched across to the table. Wally did not heed. Cutts could pick up his own postage-stamps if he wanted them. A tick who pulled a Third Form man's ear could look after his postage stamps himself, and be blowed to him!

Having practically gutted the desk, Wally turned to the fireplace. There was no fire in the study: but he had no doubt that there was soot in the chimney. His next bright idea was to rake down soot and scatter it over Cutts's expensive carpet.

But even as he reached for the poker, he paused.

'Oh!' gasped Wally.

There was a step outside in the passage. And a voice reached him through the door,. It almost froze him. For it was the voice of Gerald Cutts, of the Fifth Form.

'Coming into the study, St. Leger?'

'Oh, my only aunt Jane!' moaned Wally. He realised now that Cutts must have returned, and must have been already in the House, when he had taken that watchful look from the window! For here was Cutts!

'No - I'm goin' along to see Lefevre, about the cricket!' came St. Leger's rather drawling voice, in reply to Cutts.

The door handle turned.

Wally spun round from the fire-place, his eyes on the door, almost starting from his head. Cutts was coming in!

Cutts of the Fifth threw the door open. There was a stirring of the loose papers on the table, as the draught

from the passage to the open window, caught them. The table was near the window, and several light papers floated out – unheeded by Wally, staring at Cutts, and by Cutts, staring at Wally.

‘You young scamp. What are you doing here?’ exclaimed Cutts. ‘Why – what – oh, gad! You young villain!’ Cutts fairly gasped, as he saw the state of his study, and realised why the young scamp was there.

He stared at the heap on the table, at the papers fluttering on the floor, and at Wally. Then he made a bound towards a corner of the study where a cricket stump stood. He clutched up that stump.

What Gerald Cutts was going to do with that stump, Wally of the Third did not need telling. Wally made a frantic bound for the door.

He reached it, as Cutts swung round on him, cricket-stump in hand. Cutts leaped after him.

Swipe!

Cutts got in only one swipe, as Wally flew. But it was a hefty one. The stump rang on Wally’s trousers like a rifle-shot: and louder still rang the yell of anguish from Wally of the Third. But he gave Cutts no time for more. He fairly flew down the passage, and he was turning the corner as Cutts glared out of the doorway after him. Wally of the Third vanished into space – and Cutts of the Fifth was left staring at the havoc in his study, with an expression on his face compared with which the petrifying glare of the fabled Gorgon was a sweet smile.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### A SPOT OF LIVELINESS IN STUDY No. 6!

‘**B**AI Jove!’ Arthur Augustus D’Arcy uttered that sudden and startled exclamation.

He jumped as he uttered it.

Arthur Augustus was in his study, No. 6 in the Fourth. He was seated in the armchair, with a thoughtful expression on his noble face. His thoughts were running on a subject of the extremest interest to Gussy; the elegant trouserings he had been discussing with his tailor, Mr. Wiggs, at Wayland the previous day.

Blake and Herries and Dig cared little, if at all, for trouserings. But their noble chum was the glass of fashion and the mould of form among the School House juniors. The cut of his jacket, the crease of his trousers, and the set of his necktie, were very important matters to Arthur Augustus. They were matters of grave consultation when he saw Mr. Wiggs at Wayland. Reflecting deeply on this important subject, Arthur Augustus was quite startled when the study door flew suddenly open, and a breathless fag bolted into the study, and slammed the door after him.

Arthur Augustus sat up, in the armchair, and stared across the study at his young brother of the Third Form.

‘Weally, Wally ——!’ he exclaimed.

‘Oh. You here, Gussy!’ panted Wally, looking round at him.

‘Yaas, wathah! And I am bound to say, Wally, that



you are wathah a young wuffian to bolt into your majah's study in that mannah!' exclaimed Arthur Augustus, severely. 'You made me jump! The mannahs of the Third Form at this school are weally fwightful. There is such a thing as wepose, Wally.'

Wally did not heed.

He stood just within the door, his head bent to listen. Apparently he was listening for footsteps outside.

But he seemed relieved after a few moments, and turned to his major.

'Did you speak, Gussy?' he asked.

'Weally, Wally - I wemarked that there is such a thing as wepose of mannah,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I should be vewy glad, Wally, to see you cultivate some wepose of mannah.'

'Not when a chap's after me to skin me!' grinned Wally.

'Oh!' It dawned upon Arthur Augustus that his young brother had had a reason for that sudden and headlong irruption into Study No. 6. 'Is somebody aftah you, Wally?'

'Sort of!' admitted Wally.

'Vewy well: I will see you thwough,' said Arthur Augustus, reassuringly. 'Some chap in the Fourth ——?'  
Sniff, from Wally of the Third.

'Think I'd bolt from a Fourth Form man?' he asked, derisively. 'Forget it.'

'I twust that you have not been wowin' in the Shell, Wally? But if it is Wacke or Cwooke ——'

'It's a Fifth Form man.'

'Oh!' Arthur Augustus's face became serious. Arthur Augustus was prepared to see his young brother through: but if a Fifth Form man was after Wally, he realised that seeing him through might prove rather a difficult problem. A Fifth Form senior was not likely to be dealt with so successfully as Manners and Lowther had been, the

previous day. 'Weally, Wally, you are wathah an obstwepewous young wuffian, but you might steer cleah of wows in a seniah form. What have you been doin'?'

'Shipping Cutts's study.'

'Oh, cwumbs!'

'That's all,' added Wally.

'All?' repeated Arthur Augustus. 'Weally, Wally, you are the limit. You may have to go up to Wailton about it.'

'He pulled my ear!' yapped Wally.

'Wubbish! Wailton would not pull any fellow's yah – such things are not done,' said Arthur Augustus. 'What do you mean?'

'Not Railton, you ass – Cutts! Cutts pulled my ear!' snapped Wally. 'He heard me saying something he didn't like, yesterday, and came behind me and grabbed my ear and lugged it. That's why I shipped his study.'

'He certainly had no wight to pull your yah!' said Arthur Augustus. 'It was a wuffianly action. But shippin' his study – did he catch you?'

'That's why I'm dodging him!' said Wally. 'I expect he will look in the locker-room for me first, but he won't find me there. I want to keep out of his way for a bit, Gussy! Mind if I stay here?'

'Pway do,' said Arthur Augustus. 'But if Cutts goes to the House beak about his study bein' wagged, you will have to go to Wailton.'

Wally shook his head.

'He's after me,' he said. 'He's got a stump! He'd rather lay into me with a stump, than get me a tap or two from the House beak. Besides, he wouldn't want Railton to know why I did it. Railton would be down on a man pulling a chap's ears.'

Arthur Augustus nodded, thoughtfully.

'Yaas, wathah,' he agreed. 'Pwobably Cutts would pwefer to keep the mattah in his own hands. You had bettah keep cleah of him till he cools down. Wally,

Cutts is wathah a bad-tempered bwute – I have had twouble with him myself – he knocked my hat off, once, out of sheeah cheek. Stick heah, deah boy, and if Cutts blows in, we will thwow him out again.’

Wally grinned. He was grateful to his major for giving him shelter in time of stress, and for backing him up, but he could not quite see the two of them throwing out a hefty fellow like Cutts of the Fifth. Gerald Cutts, in fact, could have handled the two, major and minor, without the slightest difficulty.

‘What are you gwinnin’ at, Wally?’

‘Oh! Nothing!’ said Wally. ‘Thanks no end, Gus. I’ll stick here for a bit, if that rotter doesn’t guess — Oh, my only Aunt Jane.’ He broke off, at a sound of footsteps in the passage.

‘Bai Jove! Pewwaps he guesses that you cut for your majah’s study!’ exclaimed Arthur Augustus. ‘It is all wight, Wally – I will stand by you.’

The door of Study No. 6 opened. But it was not Cutts of the Fifth. Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth came in.

‘Oh! He’s here!’ exclaimed Blake, staring at Wally. ‘I say, young shaver, there’s a Fifth Form man hunting for you —’

‘Cutts seems to want to see you!’ grinned Herries.

‘Looks quite wild,’ said Dig.

‘I am wathah glad you fellows have come in,’ said Arthur Augustus. ‘I may pewwaps wequiah some help if I have to handle Cutts.’

‘Oh, scissors!’ ejaculated Blake. ‘No perhaps about that, Gussy! You’d require quite a lot of help, if you started handling a Fifth Form man.’

‘Lots and lots!’ chuckled Dig.

‘And then some!’ added Herries.

‘Weally, you fellows, I do not wish to over-estimate my powahs, but I wathah think that I could give Cutts

of the Fifth some twouble, seniah as he is,' said Arthur Augustus. 'You will wemembah that I did not have a lot of difficulty in handlin' two Shell fellows, one aftah the othah, yesterday ——'

'Ha, ha, ha!' yelled Blake and Herries and Dig.

'Bai Jove! What are you fellows cacklin' at?' asked Arthur Augustus, in surprise. 'I was not sayin' anythin' funnay, was I?'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Weally, you fellows ——'

'Hallo, here comes somebody!' exclaimed Blake, as there was a heavy tramp of feet in the passage. He looked out of the doorway. 'Cutts! Looks as if you're for it, young D'Arcy.'

The next moment Cutts of the Fifth appeared in the doorway. He had a stump under his arm, which he slipped down into his hand. His eyes fixed on Wally of the Third with a quite deadly glare.

'You young ruffian, I've found you, have I?' he exclaimed. 'Now you're going to get what you've asked for. I ——'

Wally backed round the study table. Arthur Augustus made a bound from the armchair and interposed.

'Pway stand back, Cutts!' he rapped.

'Get out of the way, you young ass!'

'I wefuse to get out of the way, Cutts. I shall not allow you to lay a fingah – not a single fingah – on my young bwothah. If he wagged your study, it serves you wight for pullin' his yah, which was an act of feahful impertinence, and I am bound to say – yawoooooooooh!'

Arthur Augustus wound up with a yell, as Cutts, rushing, hurled him aside. The slim and elegant swell of St. Jim's fairly spun from that shove, and tottered across the study, collided with the armchair and sat down in it quite suddenly, gasping.

Cutts made a rush for Wally.

But Blake and Herries and Dig, as if moved by the same spring, all leaped at the Fifth Form man at the same moment. Three pairs of hands grasped Gerald Cutts, and dragged him back before he could reach Wally of the Third.

'Let go!' roared Cutts, 'By gum, I'll stump the lot of you! I ——' He wrenched and struggled in the grasp of Study No. 6.

Cutts was a powerful fellow, and the juniors did not find him easy to hold. Arthur Augustus jumped breathlessly from the armchair and lent a hand, but even then Cutts of the Fifth was hard to manage. He struggled and wrenched and rocked, with Study No. 6 clinging to him like cats. Blake yelled breathlessly to Wally.

'Cut, you young ass!'

Wally shot to the door.

He disappeared out of the doorway like an arrow from a bow. Cutts was left struggling and wrenching.

'Pway hold on to him, deah boys,' gasped Arthur Augustus. 'Hold the wottah and give Wally time to get cleah.'

But Cutts, with a final terrific wrench, tore himself loose, and cut across to the door. He shot out of Study No. 6 in pursuit of the fleeing fag, leaving four juniors gasping for breath.

'Oh, cwickey!' gasped Arthur Augustus. 'Oh, cwumbs! Wooogh. Bai Jove, I am jolly glad you fellows were heah - I weally do not think that I could have handled that wottah Cutts on my own!'

Which remark elicited a breathless chuckle from Blake and Herries and Dig.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### ENOUGH FOR CUTTS

‘MERRY!’  
Tom Merry looked round, raising his eyebrows a little as he did so. Cutts of the Fifth rapped out his name angrily and imperatively: and the junior captain of the School House had no idea whatever of being barked at by a Fifth-form man. He raised his eyebrows by way of answer, and that was all the answer that Cutts received from him.

Tom was coming up to his study, No. 10 in the Shell. Cutts followed him into the passage from the landing. One glance at his flushed and angry face, showed that Cutts was in the worst of tempers. But Cutts’ temper had no terrors for Tom Merry.

He stared at Cutts, and Cutts scowled back. Cutts had started in pursuit of Wally of the Third in a very bad temper, and the rough-and-tumble in Study No. 6 had not improved it by any means. He was now in a state of towering wrath, which he made no attempt whatever to conceal.

‘Merry!’ he barked again. ‘Have you seen young D’Arcy?’

‘Which?’ asked Tom. ‘There are two of them, Cutts ——’

‘D’Arcy minor, you young fool,’ snapped Cutts. ‘I think he dodged into this passage – have you seen him?’

Tom looked at him steadily.

‘If you expect an answer from a fellow you’d better put it a little more civilly, Cutts!’ he said, very distinctly.

And with that Tom walked on to his study, and went in, shutting the door after him.

'Oh!' he ejaculated, the next moment as he saw that the study was not unoccupied. Manners and Lowther were down in the day-room: but No. 10 had a rather unexpected inhabitant. Tom Merry stared at Walter Adolphus D'Arcy across the study table. 'You young ass! You're here?'

'Sort of,' assented Wally. 'Seen Cutts?'

Tom Merry laughed.

'He's just asked me if I'd seen you,' he answered. 'He seems to want you, if you don't mind him. What on earth are you rowing with Cutts for, you young duffer? I stopped you yesterday ——'

'You shouldn't have,' said Wally. 'Did you like the egg?'

'If you're asking for a thick ear, young shaver ——'

'Well, if Cutts had had that egg, I shouldn't have had to ship his study to-day,' said Wally. 'He wasn't going to get by with pulling a man's ear, I can tell you.'

'You've shipped his study?' exclaimed Tom, staring.

'Shipped it from end to end,' said Wally, coolly. 'Turned his desk out, everything blowing about the study, all over the shop, like Billy-o ——'

'You young ditherer! No wonder he wants to see you!' said Tom. 'You can expect him to take your skin off.'

'I'd rather he didn't!' said Wally. 'He rooted me out of my major's study, and I cut in here. He won't look for me in the Shell —— Oh, my only aunt Jane!' Wally broke off, as the study door was hurled open, and Cutts of the Fifth looked in, or rather glared in. He glared at the dismayed Wally, and then at Tom.

'So that's why you didn't answer me, Merry,' he snapped. 'You were hiding that young scoundrel here.'

'Not at all,' answered Tom. 'I hadn't the foggiest

idea that he was here, till I came in, and I've already told you that if you want a fellow to answer you, you'd better be civil about it.'

'That's enough from you,' snapped Cutts. And he made a rush across the study at Wally of the Third.

Smack! smack! smack! Thump! Bang!

Cutts had dropped his stump in Study No. 6, and had not stayed to retrieve it. But he was using his hands with great effect. Wally, kicking and struggling, whirled in his powerful grasp, and yelled frantically as Cutts smacked and thumped and banged right and left.

Tom Merry looked on, uncertain for the moment what to do. A fag who 'shipped' a Fifth-form man's study, obviously had something drastic to expect from that Fifth-form man. But this was altogether beyond the limit. Cutts, in his fury, was letting himself go, in a way that even the bully of the Fifth would never have done had he been cooler.

'Stop that, Cutts!' exclaimed Tom, sharply.

Cutts was not likely to stop at the order of a junior in the Shell. He smacked on vigorously, Wally yelling and yelling under the smacks.

Words being useless, Tom Merry went into action. He jumped at Cutts, grasped him with both hands, and dragged him backwards from Wally by main force. Under that sudden and vigorous drag, Cutts tottered backward, releasing Wally, lost his footing and sat down with a heavy bump on the floor.

Wally did not lose that chance. He darted to the door and vanished while Gerald Cutts was still sitting and spluttering. A ghost at cock-crow could not have vanished more suddenly, and Cutts did not even see him go.

'Oh!' gasped Cutts. 'Oh, gad!' He spluttered for breath. 'Why, you cheeky young ruffian, you dare ——!' He scrambled to his feet. 'By gad, if I don't give you the hiding of your life ——!'



Wally was gone. Cutts stepped quickly between Tom Merry and the door, as if expecting Tom to follow Wally's example.

But Tom Merry had no such idea. He certainly was not going to flee from his own study, and there was no need for Cutts to bar his way.

'Now, you cheeky young rotter ——!' breathed Cutts. His eyes glinted at Tom.

Tom Merry eyed him quietly and steadily. Cutts' towering wrath was transferred to him: and trouble was coming. Tom was a sturdy fellow, as sturdy and strong as any junior at St. Jim's, and he was the best boxer in the Lower School. But he was a junior, and Cutts was a senior – a big, hefty fellow, far away beyond his size and weight. Such a combat was too unequal; but if Cutts fancied that he was going to smack and thump and bang at Tom Merry, as he had smacked and thumped and banged at the unfortunate Wally, he had quite another guess coming. If that was Cutts' programme – as evidently it was – Cutts was not getting by with it, so long as Tom had a punch left in his good right arm. He clenched his fists and watched the Fifth-form man like a cat.

Cutts came at him, smacking at his head. Tom's fist came up and knocked the smacking hand away, with a hard rap on the wrist.

'Better chuck it, Cutts,' said Tom, quietly. 'I'm not a flag in the Third to be bullied, Cutts. Lay a finger on me, and you'll get all I can give you.'

Cutts did not answer in words. With a flaming face, he rushed. The next moment they were fighting.

Tom gave ground, backing round the table, under the weight of the Fifth Form man's rush. But his hands were up, his eyes gleaming over them: his face set, and he hit out hard. Twice his knuckles landed in Cutts' flushed and furious face, with plenty of force in the punches.

Then a heavy fist, landing on his chest, sent Tom spinning, and he crashed.

But he was up again like a jack-in-the-box. This time it was Tom Merry who rushed, and Cutts, to his surprise, found himself attacked, with two swift and active fists lashing at him. So hard and fast was that attack, that the Fifth-form man backed away from it. There was, in fact, a yellow streak in Cutts of the Fifth, and savage temper could not take the place of pluck. He gave ground in his turn, backing as far as the study window.

There was a tramp of feet and a buzz of voices in the Shell passage. Baggy Trumble's excited squeak was heard:

'I say, they're scrapping in No. 10 - Tom Merry and Cutts!'

Shell fellows crowded round the doorway - Kangaroo, and Talbot, and Gore, and Skimpole, and Glyn, and six or seven more, all staring in, at the surprising and unexpected sight of a 'scrap' between a Shell fellow and a Fifth-form senior.

'Tom!' exclaimed Talbot. 'What ——'

'Go it, Tommy!' chirruped Kangaroo.

'By gum, Tom's beating him!' yelled Gore, 'and him in the Fifth! Go for him, Tom Merry! You've got him beat.'

Cutts's face burned. At that stage, the Fifth-form man would not have been sorry to call it a day. He had intended to thrash Tom without mercy for his intervention: but he had not been looking for a scrap with a fellow who seemed as hard as nails, and who had a punch like a hammer. Tom was, in fact, putting up a fight that would not have been unworthy of Johnny Jones, the Game One, in Handler's Ring at Wayland, and it was much more than Gerald Cutts wanted or could enjoy.

But he simply could not back out, beaten by a junior. He rallied, and came on again, hitting out fiercely.

Then it was hammer and tongs, and the crowd at the doorway looked on breathlessly.

Manners and Lowther came pushing through the crowd. They had heard the news. They pushed through into the study.

'Tom!' exclaimed Lowther. 'Here, lend a hand, Manners, and chuck that Fifth-form cad out.'

'What-ho!' said Manners.

How that unequal combat would have ended, did not transpire. For Manners and Lowther collared Gerald Cutts without ceremony, and dragged him away from their chum. Tom Merry dropped his hands, panting. Cutts struggled with Manners and Lowther.

'Lend a hand, Talbot!' panted Lowther. 'Chuck the cad out.'

Talbot lent a willing hand. Cutts was hitting out right and left: but the three Shell fellows handled him. The Fifth-form man went spinning to the door, where the grinning crowd opened for him to pass. He tottered in the passage, panting for breath.

'Boot him out!' roared Gore.

Cutts of the Fifth did not wait to be booted out. He cast an enraged glare round at the juniors, and tramped away down the passage. A yell of derision followed him as he went.

## CHAPTER NINE

### LOST!

‘**W**HAT a glory-hole!’ drawled St. Leger. Cutts gave him a scowl.

St. Leger was his study-mate, and his pal: but Cutts was in a mood just then to scowl at friend or foe. Seldom had Gerald Cutts felt so utterly disgruntled and exasperated.

His study did indeed look a ‘glory-hole’ as St. Leger said. Everything was in disorder: his desk gutted, all its contents scattered about the study. Both the seniors had plenty to do, to get the room to rights again, and Cutts had no use for St. Leger’s drawing.

Wally of the Third, who had wrought all that havoc, had escaped – for the present at least. Cutts’ pursuit of him had resulted only in the rough-and-tumble in Study No. 6 in the Fourth, and the fight in No. 10 in the Shell. Neither reflected any credit on Cutts: a Fifth-form senior ‘handled’ by juniors, and bearing marks on his face of a junior’s knuckles. The unequal scrap in No. 10 could scarcely have ended in victory for Tom Merry; but Cutts was glad enough that it had been stopped: he had had enough hard hitting and more than he liked. Now he was staring round his dismantled study, with a brow black as thunder.

‘Lend a hand getting things straight,’ he snarled. ‘By gum, I’ll skin that young scoundrel when I lay hands on him. Look at what he’s done.’

‘Checky little ruffian!’ said St. Leger. ‘What did you do to get his rag out like this, Gerald?’

'I suppose it's because I pulled his ear yesterday!' yapped Cutts.

St. Leger shrugged his shoulders.

'Better not let Railton hear about this, then,' he said. 'The House beak wouldn't exactly approve of pulling fags' ears, old bean. You're a bit too fond of that kind of thing, Gerald. Young D'Arcy didn't give you that nose, did he?' St. Leger gazed at Cutts' nose, which, like Marian's in the ballad, was red and raw. Tom Merry's knuckles had landed on it, hard.

'Oh, don't be a goat!' snapped Cutts. 'He hid in Merry's study, in the Shell, and that cheeky young villain Merry had the nerve to chip in when I was thrashing him.'

'I dare say it was time for somebody to chip in,' said St. Leger, drily. 'I know what you're like when you let your temper rip, old scout. It will land you in trouble one of these days.'

'Are you going to stand there jawing, with the study in this state?' hooted Cutts. 'Can't you lend a hand getting things to rights?'

'Oh, all right,' drawled St. Leger.

'Everything all over the place!' growled Cutts. 'Every drawer in my desk chucked about the study - everything spilled right and left - all my letters, and stamps, and everything. There was a five-pound note in the money-drawer - keep an eye open for it.'

'Oh gad, you don't want to lose that!' agreed St. Leger. 'Well, let's pile in - we'll soon have things to rights. Here are your stamps, anyway - just as well they didn't blow out of the window.'

The two seniors set to work. The drawers were replaced in the desk, and the contents, scattered over the table and the floor, collected and replaced. The Latin prose, drenched with ink, was a ruin; Cutts gritted his teeth as he looked at it. He gritted them again as he sorted out

his books, spotted all over with ink. But at length the study was in something like its accustomed order, though Cutts was still rooting about, peering into corners and under chairs, in search of something still missing.

'Found that fiver?' asked St. Leger.

'Not yet.'

'Oh, gad! Where the dickens can it have got to? Sure it was in the drawer in your desk?'

'Think I don't know where I kept it?' snapped Cutts. 'I had it only this morning, a tip from my uncle, Colonel Cutts. I was going to keep it for the hols. It must be here somewhere. That young scoundrel pitched the drawer across the room, and upset everything in it. It must be lying about. Where the thunder has it got to?'

Cutts kicked a chair out of his way. His temper was growing more and more savage as he hunted in vain for the missing banknote. St. Leger helped him in the search but he gave it up at last.

'It doesn't seem to be here,' he said.

Cutts nodded, breathing hard. Almost every inch of space in the study had been scanned, and there was no sign of the banknote. And a black and bitter suspicion was rising in Cutts' mind.

'It's gone,' he said.

'Looks like it.'

'That young rascal!' Cutts spoke between his teeth. 'It wasn't only for a rag he came here — he was after something more than that. That fiver was in my desk — and it's gone.'

St. Leger gave a start.

'Don't be an ass, Gerald!' he exclaimed, sharply. 'The kid wouldn't ——'

'Wouldn't he?' sneered Cutts. 'Where's the fiver, then?'

'It's rot!' muttered St. Leger, uneasily. 'I don't suppose the kid even knew you kept money in your desk. He came here for a rag.'

'And then found it!' sneered Cutts. 'Don't be a fool, St. Leger – you know as well as I do that a banknote couldn't walk away – that young scoundrel cut off with it in his pocket, and you know it.'

'I don't know anything of the kind – and you don't!' snapped St. Leger. 'Goodness knows what's become of the note: but I'll bank on it that D'Arcy minor never touched it, or even saw it at all. He was here ragging, not looking at the things in your desk.'

'It's gone!'

'I know it's gone!' St. Leger glanced at the open window. 'Might have blown out of the window, lying around loose – the merest puff of air would shift a flimsy thing like a banknote. We'd better go down and look in the quad.'

'This will have to go up to Railton,' said Cutts, savagely.

'Rot!' snapped St. Leger.

'I'm not losing that five-pound note, St. Leger,' snarled Cutts. 'If you're rolling in money, I'm not – I'm going to get that fiver back from young D'Arcy ——'

St. Leger gave him a steady look.

'You're wild with the kid, and willing to believe anything,' he said. 'But if you start a story of theft in this study, you'll be sorry for it. That kid D'Arcy is a cheeky little rascal, but he'd no more steal than I would. He never touched your fiver.'

'Where is it, then?'

'Goodness knows, unless it blew out of the window. It might have.'

'Likely!' sneered Cutts.

'Well, you're a fool if you go to Railton and accuse the kid,' said St. Leger. 'You'd better think twice, and three times, before you do anything of the sort. Let's go down and look under the window.'

'Fat lot of good that will be, when young D'Arcy's got it in his pocket all the while.'

'Let's look, at any rate.'

'Oh, all right.'

The two seniors left the study. A few minutes later they were scanning the ground under the study windows. But there was nothing to be found there. It was windy in the quad, and if so light an article as a flimsy banknote had blown out of the window, it was not likely to remain where it had fluttered down. St. Leger had little doubt, or none, that that was what had happened: but where the banknote had blown to on the wind, there was no telling, or even surmising.

'Well?' snapped Cutts, at last.

'Well, it's not here,' said St. Leger. 'Might have blown half a mile by this time, I suppose. But it might turn up in some corner, and if it did, you'd look a precious fool, and a precious rotter too, accusing the kid of taking it.'

'I'm not losing it,' said Cutts. 'I won't be in a hurry to go to Railton about it — but that young scoundrel has got to hand it back. Whether he pinched it, or lost it, he's got to make it good. And I'll tell you this, St. Leger, that if he lost it for me, he can get the money from his people to make it good — and if he doesn't, he's going up to Railton charged with pinching it.'

'He never did that, and ——'

'Oh, rats!'

Cutts stalked away with that. St. Leger shrugged his shoulders, and strolled away in a different direction.



## CHAPTER TEN

### WALLY IN A SCRAPE!

**W**ALLY!' Seven voices exclaimed, all at once. Seven fellows stared at Wally of the Third.

They were at tea, in Study No. 6.

That day, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had received a paternal 'tip' from home. Having a whole pound note at his disposal, Arthur Augustus had nobly expended one half of the same on supplies for a spread at tea time: so the table was unusually festive in Study No. 6. With a good supply of good things on hand, Blake and Co. had asked the Terrible Three of the Shell to tea; so there were seven juniors gathered round the festive board, when Wally of the Third came in.

The fact that Arthur Augustus the previous day had been engaged in fisticuffs with two members of the Three, did not detract from the general harmony. True, Manners and Lowther had planted disrespectful feet on Arthur Augustus's elegant trousers, but Arthur Augustus had, in his own happy belief at least, awarded them due and just punishment; and as Manners and Lowther were quite willing to leave him in that happy belief, all was calm and bright. It was quite a cheery party in Study No. 6 – till Wally of the Third arrived.

Then all faces became serious at once, as the seven juniors stared at the fag. Wally's face was white; he looked utterly unlike the cheeky, self-assured Wally that they all knew. He looked, indeed, as if he had had a knock-out jolt, which had left him dazed and winded.

'Wally!' repeated Tom Merry. 'What on earth ——' Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. His eyes gleamed.

'Bai Jove! What is the mattah, Wally? If that wottah Cutts has been aftah you again ——'

Wally shook his head.

'Tain't that!' he muttered.

'What's the trouble, then?' asked Blake.

Wally stood facing the staring seven. Evidently, he had come to his major's study loaded with trouble. But now that he was there, he seemed to find some difficulty in speaking. The colour flushed into his white face, and then faded out again, leaving him as pale as before. Only too plainly, something was wrong with the scamp of the Third Form.

'Give it a name, kid!' said Digby.

'All friends here, Wally,' said Tom Merry. 'Cough it up, whatever it is.'

Wally hesitated and stammered.

'I - I - I came here to - to speak to Gussy! I - I'll come back later.' He turned to the door.

'Pway do not go, Wally,' said Arthur Augustus. 'You have made me feel vewy anxious. You look quite sick.'

'I feel pretty sick!' muttered Wally.

Tom Merry glanced at his friends. It was clear that D'Arcy minor had something to say to his major, which was not for other ears.

'Time we pushed along, you chaps,' said Tom. He rose from the table. Tea was not yet over, but evidently the Shell fellows were superfluous in Study No. 6 just then.

'Hold on, deah boys,' said Arthur Augustus. 'You have not finished your tea, and Wally cannot have anythin' to say that you need not heah. Twot it out, Wally, and tell us what the twouble is.'

Wally seemed to catch his breath.

'Oh, all right,' he muttered. 'It doesn't matter if these

chaps hear, I suppose – it will be all over the House before long, and all over the New House, too, I suppose.’

‘We’d better go ——!’ murmured Manners.

‘No, don’t go,’ said Wally. ‘I – I’d rather you heard it from me, come to think of it – you’re bound to hear it soon.’

‘But what on earth is it?’ exclaimed Blake.

‘Weally, Wally, you talk in widdles!’ exclaimed Arthur Augustus. ‘You are wathah a weckless young wascal, but you have not done anythin’ weally wong. I am quite suah of that.’

‘No, I haven’t,’ muttered Wally. ‘But – but ——’ His voice trembled.

‘But what?’

‘I – I – I —— ‘The hapless fag stammered again. ‘You – you know I shipped Cutts study this afternoon because the brute pulled my ear ——’

‘Yaas, wathah! But what ——?’

‘I jolly well wrecked it,’ said Wally, ‘and serve him jolly well right, too, the bully. But – but – of course I never knew there was money in his desk – how was I to know?’

‘Money!’ breathed Blake.

‘I hooked out the drawers and chucked them about the study,’ said Wally. ‘Whatever was in them fell out, of course. So far as I know, there were letters, and papers, and I remember seeing a sheet of postage stamps; but, of course, I never looked at the things. If there was a banknote among them, how was I to know?’

‘A – a – a banknote?’

‘So Cutts says! He ain’t after me to whop me, now; he’s after me for a five-pound note!’ groaned Wally.

‘Oh, crumbs!’ gasped Herries.

Every face in Study No. 6 was extremely serious now. That white scared look on Wally’s face was explained. The fag’s thoughtless and reckless exploit in a Fifth-form study had led to unexpected results.

'Bai Jove!' said Arthur Augustus, faintly.

'Let's have it clear,' said Tom Merry, quietly. 'You chucked everything out of Cutts' desk, and scattered his things all over the study; and now Cutts says that there was a five-pound note in one of the drawers. Is that it?'

'That's it!' muttered Wally.

'Well, if that was so, the banknote must be somewhere in the study,' said Tom. 'I suppose Cutts has looked for it?'

'He says that he and St. Leger have been over every inch, and the banknote isn't in the study.'

'But it must be,' said Herries. 'You didn't chuck his things out of the window, I suppose?'

'Of course I didn't.'

'Well, then, it's there, whether Cutts and St. Leger found it or not.'

'It ain't there,' mumbled Wally. 'After Cutts told me it was missing, I asked him to let me look for it. And I - I did - and - and it wasn't there! Cutts thinks I pinched it ——'

'The rotter!' breathed Blake.

'Well, it's gone, and I must have pitched it out of the desk, in one of the drawers,' said Wally. 'And - and it ain't in the study.'

'It's a bit windy to-day,' said Manners. 'Might have blown into the passage ——'

'The door was shut till Cutts came in, and found me there!' muttered Wally. 'It couldn't have blown into the passage.'

'Was the window open?'

'Eh? Oh, yes! I remember the window was open - I put out my head to see whether Cutts was coming in - yes, it was wide open.'

'That may be the way it went, then.'

'Yaas, wathah!'

'Well, it's gone,' said Wally. 'Cutts is going to put a

notice on the board, giving the number of the note, so I suppose he thinks it may have blown away. But – but – but – if it blew away, how is it going to be found? And – and – and Cutts says he's got to have his banknote back.'

'Of course he has,' said Arthur Augustus. 'You were a weckless young wascal to go waggin' in a seniah study, Wally; and Cutts can hardly be expected to stand the loss of five pounds. He has certainly got to have his money.'

'That's so,' said Monty Lowther. 'Cutts is a tick, but he has a right to his own money.'

'But it's gone!' muttered Wally. 'If it's blowing about the school, I can't find it, and it may have blown over the wall, for all I know.'

'You should nevah have touched his desk, you young ass!' said Arthur Augustus, severely.

'True, O King!' said Monty Lowther. 'But a bit too late to be of use, Gussy. That fiver's got to be found, or made good.'

'That's what Cutts says!' muttered Wally. 'He doesn't care whether I lost it or pinched it, so long as he has it back? But – but he says that if he doesn't have it back, I'm to go up to Railton for taking it.' Wally shuddered. 'How can I make it good – five pounds! I – I – I've got threepence!'

The juniors exchanged glances.

That Wally of the Third had dreamed for one moment of touching money not his own, not one of them could suppose, for one moment. Such a suspicion might be in Cutts's hard cynical mind; but Tom Merry and Co. knew better. The banknote was lost. Wally was to blame for a reckless rag that had led to the loss, but that was all. But Cutts, hard and suspicious as he was, certainly had his rights – he could not be expected to stand the loss of such a sum as five pounds. That loss had to be made good unless the missing banknote could be found.

Every fellow in the study was willing to help. But cash was limited in junior studies. They counted their financial resources in shillings, not in fivers. Of all the seven, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the only fellow who ever possessed a 'fiver'; and such occasions were few and far between. Willingly the juniors would have contributed all they had, rather than have allowed Wally of the Third to face the charge threatened by Cutts. But all they had would have come nowhere near the sum required.

'We've got to find that rotten banknote - if we can!' said Tom Merry, at last.

'If we can!' said Blake, very doubtfully.

'Might be anywhere, if it blew away!' said Dig. 'Half a mile outside the school, if it comes to that.'

'Yaas, wathah.'

Wally stood silent and miserable. He had come to that study, in the hope that his major could help him out. But hunting for a banknote that had blown away on a windy day did not seem very helpful.

'We'll do all we can, at any rate,' said Manners.

'We couldn't find it,' muttered Wally. 'I - I think Cutts will wait, and give me a chance, before he goes to Railton. He - he wants his money, and he doesn't care about anything else. But - but we couldn't find it - it's not in his study, and goodness knows where it might be now.'

'It must be weplaced!' said Arthur Augustus.

'I tell you I've got threepence ——'

'I shall write home to-day, Wally, and ask the pater ——'

There was a yell from Wally.

'Don't! Don't you do anything of the kind, Gussy, you ass! Don't you say a word about this at home!'

'Weally, Wally ——'

'If you can't help me out, you can't! But I won't have

a word said at home about a fellow suspecting that I've pinched his rotten banknote.'

'Pway listen to me, Wally, and do not intewwupt your eldahs! I shall not say a word to the pater about Cutts or his wotten banknote - I would not soil pen and papah by alludin' to his wotten and disgwaceful suspicions. I shall simply tell the pater that I wequiah five pounds for a vewy particulah purpose, and ask him to let me have it. And I have no doubt that the governah will play up, and it will be all wight.'

Wally looked relieved.

'Thanks, Gussy, old man,' he said. 'I knew you'd stand by a fellow, old chap. If the governor coughs it up —'

'Leave it to me, Wally! Now wun away, and don't wowwy.'

'What-ho!' said Wally.

And Wally of the Third quitted the study, looking a great deal more cheerful than he had looked when he entered it. Seven juniors resumed tea.

'Think your pater will cough it up, Gussy?' asked Blake.

'I twust so, Blake.'

'It's a lot of money,' said Dig.

'Yaas; but I shall put it to him vewy particulahly,' said Arthur Augustus. 'Of course he would nevah dweam of sendin' such a sum to a kid like Wally in a fag form: but it is vewy diffewent with me. I wathah think that the governah will wealise that he can wely on a fellow of tact and judgment; and I wathah think that he will play up, and it will be all wight - wight as wain.'

'Let's hope so!' said Tom Merry. 'But we'd better have a scout round, looking for that dashed banknote, before you post the letter, Gussy.'

'Yaas, wathah.'

And after tea, seven juniors scattered outside the

House, hunting for Cutts' lost fiver; only to realise, before very long, that they might as well have hunted for a needle in a haystack. And as the result of the hunt was precisely nil, Arthur Augustus's letter to Lord Eastwood was duly written and posted; and Wally's anxious friends in the Fourth and the Shell could only wait and hope for a favourable outcome.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### WHY NOT?

**G**EORGE FIGGINS, of the Fourth Form, sat in his study in the New House, with the local paper, the *Wayland Times*, open on his knees, and a very thoughtful expression on his rugged face. His brows, in fact, were wrinkled in deep thought, and his chums, Kerr and Wynn, coming into the study to tea, looked at him in some surprise. Figgins of the Fourth was not, as a rule, much given to deep thinking. Often he acted first and thought afterwards. Figgins was a great man with the bat, he was a good boxer; but in the thinking line he did not excel. So it was rather a surprise to Kerr and Wynn to find him buried in deep reflection.

So deep was Figgy in thought, that he did not look up as they came in. He did not notice that Fatty Wynn slammed a parcel on the table. He seemed to have forgotten that it was tea-time.

'Gone to sleep, old chap?' asked Kerr.

Then Figgins looked up.

'Oh! You fellows!' he said.

'Us!' agreed Kerr. 'What's the matter, Figgy?'

'I was thinking ——'

'I noticed that! That's why I asked what was the matter,' said Kerr, blandly. And Fatty Wynn chuckled.

Figgins frowned.

'Oh, don't be an ass!' he said. 'Think you do all the thinking in this study, because you're a dashed Scotchman? I can put in a spot of thinking at times.'

'Of course you can, old boy,' said Kerr, soothingly.

'None better! But what's up, all the same? Anything in that paper?'

'Yes,' said Figgins.

Which increased the surprise of his chums. The *Wayland and Rylcombe Times* recorded many events of local importance, but apart from references to the school matches, St. Jim's fellows as a rule did not find much of an interesting nature in its columns. If some item of news in the *Wayland and Rylcombe Times* had caused George Figgins to put in that unusual spot of thinking, it was very unusual.

'What's the news, then?' asked Fatty Wynn.

'No news specially,' answered Figgins. 'I say, to-morrow's Saturday.' His friends stared, at that sudden change of subject.

'I believe so,' agreed Kerr. 'To-day's Friday, so it seems jolly probable that to-morrow will be Saturday. What do you think, Wynn?'

At which Fatty Wynn chuckled again.

'I said don't be an ass!' barked Figgins. 'What I mean is, that Handler's Ring in Wayland is open on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. To-morrow being Saturday, we can go if we like.'

'Oh, quite,' said Kerr. 'We couldn't go to the evening shows, but we can go in the afternoon, if we want to. Do we?'

'I think we do!' said Figgins.

'Can't go through the wood,' said Fatty Wynn. 'You know the Head's put it out of bounds while the races are on at Abbotsford. I've heard that that ass D'Arcy chanced it the other day, and got mixed up with some racing roughs.'

'We can go round by the road,' said Figgins.

'Jolly long way round.'

'We can go on the bikes!'

'Oh, yes, if you like! But what do you want to butt

in at Handler's Ring for?' asked Fatty. 'Anything special there?'

'Yes: a boxer they call the Game One,' answered Figgins. 'Only a young fellow, but he's said to be a first-class boxer, and they run a sort of advertising stunt, offering a prize for any local johnny who can stand up to him for three rounds. The prize is five pounds; and Mr. Handler offers it every time. I believe he hasn't had to pay it out yet.'

Kerr chuckled.

'And doesn't expect to have to,' he said. 'Mr. Handler wouldn't be offering fivers to the public, if the public had much chance of getting hold of them. Not easy to stand up for three rounds against a professional pug, Figgy.'

'Not easy!' agreed Figgins. 'But ——'

'But what?'

'But a fellow might try it on,' said Figgins. 'Five pounds doesn't grow on every bush, Kerr. How often have we had five quids in this study?'

'Never, that I remember,' answered Kerr. 'But ——' He stared at Figgins, as it dawned upon him what Figgy had been thinking about so deeply. 'My dear chap, you're not thinking of putting in for that prize at Handler's Ring ——'

'Why not?' demanded Figgins.

'Hem!' murmured Kerr.

'Um!' said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins frowned at them. Kerr and Wynn, apparently, could see reasons, quite good reasons, why not!

'Can't I box?' demanded Figgins.

'Of course you can,' said Kerr. 'Jolly nearly as good as Tom Merry, over in the School House, if you come to that. But ——'

'I don't see "nearly"!' said Figgins, gruffly. 'Last time I had the gloves on with Tom Merry in the gym, I

think I shaped pretty well, even if he did pull out a bit ahead. If you're going to make out that School House is a cut above New House, Kerr, I call it unpatriotic.'

'Not in your lifetime!' said Kerr. 'But Tom Merry is a bit above the average, you know, in that line. You could box any other School House man's head off, below the Fifth.'

'I dare say I could box Tom Merry's head off, if it came to that, and if I put my beef into it,' said Figgins, obstinately.

'I say,' interjected Fatty Wynn. 'I think ——'

'Well, what do you think?' asked Figgins, interrupting.

'I think we'd better have tea ——'

'What?' hooted Figgins.

'Tea!' said Fatty, innocently. 'I say, I've brought in sosses, and a cake, and if you're ready for tea, I jolly well I am.'

Figgins gave his fat study-mate a glare, and Kerr grinned.

'I'm talking about boxing that young pro. at Wayland, not about tea!' roared George Figgins.

'Well, you can talk about it over tea, can't you?' argued Fatty Wynn. 'It's tea-time, ain't it?'

'For goodness sake, shut up about tea,' said Figgins. 'Look here, Kerr, if you think I couldn't box any School House man under the Fifth, you've got another guess coming. I jolly well could, see!'

'Well, if you could, old chap, it's a horse of quite another colour boxing a pro.,' said Kerr. 'That lad they call the Game One is tough. You don't want your face pushed through the back of your head.'

'I'd like to see him, or anybody push my face through the back of my head!' bawled Figgins. 'I'm not saying I could lick him. I couldn't! But tain't a question of licking him. It's a question of standing up to him for three rounds, and I believe I could do it.'

'You'd get some jolly hard punches ——'

'Well, I'm not made of putty!' said Figgins, sarcastically. 'I've had some hard punches, in my time, and lived to tell the tale. Think I'm afraid of a few hard punches?'

'Of course not, old boy. But - but ——'

'Five pounds would come in jolly useful, in this study, if I could bag it at Handler's Ring,' said Figgins.

'What-ho!' said Fatty Wynn, his eyes glistening. 'We'd stand the biggest spread ever stood in the New House, what?'

'Trust you to think of that!' yapped Figgins. 'We'd jolly well have new cricket bats all round; and if there's was anything left over, you could blow it on a spread, Fatty.'

'But ——!' said Kerr, dubiously.

'Think what a score it would be over the School House!' said Figgins. 'There's no end of talk about that chap Johnny Jones, and the way he knocks out fellows who take him on in the ring, thinking they've a chance of bagging that five quid. Well, if a New House man pulled it off, it would show those ticks over the way which is cock-house at St. Jim's, what?'

'Yes. But ——'

'Nobody's stood up to the Game One for those three rounds, so far,' said Figgins. 'A lot have tried it on, but they couldn't make it! Well, if I make it, ain't that a score for the House?'

'Oh! Yes! But ——'

'But - but - but ——!' mimicked Figgins. 'Billy-goats ain't in it with you, Kerr. But - but - but - but - but —— Rats!' Figgins gave a snort. 'If you jolly well think I can't box a man for three rounds, Kerr, you'd better say so, instead of keeping on butting and butting and butting.'

Figgins rose from the chair, and threw aside the *Wayland and Rylcombe Times*. His rugged face was determined.

'It's settled,' he said. 'I'm going to give in my name, and box that chap to-morrow afternoon at the Ring in Wayland.'

'But ——!' murmured Kerr.

'That,' said Figgins, 'is fixed, settled, like the laws of the Thingummies and What-do-you-call-'ems! Nuff said.'

And as enough was said, Kerr said no more; but he could not help feeling dubious about the prospects. Figgy, no doubt, could box, and he had pluck, and vigour, and reach, and he could stand up to punishment. But – there was, in his sage Scottish chum's opinion, a 'but' – and rather a large size in 'buts'.

However, as Figgins declared that it was fixed and settled, like the laws of the Thingummies and What-do-you-call-'ems – perhaps meaning the Medes and Persians – Kerr had to let it go at that; and the next item on the programme was sosses for tea, which was satisfactory, at least to Fatty Wynn.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### CARDEW TO THE RESCUE!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY frowned. That frown knitted his noble brow, as he looked into No. 9 Study, in the Fourth.

No. 9 belonged to Levison, Clive and Cardew. Only the last-named was there, when D'Arcy looked in. And it was the occupation of Ralph Reckness Cardew that brought the disapproving frown to the aristocratic brow of his distant relative, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Cardew of the Fourth was lounging in an armchair, with a newspaper open in his hands. But it was not the sort of newspaper that Figgins of the Fourth was interested in, over in the New House. It was quite a different kind of publication. From the doorway, Arthur Augustus was able to perceive that it was entitled *Sporting Snips*: a periodical that no St. Jim's junior was supposed to have in his study, or even to have seen or heard of. Had it been Mr. Railton or Mr. Lathom who looked into No. 9, instead of Arthur Augustus, Cardew's deep interest in the 'sport of kings' would certainly have landed him in a heart-to-heart talk, and quite probably into something more severe. Luckily for the sportsman of the Fourth, it was only D'Arcy at the door, and he received nothing but a disapproving frown.

'Weally, Cardew ——!' began Arthur Augustus.

Cardew was so deep in *Sporting Snips* that he was unaware that his door had opened. He gave a start at the sound of a voice, and whipped the paper behind him in the armchair in a split second.

Arthur Augustus's lip curled, as he beheld that swift action.

'That would be wathah too late, Cardew, if it was a beak or a pwefect heah,' he said. 'You are a vewy weckless ass, Cardew.'

Cardew gave him an angry stare for a moment. But his face cleared at once, and he nodded and smiled.

'Spot of luck that it was only you, Gussy,' he said. 'Trot in, old bean.'

Arthur Augustus hesitated in the doorway. The swell of St. Jim's had very firm opinions on the wayward ways of his relative, and he never made any secret of his strong disapproval, which, sad to relate, seemed rather to amuse Cardew than to discourage his sporting proclivities.

'I came heah because you asked me to look in aftah class, Cardew,' he said. 'But pewwaps I had bettah not. I am not in the least intewested in your wathah disweputable pursuits, Cardew. I am vewy much disgusted to see you weadin' a wacin' papah, and I cannot help wegardin' you as wathah a wottah.'

Cardew's eyes gleamed for a moment. But the smile did not leave his face.

'Trot in all the same, Gussy,' he said.

'If you have anythin' to say to me, Cardew ——'

'That's why I asked you to look in.'

'Oh, vewy well.'

Arthur Augustus walked into the study. Cardew waved his hand to a chair.

'Take a pew, old bean,' he said.

Arthur Augustus sat down. There was still a trace of a frown on his aristocratic brow. But Cardew's manner could not have been more bland.

'I hear you're landed in a spot of bother, old boy,' he said.

'Weally, Cardew ——'



'That minor of yours ——'

Arthur Augustus's frown revived.

'I was unawah, Cardew, that you knew anythin' about my young bwothah bein' in a spot of bothah,' he said.

Cardew laughed.

'I fancy a good many fellows know,' he said. 'From what I've heard, the young ass was ragging in a Fifth Form study the other day, and a banknote was lost among the ruins. Isn't that so?'

'Somethin' like that,' admitted Arthur Augustus.

'Cutts of the Fifth, I think ——?'

'Yaas, that wottah Cutts of the Fifth. He had the feahful cheek to pull my minah's yah!' said Arthur Augustus, warmly. 'I do not appwove of fags waggin' in a seniah study, but Cutts asked for it. Cutts is a boundah and a wank outsidersah, Cardew.'

'Quite!' agreed Cardew. 'But he wants that fiver, and won't be happy till he gets it. If he doesn't, he will kick up a thundering row, and it will get to the House beak. That will mean trouble for young Wally.'

'I twust that I shall be able to see Wally thwough, Cardew. I have asked my governah specially for a fivah, and I twust that it will awwive in the mornin'.' answered Arthur Augustus.

'If it doesn't ——!' said Cardew. 'A fellow's pater doesn't always cough up such a sum when he's asked.'

Arthur Augustus did not reply to that. So much depended on Lord Eastwood 'coughing up' the required fiver, that he did not like to think of the possibility of a negative reply from Eastwood House. Anyway it was no business of Cardew's, and he wondered why the scape-grace of the Fourth was interested in the matter at all. It was not the way of Ralph Reckness Cardew,

as a rule, to concern himself about other fellows' troubles.

'That would be a bit of a facer, what?' persisted Cardew.

'Yaas, wathah,' admitted Arthur Augustus. 'But weally, Cardew, I fail to see why you are speakin' to me about it. It needn't wowwy you.'

'I'm a relation, you know,' said Cardew, gravely. 'A distant one, if you like - but a relation all the same. Sort of family concern, in a way.'

Arthur Augustus's expression relaxed.

'Bai Jove! It is vewy decent of you to look at it like that, Cardew,' he said. 'I have nevah noticed befoah that you placed any value on the welationship, or had any wegard for it at all. I am vewy glad, Cardew, to heah that you wegard the mattah in that light.'

'I'd like to help,' explained Cardew.

'Bai Jove!' repeated Arthur Augustus, his noble countenance relaxing still more. 'That is vewy decent of you, Cardew. If you happen to have a fivah you could lend a fellow for a time, I should not wefuse to bowwow it, and I should feel evah so much obliged.'

Cardew coughed.

'My dear chap, if I had a fiver, it would be yours, without the asking,' he said. 'Unluckily, I've struck a stony patch, and I haven't even five sixpences.'

'Then what ——?'

'But I fancy I know how the tin could be raised,' said Cardew, watching Arthur Augustus out of the corner of his eye. 'I could get five pounds to-morrow ——'

'Could you weally, Cardew?'

'If I had just a ten-bob note to-day!' said Cardew. 'But as I've told you, I'm stony.'

'I am afwaid, Cardew, that you let your money wun away on your wacin' wubbish,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I have evewy weason to believe that you back horses,

with that unpleasant chawactah Bill Lodgey, at the Gween Man. It is not only vewy disweputable, Cardew, but a weckless waste.'

'Oh, quite!' agreed Cardew. 'But to come down to brass tacks, Gussy, could you lend me ten bob, to raise five pounds to-morrow?'

Arthur Augustus looked puzzled.

'As a mattah of fact, I have a ten-bob note left, out of a tip I had fwom the governah,' he said. 'But I uttably fail to see, Cardew, how you could possibly waise five pounds by havin' ten shillin's.'

Cardew coughed again.

'Leave that to me,' he said. 'There are ways and means, old scout. I've had rotten luck, and I'm just stony, but I know how to turn a ten-shilling note into a fiver, if I had one.'

'Weally, Cardew, that sounds wathah like magic,' said Arthur Augustus, in amazement. 'I weally quite fail to see ——'

'Well, what about it?' asked Cardew, briskly. 'Lend me that ten-bobber, Gussy, and to-morrow I'll lend you a fiver, for as long as you like.'

'Bai Jove! That sounds a vewy attwactive offah, Cardew,' said Arthur Augustus. 'And a vewy genewous one, too. It would get me wight out of the difficulty, if the governah doesn't play up.'

'That's what I'm thinking of,' said Cardew, blandly.

'But it is vewy puzzlin',' went on Arthur Augustus. 'I should vewy much like to know how you are goin' to do it, Cardew.'

'What does that matter?' asked Cardew. 'Do as I say, and to-morrow I'll hand you your ten-bobber back, and lend you a fiver. Isn't that good enough!'

'Yaas, wathah!'

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's hand went to his pocket for his wallet. Cardew's eyes glistened.

But they glistened too soon. Even as he reached for his wallet, Arthur Augustus remembered *Sporting Snips*, and a sudden doubt struck him. His hand came out of his pocket empty.

'One moment, Cardew,' he said, very quietly. 'Pway tell me pwecisely how you are goin' to do it. If it is anythin' to do with horses ——'

Ralph Reckness Cardew breathed hard.

Arthur Augustus had 'tumbled' to it! Really, it said much for Gussy's unsuspecting innocence, that he had not 'tumbled' sooner.

'If that is it, Cardew ——' Arthur Augustus's brow grew stern. 'Are you askin' me to lend you money to put on a wacehorse? Is that where you fancy that you can get a fivah?'

'Oh, don't be a goat!' growled Cardew. 'What else? Look here, D'Arcy, don't be a fool. You've got to get a fiver to save the neck of that young brother of yours, and I can get it for you. Lend me that ten-bobber, and leave it to me. Look here, I've got a horse ——'

'I wegard you as a wottah, Cardew.'

'It's a dark horse,' said Cardew, eagerly. 'Pink Pickle is a dark horse, D'Arcy, and I can get ten to one. Think of that - ten to one - that means turning ten bob into five quids ——'

'I would not take part in such a twansaction, Cardew, to turn it into ten thousand quids!' said Arthur Augustus, disdainfully. 'I wegard you as a blackguard, Cardew, and I wefuse to say anothah word to you. I wegwet vewy much that you are a welation of mine - I am not pwoud of the connection, I can assuah you. I will have nothin' to do with you or your wotten wacin'.'

'Look here, you silly fathead ——'

'Wats!'

'You'd rather Cutts marched your minor off to

the house-master and charged with him pinching!' sneered Cardew. 'This would see the young sweep clear ——'

'If you are hintin' Cardew, that my minah is capable of pinchin', I shall give you a feahful thwashin' befoah I leave this study!' exclaimed Arthur Augustus, wrathfully.

'What does it look like!' sneered Cardew. 'Do banknotes walk away, when a fag is ragging in a senior study?'

Arthur Augustus' eyes flashed. He clenched his fists, and made a step towards Cardew. There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Levison and Clive came into the study.

'Hallo, what's up here?' exclaimed Levison. 'You fellows rowing?'

'I am going to thwash Cardew, Levison ——'

'Forget it, old man,' said Clive, soothingly.

'I wefuse to forget it, Clive. I am sowwy to kick up a wow in your study, but I am goin' to thwash Cardew for hintin' that my minah is capable of pilfewin' a banknote in a seniah study.'

With that, Arthur Augustus made a rush. Levison and Clive grasped him just in time, and jerked him back.

'Hold on, old son,' said Levison.

'I wefuse to hold on!' roared Arthur Augustus. 'I am goin' to thwash that cheeky wottah ——'

'Cardew's going to take it back,' said Levison, 'And now!'

'Am I?' jeered Cardew.

'Yes, and at once.'

'And why should I, if I don't choose?'

'Because otherwise you're going to have your head banged on the study table till you do!' said Levison.

'Leave him to us, Gussy.'

Cardew, for a moment, looked fierce. Then he shrugged his shoulders, and burst into a laugh.

'Okay, Gussy,' he said. 'I don't think anything of the sort, really - nobody does, that I know of. Now take your face away - it worries me.'

Arthur Augustus unclenched his noble fists. He gave Cardew a glance of disdain, and stalked out of No. 3.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### DRAWN BLANK!

‘ONE for you, Gussy!’ said Jack Blake.

It was Saturday morning, in break. A good many fellows had gathered at the rack to look for letters. Among them were seven juniors who were keenly interested in an expected missive for D’Arcy of the Fourth.

Much depended on the reply from Gussy’s noble pater to his urgent letter. Arthur Augustus was among the few St. Jim’s fellows who sometimes received a ‘tip’ from home in the shape of a fiver. But whether Lord Eastwood had ‘coughed up’ the fiver that was so urgently needed to save Wally of the Third from dire trouble, was uncertain, till the letter was opened. It was, at least, hopeful to see the letter there, addressed to Arthur Augustus in the paternal hand.

‘Here you are, Gussy!’ said Tom Merry.

He took down the letter, and handed it to Arthur Augustus.

That elegant youth received it with much satisfaction.

‘Bai Jove! The governah has not lost time in weplyin’,’ he remarked. ‘Of course, I made it cleah that it was vevy urgent. I couldn’t tell him about Wally’s scwape, but I was vevy particulah to make it cleah that the mattah was vevy urgent indeed.’

‘Let’s hope that his jolly old lordship got it quite clear,’ remarked Monty Lowther. ‘If there’s a fiver in that letter, it’s okay.’

‘Yaas, wathah.’

Arthur Augustus stood with the letter in his hand, a thoughtful expression on his face.

'I wondah whethah the patah has played up!' he said, slowly. 'The fact is, deah boys, that I had a fivah fwom home only a week ago, and a pound note since: and the patah might think that I was wathah pilin' it on.'

'He jolly well might!' agreed Manners.

'I weally do not quite know how the money goes, you know,' said Arthur Augustus. 'It is vewy odd how money goes. All of a sudden you find that you have nothin' left, and it is vewy awkward. If you fellows will take a tip fwom me, you will be vewy careful in spendin' money.'

'Listen to the words of wisdom from the man who knows!' said Monty Lowther. 'Gussy's just the man to tell us how to be careful in spending money.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Yaas, wathah,' said Arthur Augustus. 'You cannot do bettah than wely on advice fwom a fellow of tact and judgment. Always keep carefully within your wesources, deah boys — that is my advice. I weally twust that the governah does not think I have been ovah-doin' it. I wondah what he says in this lettah.'

'Why not open it and see?' suggested Tom Merry.

'Not a bad idea, when you come to think of it,' said Herries, sarcastically. 'Nothing like opening a letter to see what's in it.'

'Weally, Hewwies ——'

'Open it, fathead!' said Digby.

'Weally, Dig ——'

'Give your chin a rest, and open the letter!' hooted Blake.

'Weally, Blake ——'

'Buck up, Gussy, and let's hear the worst,' said Tom.

Arthur Augustus opened the letter at last. Six juniors waited eagerly for the result. If his lordship at Eastwood



House had played up, all was serene. Cutts of the Fifth would get his five-pound note, and Wally of the Third would be out of his scrape. If his lordship had not played up, the knotty problem still remained unsolved: and what was to be done was a question to which none of the seven knew the answer. But the swell of St. Jim's got the letter open at last.

He drew out the missive within, and unfolded it. Then he uttered an ejaculation:

'Bai Jove!'

'Well?' exclaimed six voices in unison.

'Oh, goodness gwacious!' said Arthur Augustus, rather blankly.

'What's the verdict, fathead?'

'Give it a name!'

'Spill it!'

'Let's hear it, Gussy!'

'Gone dumb?'

'Cough it up!'

Heedless of half a dozen objurgations all at once, uttered by six anxious juniors, Arthur Augustus stood staring at the letter in his hand. Then, instead of speaking, he adjusted his eyeglass in his eye, and stared again: as if the aid of his celebrated monocle would improve matters somehow. It did not seem, however, to do so: for the swell of St. Jim's continued to gaze at the letter in dismay. From the expression on his speaking countenance, Tom Merry and Co. were able to deduce that the reply from Eastwood House was not favourable.

'Oh, deah!' said Arthur Augustus, at last.

'Anything in it?' demanded Blake.

'There is nothin' in the lettah, Blake?'

'Not a fiver?' asked Dig.

'Nothin' like it, Dig.'

'Nothing at all?' asked Herries.

'Only the lettah, deah boy,' answered Arthur Augustus.

'It is weally vevy upsettin'. The governah does not seem to wealise the sewiousness of the mattah, although I twied vevy hard to make it quite cleah. Look at it!'

The juniors looked at it.

The letter from Lord Eastwood, at Eastwood House, Hampshire, was brief. But it was quite to the point. Really, it was such a letter as Gussy might have expected from the paternal hand, in the circumstances.

*Dear Arthur,*

*I have received your letter, and can only conclude from it that you have been very unusually extravagant. You must make an effort to realise that extravagance is a serious fault which should be corrected.*

*Your affectionate Father.*

'Sold!' murmured Monty Lowther.

'A wash-out!' said Herries.

'Good advice, at any rate!' remarked Blake. 'Good advice runs in the family, I suppose. Good advice won't be enough for Cutts, though.'

'Hardly!' said Manners.

'Bai Jove! This is wathah a facah, you fellows,' said Arthur Augustus. 'Do you chaps think, fwom that lettah, that the governah isn't going to send me a fivah?'

'Sort of!' said Tom Merry.

'Seems rather like that!' said Blake, sarcastically. 'And serve you jolly well right, too, the way you chuck your tin away.'

'Weally, Blake ——'

'I suppose your pater isn't made of fivers,' said Blake, 'and he let you have one last week, and you blew it in riotous living ——'

'You uttah ass, I did nothin' of the kind,' exclaimed Arthur Augustus, indignantly. 'I bought a few things — I suppose a chap must have a new necktie occasionally, and pay his tailah, and ——'

'Well, there's nothing doing, so far as Gussy's pater is concerned,' said Tom Merry. 'We shall have to think of something else.'

'Yaas, wathah.'

'And what?' asked Blake.

But Tom had no reply to that question. His lordship at Eastwood House had been drawn blank; and if Wally of the Third was to be extricated from his scrape, evidently some other resource had to be thought up. But how was a problem to which there appeared, at the moment, to be no solution.

'Bai Jove, this is wathah wuff!' said Arthur Augustus, sadly. 'Cardew was wight aftah all — he fancied the patah mightn't cough up that fivah. It is weally wuff — vewy wuff indeed! But Cutts has got to be paid, you fellows, and I shall have to set my bwains to work wathah hard.'

'Oh, my hat!' said Blake.

Serious as the matter was, the Co. could not help grinning. If saving Wally of the Third from trouble depended on the outcome of Arthur Augustus setting his aristocratic brains to work, hard, they could not help thinking that Wally was in rather a bad box. Arthur Augustus glanced from face to face, and frowned.

'It is not a gwinnin' mattah!' he remarked, stiffly.

'Oh, not at all,' agreed Tom Merry. 'But ——'

'But ——!' murmured Monty Lowther.

'Five quids don't grow on every bush!' remarked Herries, oracularly.

'I am awah of that, Hewwies! But somethin' has got to be done, and I hardly think that you fellows would be able to think out a pwoblem like this! I shall have to think it out!' said Arthur Augustus.

And he crumpled the letter from home into his pocket, and walked away: with a deep wrinkle of thought in his brow: apparently beginning already on giving his noble brains some hard work!

'Well, that's that!' said Blake.

'Nothing doing!' said Dig.

'Nothing!' said Herries. 'Wally will be in the soup!'

The juniors went out into the sunny quad, with thoughtful faces. Not one of them could glimpse a possible way out of that difficult situation: and it certainly looked as if Wally was, as Herries expressed it, in the soup. And the fact that Arthur Augustus was setting his brains to work, hard work, with all the power of his aristocratic intellect, did not make them feel at all optimistic.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### POOR OLD FIGGINS!

'Oh, my hat!' ejaculated Tom Merry.  
'What——?' said Manners and Lowther together.  
'Look!'

Tom released one hand from a handle-bar and pointed. Manners and Lowther looked – and stared.

The 'Terrible Three' of the Shell had taken their bikes out for a spin after tea. They were not, at the moment thinking of Wally of the Third and his spot of bother, though no doubt D'Arcy major's powerful brain was still concentrated on that problem. They were, in fact, thinking of nothing in particular, as they bowled cheerily along the sunny Wayland road. But they concentrated on an interesting, and curious sight that met their eyes, under the trees by the roadside, and slowed down on their bicycles.

Three St. Jim's juniors stood in a group there.

They were New House men: Figgins, Kerr and Wynn. Evidently they had been cycling, for three bicycles were stacked against a wayside tree. There was a pool at that spot, beside the road, and George Figgins was bending over the pool, apparently bathing his rugged face in the cool water, dabbing at it with a dripping handkerchief. Kerr and Wynn seemed to be chiefly occupied in giving him sympathetic looks.

As the School House juniors came along, Figgins lifted a dripping face, and they had a view of it. It was quite a startling view.

Figgy's nose, like Marian's in the ballad, was red and raw.

It looked as if it had stopped something hard and forcible. One of his eyes was closed, and surrounded by a darkening hue. There were other signs of damage about Figgins, and his whole aspect was rather limp.

He rubbed that discoloured eye ruefully.

'Blow!' he said. 'I say, does it look very bad?'

Kerr and Wynn gazed at it. They hesitated to reply. In point of fact, it did look rather bad!

In their deep interest in Figgy's casualty list, the New House juniors did not notice the Shell fellows coming along. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther dismounted, wondering what on earth could have happened to Figgins of the Fourth. He looked as if something had happened — hard!

'Well, does it?' snapped Figgins. It was quite a snap. Figgy's temper seemed a little damaged, as well as the rest of him.

'Well, it's a bit dark, old chap,' said Kerr.

'Sort of shady!' said Fatty Wynn.

'Think Ratty will notice?' asked Figgins.

Again his chums hesitated to reply. Figgy had a hopeful nature, and perhaps he hoped that Mr. Ratcliff, his house-master, would not notice the state of that discoloured optic. But if anything was quite certain in this uncertain world, it was that Figgy's eye would leap to Ratty's eye, the moment his house-master's gaze fell upon him.

'Well?' yapped Figgins, as he received no answer.

'Can't be helped, old chap!' said Kerr. 'Ratty's bound to notice it. It's just one of those things.'

'Might have been worse!' said Fatty Wynn, consolingly. 'The chap could have hit harder, if he'd liked.' Snort, from Figgins.

'Think he let me off?' he exclaimed.

'Hem!' murmured Kerr.

'Look here, Kerr ——!'

'Well, he didn't go all out, Figgy,' said Kerr.

'He didn't have to!' said Fatty Wynn, rather unfortunately. Figgins gave him a glare for that remark.

'I suppose you think I was a silly ass, to take it on?' he hooted.

'Hem!' said Kerr and Wynn together. They were not going to say so; but Figgins had spotted their very thoughts!

'Might have pulled it off?' said Figgins. 'It was worth trying on, anyway. I can stand a few punches, if it comes to that.'

'Poor old Figgy!' sighed Fatty Wynn.

'Not so much of your poor old Figgy!' said Figgins, tartly. 'Think I'm made of putty?'

At this point, the New House Co. became aware of the School House trio. They stared round at them; Figgins with a frowning brow. George Figgins was not anxious to meet School House eyes just then.

'What on earth's happened, Figgins?' exclaimed Tom Merry.

'Oh! Nothing much,' answered Figgins, lightly: as lightly as he could! It was not very easy for a fellow to speak lightly, when he was feeling rather like an over-worked punch-ball.

'Your nose looks as if something had!' remarked Manners.

Figgins glared.

'You leave my nose alone!' he snapped.

'Where did you pick up that eye?' asked Lowther.

'Find out!'

'But, my dear chap,' said Tom Merry, 'you look as if you'd had a tough time. Been falling in with some of those racing roughs, like Gussy the other day?'

'Think I couldn't handle a racing rough?' said Figgins. 'I'm not a tailor's dummy, I hope.'

'But what ——?'

'Go and eat coke!' Only too plainly Figgy's temper had suffered, as well as the rest of him!

'Oh, all right,' said Tom, amicably. 'Come on, you chaps, and leave Figgy to enjoy himself.'

'I don't see why I shouldn't tell you,' growled Figgins. 'A dozen fellows in our House know, so you'd hear all about it. After all, I did stand up to him for two rounds, and that's more than any School House tick could have done, and chance it.'

'Hear, hear!' said Fatty Wynn, loyally. 'Figgy couldn't expect to pull it off, really, but he stood up for a couple of rounds, and there ain't a School House man under the Fifth that could have.'

'But who - what ——?' asked Tom, puzzled.

'That chap in Handler's Ring!' grunted Figgins. 'They offer a prize for any fellow standing up to him for three rounds. I stood it for two.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Tom. 'The Game One - the chap who rescued old Gussy from the tramps the other day——'

'That's the chap.'

Tom Merry whistled.

'From what Gussy told us, that chap Johnny Jones handled a couple of tough roughs as if they were kids,' he said. 'You must have been an ass, Figgy - you a Fourth Form chap, thinking you could stand up to a professional pug like that. No wonder you look as if you'd been charging a lorry with your face.'

'Well, I held him for two rounds,' said Figgins, defiantly, 'and that's more than any School House tick could have done. I'd like to see you stand up to him for three, so rats.'

'You're not likely to see it!' said Tom, laughing. 'I don't want an eye like that to show to Railton, or a nose like that either. Why, you ass, Johnny Jones could have made mincemeat of you, if he'd wanted to. He must have let you off lightly.'



Figgins breathed wrath.

He had to admit that he had taken on too big an order, in standing up to the Game One in Handler's Ring at Wayland. He had to admit that he had not got by with that rather reckless venture. He had to admit that the Game One was too much for him; much too much. But he was not in the least disposed to admit that Johnny Jones had let him off lightly. His own private opinion was that the Game One had had to extend himself considerably, to knock him out in two rounds.

'You blithering, blethering, blathering School House booby!' said Figgins, in measured tones. 'You couldn't have stood it for one round, if you'd tried for a hundred years, and then another hundred after that. I stood it for two, and I'd have stood it for three, if - if - if——'

'If you could have come up to the scratch, old chap,' said Fatty Wynn, as Figgins paused rather uncertainly. 'Only you couldn't, old fellow ——'

'I could have,' said Figgins. 'Only - only ——!' He paused again. 'Well, I stood it for two rounds, and I'd like to see any School House tick do as much. And if you stand there grinning, Tom Merry, I'll jolly well punch that grin off your mug. I'll jolly well punch it off, anyway!' added Figgins, apparently thinking it a good idea.

'Oh!' gasped Tom, as a sudden punch landed on his nose. 'Why, you silly ass - you New House tick - I - I - I'll ——'

'Have another?' hooted Figgins.

He squared up to Tom Merry, blinking painfully with his damaged eye, and a crimson stream trickling afresh from his damaged nose.

But Tom, instead of coming on to have another, burst into a laugh. He rubbed his nose and backed away from the incensed Figgins. He could feel for poor old Figgy, in his damaged and dilapidated state. One punch, certainly would have knocked Figgy helplessly off his

pins; he was in no condition to stand up to a fag of the Third, after his experience at the hands of the Game One of Handler's Ring. Tom had no desire to administer that punch. He backed away, laughing.

'Keep its ickle temper!' he said.

'Look here ——!' roared Figgins.

Tom Merry chuckled.

'Well, if Johnny Jones didn't let you off lightly, Figgy, I will!' he said. 'I don't want your pals to have to carry you home on a gate! Ta-ta!'

And Tom Merry put a leg over his bicycle, and rode on, laughing, followed by Manners and Lowther, chuckling. Figgins glared after them, as they went, and then glared at George Francis Kerr and David Llewellyn Wynn.

'What are you grinning at?' he demanded.

Two faces became very serious at once.

'Nothing, old chap,' said Kerr, hastily. 'I say, better give your nose another dab or two — the claret's running.'

Figgins snorted, and bent over the pool again, to give his suffering nose another dab in the cool water. Then he gave his shadowy eye another dab. Then he made a move towards his bike.

'Feel like going on, old chap?' asked Fatty Wynn, anxiously.

'Think I'm going to stay here till calling over?' yapped Figgins.

'I mean, you're rather groggy ——'

'Who's groggy?'

'My dear chap ——!' murmured Kerr.

'If you think I'm too groggy to push a bike, Kerr ——'

'Not at all, old fellow! Let's push on,' said Kerr.

Evidently, it was necessary for Figgy's loyal chums to be rather tactful with Figgy, just then. They rode on towards St. Jim's. But after about a hundred yards, Figgins dismounted, and walked the bike.

'Going to walk it?' asked Fatty Wynn.

'Got eyes?' counter-questioned Figgins.

'But if you ain't groggy ——'

Figgins looked at him.

'If I'm groggy,' he said, 'I'm not too groggy to punch a silly ass's nose if he keeps on talking like a silly idiot!'

After which, they proceeded in silence.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### UP TO GUSSY!

‘PENNY for them!’ said Talbot.

Arthur Augustus D’Arcy gave quite a jump.

He was deep, very deep, in thought. Leaning on a buttress outside the School House, with his hands in the pockets of his elegant bags, his eyeglass gleaming in the sunshine, and a wrinkle of concentrated cogitation in his noble brow, Arthur Augustus was lost to the world, when Talbot of the Shell came along.

Talbot paused, and looked at him, smiling. Arthur Augustus did not even notice him there, so deep in a brown study was he. Talbot’s playful offer of a penny for his thoughts brought him out of that brown study with a jump.

‘Oh!’ he ejaculated.

Arthur Augustus had been thinking, very deeply, ever since the arrival of the letter from Eastwood House that morning.

He had told his friends that he was going to set his aristocratic brains to work, to solve that knotty problem, and apparently he was doing so. Lord Eastwood had been drawn blank, and some other resource had to be found. All his friends were quite keen to help, but so far, the Gordian knot still remained uncut. Fivers, as George Herries had sagely remarked, did not grow on every bush. Gussy, undoubtedly, had some hard thinking to do – and he had been doing it ever since break.

He had, in fact, been thinking over that problem, instead of the lesson, in third school. Mr. Lathom, the

master of the Fourth, quite unaware of the weighty problem on Gussy's mind, had been quite tart – when he received answers at random from that member of his form. When a form-master, in a history lesson, inquired who had commanded the British troops at the Battle of Waterloo, and received the surprising answer, 'Cutts of the Fifth!' it was quite unlikely that he would be pleased or satisfied. Arthur Augustus had been rewarded with a hundred lines for that inadvertent slip.

But he was not thinking about lines now. Much weightier matters than lines were on his mind.

'Anything up, old boy?' asked Talbot, smiling.

'Yaas, wathah,' answered Arthur Augustus. 'Pewwaps you could give a fellow a word of advice, Talbot. You are wathah a sensible chap, as a wule.'

'Good advice on tap!' said Talbot. 'Carry on.'

'I am wathah in a fix!' explained Arthur Augustus.

Talbot's face became grave.

'About young Wally, do you mean?' he asked. 'I wish I could help, old chap.'

'Bai Jove! Evewybody seems to have heard about young Wally,' said Arthur Augustus. 'It would have been evah so much bettah to say nothin' about it, but these youngstahs are so thoughtless. It is wathah a pwoblem, Talbot.'

'It must be,' said Talbot. 'The young ass ought to be booted for ragging in a senior man's study. But that wouldn't help.'

'I have been thinkin' vewy hard,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I have thought of a way out, deah boy.'

'That's good,' said Talbot.

'There is a pwoverb that the end justifies the means,' said Arthur Augustus, very slowly and very thoughtfully.

'What do you think?'

'Well, that depends,' said Talbot, puzzled. 'What's the big idea?'

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

'I think I had better not go into details,' he said. 'I should very much dislike setting a bad example to chaps who might be thoughtless, and who haven't my tact and judgment.'

Talbot stared.

'Suppose ——!' said Arthur Augustus, and paused.

'Suppose ——?' repeated Talbot.

'Yaas, wathah! Suppose ——!' Arthur Augustus paused again. 'Suppose a fellow had to think of a way out of a very awkward position, Talbot, and suppose he thought of a way out, and suppose that way was a sort of thing of which he very wightly disapproved very strongly ——' Arthur Augustus paused again.

'What on earth ——?' said Talbot.

'Suppose ——!' said Arthur Augustus again.

'Yes?' said Talbot, encouragingly.

'Suppose ——!'

'Go it!'

'Well, suppose ——!' Another pause.

Talbot waited patiently. But apparently Arthur Augustus was unable to get further than supposing. There was distress, as well as deep thought, in his noble visage. Talbot could only wonder what was working in his mind. It was a long minute before Arthur Augustus spoke again. Then he said ——

'Suppose ——!'

'Cough it up, old chap,' said Talbot. 'Suppose what?'

'No fellow ought to do a thing of which he very strongly disapproves, of course,' said Arthur Augustus.

'Never!' agreed Talbot.

'On the other hand, a fellow is bound to play up and help a fellow when a fellow's up against it, Talbot.'

'Oh, quite!'

'And circumstances alter cases, don't they?'

'Sometimes.'

'Of course, I would nevah dweam of it on my own account,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I should wepudiate the mere ideah with scorn.'

'What idea?'

'I would wathah not go into details in such a mattah, deah boy. But a fellow might do for anothah fellow what a fellow wouldn't do on his own account when a fellow's in a bad scwape, and a fellow feels bound to help a fellow. On the othah hand, such things are vevy wotten and vevy shady, and vevy much against a fellow's inclinations. You see that, deah boy?'

'I might, if I had the least idea of what you are talking about,' answered Talbot.

'Weally, Talbot ——'

'Couldn't you make it a bit clearer?' suggested Talbot. 'If you're thinking of some way of raising the wind to see young Wally through ——'

'Yaas, wathah.'

'Well, you're not thinking of holding up a bank, I suppose?'

'Weally, you ass ——'

'Well, what have you got in your noddle?' asked Talbot, completely perplexed. 'Can't you give it a name?'

'Well, suppose ——!' said Arthur Augustus, slowly.

'We've had that!' Talbot pointed out.

'I mean, suppose ——'

'Yes?'

'Suppose a fellow could waise the money, but in a way of which a fellow has vevy often expressed vevy atwong disappwoval.' Arthur Augustus got it out at last. 'What do you think, Talbot?'

'I don't think you either would, or could,' answered Talbot. 'And if you've any use for my advice, don't!'

Arthur Augustus nodded.

'Pewwaps you are wight, deah boy,' he said. 'I shall

have to think it out vewy carefully, but I wathah think you are wight. Thank you vewy much deah boy.'

And as Arthur Augustus evidently wished to be left alone to get on with the thinking-out process, Talbot went on his way, quite puzzled and perplexed. Arthur Augustus remained leaning on the buttress, his noble brow still corrugated by lines of deep reflection.

He shook his head at last.

'Nevah!' he said, aloud.

'Hallo, Gussy!' A somewhat untidy fag came up. 'I've been looking for you. What are you sticking here for?'

'Weally, Wally ——'

'Well, here you are,' said Wally of the Third. 'Is it all right?'

Arthur Augustus's clouded brow clouded still more.

'I am sowwy, Wally, but it is not all wight,' he said. 'There was nothin' in the governah's lettah.'

Wally's face fell.

'Then ——!' he said. 'Then it's all up?'

'I have been twyin' to think it out, Wally ——'

'Fat lot of good that will do!' said Wally. 'Look here, Gussy, Cutts spoke to me to-day. I said he was going to have his beastly fiver, and he said he wouldn't wait much longer. He said he would go to Railton.'

'The wottah!' murmured Arthur Augustus.

'He ain't keen on going to Railton,' said Wally. 'But he jolly well will if he doesn't get his fiver back. I - say, Gussy, if - if they think I had it ——' The fag's voice faltered.

Arthur Augustus looked at him. Wally of the Third, cheeky and independent young scamp as he was, relied on him; he came to his elder brother for help out of a scrape, as a natural resource. And Arthur Augustus was a very dutiful elder brother; he fully accepted the responsibility of his minor at school. He was prepared to



make any sacrifice to pull the young scamp out of his scrape. And as he looked at Wally's distressed face, his noble mind was made up, on the spot.

'It will be all wight, Wally,' he said.

'How?' asked Wally.

'Leave that to me, kid. I shall see that Cutts has his fiver, and it will be all wight!' said Arthur Augustus, reassuringly.

'I don't see how, if you can't get it from the pater——'

'It is not necessawy for you to see, Wally. Leave it in your eldah bwothah's hands, and it will be all wight.'

Wally of the Third regarded him rather dubiously.

'Sure?' he asked.

'Yaas, wathah.'

'Honest Injun?' persisted Wally.

'Honest Injun, you young ass.'

'Oh, all right, then,' said Wally, and his face cleared. He whistled as he walked away, a weight off his mind. That weight was left on Arthur Augustus's.

For some minutes longer Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained leaning on the buttress, still in deep thought, and with a cloud on his brow. Whatever decision it was, to which he had come, evidently it troubled him. But he detached himself from the buttress at last, and walked slowly away towards the doorway of the House.

Three juniors in flannels intercepted him.

'Here he is!' said Herries.

'Looking for you, ass!' said Blake.

'Coming down to the nets?' asked Digby.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

'I will join you latah at the nets, deah boys,' he answered. 'At the moment, I have somethin' wathah pwessin' to attend to.'

'Pressing your trousers?' asked Herries, staring.

'Weally, Hewwies ——'

'If it's that, you can leave it over,' said Blake. 'You've

got to keep in form, Gussy, if you don't want to be left out of the Carcroft match.'

'I hardly think Tom Mewwy would leave his best bat out of the team to play Carcroft, Blake. And when I said it was a pwessin' mattah, I was not weferrin' to pwessin' twousahs, or anythin' of the kind.'

'Well, when you're not pressing your trousers, you're generally polishing your silk hat,' said Herries. 'Is that it?'

'Whatever it is, chuck it, and come down to the cricket,' said Digby.

'I wepeat that I have a pwessin' mattah to attend to - vewy pwessin'. Pewwaps you have forgotten that my young bwothah, Wally, is in a scwape, and that it is my duty as his majah to see him thwough,' said Arthur Augustus, with a faint inflection of sarcasm.

'Oh, that fiver!' said Blake. 'Not thinking of roaming all over Sussex for a fiver that blew out of window days ago, are you?'

'Certainly not, you ass.'

'Well, then, what ——?'

'I have to waise the wind,' said Arthur Augustus. 'It is up to me, and I am goin' to do it.'

'How?' asked the three, all at once.

'I pwefer not to go into details, deah boys,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I do not want to set thoughtless fellows like you a bad example.'

'Wha - a - at?' ejaculated Blake.

'What does that mean?' demanded Herries.

'If it means anything!' added Digby.

'Pway don't ask me any questions, deah boys, as I do not wish to explain the mattah. Wun away and play cwicket, and I will join you latah.'

'Look here ——!' hooted Blake.

But Arthur Augustus did not 'look there.' He walked on to the House, leaving his friends staring. They stared after him as he went, and then at one another.

'What has that ass got into his head now?' asked Blake.

'Goodness knows.'

Blake and Co. had to give that one up! They went down to the cricket, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went into the House. And it was No. 9 Study in the Fourth for which he headed.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE ONLY WAY!

'CARDEW ——'

'Well?'

'Coming down to the nets!'

'No!'

Cardew of the Fourth was lounging in the armchair in No. 9 Study, and Levison and Clive were displaying signs of impatience. Ralph Reckness Cardew was often a slacker: but it was not his way to loaf in a study on a sunny afternoon, a half holiday. Why he chose to stick in the study, instead of joining a crowd of other fellows at junior nets, his friends did not know: neither were they pleased.

'Why not?' demanded Clive.

'Oh, rot!' said Cardew. 'I've no use for cricket to-day. I've got something more serious to think about.'

'Lines for Lathom?' asked Clive.

Cardew stared at him, and burst into a laugh.

'Lines for Lathom wouldn't worry me a whole lot,' he answered. 'Don't be an ass, Clivey, if you can help it.'

'Well, what's worrying you, then?' asked Clive. Levison was looking at Cardew very sharply. Perhaps he could guess what the sportsman of the Fourth had on his mind, though it had not occurred to Sidney Clive. He frowned.

'Look here, chuck it and come down to the cricket,' said Levison, brusquely.

'Rot!' said Cardew.

'Better than frowsting about like Baggy Trimble,' said Clive. 'What do you want to stick in the study for?'

'I don't want to,' drawled Cardew. 'But ——' He paused. 'Look here, you fellows, you know I'm hard up. You know I've had rotten luck, and I'm as stony as the Sahara. Can you lend me ten bob between you?'

'Tanner any good?' asked Clive.

'No, you ass!' Cardew looked at Levison. 'What about you, Ernest?'

Levison's face set.

'Nothing about me,' he answered. 'You've been fool enough to chuck away your own money on racing, and I don't see that it would be any use to hand mine to Bill Lodgey after it.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Clive. 'Is that it? You make me tired, Cardew.' With that, the South African junior walked out of the study.

'Hold on, Ernest, old bean,' said Cardew, as Levison was about to follow. 'Look here, I tell you it's the chance of a lifetime. If I can get on to-day, I can get ten to one against Pink Pickle – that's a fiver for a ten-bobber – and it will set me up again – and I tell you that it's a dead cert ——'

'You know all about dead certs!' said Levison, sarcastically. 'Wasn't it a dead cert that cleared you out a few days ago?'

'Oh, don't jaw! Will you lend me ten bob?'

'Not to put on a horse, if I had it. And I've only two or three.'

'Then you can go and eat coke.'

Levison laughed.

'Thanks – I'd rather go and play cricket,' he answered. 'And if you've got as much sense as a bunny-rabbit, you'll forget all about dead certs, and come along and do the same.'

'Rats!' snapped Cardew.

Levison left the study, Cardew scowling after him as he went. They were quite good chums in No. 9 Study: but neither Levison nor Clive had the slightest sympathy to waste on a sportsman's spots of bother. Whether Pink Pickle came in first or fifteenth at the Abbotsford races, they couldn't have cared less.

But it was a very urgent matter with Ralph Reckness Cardew. Cardew had more money than was good for him, from an indulgent grandfather: and quite a great deal of it found its way to the frowsy pockets of Bill Lodgey, at the Green Man. Bill, probably, was amused by the reckless young rascal's belief that he possessed the rare — extremely rare! — gift of spotting winners. But he was always prepared to take Cardew on — a schoolboy's money was as good as anybody else's, to Mr. Lodgey.

'Rotten!' muttered Cardew, discontentedly. 'Cleared out — stony — down to nix — and then this chance — the chance of a lifetime! If that fool Gussy ——!'

He broke off, as a voice floated in at the doorway, which Levison had left open.

'Is Cardew in his study, Levison?' It was the voice of the junior of whom Cardew was thinking at that moment.

'Yes, you'll find him there, D'Arcy, if you want him.'

'Wight-ho!'

Levison's footsteps died out towards the landing: Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's came on towards the study. A moment more, and an eyeglass gleamed into No. 9.

Cardew scowled at the face in the doorway. He was in a jam, and he did not expect any help out of that jam from his noble relative.

'Well, what do you want?' he snapped.

'Weally, Cardew ——!'

'Shut the door, and keep on the other side of it.'

Arthur Augustus coloured. His greeting in No. 9 was far from polite: and he did not seem to find it grateful or comforting. He hesitated in the doorway, very much inclined to walk away, without carrying out the intention that had brought him to Cardew's study.

However, he restrained his just indignation, came into the study, and closed the door after him. He closed it carefully. Apparently he did not want other ears to hear what was said in No. 9.

That action brought him a stare of irritated surprise from the junior lounging in the armchair. Why Arthur Augustus had come, Cardew had not the faintest idea: but he had no desire whatever for his company, in fact since their last meeting in that study, his chief desire had been to punch his relative's noble nose.

'Do you want anything here, D'Arcy?' he snapped.

'I should not have come heah othahwise, Cardew,' answered Arthur Augustus. 'It is no pleasuah to me to entah this study, or to talk to a fellow whom I cannot help wegardin' with vevy strong disappwoal.'

'Well, you're not wanted here – unless you're going to lend me that ten-bobber after all,' said Cardew, with a sneer.

'Yaas, wathah.'

'Eh?'

Cardew sat bolt upright in the armchair, staring at him. On the previous occasion, he had only the very faintest hope of 'touching' his relative for a loan to put on an elusive 'geegee.' That faint hope had disappeared entirely as the result of the interview. So Arthur Augustus's reply came as a surprise to him. Certainly he had not dreamed of guessing that it was with any such intention that the swell of St. Jim's had called at No. 9 in the Fourth.

'Mean that?' he exclaimed, eagerly. The scowl disappeared from his face, as if wiped away by a duster.

If Arthur Augustus had, after all, come to the rescue of a sportsman in distress, he was prepared to welcome him with open arms.

'I genewally mean what I say, Cardew,' answered Arthur Augustus, stiffly. 'But let us have it cleah. You are awah, Cardew, that I disappwove vewy stwongly of your blackguardly pwoceedin's. I wegard a fellow who sneaks out of school to back horses with a low-down wacin' man as a wotten outsiders. I should be vewy sowwy if Wailton spotted you at your shady games, and walked you off to the Head — but it would be pwe-cisely what you deserve. Your goin's on, Cardew, have made me feel feahfully ashamed of bein' a welation of yours — a vewy distant welation, I am thankful to say.'

Cardew's hand closed on the cushion in the armchair. Only one consideration stopped that cushion whizzing at the noble head of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy — the possibility of the loan the sportsman of the Fourth so sorely needed.

'It is bettah to be quite fwank about it,' resumed Arthur Augustus, happily unaware of his narrow escape. 'I am vewy fah fwom satisfied with takin' a hand in pwoceedings which I wegard with disappwoval and contempt, Cardew — and nothin' but seein' Wally thwough would make me do so. In the circumstances, I have decided to win the money on a wace, as there seems to be no othah way. I simply cannot let Wally down, and he welies on me as his eldah bwothah to get him out of his scwape.'

'Oh!' said Cardew.

He relinquished the cushion. He understood now.

'I cannot say that I know much, or indeed anythin', about wacin',' went on the swell of St. Jim's. 'But you said that Pink Pickle was a dark horse ——'

'That's it,' assented Cardew.



'A dark horse, I believe, is a horse that is bound to win, but that has been kept dark,' said Arthur Augustus. 'They keep it dark to get big odds against it – isn't that so?'

'Just that!' agreed Cardew.

'And you feel quite suah about it?'

'Quite!' said Cardew. 'I've had a tip straight from the horse's mouth. Pink Pickle simply can't lose. To-day's the last chance of getting on at long odds – the price will shorten on Monday.'

'Bai Jove! Then there is no time to lose, if you have it wight,' said Arthur Augustus.

'Not a minute,' said Cardew. 'I can get the money on this afternoon – if I had it!'

An expression of repugnance crossed Arthur Augustus's face. He had made up his mind, and he was going through with this for Wally's sake. But it was very painful and irksome to him.

'We must have it cleah,' he said. 'I lend you my ten-shillin' note, and you lend me the fivah, which I will settle as soon as I can – pwobably befoah vewy long. Is that undahstood?'

'That's understood, of course,' said Cardew.

'Vewy well, then.'

Slowly – very slowly – Arthur Augustus drew out his natty little wallet. Cardew watched him almost breathlessly. Slowly, very slowly, the ten-shilling note was extracted from the wallet.

Arthur Augustus held it out. Cardew almost snatched it from his hand. He jumped up from the armchair.

'Okay,' he said. 'It's the three o'clock on Monday at Abbotsford, D'Arcy – we can get the result in Monday's evening paper. I'll cut off now, and push out my bike.'

With that, Cardew hurried out of the study. He had what he wanted, and had no further use for the swell of

St. Jim's. His moodiness and irritation had quite disappeared: he hummed a tune as he cut down the staircase.

Arthur Augustus did not look by any means so cheery as he left No. 9 Study. There was a cloud on his brow, and he shook his noble head several times. But the die was cast now: he had taken the plunge, and that was that!

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### OUT OF BOUNDS!

‘OUT of bounds!’ said Manners.  
‘Quite!’ agreed Monty Lowther. ‘But ——’  
‘But ——!’ said Tom Merry.

Three cyclists had dismounted at the gate on the Wayland Road, which gave access to the foot-path through the wood. At that gate they paused: Tom Merry and Monty Lowther undecided: Manners quite decided.

It was a couple of hours since the ‘Terrible Three’ had passed Figgins and Co. on that road, and beheld Figgy in his dilapidated state, after his rather unfortunate essay to stand up to the Game One at Handler’s Ring for three rounds. Since then, they had pushed on for a long spin: rather forgetful of time, and of calling-over at St. Jim’s. Now, on their way home, they were in doubt – or two of them were in doubt.

‘We’re going to be late,’ said Monty Lowther. ‘It’s miles round by the road.’

‘Quick cut through the wood, on the bikes!’ said Tom. Manners shook his head.

‘Toe the line,’ he said. ‘That ass Gussy got into trouble breaking bounds on this very path ——’

‘Cosh boys wouldn’t worry us,’ said Tom. ‘We’re three of us, old chap, and we could take care of ourselves.’

‘And a little over,’ agreed Lowther.

Manners shook his head again.

‘Look here, don’t be asses,’ he said. ‘We shall have to put it on, to get in on time, going round by the road.’

But Head's orders are Head's orders, and we're not silly asses like Gussy.'

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther exchanged glances. It was true that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had asked for trouble, by taking that very path a few days ago. And the chums of the Shell had been as emphatic as Blake and Co., in telling Arthur Augustus what they thought of his obstinacy. Still, circumstances alter cases. Three sturdy fellows had no occasion to fear racing roughs, if they chanced to be hanging about; and transit through the wood was quick work awheel. Manners was a somewhat more reflective youth than his comrades, but at the moment, they seemed to have little use for his wisdom.

'Let's chance it,' said Tom. 'That footpath's only put out of bounds because it isn't safe, while the races are on at Abbotsford. But we're safe enough - and we shall be through in a matter of minutes, on the bikes.'

'Let's!' said Monty Lowther.

Manners' head was shaken, for the third time.

'Better not,' he said. 'Didn't we boot Gussy for carrying on like an obstinate mule, and now you want to follow his example.'

'And didn't he wallop us for it, in the day-room?' said Monty Lowther, laughing. 'Good old Gussy - it hasn't dawned on him even yet that we were pulling his leg. I say ——'

'Mind shifting them bikes?' asked a voice, and the Terrible Three looked round, to see that a pedestrian had arrived at the spot. The bikes were in the way of opening the gate.

The newcomer was a stocky lad only a few years older than the St. Jim's juniors. He had a rather rugged but good-humoured face, and a very springy step. And the juniors, as they looked at him, recognised that rugged but pleasant face; they had seen it pictured in the

*Wayland and Ryclombe Times*, in the advertisements of Handler's Ring at Wayland.

'Okay, Mr. Jones!' said Tom Merry, with a smile. 'Shift the jiggers, you men.'

'Thanks,' said Johnny Jones. He put his hand on the gate.

'Feeling fit, Mr. Jones?' asked Monty Lowther with a grin.

The young boxer looked at him.

'Why not?' he asked.

'Didn't you have rather a tough time in the matinée performance at the Ring this afternoon?' asked Lowther.

Johnny Jones had a puzzled look.

'Not that I remember,' he answered. 'There were only four fellows took up the challenge to stand up in the ring - one of them a schoolboy. They didn't give me a lot of trouble.'

'That chap belongs to our school,' explained Lowther. 'We met him on his way home, and he looked as if he had been under a lorry.'

'Oh, I'm sorry for that!' said the Game One. 'The fact is, that kid had plenty of pluck, and I had to punch him, or he'd have beaten me to it. I couldn't let him walk away with it, could I? That wouldn't be business. But I let him off as lightly as I could, young gentlemen. To tell the truth, he gave me a few good ones - plucky kid.'

Johnny Jones gave his pug nose a reminiscent rub. Apparently one of Figgins's 'good ones' had landed there!

'But he didn't quite crock you?' grinned Lowther.

The Game One grinned too.

'Not quite!' he said. 'I'm jest able to take my usual trot after the show. But I really 'ope the kid wasn't much 'urt. I did really let him off as light as I could.'

With that, and a nod to the schoolboys, the Game One opened the gate, and walked on into the wood, disappearing up the green shady footpath. The 'Terrible Three' were left smiling. Figgins of the New House undoubtedly had plenty of pluck, and he had stood up valiantly to some hard punching; but evidently he had not made much impression on the Game One of Handler's Ring. Which really was only to have been expected, for Johnny Jones looked — as he was — a solid chunk of bone and sinew, hard as nails.

'Decent chap, that young pug,' remarked Monty Lowther. 'I'd rather give him a friendly chat, than a slog in the eye, though.'

'Much rather,' said Tom, laughing.

'Well ——!' began Manners.

Lowther pushed his bike through the gateway.

'Look here, come on,' said he. 'There's that boxer ahead of us, and if there are any Cosh boys about, he can rescue us like he did Gussy. So there's no more to be said. Get a move on.'

'Oh, all right,' said Manners, at last. And he followed on with Tom.

Apparently that walk in the wood was a favourite one with Johnny Jones after the 'show' at the Wayland Ring. Anyhow, there he was, on the footpath ahead of the St. Jim's juniors, no doubt as ready to handle any Cosh boys as on the previous occasion, if any showed up.

The three Shell fellows remounted on the footpath, and rode on, bent on getting through the wood, and out into Rylcombe Lane, as soon as possible.

In a few minutes they overtook Johnny Jones on the footpath, and passed him. They waved to him as they passed, and left him behind, strolling along contentedly with his hands in his pockets. The winding of the footpath soon hid them from his view.

They pedalled on swiftly; on that footpath they were out of school bounds, and the sooner they were within bounds again, the better. But Tom Merry, who was in the lead, slowed down suddenly.

'Look out, you men,' he said, over his shoulder.

About half-way through the wood, the trees and bushes were very thick, on either side of the footpath. And suddenly, from the thickets, a face looked out — a hard stubbly face over a red necktie. And a husky voice called:

'Ere, Alf!'

Another face looked out, from the thicket on the other side of the path. It was that of a bull-necked man with a black eye. He glanced at the cyclists, and then scowled across at the man in the red necktie.

'Chuck it, Jemmy,' he growled.

'Look 'ere, Alf ——'

'That ain't our game, I tell you! Forget it!' snapped Alf, and he disappeared into his thicket again.

Jemmy grunted, and backed out of view, on his side of the footpath.

Tom Merry and Co. had slowed down. The sight of the two roughs reminded them only too forcibly of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's wild adventure on that footpath a few days ago. They had more than half expected Messrs. Alf and Jemmy to rush them. It was a relief to see the two ruffians disappear into the thickets again.

'Come on!' said Tom. 'But look out as you pass them! You could see the kind of blighters they are.'

'What-ho!' said Lowther.

The three rode on, very warily as they passed the spot where Jemmy and Alf skulked unseen in the thickets. But there was no sign from the racing roughs, and the juniors passed on unmolested.

'Put it on!' said Monty Lowther. 'We're not looking

for a battle-royal, if those two footpads change their minds and come after us.'

'Not in the least!' agreed Tom.

Manners slowed down.

'Hold on a bit,' he said.

His comrades looked round at him.

'Better push on, Manners,' said Lowther. 'We're out of bounds, and we don't want a row with a couple of roughs, if they cut up rusty.'

'I know that! But hold on, all the same.'

Manners settled the point by dismounting and leaning his bike against a tree. Tom Merry and Lowther, puzzled, followed his example.

'What's the big idea, Manners?' asked Tom.

Manners jerked his thumb back along the footpath.

'You saw those two hooligans ——!' he said.

'Yes — and don't want to see them again.'

'They're waiting there for somebody,' said Manners, quietly. 'You heard what one of them said. My idea is that they'd have stopped us, only they're there specially for somebody else.'

'Oh!' said Tom.

Monty Lowther whistled.

'Blessed if it doesn't look like it,' he said. 'But ——'

'They look, to me, like what Gussy told us of the two hooligans who set on him, as if they're the same pair,' said Manners.

'I thought so,' agreed Tom. 'But ——'

'That young fellow Jones knocked them out, and saved Gussy's bacon. He's coming along the footpath now. Doesn't it look as if he's the man they're watching for?'

'Oh!' said Tom again. 'If they know he takes his walks on this footpath ——'

'They'd know, if they've been looking for a chance at him,' said Manners. 'Easy enough for them to spy on



him. Look here, it looks to me as if they're after that young chap, and if they are, he's walking right into their hands.'

'He can take care of himself,' said Lowther.

'Not if they take him off his guard,' said Manners. 'Look here, that young fellow stood by a St. Jim's man, and if those hooligans are lying in wait for him, as it looks to me, it's up to us to chip in, if we're wanted.'

Tom Merry nodded.

'Ready and willing, if there's anything in it,' he said. 'But I can't quite imagine that pug wanting any help from schoolboys.'

'He could handle three or four of them,' said Lowther.

'Yes, but ——' Manners stared back along the winding green footpath, under the shady foliage. 'Look here, hold on a bit, till young Jones comes in sight again. It won't be many minutes.'

'Oh, all right.'

The three bicycles were stacked against trees, and the three juniors waited, looking back along the path and listening. Now they came to think of it, Tom Merry and Monty Lowther could not help feeling that Manners probably had it right. It certainly looked as if Messrs. Alf and Jemmy were in ambush, waiting for some victim whom they expected to pass, on the lonely footpath; and it was very probable that they had a revengeful recollection of the Game One. The three juniors were more than willing to lend aid, if aid were wanted. One good turn deserved another! So they waited, not to ride on again till the young boxer appeared in sight.

But Johnny Jones did not appear in sight. Instead of that, there came a sudden sound of angry voices, panting breath, scuffling and struggling. Hidden by the winding of the path, something was happening – and the juniors did not need telling what it was.

'Come on!' said Tom.

He started at a run back along the footpath. Manners and Lowther followed him. Somebody – and they had no doubt that it was Johnny Jones – had found trouble in the dusky wood, and Tom Merry and Co. dashed back along the footpath at top speed.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### JUST IN TIME!

‘OH,’ gasped Johnny Jones.  
He was taken utterly by surprise.

In the ring, the Game One was watchful as a badger, wary as a fox. No one ever took Johnny Jones by surprise in the ring. But strolling through the scented summer wood, his hands in his pockets, humming a tune as he strolled, Johnny was completely off his guard. Probably he had forgotten his encounter with the two racing roughs, when he had come to the rescue of Arthur Augustus D’Arcy. Certainly, if he had met them in the open, and they had given trouble, he would have been cheerfully prepared to knock them out again, as he had knocked them out before. But Messrs. Alf and Jemmy had laid their plans too cunningly for that. The attack came too suddenly and unexpectedly for even the wary young boxer to be able to deal with it.

The Game One did not know what was happening, till it happened. Two figures leaped suddenly from the thickets, on either side of the footpath; he was grasped and dragged down, before he could even get his hands out of his pockets. He crashed in the grass on his back, and the bull-necked man’s heavy knee was planted on his chest, pinning him down, two savage eyes, one of them blackened, glaring down at him.

‘Got ’im!’ breathed Alf, vengefully.

‘Got ’im!’ repeated Jemmy. His grasp too was on the young boxer, clutching him savagely. ‘Got ’im, and now he’s getting what he give us, and some more to it, too!’

The Game One panted.

Pinned down under the two hooligans, he had no chance. But he was game all through, and after the first moment of surprise, he struggled fiercely. He heaved under the bull-necked man, and Alf rocked.

'Old him!' panted Alf. 'Give 'im the cosh, you fool.' He broke off, with a howl, as Johnny Jones, freeing his right arm, landed a hefty punch on his chest. Alf almost rocked over under that punch.

But the cosh was ready in Jemmy's hand – a length of leaden pipe wrapped in a sock. Before Johnny could hit out again, the cosh came down on his right arm, and the young boxer, tough as he was, uttered a sharp cry of pain. His strong right arm fell useless, numbed by the blow.

'Now give it 'im!' panted Alf. 'Cor! He won't do no more boxing in a 'urry, arter we're finished with 'im – nor he won't give a covey a black eye, neither! Give it 'im, 'ard!'

The cosh was lifted again. Johnny Jones twisted like an eel, and the savage blow missed him, and crashed on the ground. Up went the cosh again, Jemmy's eyes blazing over it: and Johnny would not have escaped the next blow: but at that moment came a patter of running feet.

In the excitement of the struggle, both Johnny and his assailants were unconscious of Tom Merry and Co. – till they arrived. Tom Merry was the first on the spot, and as he saw the cosh about to descend on the hapless boxer, he put on a desperate spurt, and his crashing fist caught Jemmy under the ear, just in time.

Jemmy gave a startled yell, and tumbled over headlong, the cosh falling from his hand.

Alf stared round savagely: Manners and Lowther charged him at the same moment. He was knocked headlong off Johnny Jones under that charge, and sprawled by the side of the spluttering Jemmy.

Johnny Jones sat up.

'Oh, my eye!' he ejaculated.

The next instant he was on his feet, with a bound. He was up before the two ruffians could struggle to their feet.

'My turn now, you rats!' he said, grimly.

Tom Merry rubbed his knuckles. They felt a little damaged, after that crash under Jemmy's ear – though not so damaged as Jemmy!

'Here we are, Mr. Jones, if you want any more help!' said Monty Lowther, grinning.

The Game One glanced at them.

'I don't fancy I want any more, young gentlemen,' he said. 'But I did want it, bad, when you came up. They'd have put paid to my boxing show at Handler's, but for you – they had me where they wanted me, the rats! Now I've got them where I want them.'

Alf and Jemmy gained their feet. They stood panting and furious. Now that the Game One was up, and free to use his hands, Messrs. Alf and Jemmy were by no means keen on further trouble with him. They would, in fact, have been glad to take to their heels at that moment, and disappear into space. But there was no disappearing yet for Alf and Jemmy.

The Game One came straight at them. He did not use his right – that arm was hurt by the knock from the cosh. But his left was tremendously effective.

The three juniors looked on. They were more than ready to give further aid, if Johnny Jones needed it. But it was very clear that he did not. It was the hooligans that needed aid.

They backed away as the Game One came on: but backing did not save them. Johnny's left landed in Alf's sound eye, and Alf staggered back a couple of yards before he collapsed. He went down like a log and lay like one, gasping for breath: the eye that had received

Johnny's fist blackening to the same sable hue as the other.

Almost before Alf had hit the ground, Johnny had turned on Jemmy. For about twenty seconds, the man in the red necktie stood up to it, desperately: then a terrific jolt on the jaw fairly lifted him from his feet, and he crashed.

'Oh, my hat!' murmured Monty Lowther. 'That chap packs a punch, and no mistake. Ambulance wanted here!'

Johnny Jones looked down at the two sprawling ruffians. Alf moaned and caressed his eye: Jemmy lay groaning, with both hands to his jaw. Neither made any attempt to rise. They were knocked out – knocked out to the wide!

'Want any more!' rapped the Game One.

There was a moan from Alf, and a groan from Jemmy. Those inarticulate replies seemed to indicate that they did not want any more.

'Now look 'ere, you two!' said the Game One. 'You 'op it out of this quarter – see? If I see either of you round about Wayland again, you get some more of the same, and you get it 'ard! If you don't want your ugly mugs pushed right through the back of your ugly 'eads, you 'op it while the going's good. You got that? It won't be 'ealthy for you 'ere.'

A moan and a groan answered, as before.

'Op it!' snapped Johnny.

Alf and Jemmy made an effort, dragged themselves up, and 'hopped' it. They moaned and groaned as they went. Mumbling and moaning floated back as they disappeared through the wood. Probably they lost no time in shaking the dust of Wayland from their feet: realising sadly that the vicinity of the Game One was not healthy for them!

Johnny Jones rubbed his right arm tenderly. His left,

evidently, was as effective as ever, but his right had a bad ache in it, from the cosh.

'Hurt your fin, Mr. Jones?' asked Lowther.

'I got a knock on it,' said Johnny. 'Not what you'd call 'urt - but I reckon I'll have to keep to the left in my show to-night. Thank you young gentlemen for coming up as you did! You done me a good turn - they was going to stop my boxing for a good while, if they'd got away with it. Now I got to 'urry in, and get something done for this 'ere fin. Thanks again, Cheerio!'

'Cheerio!' said the three juniors together.

Johnny Jones started at a brisk walk back to Wayland, evidently a little anxious about his 'fin'. Tom Merry and Co. departed in the opposite direction, to the spot where they had left the bicycles. They remounted and rode on their way.

'Good for you, Manners, old man,' said Tom. 'If we hadn't stopped ——'

'Jolly glad we did!' said Monty Lowther. 'They'd have knocked that chap out, and put a stopper on his boxing show. By gum, though, Figgins must have been an ass to fancy that he could stand up to a chap with a punch like that.'

'Silly ass!' agreed Manners. 'I wonder if you could, Tom - for the three rounds.'

Tom Merry laughed.

'You won't catch me trying it on!' he said; so little could Tom, at that moment, foresee the near future!

They rode on to the stile that gave on Rylcombe Lane. A St. Jim's junior was lounging there, leaning idly on the stile. He glanced round, as the Shell fellows came up and dismounted, to lift their bikes into the lane.

'Naughty!' said Cardew. 'You've been out of bounds! Is this the shinin' example we expect from you!'

'Oh, rats!' said Tom, gruffly. 'You'd better cut in, Cardew - it's getting pretty near lock-ups.'

Cardew shook his head.

'Waitin' here for a friend,' he yawned. 'I shall have to chance lock-ups - you can answer to my name at roll, if you like, if I'm late.'

Manners gave a sniff.

'Friend from the Green Man!' he asked, sarcastically.

'What a brain!' said Cardew, admiringly. 'You've hit it in one.'

'Pity Railton doesn't happen along when you're meeting him!' said Monty Lowther. 'The House beak would be interested.'

Cardew laughed.

'Oh, I shall step into the wood, when my horsey pal shows up,' he drawled. 'Don't be anxious about me, chum! Like me to put something on for you, for the three o'clock at Abbotsford on Monday?'

Tom Merry and Co. made no answer to that. They remounted their machines and rode on to the school, leaving Ralph Reckness Cardew lounging against the stile and laughing.



## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### MYSTERIOUS!

‘Gussy ——’  
‘What’s up?’

‘What’s the matter?’

Blake and Herries and Digby asked these questions, all at once, as they came into Study No. 6 after lock-ups. Having missed their aristocratic chum below, they came up to look for him, and found him in the study.

His aspect, when they found him, rather surprised them. Arthur Augustus was sitting at the table, his noble head leaning on his hand, deep in thought with a clouded brow.

They were not surprised to find him in deep thought. Deep thought had been Gussy’s long suit, ever since the letter from Lord Eastwood that morning. That anything was likely to emerge of a useful or practical nature, from his deep thinking, his chums doubted. Still, as the problem of Wally of the Third and Cutts’ fiver was still unsolved, it was natural for the thinking-process to be still going on. But there was not only deep thought in Arthur Augustus’s speaking countenance; there was trouble as well, and something like distress. It looked as if something more than the problem of his minor was on his mind.

He glanced up and coloured a little as he met the inquiring gaze of his chums.

‘Oh! You fellows!’ he said.

‘Just us fellows!’ agreed Blake. ‘What are you sticking in the study for, old scout, instead of coming down and joining in the throng of the happy and the gay!’

'Weally, Blake ——'

'And whence that worried look? Got a headache?'

'Nothin' of the kind.'

'Well, what's up?'

'Nothin', deah boy,' answered Arthur Augustus. 'Well, pwactically nothin'. I - I mean - I'm wathah wowwied ——'

'Cough it up, then,' said Blake. 'Tell your Uncle Jack all about it. Anything happened to your new trousers?'

'Weally, you ass ——'

'Accident to your topper?' asked Digby.

'Weally, Dig ——'

'Lost your best necktie?' queried Herries.

'Weally, Hewwies ——'

'Give it a name, anyhow,' said Blake.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

'I am sowwy, deah boys, but it is not a mattah that I can confide to thoughtless youngstahs,' he answered.

The thoughtless youngsters looked at him expressively. Arthur Augustus spoke as if he were sixty or seventy at least.

'You howling ass ——!' said Blake.

'I wefuse to be called a howlin' ass, Blake! Hadn't you fellows bettah go down?' suggested Arthur Augustus.

'I believe I heard Tom Mewwy say there was goin' to be some boxin'. You don't want to miss it.'

'Don't want our company?' asked Herries.

'As a mattah of fact, Hewwies, I would wathah be alone for a bit,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I have wathah a wowwy on my mind.'

'And you can't tell us what it is?' said Blake.

'I would wathah not! It would be a vewy bad example for you,' said Arthur Augustus, 'and I wealise only too cleahly, deah boys, that it is up to me, as a fellow of tact and judgment, to set a good example to the study. I have always stwiven to do so, and so fah I flattah myself not without success. But now ——'

‘Now ——!’ said Blake.

‘I would wathah say no more, Blake. It is vevy painful to think about what I have done, and I have no desiah to talk about it.’

‘What have you done, then?’ howled Blake.

‘I would wathah not say.’

‘What awful crimes are on your conscience, Gussy?’ asked Dig, with a grin. And Blake and Herries chuckled.

‘Not exactly a cwime, Dig. That is fah too stwong a word. But a chap doesn’t like to be compelled to wealise that he has acted in a wathah shady way – in a way he has always condemned in othahs,’ sighed Arthur Augustus.

‘Great pip!’ said Jack Blake, staring at him. ‘Are you telling us that you’ve done something shady?’

‘I feah so, Blake.’

‘Gammon!’ said Blake. ‘You couldn’t if you tried, Gussy. You’re the biggest ass going, but that’s your limit. What the dickens have you been up to, when your pals hadn’t an eye on you? Looking on the wine when it is red ——?’

‘You uttah ass!’

‘Or the billiard-table when it is green?’

‘Weally, Blake ——’

‘Well, what is it, then?’ demanded Blake. ‘Make a clean breast of it to your Uncle Jack, old boy.’

‘I weally wish you would be sewious on a sewious mattah, Blake. It was the only way, you know, to pull Wally thwough his scwape, but it wowwies me vevy much indeed!’ sighed Arthur Augustus. ‘Pway don’t ask me any questions – I am not goin’ to tell you anythin’ about it. And ——’

Arthur Augustus stopped, as there was a step at the doorway. A hard and not very pleasant face looked into the study. It was Cutts of the Fifth who had called at No. 6.

Blake and Co. gave him far from friendly looks. Cutts

did not heed them. He came into the study and stopped at the table, looking at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy across it. His lips were set unpleasantly.

'What the dickens do you want here, Cutts!' rapped Blake, though he could guess what had brought the Fifth-form man to Study No. 6.

Cutts did not answer him.

'A word with you, D'Arcy,' he said.

'Cawwy on,' answered Arthur Augustus.

'I'm not keen on going to Railton about that fiver missing from my study,' said Cutts. 'It may have blown out of the window and it may not; I don't know, and I don't care, so long as I get my money back. But I'm not losing the money, and its several days ago now ——'

'I am awah of that, Cutts.'

'Your minor told me to-day that you were seeing to it,' said Cutts. 'If you choose to make it good for him, I've no kick coming – all I want is my fiver. If I don't get it, I'm going to the House beak about it. And I'm not waiting much longer. If you've got the money and choose to settle it for that young scamp, there's an end. Well?'

'I have no money at all, Cutts ——'

'What?'

'Stonay!' said Arthur Augustus. 'But Wally was quite wight in tellin' you that I have made myself wesponsible for it. You will certainly be paid your five pounds, Cutts, as it was thwough my minah that it was lost.'

'When?' snapped Cutts.

Blake and Herries and Digby stood silent. They were powerfully inclined to collar Gerald Cutts and eject him neck and crop from the study. But they realised that that would not improve matters. Unpleasant as Cutts was, he was within his rights; the banknote was lost, and it was D'Arcy minor who had lost it.

'Vewy soon, Cutts,' said Arthur Augustus, in answer

to the Fifth-form man's question. 'I have taken measures to waise the money, and you will certainly be paid, and you can wely on my word for that.'

It was news to Blake and Co. that Arthur Augustus had 'taken measures,' and they wondered what those measures might be! Certainly they were not likely to guess the extraordinary measures he had taken.

'I asked you when!' snapped Cutts. 'I'm not letting the matter hang about much longer, I can tell you. If it goes to the House beak ——'

'Next week ——!' said Arthur Augustus.

Cutts sneered.

'And then the next week after that, and then the next!' he said. 'That's not good enough. If you think you can make a fool of me ——'

'Weally, Cutts ——'

'Put it plain!' snapped Cutts. 'If you can settle the matter for your minor, well and good. If not, it goes to Railton, and as likely as not your minor will be sacked. If you can settle, when?'

Arthur Augustus cogitated.

'Possibly on Monday,' he said. 'At any wate, on Tuesday. But in case of any delay, we will say Wednesday, at the latest. I am prepared,' added Arthur Augustus, with overwhelming dignity, 'to give you my word, Cutts, that the money shall be paid not latah than Wednesday. I twust that you can wely on my word, Cutts!'

Cutts gave a grunt. His own word was not quite as good as gold; but he could not doubt Arthur Augustus's earnestness.

'Oh, all right, then,' he said, ungraciously. 'I'll wait till Wednesday. But mind, that's the limit. If I don't see my fiver on Wednesday, at the very latest, your minor will hear from Railton.'

'I have alweady said, Cutts, that your loss will be weimbursed on Wednesday, and you have my word of

honah for it, and I have nothin' whatevah to add to that!' said Arthur Augustus, with icy dignity.

'Keep to that, then - it's the limit!' snapped Cutts: and with that, he turned and stalked out of Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus sighed.

'Bai Jove! It's wotten all wound,' he remarked. 'That young ass Wally is a wegulah wowwy, but it is up to his eldah bwothah to see him thwough.'

'But how on earth are you going to raise the wind on Wednesday?' asked Jack Blake, quite puzzled. 'Where is the fiver coming from, Gussy?'

'I would wathah not explain, Blake.'

'Look here, you ass ——'

'I told you fellows that I was goin' to think it out, and I have done so,' said Arthur Augustus. 'It will be all wight - Cutts will be paid his fivah on Tuesday or Wednesday, and we shall heah the last of it.'

'But how ——?' demanded Herries.

'I have already wemarked, Hewwies, that I pwefer not to explain.'

'Why not?' howled Digby.

'I have vewy good weasons, Dig. It would be howwid to feel that I had set you fellows a bad example,' sighed Arthur Augustus. 'Least said soonest mended, deah boys. I am waisin' the money in a mannah that I vewy much dislike and despise, but I would pwefer you fellows not to know that.'

'Oh, my hat!' said Blake.

'But it will be all wight, and we shall be thwough with that wottah Cutts,' said Arthur Augustus. He rose from the study table. 'Let's go down to the boxin', deah boys - I wathah think I should like to have the gloves on with Tom Mewwy, and see whethah I can knock him out as easily as I did Mannahs and Lowthah the othah day.'

'Ha, ha, ha!' yelled Blake and Herries and Dig.

Arthur Augustus looked at them.

'I do not see anythin' to cackle at in that,' he said. 'Have I said anythin' funnay?'

'Do you ever say anything that isn't?' grinned Blake. 'Come on, you chaps - let's go down with Gussy, and see him knock Tommy out as easily as he did his pals.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

And Study No. 6 went down; three of them grinning, but Arthur Augustus still very serious, indeed almost solemn. It was a weight on Gussy's conscience that he was, for once, dabbling in his relative Cardew's shady pursuits; and he could not quite think that the end justified the means. Still, it was a comfort to know that at last, it was 'all right'. It had not occurred to Gussy's powerful intellect that perhaps it wasn't!

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### THE DARK HORSE!

'MIND leavin' a fellow alone?' Ralph Reckness Cardew asked that question, in No. 9 Study, after class on Monday. Levison and Clive stared at him. They were sitting at the study table, comparing notes on a passage in the Aeneid, which had to be translated for Mr. Lathom. Deep in Latin, they hardly noticed Cardew, who was moving restlessly about the study, his hands in his pockets, ill at ease. But they looked round as he spoke abruptly.

'Want all the study to stalk about in?' asked Clive. 'What's the matter with you, Cardew? You're like a hen on hot bricks.'

'Why not get on with this, along with us?' suggested Levison. 'You've got to do it for Lathom, same as we have.'

Cardew gave an angry grunt.

'Bother Lathom, bother that, and bother you!' he replied tartly. 'I've something else to think of, and I'm expecting a chap to come up with the evening paper, if you want to know.'

'Oh!' said Clive. 'Cricket news, do you mean?'

'Fathead!'

Levison's lip curled.

'Something more exciting than cricket, what?' he asked, sarcastically. 'Did you get on your precious Pink Pickle after all?'

'I did, if you're curious. And I'm fed up with your chattering Latin, with that on my mind,' snapped Cardew.



'So you raised the wind after all,' said Levison. 'Is the race to-day, then?'

'Think I should be waiting for the evening paper, if it wasn't?' snapped Cardew. 'I've no doubt that it's all right ——'

'You never have, till it turns out to be all wrong,' said Levison.

'Oh, rats! I tell you it's all right - Pink Pickle was a dark horse, and I know the odds shortened over the weekend,' said Cardew. 'I haven't a doubt that he came in first in the three o'clock at Abbotsford, but I want to see it in print all the same. And I don't want any jaw.'

Clive grunted, and Levison shrugged his shoulders. Cardew was determined to believe that that 'dark horse' had romped home; he would not allow himself a single doubt on that subject. But his evident anxiety to see the result of the race in the evening paper, did not quite tally with his absolute assurance that Pink Pickle had won the three o'clock.

'It couldn't go wrong,' said Cardew, rather to himself than to the others. 'It just couldn't! I know something about geegees, and I'd have put my shirt on Pink Pickle. He's won all right.'

'Why the anxiety, then?' said Levison.

'Oh, shut up! Will you leave a fellow alone - you can jabber Latin down in day-room,' Cardew almost snarled. 'Do give a fellow a rest.'

'Oh, all right.'

Clive gave another grunt; an expressive one. Cardew's chums found his sporting speculations a trial to their patience. However, they rose from the study table, and gathered up their books. Latin in the study was not an easy proposition, with an irritated and anxious fellow snapping at them while they explored the mysteries of P. Vergilius Maro.

'Come on, Clivey!' said Levison. 'Let's get out, for goodness sake.'

'Br-r-r-r!' grunted Clive. 'One of these days, Cardew, Railton will get on to your racing stunts, and you'll be in the soup.'

'Pack it up,' said Cardew.

Every minute now he was expecting Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to arrive in the study with the evening paper. Arthur Augustus had undertaken to secure one from Common Room, where they were delivered for the 'beaks.' But he had to wait till some master was done with his paper; and Cardew, in the study, had to wait too. It was intensely irritating to Cardew for his study-mates to be 'chattering Latin' while he waited anxiously. Cardew, certainly, was not in a mood to give any attention to translations for Mr. Lathom.

He was anxious, and he was also a little troubled in his mind, elastic as his conscience was. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy knew as much about racing matters as he did about Sanskrit. In the innocence of his heart, he had taken it for granted that Cardew knew what he was talking about. Gussy was deeply concerned over the 'shady' nature of the proceedings, but it had not even crossed his mind that it might prove to be all moonshine. Cardew had assured him, with such absolute certainty, that Pink Pickle was a dark horse that simply couldn't lose, that the unwary Gussy saw no room for doubt on the subject. He just hated that method of raising a fiver, but he was innocently taking the fiver for granted.

Cardew, to do him justice, had no doubt either. He had believed every word he had said on the subject. Pink Pickle was going to win the three o'clock - he couldn't lose! It was all right - right as rain! But the bare possibility that it might prove otherwise, made him feverishly impatient and anxious, now that the race was

over, and it only remained to see the result in print. If, against all probability, of course, Pink Pickle had failed to get home, he had to let the innocent Gussy down, and that was an irksome thought.

‘The ass!’ he muttered, irritably. ‘Why doesn’t he come up with the paper. He can always get Lathom’s paper, for the cricket news. Lathom must have got through before this. What is he wasting time for?’

‘Who?’ asked Levison, looking round.

‘Oh, rats!’ was Cardew’s answer to that. He had told his friends nothing of his compact with Arthur Augustus; he knew only too well what they would have thought of it.

‘Oh, come on,’ grunted Clive. ‘Let’s get out, and leave that fathead to his geegees.’

The two juniors went to the door. Just as they reached it, an elegant figure appeared outside, with a newspaper under its arm.

Levison and Clive stared at Arthur Augustus D’Arcy. He was about the last fellow in the House whom they would have expected to see taking any interest in Cardew’s racing stunts. But the evening paper under his arm told its own tale. Arthur Augustus, evidently, was the fellow Cardew was expecting to come up with the evening paper.

‘Heah you are, deah boy,’ said Arthur Augustus, cheerfully. Levison and Clive stepped aside, for Gussy to walk in. Then in, silence, but with expressive glances at Cardew, they left the study, Clive banging the door after him.

Cardew gave them no heed. His eyes were on Arthur Augustus and the evening paper. From Gussy’s cheerful aspect, he concluded that the swell of St. Jim’s had already looked out the result of the three o’clock in the Stop Press column, and that it was all right.

‘You’ve kept me waiting,’ he muttered.

'Lathom wasn't thwough with the papah till five minutes ago, deah boy,' answered Arthur Augustus.

'Has it taken you five minutes to get up a staircase?' snapped Cardew.

'Weally, Cardew, I only stopped a few minutes to look at the County cwicket wesults ——'

Cardew breathed hard.

'The county cricket results!' he repeated.

'Yaas, wathah! Suwwey appeah to be doin' pwetty well, and Yorkshire ——'

'You blithering ass!'

'Eh?'

'You dithering noodle!' hissed Cardew.

'Weally, Cardew ——'

'Haven't you looked out the result?'

'If you mean Suwwey ——!'

'You cackling cuckoo, I mean the three o'clock at Abbotsford!' hissed Cardew. 'Haven't you a spot of sense in your silly head?'

Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows.

'Weally, Cardew, your mannaahs are gwowin' quite deplowable,' he said. 'What is the huwwy? Why shouldn't I look out the cwicket news befoah I came up? As a mattah of fact, I do not know where to look for the wacin' wesults, but what does it mattah, as we know that it is all wight. Bai Jove!' added Arthur Augustus, as Cardew strode across the study, and snatched the newspaper from under his arm, 'Weally, Cardew, your mannaahs ——'

'Oh, shut up!'

'Bai Jove!'

Unheeding the swell of St. Jim's further, Cardew stared at the paper. He knew where to look for the racing results if D'Arcy did not. It was not the first time, by many a one, that he had scanned the Stop-Press with eager and anxious eyes.

'Oh!' he gasped.

What he saw in the Stop-Press column struck him like a blow in the face.

Shepherds Pie  
Willow Grove  
Eileen Alanna

Pink Pickle, that dark horse, that dead cert that couldn't lose, was not even mentioned. The 'also rans' were not given in the evening paper; had they been, Pink Pickle would have figured among them. Certainly he was not in the first three, which was all that mattered. Shepherds Pie had won the race, Willow Grove had come in second, and Eileen Alannah third. Pink Pickle, the horse that couldn't lose, was nowhere.

'Oh!' repeated Cardew. He felt quite sick for the moment.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood looking at him, with considerable disfavour. Cardew's manners did indeed seem to Gussy deplorable. A fellow who called a fellow names, and snatched a paper from him, was really the limit. The swell of St. Jim's did not speak, but his look was very expressive.

'Oh!' said Cardew, for the third time. He stood with the paper in his hands, staring at it, and not looking at Arthur Augustus. Even yet the cheery Gussy had no suspicion how matters stood.

'Thank goodness it is all ovah.' Arthur Augustus spoke at last, as Cardew did not speak. 'This kind of thing leaves a vevy nasty taste in the mouth, Cardew, if you don't mind my sayin' so, and I wish vevy much that there had been some othah way of waisin' that fivah. The whole thing weally does make a fellow feel vevy wotten - vevy wotten indeed.'

Cardew did not speak.

'Howevah, it is done, now and we must make the best of it,' sighed Arthur Augustus. 'At any wate, I shall be able to see Wally thwough, bothah him! I don't know a lot about these mattahs, Cardew; I have nevah dabbled in anythin' of the kind befoah, and I twust I nevah shall again. When do you collect the fivah?'

Cardew looked at him, in silence.

'I have pwomised Cutts Wednesday at the latest,' explained Arthur Augustus. 'But I suppose you will be collectin' the fivah befoah then, Cardew. I should much wathah settle with the fellow at the earliest possible moment, and have done with it. To-mowwow ——?'

Cardew found his voice.

'There won't be any fiver to collect,' he said.

'Eh?'

'There's no fiver to come.'

'I fail to undahstand you, Cardew,' said D'Arcy, in perplexity. 'Ten to one for a stake of ten shillings comes to a fivah. I am not particularly good at awithmetic, but I can work that out all wight. What do you mean?'

Cardew breathed very hard.

'I mean that the horse has lost, and that there is nothing to come!' he said. 'I'll square your ten-bobber next week. It's lost, of course, as the horse lost.'

'Lost!' repeated Arthur Augustus, almost dazedly.

'Yes, lost.'

'Oh, cwumbs!'

'I'm sorry ——' muttered Cardew. 'I was sure - absolutely sure - but - but——.' He faltered. The look on Arthur Augustus's speaking countenance made him feel, if only for once in his life, thoroughly ashamed of himself. 'It's rotten luck, D'Arcy - rotten! I - I did my best! I was sure - absolutely sure ——' He faltered again, and said no more.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood stock still. He was slow to assimilate that crushing blow. His aristocratic face was

quite pale. He had promised Cutts – a definite promise for a definite date. And there was nothing to come. For a long, long minute he stood in silence. But he rallied from the shock. When, at last, he spoke, his voice was quiet and even.

‘I have asked for this, Cardew,’ he said quietly, ‘and I am bound to admit that it serves me wight! I have done wong, and made things worse instead of bettah: and it is my own fault! It serves me wight!’

With that, Arthur Augustus turned and walked out of the study. He went without a word of reproach. Arthur Augustus had some more hard thinking to do now, and he sought solitude for his meditations.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### HOT CHASE!

'**B**OTHER!' growled Figgins.  
He clutched at his cap.

It was windy that afternoon. There was a high wind on the Sussex downs, and it blew in gusts in the St. Jim's quad, and bent the branches of the old elms. It almost blew off the cap stuck carelessly on George Figgins's not very tidy head; hence the New House junior's remark.

Figgins of the Fourth was not his usual cheery self that day. Kerr and Wynn, who were sauntering with him after class, were as patient as they could be. They could feel for old Figgins.

A darkened eye, and a raw nose, were neither grateful nor comforting. And Figgy's eye was very dark, and his nose very raw.

As if these adornments were not bad enough in themselves, they had, naturally, caught the eye of Mr. Ratcliff, house-master of the New House, and Ratty had been quite unpleasant.

No doubt Mr. Ratcliff supposed that Figgins had picked up those decorations in a row with School House fellows. Figgins, when he was called on the carpet, did not confide to his house-master that he had had the temerity to tackle the Game One in Handler's Ring at Wayland. Anyhow, Ratcliff disapproved, very strongly, of darkened eyes and raw noses: and he signified the same in the usual way, by awarding Figgins three hundred lines. Which really filled the cup to overflowing.

So it was no wonder that George Figgins was not at



his bonniest that Monday afternoon. The playful wind added to his disgruntlement by nearly snatching the cap from his head.

‘Blow!’ said Figgins.

‘It’s a bit windy,’ remarked Fatty Wynn. ‘I say, what about going in to tea, Figgy?’

‘I’m not stopping you!’ grunted Figgins.

‘We’ve got ham and eggs ——!’ said Fatty, temptingly. Figgins was sore, not only in his nose and eye. But Fatty’s view was that there were few troubles that could not be solaced by ham and eggs. ‘Jolly good ham, too, Figgy ——’

‘Go and wolf it!’ said Figgins.

‘Well, it’s jolly near tea-time ——’

‘Br-r-r-r!’ said Figgins. Which was a little unintelligible, but quite expressive. Fatty Wynn relapsed into silence, though no doubt his thoughts dwelt on the ham and eggs in the study in the New House.

Figgins rubbed his eye.

‘Blow!’ he said. ‘Ratty had to notice it on Saturday, and come down with lines. Blow!’ he added again, as something fluttered on his face, borne by the wind. ‘What the dickens is that! Leaves blowing all over the shop ——’

Kerr gave a jump. His eyes followed the light object that had fluttered by on the wind. It was certainly not a loose leaf blown from the foliage. It was a flimsy strip of paper.

‘By gum!’ exclaimed Kerr. ‘That looks like ——’

‘Like what?’ grunted Figgins.

‘Dashed if it doesn’t look like a banknote,’ said Kerr, staring after the flimsy strip that fluttered some distance up the path under the elms.

Snort from Figgins.

‘Likely!’ he said. ‘Sort of probable, banknotes blowing about in the wind. Don’t be an ass, old chap.’

'There's a notice on the board, about a School House man losing a banknote,' said Kerr. 'Cutts of the Fifth ——'

'That was last week,' said Figgins.

'Well, it can't have been found, or the notice wouldn't be still there,' said Kerr. 'Let's cut after it, and see, anyway.'

'Oh, all right.'

'From what I've heard, it was lost when that young ass, D'Arcy minor, was ragging in Cutts's study,' said Kerr. 'It will be a bit unpleasant for the kid, if it isn't found. If that's it ——'

'Come on!' said Figgins.

He stretched his long legs in a run. At a distance, the flimsy paper had fluttered to the ground. It was not easy to see precisely what it was, at the distance, but there was no doubt that it looked like a banknote. If it was Cutts' lost fiver, no doubt it had blown into some remote corner, and lain out of sight there till the high wind from the downs rooted it out again that afternoon.

Figgins forgot his eye and his nose, as he led the chase. Kerr at his heels. Fatty Wynn brought up the rear at a slower pace, having more weight to carry. But all three were keen. The story of that lost banknote was all over the Lower School; and there were not wanting fellows who, like Cutts, doubted whether it really had blown out of window, or whether Wally of the Third could not have accounted for its disappearance if he had chosen. There was no doubt that it would be, as Kerr said, unpleasant for the kid if it was not found. If this was a chance of finding it, Figgins and Co. were very keen to make the most of the chance.

'By gum! It's a fiver!' gasped Figgins.

Within a yard of it, he had a clear view of the flimsy paper; it lay spread under his eyes, face up, and he saw the figure '£5' and the lettering. It was undoubtedly a

five-pound note, and it was scarcely to be doubted that it was the one that had been lost from the study of Cutts of the Fifth; no other banknote was likely to be blowing about St. Jim's.

'A fiver, by gum!' gasped Kerr. 'Get it - quick!'

Figgins made a headlong plunge at the banknote, and clutched. But as if to tantalise him, a gust of wind caught it at the same moment, and blew it high. Figgy's clutch missed by an inch.

'Blow!' panted Figgins. 'Catch it, Kerr!'

Kerr's hand swept the air and missed by a yard. That flimsy strip of engraved paper fluttered away on the playful breeze.

'After it!' hooted Figgins.

They rushed in pursuit again. Again the banknote fluttered low, and almost grounded. But again a gust caught it, and carried it up, towards the school wall.

'Quick!' panted Figgins. 'If it goes over the wall, we're done!' He tore in pursuit of the elusive banknote. 'Looks as if it's going into that tree! If it does ——'

But it did not, quite. Borne by the wind, the fluttering flimsy strip just missed the branches of an elm, and fluttered on. Figgins and Co. came round the elm at a frantic rush.

Crash!

'Yawoooooooooh!'

'Oh, my hat!'

'Oh, cwumbs! Oh, cwikey! Wow!'

Up to that moment Figgins and Co. had been unconscious of the existence of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the elegant ornament of the School House. They knew, of course, nothing of his unlucky dealings with Cardew of the Fourth, of the crushing blow he had sustained in No. 9 Study, and were totally unaware that Gussy had retired to a quiet spot to ponder over the disastrous situation. In that quiet corner, between the elms and the school

wall, Arthur Augustus did not expect to be disturbed, while he exercised his powerful intellect on an insoluble problem. But he was disturbed very suddenly and very forcibly, as the three New House juniors came racing round the tree, and crashed into him.

Arthur Augustus uttered a yell, as he was bowled headlong over. Figgins, taken by surprise as much as Gussy, sprawled headlong over him. Kerr, going too fast to stop, stumbled over Figgy's long legs and added himself to the pile, and the next moment, Fatty Wynn was sprawling over Kerr. It was quite an exciting mix-up.

'Oh, cwickey! What the dooce - wow! Oh, cwumbs! Bai Jove! Gewwoff!' yelled Arthur Augustus, struggling wildly under a heap of New House humanity.

'Oh, scissors!' gasped Figgins.

He gave Kerr a shove and scrambled up breathlessly. Kerr and Wynn tottered to their feet. Arthur Augustus sat up, gasping for breath, and groping for his eyeglass, that fluttered at the end of its cord.

'You uttah asses!' howled Arthur Augustus. 'What the dooce do you mean, wushin' at a fellow like a lot of mad whinocewoses! Oh, cwickey! I am all in a fluttah!'

'You silly chump, getting in the way!' roared Figgins. 'We've lost it now, ten to one! You burbling School House chump ——!'

'You New House wuffian ——'

'Get on,' gasped Kerr.

'It's gone,' panted Fatty Wynn.

'Oh, come on!' yapped Figgins. He rushed on again, his eyes wide open for a sign of that elusive banknote.

But the delay had done it! There was not a sign of it to be seen. A few moments had made all the difference; and the sportive wind had carried it far beyond their ken. Whether it had blown into the branches of a tree, or over the wall, or what had become of it, they had no idea. All they knew was that it was gone.

'You uttah asses!' Arthur Augustus, having recovered his wind a little, came striding after the New House juniors, as they stood staring about them, and staring in vain. 'Have you New House ticks gone off your wockahs, wushin' about like a bunch of Wed Indians ——'

'Fathead!' said Figgins.

'Ass!' said Kerr.

'Chump!' said Fatty Wynn.

Arthur Augustus breathed wrath. He was winded, he was dusty, he was quite shaken up, and he was wrathy.

'Bai Jove! You New House wuffians ——' he gasped.

'Gussy all over!' said Kerr. 'We might have had it ——'

'We should have had it!' growled Figgins. 'We'd have had it all right, if that image hadn't had to be in the way.'

'No chance now,' said Fatty Wynn, shaking his head.

'It's gone over the wall - must have! Might look outside ——'

'Bai Jove!' It dawned upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble brain that the New House juniors had been in search of something, and had not merely been rushing about like Red Indians. 'Were you fellows lookin' for anythin'?'

'Oh, nothing much,' said Figgins, sarcastically. 'Only a five-pound note that was blowing about.'

Arthur Augustus jumped.

'A fivah!' he ejaculated.

'Just that!' said Kerr. 'We saw it plainly enough - a five-pound note! But - it's gone!'

'Gweat Scott! That must be the fivah that blew out of Cutts's window last week!' exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great excitement. 'If you fellows are suah ——?'

'Of course we are, ass! Think we don't know a fiver when we see one!' snapped Figgins, 'But it's gone again, goodness knows where.'

'Why didn't you collah it at once?' exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

'Because a bithering, blethering, blathering School House fathead had to get in the way!' hooted Figgins.

'Weally, Figgins ——'

'Anyhow, we've seen it,' said Kerr. 'That's proof that it really did blow away, and nobody can make out now that young Wally had it.'

'Yaas, wathah,' said Arthur Augustus. 'But I weally wish that you had got hold of it! That would have saved no end of twouble. You must be wathah silly fatheads to let it blow away ——'

'Ass!'

'Fathead!'

'Chump!'

'I wepeat that I wegard you as silly fatheads to let that beastly banknote blow away undah your eyes!' said Arthur Augustus severely. 'I don't expect much sense from New House men, but weally this is the limit, and I considah, and I feel bound to say —— Yawoooooh!'

Arthur Augustus was interrupted by Figgins and Co. As if moved by the same spring, the three New House juniors collared Arthur Augustus, all at once, and whirled him off his feet, and sat him down on the hard, unsympathetic earth.

Bump!

'Yawooooooooh!' roared Arthur Augustus.

'Give him another!' said Figgins.

'Bai Jove! I - I will thwash you all wound - I - will - Oh, cwikey!'

Bump!

Arthur Augustus sat down again, hard. Figgins and Co. walked away, and left him sitting. Arthur Augustus sat and gasped for breath, in quite a dizzy state, while Figgins and Co. went out at the gates to look for that elusive banknote outside the school wall. But they had little hope of success, and they found none. Cutts's fiver was gone; and this time, only too evidently, it was gone for good!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### WORD IN SEASON!

‘WHAT’s up?’ asked Tom Merry.  
‘Goodness knows,’ said Manners.

And Monty Lowther shook his head.

Why Arthur Augustus D’Arcy had asked them to come up to Study No. 6 after tea that day, the three did not know. He hadn’t asked them to tea – they had tea’d in hall, and Study No. 6 had done the same. Funds were low, and study-teas had to wait till the funds rose again. Apparently Arthur Augustus had something to say, which the chums of the Shell were to hear; though why Gussy couldn’t have said it on the spot, instead of asking them to come up to the study, they did not know, any more than they knew what it was all about.

‘Something about that dashed fiver, I expect!’ said Manners, after a moment’s thought. ‘Gussy may have thought of something.’

‘Blessed if I know what, then,’ said Tom. ‘Looks to me like a puzzle without an answer. We ought to be getting down to the nets, really ——’

‘Oh, let’s go, and hear what Gussy has to say,’ said Lowther. And Tom Merry nodded assent, and they went up to Study No. 6 in the Fourth.

They found Blake and Herries and Digby in that study. Arthur Augustus, though he had called the meeting, had not yet arrived there.

The three Fourth Formers looked inquiringly at the Shell fellows, as they came in.

‘You, too?’ asked Blake. ‘Gussy told us to come up, as

he had something special to say. Has he roped you fellows in too?’

Tom Merry laughed.

‘He has,’ he answered. ‘Got any idea what it’s about?’

‘Not the foggiest,’

‘Row with the New House, perhaps,’ suggested Herries. ‘Figgins’s gang seem to have been ragging Gussy – he came in looking jolly dusty, just before tea.’

Blake shook his head.

‘Gussy isn’t bothering about rows with the New House now,’ he said. ‘He’s got that fiver on his mind. Poor old Gussy! Who’d have a minor at school?’

‘Cutts will have to wait,’ said Tom.

‘That’s the queer part of it,’ said Blake. ‘That tick came up here on Saturday to speak to Gussy about it, and Gussy promised him, word of honour, to square it by Wednesday. He wouldn’t explain how he was going to do it, and I know he’s stony. Cutts agreed to wait till Wednesday at the latest, but I don’t fancy he will wait longer than that. What on earth’s going to happen, if he goes to Railton about it?’

Nobody could answer that question.

‘Oh, here he comes,’ said Digby.

Arthur Augustus came into the study. Six pairs of eyes turned on him, and all six pairs noted that his aristocratic face was very grave.

‘Oh! You are all heah, deah boys,’ said Arthur Augustus.

‘Here we are, waiting for the news to break!’ said Monty Lowther. ‘Cough it right up, Gussy.’

‘I have somethin’ vewy sewious to say to you fellows,’ said Arthur Augustus, slowly.

‘Don’t tell us that that fiver has turned up!’ exclaimed Blake. ‘By gum, that would be jolly good news.’

‘After all, it might turn up, if it blew out of window,’ said Herries.



'There is no "if" about that, Hewwies,' said Arthur Augustus. 'Cutts' fivah did blow out of window when Wally was waggin' in his study.'

'I'm sure it did,' said Tom Merry, 'and I'm sure Railton will believe so, if Cutts does go to him about it. But ——'

'It has been seen, Tom Mewwy, so even a cad like Cutts cannot have any doubt about it now,' said Arthur Augustus. 'It was blowin' about in the wind, just before tea, and Figgins and Kerr and Wynn saw it, undah the elms, though they had not sense enough to gwab it.'

'Oh, my hat! Sure of that?' exclaimed Tom.

'Yass, wathah.'

'That clears that up, at any rate,' said Blake. 'If a banknote was seen blowing about, it must have been Cutts's - nobody else has lost one. But why didn't those New House chaps bag it if they saw it?'

'It appeahs that they were wushin' aftah it, Blake, and like the silly New House asses they are, they wushed into me ——'

'Oh, you ass!' exclaimed Blake.

'Weally, Blake ——'

'Gussy all over!' sighed Lowther. 'He had to get in the way at the wrong moment. So they didn't get it?'

'They did not, Lowthah! But I did not get in the way,' said Arthur Augustus, with cold dignity. 'I happened to be there, and they wushed wound a twee and banged into me and sent me flyin' ——'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'It is not a laughin' mattah! I was knocked ovah, and made fwightfully dusty, and thwown into a fluttah!' exclaimed Arthur Autustus, indignantly. 'Those New House fatheads spawled all ovah me, and when they had sorted themselves out the banknote had blown away again and disappeared. They had the cheek to bump me ——'

'Serve you right!' said Blake.

'Hear, hear!' said Herries.

'Isn't it just Gussy?' said Dig. 'That dashed fiver has been blowing about all over the shop for days, and the minute it's seen, Gussy has to barge in the way and prevent fellows getting hold of it ——'

'I did not barge in the way, Dig! I wepeat ——'

'Trust Gussy to be the wrong chap in the wrong place at the wrong time!' said Blake, sadly.

'I wepeat ——!' roared Arthur Augustus.

'Still, that clears it up about what became of the rotten thing,' said Manners. 'Even Cutts will have to admit that now.'

'Yaas, wathah! I have a gweat mind to go ovah to the New House, and give those cheeky boundahs a feahful thwashin' all wound,' said Arthur Augustus. 'But in the circs, I shall let them off, as they have weally come in useful, silly asses as they are for not gwabbin' that fivah when they had a chance. Even that wottah Cutts cannot make out now that losin' the fivah was anythin' but an accident. Of course, he will have to be paid all the same.'

'Is that what this meeting's about, then?' asked Tom.

'Not pwecisely, Tom Mewwy. I have, as I have said, somethin' vewy sewious to say to all of you. Pway give me your attention.'

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's manner was grave, indeed solemn. Six Juniors, staring at him, could only wonder what was coming. It seemed that it was something quite portentous.

'Go it, Gussy,' said Manners. 'We're all ears!'

'I am goin' to speak a word in season, deah boys ——'

'Wh-a-at?'

'A word in season - a warnin' to all of you!' said Arthur Augustus, in the same serious and solemn manner, 'You are wathah thoughtless kids ——'

'You silly ass!'

'Weally, Blake ——'

'What is he burbling about?' asked Herries, in wonder.

'Does he know?' said Lowther.

'Pway dwy up and listen to me,' said Arthur Augustus.

'I am goin' to tell you somethin' that I have not mentioned befoah, because it will be a warnin' to you, and may cause you to pause and weflect in time if you are evah tempted to take a w'ong step, even in a good cause. I wegwet to say that I twied to waise that fivah by backin' a horse.'

'What!' yelled six juniors at all once.

'Backing a horse!' said Blake, almost dazedly.

'You!' gasped Herries.

'Oh, you benighted chump!' gurgled Digby.

'Is that a joke?' asked Tom Merry, staring blankly at the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus shook his head sadly.

'Fah fwom it,' he answered. 'It seemed the only way of waisin' the cash to pull Wally thwough, and I fell for it. I did w'ong! Even for such a good cause, a fellow should not do what he knows to be shady. I have been vevy pwopahly wewardad by the wesult. The horse lost.'

'You needn't have mentioned that!' said Monty Lowther. 'I can sort of see you spotting winners – I don't think!'

'As a mattah of fact, Lowthah, it was another fellow who spotted the winnah – I mean the losah. Pewwaps I was wathah an ass to take his word for it that it was all wight!' added Arthur Augustus, musingly – as if that had just occurred to him.

'No perhaps about that!' said Tom.

'And who was it pulled your silly leg, and put you up to playing the giddy ox?' demanded Blake.

'I would wathah not tell you that, Blake. Pwobably he

meant well, and I should have known bettah. I shall not tell you fellows who it was. I don't want you wowin' with Cardew.'

'Oh, my hat!'

'Nevah mind that,' went on Arthur Augustus. 'I was let down, as I wealise that I deserved to be. I should not have said anythin' about it, except as a warnin' to you thoughtless fellows – a word in season, you know. I am not oldah than you in yahs,' said Arthur Augustus, in his most fatherly manner. 'But I think I may say that I am vevy much oldah in judgment. Pway weflect on what I have told you, and let it be a warnin' to you.'

Six juniors gazed at Arthur Augustus, seemingly speechless. Then they all seemed to find their voices, all at once.

'You ass!'

'You goat!'

'You cheeky chump!'

'You ditherer!'

'You silly cuckoo!'

'You dithering blitherer!'

None of the six seemed to have any use for Gussy's word in season! Certainly none of the six was likely to have fallen for Cardew's wiles, as the ineffable Gussy had done. Arthur Augustus undoubtedly, was the only fellow there, who could have fancied, for a moment, that backing a horse was a way out of a financial difficulty. Fatherly advice and sage counsel from Gussy, in the circumstances, was a little superfluous, and not a little exasperating.

'Weally, you fellows ——!' protested Arthur Augustus, apparently surprised at this reception of his word in season. 'I am only speakin' for your good – a word in season to unthinkin' youngstahs ——'

'Did you say Figgins and Co. bumped you?' asked Blake.

'I did, Blake ——'

'Figgins and Co. have good ideas, sometimes,' said Blake. 'Let's do the same, you fellows.'

'Good egg!'

'Hear, hear!'

'Go it!'

'Bai Jove! Weally, you fellows - welease me, you young wuffians - what are you up to, you silly asses - Bai Jove - Oh, cwikey - Yawoooh!' roared Arthur Augustus, as six pairs of hands swept him off his feet, and he sat on the floor, with a concussion that almost shook Study No. 6.

Bump!

'Oh, cwumbs! Bai Jove! Ow! wow!'

Six juniors streamed out of Study No. 6, leaving Arthur Augustus sitting on the carpet, struggling for his second wind - far too breathless to have uttered any more words in season, even if they had stayed to hear.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

GUSSY KNOWS HOW!

'D'ARCY!  
No reply.

'D'Arcy!  
Still no reply.

Mr. Lathom frowned.

Lathom, master of the Fourth, was a mild gentleman. But he was not accustomed to such disregard of his voice in his own form-room. Fourth-form fellows could take things more easily with Lathom than Shell fellows could with Linton, or Fifth-form men with Ratcliff. But there was a limit. Lathom's voice, mild as it was, was not to be passed by, in the Fourth-form room, by inattentive juniors, like the idle wind which they regarded not.

So Mr. Lathom frowned at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who sat in his place, seemingly unconscious of Lathom.

Blake and Herries and Dig looked round at him. Figgins and Kerr and Wynn did the same. So did Levison and Clive and Cardew, and many other fellows. Baggy Trimble giggled. Arthur Augustus, generally a most respectful pupil, with irreproachable manners, seemed to be bent for once on getting a beak's 'rag' out.

Kerr had been on 'con,' and Arthur Augustus was called on to follow. But he seemed deaf to his form-master's voice.

He sat with a wrinkle of deep thought in his brow, but only too evidently that deep thought was not concentrated on the lesson. Some other matter occupied the

powerful intellect of the swell of the Fourth – so intently, that he seemed to have forgotten that he was in form at all.

‘Gussy, you ass ——!’ whispered Blake.

Still Gussy did not heed.

Herries reached out with his foot, and delivered a hack under the desk. Then Arthur Augustus came out of his deep meditation, with a jump, and a startled exclamation.

‘Wow!’

‘Wake up, fathead!’ hissed Blake.

‘Bai Jove!’

‘D’Arcy! I have spoken to you twice!’ said Mr. Lathom, in a deep voice. ‘What is the matter with you this morning, D’Arcy?’

‘Oh! Nothin’, sir!’ stammered Arthur Augustus. ‘I – I – I was – was thinkin’, sir ——’

‘Indeed!’ said Mr. Lathom, drily. ‘I presume that you were not thinking about the lesson, D’Arcy.’

‘Oh! Yaas – I – I – I mean no, sir!’ gasped Arthur Augustus.

‘I am indeed sorry to interrupt your reflections on more important matters, D’Arcy.’ Lathom could be sarcastic. ‘But I must ask you to bestow some slight attention on the lesson while you are in form.’

Arthur Augustus crimsoned.

‘Oh, yaas, sir! Sowwy, sir ——’

‘You will go on where Kerr left off,’ rapped Mr. Lathom.

‘Oh, certainly, sir.’

Arthur Augustus was quite willing to go on where Kerr had left off. But there was a spot of difficulty in the matter, as he had not the faintest idea where Kerr had left off, not having heard a word. His thoughts had been far away; miles away from the Fourth-form room at St. Jim’s, and the adventures and misadventures of the ‘pius Aeneas.’ He blinked at a page of Latin, blinked at Mr. Lathom, and then blinked at Virgil again.

'I am waiting, D'Arcy,' said Mr. Lathom, ominously.

'Oh! Yaas, sir! Sowwy, sir! I - I - I have lost the place, sir.'

'You should not have lost the place, D'Arcy.'

'Oh, Yaas, sir - I - I - I mean, no, sir.'

'You will go on from "sic voce secutus", D'Arcy!' said Mr. Lathom, still more ominously.

'Yaas, sir! Sic voce secutus ——' Arthur Augustus stared at the next line. It ran 'Rex, genus egregium Fauni, nec fluctibus actos ——' which Arthur Augustus, at a more propitious time, might no doubt have construed with success. But Arthur Augustus was in a rather confused state of mind; moreover, he had been too busy thinking out financial problems, in Study No. 6 the previous evening, to give much attention to preparation. 'Rex genus egregium Fauni' presented, at the moment, a problem as insoluble as the problem of Wally.

'I am waiting, D'Arcy!' repeated Mr. Lathom.

'Oh! Yaas, sir! I - I'm just goin' to begin,' stammered Arthur Augustus. 'Rex - oh cwikey! - I mean, wex genus egwegium Fauni ——'

'I am waiting for you to construe, D'Arcy.'

'O King, egregious son of a fawn ——!' stuttered Arthur Augustus. He had to make a shot at it. The look on Mr. Lathom's face apprised him, the next moment, that that shot was not a bullseye!

'What? What did you say, D'Arcy?' exclaimed the Fourth-form master.

'O King, egwegious son of a fawn ——'

'He, he, he!' came from Baggy Trimble, and there was a chuckle up and down the Fourth. Mr. Lathom did not chuckle. He glared.

'D'Arcy!'

'Oh! Yaas, sir!' groaned Arthur Augustus. 'Is - is - isn't that wight, sir?'

Evidently, from Mr. Lathom's expression, it was not!



There was, in fact, some considerable difference between a descendant of illustrious Faunus, and the egregious son of a faun!

'D'Arcy! Have you prepared this lesson?' thundered Mr. Lathom.

There were fellows in the form who would have answered 'Certainly, sir.' But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not one of them.

'No, sir!' he confessed.

Lathom stared at him, instead of glaring.

'I am glad you are so frank, at all events, D'Arcy,' he said. 'You will write out the lesson twenty times after class. You will go on, Blake.'

'Bai Jove!' murmured Arthur Augustus, as he sat down.

It was a relief to the swell of St. Jim's when the Fourth were dismissed for break. Little as Mr. Lathom was aware of it, that member of his form had matters on his mind, that far outweighed Latin in the form-room. It was Tuesday, and Arthur Augustus's noble word was passed that a fiver was to be forthcoming on the following day, for Cutts of the Fifth. The problem of extracting that fiver from empty space was more than enough to fill an aristocratic brain to capacity, leaving no room over for even the deathless verse of Virgil.

'You ass!' said Jack Blake, as they came out into the sunny quad. 'What sort of a son of an egregious fawn do you call yourself?'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Weally, Blake ——'

'You were asking for whops,' said Herries. 'What made you go off dreaming in form, fathead?'

'I was not dweamin' in form, Hewwies ——'

'Asking for it!' said Dig. 'Son of an egregious fawn — ha, ha, ha!'

'One of Gussy's best!' agreed Blake.

'Oh, bothah that wot,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I was thinkin' about what is going to be done about that fivah and I have solved the pwoblem at last. I wathah think that that is a little more important than Latin with Lathom, even if Lathom cannot see it.' Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass in his noble eye, and gave his friends a complacent look. 'I have thought it out at last, deah boys — and I wondah I did not think of it befoah.'

Blake and Co. stared.

'You've thought it out ——!' exclaimed Blake.

'Yaas, wathah.'

'You know where to bag a fiver?'

'Pwecisely.'

'Well, I hope you've got it right,' said Blake, evidently unconvinced. 'I'm dashed if I know where a fiver is to be dug up. Not the sort of thing that a fellow can pick up any odd minute.'

'Hardly,' said Herries.

'All the same, I know where to get one, and I can get it to-mowwow, in time to keep my word to Cutts!' said Arthur Augustus, confidently. 'I weally wondah that it did not occur to me befoah. But a fellow often ovah-looks a thing that is fairly stawin' him in the face, you know. Heah I have been wowwyin' like anythin' ovah that beastly fivah, when I only have to walk ovah to Wayland to collect one.'

'Wayland!' repeated Blake, blankly. 'You're going over to Wayland to collect a fiver? Think Cutts' banknote has blown as far as that, and that you could spot it, if it had?'

'Pway don't be an ass, Blake.'

'Well, how are you going to pick up five pounds at Wayland?' demanded Blake, quite mystified. 'If you're thinking of backing another geegee, we'll duck your head in the fountain.'

'I should uttahly wefuse to have my head ducked in

the fountain, Blake, and I am not thinkin' of anythin' so blackguardly and widiculous as backin' a horse.'

'Well, what's the big idea, then?'

'You wemembah that chap Jones, they call the Game One on the advertisements of Handlah's Wing ——'

'What about him?'

'You are pwobably awah that Mr. Handlah offahs a pwize of a five-pound note for any fellow able to stand up to him for thwee wounds ——'

Blake chuckled.

'Yes, that New House ass Figgins tried it on, and brought home an eye and a nose that look as if he'd won them in a raffle,' he said. Then Blake gave a jump.

'You're not thinking ——!' He fairly yelled.

'Exactly.'

'You - you - you ——!' Jack Blake seemed afflicted with a stutter. 'You - you - you - you're thinking of taking the Game One on - you!'

'Yaas, wathah!'

'Oh, suffering cats and crocodiles!' gasped Blake.

'Oh, holy smoke!' said Herries.

'Mad?' asked Dig.

'Weally, you fellows, I wathah thought you would think it a wippin' ideah, and wondah that we hadn't thought of it befoah ——'

'Ha, ha, ha!' yelled Blake and Herries and Digby. They seemed quite overcome, at the idea of the elegant swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, standing up to that very tough specimen, Johnny Jones of Handler's Ring. 'Ha, ha, ha!'

Arthur Augustus frowned.

'I see nothin' whatevah to excite mewwiment in my wemarks,' he said, stiffly. 'I can box, I suppose, and I twust you do not think that I am afwaid of gettin' a few hard knocks. I do not expect it to be a walk-over ——'

'Not?' gasped Blake.

'No, it would hardly be that!' admitted Arthur Augustus. 'But I am pwetty tough, you know, and I wathah fancy I am good for thwee wounds, even against a hard hittah like Mr. Jones. I am certainly goin' in for that fivah at Handlah's Wing.'

'Help!' moaned Digby.

'Weally, Dig ——'

'You priceless ass!' hooted Blake. 'Why, Figgins hadn't an earthly – not a ghost of an earthly – against that pug.'

'Pwobably not! But what diffewence does that make?'

'Lots; as Figgins could make rings round you, with one of his hands tied, if not both of them!' snorted Blake.

'Pway do not talk wot, Blake. I twust I could knock Figgins into a cocked hat, and Kerr and Wynn aftah him!' said Arthur Augustus calmly. 'You fellows may not wealise it, but I am wathah a tough customah with the gloves on. Pewwaps you have forgotten how vewy easily I knocked out two Shell fellows, one aftah the othah, last week!' added Arthur Augustus, sarcastically.

'Oh, fan me!' murmured Blake. Even yet, it seemed, it had not dawned on Gussy's noble brain that that combat in the day-room had been a leg-pull. Manners and Lowther, in Gussy's happy belief, had been the helpless victims of his prowess with the gloves.

'I have quite decided on it,' added Arthur Augustus. 'You fellows can come along and see me tacklin' the Game One, if you like. I may get a few hard punches. I weally do not care about that. I am certainly goin' thwough with it, and baggin' Mr. Handlah's fivah if I can.'

'If!' snorted Herries. 'Biggest size in ifs I've ever heard of.'

'Weally, Hewwies ——'

They gazed at him. Arthur Augustus, it was clear, was in earnest – deadly earnest. He had thought of that

remarkable way of solving the financial difficulty – pondered over it in class, rather to the detriment of his lessons – and made up his noble mind. There was a five-pound note to be picked up in Wayland – by any person who could stand up to the Game One for three rounds – and Arthur Augustus was going to pick it up, by the simple process of standing up for the required three rounds. It was quite simple, really! – at least from Gussy's point of view.

It was true, that Gussy elegant as he was, was fit and sturdy, that he had unlimited pluck, and certainly was not lacking in confidence. But that he could stand up to the Game One's lunges for one round, let alone three, was not within the region of possibility, in the opinion of his chums. In their mind's eye, they could see Arthur Augustus rolling about like a sack of coke under the Game One's punches; and returning to St. Jim's in a sadder and more sorrowful state than Figgins of the New House – if indeed there was anything of him left to return at all.

'So that's the big idea?' said Blake at last.

'Yaas, wathah.'

'Then there's only one thing you can do.'

'What is that, deah boy?'

'Forget it!' said Blake.

'Weally, Blake ——'

'Forget all about it,' said Blake. 'We're not going to have the study ornament knocked into a gargyle ——'

'You uttah ass ——'

'Figgins couldn't pull it off!' hooted Digby.

'I twust that I can box bettah than a New House boundah, Dig.'

'I don't suppose Tom Merry could!' said Herries.

'I have vewy little doubt, Hewwies, that I could knock out Tom Mewwy as easily as I did Mannahs and Lowthah ——'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'And if you are goin' to cackle at evewythin' I say, we may as well dwop the discussion. I am goin' ovah to Wayland to-morrow aftahnoon, as it is a half holiday, to take the Game One on. You fellows can come with me if you like, and we shall see!'

'Oh, we'd have to come,' said Blake. 'Somebody will have to carry home the fragments, after the Game One has disintegrated you with one punch.'

'Wats!' said Arthur Augustus, disdainfully; and he walked away with his noble nose in the air.

Blake and Co. looked at one another. The matter was serious, for Arthur Augustus was in deadly earnest. But serious as it was, they had to grin.

'The ass!' said Blake.

'The fathead!' said Herries.

'The image!' sighed Dig.

'I wonder how much would be left of poor old Gussy, if anything, after the Game One had given him just a oner!' said Blake. 'But he means it!' He's going over to Wayland to-morrow to be knocked into a cocked hat, hammered to a jelly, and chopped up into small pieces if we let him! Looks to me as if we shall have to bag him in the study and sit on his head all Wednesday afternoon. He's our pal, and we've got to save his life somehow.'

And Herries and Dig, chuckling, agreed that they had – even if it came to sitting on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic head in the study for a whole afternoon!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### SO DOES TOM MERRY!

'TOM MERRY jumped.'  
'Gussy?' he ejaculated.  
'Yes, Gussy!'  
'Ha, ha, ha!'

There was a ripple of merriment in No. 10 Study in the Shell. Tom Merry laughed - Manners laughed - Lowther laughed. Jack Blake looked at them with a rueful grin on his face. The Shell fellows seemed to think that it was funny. Blake admitted that it was funny, but he was perturbed all the same.

Blake had come along to speak to the 'Terrible Three' about it. There had been argument in Study No. 6, ever since Arthur Augustus had propounded the big idea that morning. Argument, however, had no more effect than water on a duck. Arthur Augustus's mind was made up; and all the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't have unmade it. Gussy was adamant. Nevertheless, it was certain, in his chums minds, that he couldn't be allowed to face up to the lunging fists of the Game One in Handler's Ring at Wayland. The results had been painful and un-decorative for Figgins of the New House, and only Arthur Augustus believed that he could knock Figgins into a cocked hat! It simply could not come off, and it would be quite useless if it did - for whatever Arthur Augustus might collect at Handler's Ring, in the shape of facial decorations, it was fairly certain that he would not collect Mr. Handler's five-pound note.

'Ha, ha, ha!' chorused the Terrible Three. 'Gussy! Ha, ha, ha!'

'He means it,' said Blake.

'Dear old Gussy!' said Tom Merry. 'Doesn't he know that Figgins tried it on, and that Kerr and Wynn almost had to carry him home afterwards?'

Blake made a grimace.

'He fancies he could box Figgy's head off,' he answered. 'It's partly our fault for pulling his leg the other day. He still thinks that he whopped those two fatheads to the wide.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Well, if you fellows can't do anything but cackle, what the dickens do you think we can do about it?' asked Blake. 'We can't let Gussy go over to Wayland and be made mincemeat of.'

Tom Merry shook his head.

'Hardly,' he agreed. 'Must stop him somehow.'

'That chap Jones seems a good-natured sort of johnny,' said Manners, thoughtfully. 'He would let Gussy off as lightly as he could. But Gussy is a sticker. He would keep on till the chap had to knock him out.'

'He would!' said Monty Lowther. 'He couldn't afford to let Gussy walk off with a glorious victory as we did.'

'They don't expect that five-pound note to be won, of course,' said Blake. 'It's been on offer for weeks, and a lot of locals who fancy themselves with the gloves have tried for it. They haven't pulled it off. Nor will anybody ever, I expect. It's just as advertising dodge, and brings people to the Ring to see the show. Old Handler hasn't had to hand out a fiver yet – and he doesn't expect to. At any rate, he won't be called on to hand it out to Gussy!'

'Ha, ha! Not likely.'

'If it comes to it, we're going to bag him to-morrow afternoon and sit on his head,' said Blake. 'But that's



the last resort. It's all that young ruffian Wally's fault. I've a good mind to look for him and kick him. Still, that wouldn't help.'

'He's got to be kept away from Handler's Ring,' said Tom Merry, decidedly. 'If he had the ghost of a chance of pulling it off it would be worth a few hard punches – but that's rot! Figgins hadn't an earthly – Gussy hasn't a ghostly! And he's such an obstinate ass that he will go on till Johnny Jones has to damage him. Gussy's got heaps of pluck, if he hasn't much sense. We can't have him crawling home a wreck, worse than Figgins did.'

'We can't,' said Blake. 'But it's no good talking to him. He gave that tick Cutts his word that the fiver would be paid to-morrow, thinking he was getting it on a horse – that cad Cardew pulling his silly leg. He simply can't raise a fiver, and we can't! But it's no good Gussy getting hammered black and blue for nothing.'

'No good at all,' said Tom.

'What about going over to Wayland with him by train from Rylcombe?' suggested Monty Lowther, with a glimmer in his eyes. 'The footpath through the wood is still out of bounds, and Gussy won't want a long bike ride just before taking on a pug with the gloves.'

Blake stared.

'We could go by train, if that was any good,' he said.

'What good would that be? What are you driving at?'

Monty Lowther grinned.

'Fellows get into the wrong train sometimes,' he said.

'I've heard of such things happening.'

'Oh!' said Blake. And he grinned, too.

'Gussy was born to have his leg pulled,' said Monty. 'Nature specially designed him for the part. If there's a wrong train to be picked up at any railway station in the kingdom, Gussy's the man to pick it up, even on his own. With the help of three pals, it would be a cert.'

Jack Blake chuckled.

'By gum!' he said. 'I'll get a time-table and look it out. I believe there's a train for Wayland at two-thirty, and one just before it that doesn't stop before Ridgate. That's our train for Carcroft when we play them. If Gussy gets landed at Ridgate for the afternoon ——'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Quite a pleasant spot - jolly old beach on the sea-shore, and you may meet some of the Carcroft chaps,' said Lowther. 'Might make it a very pleasant afternoon.'

Blake chuckled again.

'Thanks,' he said. 'That's a tip! We're ready to sit on Gussy's head all the afternoon, if we have to - but we'd rather not! We'll start for Wayland with Gussy and land at Ridgate. It will be too late then for Gussy to get back for the show at Handler's Ring. Mind, not a word to Gussy - not a syllable - not a whisper! Dear old Gussy can go on fancying that he's heading for Handler's Ring and a pulped nose and a pair of jolly old black eyes - till he wakes up at Ridgate ——'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Thanks no end for the tip,' said Blake. 'Us for the seaside to-morrow afternoon - the jolly old sea-breeze will do Gussy more good than getting his silly nose pushed through the back of his silly head! I'll fix it with Herries and Dig - it's a go!'

Blake, grinning, walked out of No. 10 Study leaving the chums of the Shell laughing.

There was little doubt that the playful Monty's 'tip' would prove a winner. It was, in fact, easier to get Arthur Augustus into a wrong train than into a right one. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had to be saved from himself, and that was the easiest way. It was simply unthinkable that the elegant swell of St. Jim's could be allowed to stand up to the hard-hitting of the Game One, if there was any way of stopping him. A trip to the Sussex shore would, evidently, be ever so much better for him.

'That's that!' said Manners. 'And now prep.'

The Shell fellows sorted out their books for prep. But there was a shade of thoughtfulness on Tom Merry's face. He was not, for the moment, thinking of prep. Manners and Lowther sat down at the study table, to begin - Tom remained standing, a wrinkle in his brow.

Manners glanced round at him.

'Prep, old man,' he said.

'Oh! Yes,' said Tom. 'I was thinking ——'

'Better think about Virgil if you want to scrape through with Latin in the morning,' said Manners.

'Oh, bother Virgil for a minute,' said Tom. He came to the table, and stood looking down at his chums. 'If - if there were some way of helping old Gussy out of his jam —— That's what I'm thinking of. Of course, he could never make it, taking on the Game One for that fiver. But - he's promised Cutts, and Cutts will kick up no end of a shindy if he isn't squared. We don't want Gussy's young brother up before the House beak.'

'Nothing we can do,' said Lowther.

'I'm not so sure!' said Tom, slowly.

'We can keep Gussy from getting hammered for nothing - Blake will see to that to-morrow,' said Manners. 'The ass - to think that he could stand up to that chap Jones for one round, let alone three ——'

'He couldn't,' said Tom. 'But ——'

'But what?'

'I - I wonder ——' Tom Merry paused. Manners and Lowther stared at him, mystified.

'You wonder what?' asked Manners. 'Wonder what Linton will say if you skew in con to-morrow morning?'

'No, ass! For goodness sake give that a rest for a minute. Look here, Gussy can be kept out of mischief to-morrow, but there's another show, just the same, on Saturday, and he couldn't be bunged into a wrong train a second time - and you know what an obstinate ass

he is. And – and that fiver's got to be raised somehow. I was just wondering — What Blake told us about Gussy put it into my head – and I wondered —' Tom paused again.

'What the dickens ——!' said Lowther.

'Cough it up,' said Manners.

Tom coloured a little.

'Well, I was wondering whether I might have a chance,' he said. 'I haven't got such tremendous confidence in my powers as Gussy seems to have, bless his little heart. But – I can box ——'

'You!' ejaculated Lowther.

'You!' gasped Manners.

'Little me,' said Tom. 'Mind, I'm not saying I could pull it off. It's a big order. But – what do you fellows think? I can box, and I'm fairly tough – I was scrapping with a Fifth-form man last week, and Cutts didn't seem too keen to go on with it. I've knocked out Figgins in the gym with the gloves on, and old Figgy is the toughest man in the Lower School, in the New House. Think I might have a chance?'

Monty Lowther whistled.

Manners shook his head.

'That man Jones is a professional pug,' he said. 'And he can't afford to lose. He would go all out, if he had to. You'd make him go all out, Tom. But – you couldn't stand three rounds.'

'Tough proposition,' said Lowther.

'I know!' said Tom. 'But – I'm not sure, but I think I might pull off the three rounds, with luck. I just might! And – and if I did, it would be a fiver, and Wally out of the wood. I'd like to see old Gussy through. And goodness knows what's going to happen, if we don't scare up a fiver from somewhere pretty soon. It's a chance, at least.'

'A pretty slim one,' said Manners, very doubtfully.

'Jolly slim!' said Lowther.

'You think I'm as big an ass as Gussy, what?' asked Tom, laughing.

'No, old chap! Gussy hasn't an earthly, but you might have,' said Manners. 'But - but - you'd get some jolly old hard knocks, Tom, even if you did pull through the rounds.'

'I know!'

'It's a chance,' said Lowther. 'By gum, too, it would be a score for the House, if you did pull it off, Tom.'

'There's that!' agreed Manners. 'But ——'

'It's a chance,' said Tom, 'and I'm jolly well going to try it on. If I get knocked out like Figgins, I daresay I shall mend in time. I'm going to give in my name to old Handler and hope for the best. That's that!'

Tom Merry had made up his mind. And 'that' being 'that', it was settled, and the chums of the Shell gave their attention to prep.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### ARTHUR AUGUSTUS MEANS BUSINESS!

‘CHEER up!’ said Levison minor.  
‘Yes – don’t look as if you’d lost a quid and found a farthing,’ said Reggie Manners. ‘You’re a bit of a wet blanket these days, Wally.’

Wally of the Third grunted.

It was in break the following morning. Generally, in morning break, when the Third Form escaped from the keen eyes and rapping voice of Mr. Selby, Walter Adolphus D’Arcy was in exuberant spirits. Seldom, if ever, could Wally of the Third be justly described as a ‘wet blanket’. But in the last few days, undoubtedly, Wally had not been quite his usual exuberant self. An unaccustomed spot of bother worried the usually cheerful fag.

True, he had happily landed that spot of bother on the long-suffering shoulders of his major in the Fourth. But he had a lingering doubt whether his major in the Fourth might not prove a somewhat unreliable reed to lean on. Arthur Augustus had promised to see him through, and Gussy’s word was his bond. But ——!

There was a ‘but’. So far, at all events, nothing had come of it, and Cutts of the Fifth, whenever he came across Wally, gave him very expressive looks. Wally’s feelings towards Gerald Cutts were more inimical than ever, but he was no longer thinking of retaliatory measures, he had had enough of ‘shipping’ Fifth Form studies – and the results thereof!

It was a consolation to Wally that the missing banknote

had been seen, though unfortunately it had not been recaptured; everyone knew now that it had blown away, even Cutts knew that, and malicious tongues were stilled. But it was lost, all the same, and had to be made good. And the lapse of day after day, with that debt still unpaid, added to Wally's misgivings. There was no doubt that Manners minor was right, Wally was a bit of a wet blanket now.

'What's up with you?' went on Reggie. With the cheery inconsequence of youth, Reggie had rather dismissed Wally's trouble from mind.

'It's that rotten fiver, I suppose,' said Frank Levison. 'Is that it, Wally?'

Another grunt from Wally.

'Of course it is,' he said.

'Everybody knows now that it was lost by accident,' said Levison minor. 'That's something, Wally.'

'Cutts has got to be paid, all the same.'

'Well, didn't your major say he would see to it?' exclaimed Reggie, rather impatiently. Truth to tell, Master Reggie had heard enough about that wretched banknote, and it was rather a bore. 'I suppose D'Arcy major knew what he was talking about.'

'Well, yes — but ——'

'Leave it at that!' said Reggie. 'What's the good of pulling a long face? Look here, the men are leap-frogging over by the gym——. Let's cut along and join them, what?'

'Bother them!' said Wally.

'Well, look here, I'm going!' said Reggie; and he went. Reggie seemed to have had all he wanted in the way of wet blankets, and he trotted off to join the other 'men' of the Third at leap-frog.

Wally gave another grunt.

'You cut off too, Levison mi.,' he said. 'I'm a wet blanket.'

'Well, if your major's looking after it ——'

'I don't know how he's going to do it,' said Wally, 'and he hasn't done it so far, and chance it. I can tell you it's a worry.'

Levison minor made a gesture towards an elegant figure under the elms.

'There's your major,' he said. 'Why not go and ask him? If he's going to see you through, it's jolly near time he did.'

Wally of the Third looked round at his major. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing on the path under the elms, a thoughtful and meditative expression on his face. Mr. Railton, passing along the path, glanced at him, but Arthur Augustus did not even see his house-master. Wally wondered whether his deep meditations were on the subject of that miserable fiver, and, rather to Levison minor's relief, he started across to speak to his major — whereupon Levison mi. immediately cut after Reggie Manners, and joined the merry crowd leap-frogging by the wall of the gym.

'Look here, Gussy ——!' said Wally, as he came up.

'Eh?' Arthur Augustus looked up at his minor's voice. 'Is that you, Wally? I was just thinkin'.'

'So was I,' grunted Wally. 'You haven't paid Cutts yet.'

'So fah, no,' admitted Arthur Augustus. 'It is not an easy mattah to waise a fivah, Wally. In fact, it is vewy hard.'

'It means a row for me with the House beak,' muttered Wally. 'Cutts can't make out now that I pinched his rotten fiver, but it means a row all the same. If you can't do anything ——'

'It will be all wight, Wally.'

'You haven't got a fiver,' said Wally, eyeing his major doubtfully.

'Not at the pwesent moment, Wally. But I am goin' to get one,' answered Arthur Augustus, reassuringly.

'When?' asked Wally, still dubious.



'This aftahnoon.'

'And how?'

'It is vewy simple, deah boy, and I can only wondah that I nevah thought of it earliah,' said Arthur Augustus. 'Pwobably you have heard of the pwize offahed at Handlah's Wing at Wayland, for any man that can stand up to the Game One for thwee wounds ——'

'What about that?' yapped Wally. It seemed to him that his major was wandering from the subject.

'I am goin' in for it,' said Arthur Augustus.

'Wha-aa-t?' stuttered Wally.

'Yaas, wathah! That is the big ideah, Wally,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I was just turnin' it ovah in my mind, kid, and I think it will be all wight. In fact it will be wight as wain.'

Wally gazed at him speechlessly. He had wondered a good deal how his major fancied that he could raise that fiver. But in his wildest imaginings he had never imagined that Gussy fancied that he could raise it by standing up to a pugilist's punches.

'Surpvised?' asked Arthur Augustus, smiling. 'I assuah you that it will be all wight, Wally. I twust that I am not a fellow to bwag, but weally I am wathah good at boxing - you would think so, kid, if you saw how easily I knocked out a couple of Shell fellows last week, one aftah anothah. Of course, that chap Jones is fah and away tougher than any Shell fellow. But I wathah think I shall pull it off, all the same.'

'My only aunt Jane!' gasped Wally.

'Mind, I'm not sayin' that I could lick the chap, in a wegulah boxin' go,' said Arthur Augustus. 'But I feel assuahed that I can stand up to him for thwee wounds, and that is all that is necessawy to bag the pwize. I feel quite assuahed on that point.'

'Oh, crikey!' said Wally; which indicated that he was far from sharing his major's sublime confidence.

'So it will be all wight, Wally, and you needn't wowwy about it,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I am goin' to see you thwough, kid.'

'By boxing with Johnny Jones!' gurgled Wally. 'Oh, crumbs! Did you see Figgins of the New House when he came in on Saturday? He's still got a dark eye and a red nose, and he was ragged by his House beak, too. Think you could do what Figgins couldn't?'

'Yaas, wathah.'

'Oh, scissors!' groaned Wally. 'So that's the big idea, is it? Well, you're jolly well not going to do it, see?'

'Weally, Wally ——'

'I shall have to stand the racket,' said Wally. 'I don't mind so much, now that Cutts can't make out that his fiver was pinched. You're not going to have your face pushed in, trying to get me out of a scrape. Even if you could pull it off ——'

'There is no "if" about that, Wally,' said Arthur Augustus, mildly. 'I have thought the mattah ovah vewy carefully, and I am assuahed that I can stand up for the wequiahed thwee wounds.'

'I don't think!' grunted Wally. 'But even if you did, you'd be knocked black and blue, and pink and green ——'

'I shall have to face that, Wally. I can stand some hard knocks, I twust. Say no more, deah boy - wun away and play, and don't wowwy about that fivah any more. It will be all wight.'

'Look here, Gussy ——'

'That is all, Wally. Wun away and play.'

'You're not going to do it ——'

'I certainly am.'

'You can't, and shan't,' howled Wally. 'Look here, Gussy, you're not going anywhere near Handler's Ring this afternoon, see?'

'Wats!' said Arthur Augustus. 'I am goin' to Handlah's

Wing, Wally, and I am goin' to take on the Game One for thwee wounds ——'

'D'Arcy!' rapped a sudden voice.

'Oh, bai Jove!' Arthur Augustus spun round.

Neither major nor minor had observed Mr. Railton coming back along the path. But they observed him now, as he came to a halt, his eyes fixed on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, a stern frown on his brow.

'D'Arcy!' rapped the School House master again.

'Yaas, sir!'

'I heard what you said to your minor,' said Mr. Railton, severely. 'Is it possible, D'Arcy, that you entertain any such foolish and reckless idea as that of entering into a boxing contest with a professional pugilist at the Ring in Wayland?'

'It is only thwee wounds, sir,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I wathah think that I could pull it off, sir.'

'You absurd boy ——!'

'Weally, Mr. Wailton ——'

'Understand this, D'Arcy,' said the house-master, sternly. 'You are forbidden to go to Handler's Ring this afternoon. You are forbidden to go to Wayland at all. You will be allowed to do nothing of the kind.'

'Weally, sir ——!'

'Understand that clearly,' snapped Mr. Railton. 'Handler's Ring at Wayland is out of bounds for you, D'Arcy.'

'But weally, sir ——'

'If you should go there, D'Arcy, in spite of my command, I shall report the matter to your headmaster, and Dr. Holmes will deal with you.'

'But, sir ——!' stammered the dismayed Gussy.

'That will do!' said Mr. Railton; and he walked on, frowning. Arthur Augustus gazed after him, in something like consternation. Wally grinned.

'That settles it!' he said. 'You were a mad ass to

think of it, Gussy – anyhow, it's washed out now. Fat lot of good it would be for you to get your face pushed in for nothing.'

'Weally, Wally ——!'

The bell for third school interrupted Arthur Augustus. Wally cut off to join the Third, and his major took his way to the Fourth, with a deep wrinkle in his brow. Having thought the matter over so very carefully, and decided that he was good for the three rounds against the Game One, Arthur Augustus had practically seen himself at the end of his problem, and his house-master's intervention was a blow. But by the time he was in form again with Mr. Lathom, Arthur Augustus had rallied from that blow. Railton or no Railton, he was going to Handler's Ring that afternoon; he was going to stand up to the Game One for those three rounds, and he was going to return to St. Jim's with that sorely-needed fiver in his pocket. And that was that!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### NOT A PICNIC!

'Looks like a picnic!' said Figgins.

'They won't be asking us, if it is,' said Fatty Wynn.

'Might ask ourselves!' said Figgins.

'Eh?'

'And not take no for an answer, too!' said Figgins, with a grin.

Kerr and Wynn looked at him.

After dinner on that Wednesday, the chums of the New House were out of gates. Wayland Wood was within school bounds once more, the restriction having been taken off, now that the local races were over. Monday, which had turned out so unlucky for Cardew's speculation, had been the last day. So on Wednesday, St. Jim's fellows were at liberty to roam in the scented summer woods, and Figgins and Co. were going a'roaming.

But they had stopped at the stile in Rylcombe Lane, Fatty Wynn having deposited his considerable weight on the top bar. Fatty liked to give his weight a rest when opportunity offered.

So it came about that Figgins, leaning on the stile, and looking up the lane, beheld three Shell fellows of St. Jim's in the distance towards the school: Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther. They were walking at an easy pace, and Monty Lowther was swinging a bundle in his hand. Figgins's eyes fixed on that bundle, which seemed to interest him.

'What ——?' began Kerr.

'Get out of sight, while I spill it!' said Figgins. 'We don't want those School House ticks to see us yet.'

'Why not?' asked Fatty Wynn.

'Never mind why not!' said Figgins. 'Roll off that bar, you bulging old barrel, or are you waiting for me to roll you off?'

Fatty Wynn decided to roll off the bar, without waiting for assistance from George Figgins. The three of them retreated into the trees close by the stile, Figgins grinning widely.

'Doesn't it look like a picnic?' he demanded.

'I suppose so!' said Kerr. 'They wouldn't be carrying a bundle around for nothing, I suppose. What about it?'

'Ten to one they're going into the wood,' said Figgins.

'I suppose so — they wouldn't camp in the lane, or in Rylcome High Street, if it's a picnic,' assented Kerr. 'But what ——?'

'Are we up against their mouldy old House, or are we not?' demanded Figgins. 'Have we had no end of chipping from School House toads, since I brought home that eye and nose from Handler's Ring, or haven't we? Are we going to let them walk by with a bundle of tuck, or are we not?'

Figgins propounded those queries, peering through the thicket towards the stile. Kerr and Wynn caught on, and grinned.

'Good egg!' said Kerr.

'Tip-top!' said Fatty Wynn, heartily. 'No end of a jest on the School House to walk off with their jolly old picnic. Nice of them to bring it along for us, really.'

Three juniors chuckled in chorus. But they subdued their chuckles, as there was a sound of footsteps at hand. Tom Merry and Co. were drawing near to the stile.

'Just wait!' whispered Figgins. 'We'll rush them, as soon as they get over the stile. They haven't seen us, and we'll take them by surprise. Leave 'em wondering what

hit them, and scud off with that jolly old parcel. We can do with a spot of tuck on a ramble.'

And there was a subdued chuckle.

Figgins and Co. watched and waited. None of them doubted that it was a picnic in the summer woods that the 'Terrible Three' had in view. Why else were they carrying a bundle with them? Fellows did not carry bundles when they went out just for a walk. And if it was a picnic, there was little doubt, or none, that the Shell fellows would cross the stile and enter the wood. All that the New House trio had to do, was to lie in ambush till the psychological moment! Then a sudden rush would do the trick. Floored by that rush, the School House three would be left sprawling, while the New House Co. disappeared into the wood with the picnic. Which would be a score in favour of the New House, and one in the eye for the School House - which, of course, was a right and proper state of things, from the New House point of view.

'Here they come!' breathed Figgins.

In the thicket under the trees, close by the footpath, Figgins and Co. were still as mice - and watchful as cats. Voices floated to their ears.

'Lucky that jolly old footpath isn't out of bounds now!' It was Monty Lowther's voice.

'Yes, we didn't want a long bike ride, considering what's coming,' said Tom Merry. 'A fellow wants to be quite fresh.'

'Feeling fit?' asked Manners.

'Fit as a fiddle!' Tom Merry vaulted over the stile. 'I'll take the bundle while you get over, Monty.'

'Here you are!'

Figgins made a sign to his comrades. The 'Terrible Three' were over the stile, Tom Merry with the bundle in his hand, holding it by the string. They were about to start walking up the path. But at that sign from Figgins,

the New House Co. went into action, and there was an interruption in the programme.

There came a sudden rustle, and a rush. Before the Shell fellows knew what was happening, or that anything was happening at all, the charge of the New House juniors swept them off their feet.

Figgins crashed into Tom Merry, sending him spinning. As Tom went over the bundle dropped from his hand, and Figgins clutched it up. Tom rolled in the grass. At the same moment Kerr crashed into Manners, and Manners flew, and Monty Lowther, receiving Fatty Wynn's extensive weight with a terrific crash, was strewn on his back.

The surprise was complete, the School House enemy down and out. Figgins and Co. did not give them time to recover.

'Come on!' chirruped Figgins.

Bundle in hand, George Figgins darted into the wood. Kerr and Wynn darted after him. That sudden raid had been an absolute success, it could not have worked better. Three gasping School House juniors were outspread in the grass, spluttering for breath, while the successful raiders vanished, winding deep into the wood and giving the enemy little chance of pursuit.

Spluttering voices followed them till they were out of hearing.

'Oh, my hat!'

'Who - what ——?'

'Those New House ticks! They've got the bundle ——'

'After them ——'

'We've got to get that bundle - quick!'

The voices died away. Figgins and Co. grinning, sped on, winding among trunks and thickets. They had no doubt that the proprietors of the bundle would pursue, but they did not expect to see anything more of the Terrible Three that afternoon. The wood was thick and



it was the easiest thing in the world for a fellow to lose himself in it, leaving no sign. Figgins and Co. lost no time in losing themselves.

'This will do!' panted Figgins, at last, coming to a halt in a little shady glade. 'They won't find us here. If they do, we'll punch their noses till they wish they hadn't! But they won't!'

'No fear!' chuckled Kerr.

Fatty Wynn wiped perspiration from a plump brow. Top speed on a warm summer's afternoon told on Fatty. But his plump face was irradiated by a cheery grin. The bundle had been captured; the School House picnic had become a New House one, and Fatty was eager to begin.

'Get it open, Figgy,' he said. 'I say, I wonder what's in it! Jam tarts, very likely - a cake, I shouldn't wonder.' Fatty's eyes glistened. 'I say, get it open, and we'll have a snack before we go on the ramble, what? I can do with a snack, old chap - especially if it's a cake.'

'Is there ever a time when you couldn't do with a snack?' asked Figgins. 'Well, we've got the goods - Listen!' A sound of rustling and brushing in the wood came to their ears. 'They're looking for us - I shouldn't wonder if they're feeling quite cross! Keep quiet - we don't want to punch their poor little noses if we can help it. That wouldn't be grateful, after they've taken the trouble to bring us a jolly old picnic.'

The New House trio chuckled. The sound of rustling and brushing could still be heard, but it was not close at hand. The School House fellows, evidently, were in search of the raiders; but equally evidently, they hadn't a clue. Thick trees and bushes surrounded and screened the New House Co., and the hunt might have gone on for hours unsuccessfully, so long as Figgins and Co. preserved a masterly silence and gave the enemy no guide.

It was tremendously amusing to Figgins and Co.

They were going to sit down in that shady little spot and enjoy the School House picnic, while the exasperated School House fellows hunted for them in vain. Nothing really could have amused Figgins and Co. more.

Figgins opened his penknife and cut the string of the bundle. He laid it in the grass and unwrapped it. Fatty Wynn watched him with eager eyes in happy expectation of tuck – jam-tarts, or a cake, or perhaps both! Fatty hardly breathed in his keen anticipation.

‘Oh!’ ejaculated Figgins, suddenly.

‘What ——!’ stuttered Kerr.

‘Wha-a-a-t ——!’ stammered Fatty Wynn.

Figgins, with an extraordinary expression on his face, held up the first article from the bundle. It was not a jam tart! It was not a cake! It was not, in fact, edible at all! It was a gym shoe!

He stared at it! Kerr stared at it! Fatty Wynn stared at it with bulging eyes. Nothing could have surprised them more.

‘My only hat!’ gasped Figgins. ‘Are they off their rockers? Fellows going on a picnic – with a gym shoe in the bundle – they couldn’t eat a gym shoe – even you couldn’t, Fatty ——’

‘Must be something else,’ said Kerr, blankly. ‘What ——’

There was something else, and Figgins pulled it out! It was another gym shoe! Then he turned the bundle inside out, to see at once what else it might contain. It contained something else. That was a pair of shorts.

‘Well, my only Aunt Sempronia!’ said Figgins. ‘Did you ever? It – it – it wasn’t a picnic after all.’

Kerr grinned. Obviously that bundle could not have been packed for a picnic in the wood. Figgins and Co. had taken that for granted, they had had no doubt of it, and indeed it had seemed probable enough. But it was only too clear that it was no picnic, that bundle

contained shorts and gym shoes, for what imaginable reason Figgins and Co. could not begin to guess — but there they were! The New House trio gazed at them, and the happy anticipation died out of Fatty Wynn's face, like the sun going behind a cloud.

'Sold!' mumbled Fatty, sadly.

'Sold, and no mistake!' said Figgins, blankly. 'But are those School House ticks batchy? What are they taking shorts and shoes for a walk for?'

'Goodness knows!' said Kerr. 'Still feeling like a snack, Fatty? Which do you prefer — a shoe or the shorts?'

Figgins laughed; but Fatty Wynn did not. Fatty gazed sorrowfully at that deceptive bundle. Fatty had banked on that picnic, he had almost tasted the tuck, and now ——! Fatty gazed at the gym shoes and the shorts, and looked, and felt, like Rachel of old, who mourned and could not be comforted.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

PAX!

‘THOSE ticks ——’  
‘Those fatheads!’

‘Those New House rotters!’

‘Blow them!’

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came to a halt in the green and shady wood. They were red with wrath and exertion. They had lost no time, after that sudden up-ending on the footpath, in pursuing the New House enemy. But Figgins and Co. had had minutes, and moments would have been enough. They had vanished as utterly as a Hunter of the Snark suddenly confronted by a Boojum! The deep and shady wood had swallowed them up. Had they continued on the run, perhaps some sound of rustling thickets or brushing bushes might have afforded a clue. But the chums of the Shell could guess that they had stopped – somewhere! Where, was a question they could not answer.

‘The fatheads!’ said Tom Merry. For once even the sunny-tempered Tom was vexed. ‘Such a fatheaded jape ——’

‘The blithering idiots!’ said Monty Lowther. ‘What on earth did they want to snoop our bundle for? If that’s Figgy’s idea of a joke ——’

‘We’ve got to get it back,’ said Manners, ‘or else cut back to the school. If we’re late ——’

‘We mustn’t be late!’ said Tom. ‘We’ve got to be on the spot when my name is called. Mr. Handler has my name down, and I may be first on the list for all I know. Bother that ass Figgins ——’

'Hallo, what's that?' exclaimed Lowther, as a sudden, shrill whistle came to their ears. The Shell fellows stared round in surprise.

'Can't be a signal from those New House asses,' said Manners. 'They don't want us to find them.'

'It's somebody ——!'

The whistle was repeated, loud and shrill. Then it came again, and yet again, echoing among the trees and thickets. Evidently it was a signal of some sort, though the Shell fellows could hardly suppose that the enemy were signalling to their pursuers. Whistle followed whistle, and then, faintly from the distance, came a voice:

'School House fatheads!'

Then came the whistle again.

'That's Figgins!' said Tom Merry, quite puzzled. 'He's letting us know where to look for him! The silly ass! Come on.'

The Shell fellows plunged through the wood in the direction of the distant whistle. It was repeated several times, and guided them without a pause. That it came from Figgins was certain; though why he was guiding them to the spot where he was to be found was rather a mystery. However, they were glad enough to be guided and they lost no time.

They came out into a dusky little glade at a run. Three New House juniors, and an unpacked bundle, met their eyes. Figgins and Kerr grinned at them, but Fatty Wynn gave them only a sad glance. Fatty had not quite recovered yet from the shock of discovering nothing eatable in that bundle.

'Oh, here you are!' said Figgins, affably. 'You can have your bundle. Pax!'

'You New House noodle ——!' hooted Monty Lowther.

'I've a jolly good mind ——!' began Tom Merry. However, he changed that jolly good mind on the spot

and began re-packing the bundle. That, after all, was what mattered. And Figgins had made it 'pax'.

'We've no use for it,' said Figgins, blandly. 'Even Fatty jibs at eating that lot! If it had been tuck you wouldn't have seen it again! But we don't want your shoes and your shorts! Take 'em and welcome.'

'Fathead!'

'But what on earth's the game?' asked Figgins, curiously. 'Do you School House fatheads generally go out for a walk carrying a bundle of clobber? Of course we thought it was a picnic ——'

'Oh!' said Tom Merry. He understood now the why and wherefore of that sudden raid on the footpath. 'You silly ass - nothing of the sort - It's not going to be a picnic for me - anything but!'

'But what ——?' asked Figgins. 'You're not taking that bundle to Wayland to pop at Uncle Solomons, I suppose ——'

Tom Merry laughed. His good humour was quite restored by the recovery of the bundle.

'Not exactly,' he said. 'But I shall have to change at Wayland; couldn't go into the ring as I am, you know.'

Figgins jumped.

'Into the ring!' he exclaimed.

'Tom's taking on the Game One, for that fiver!' explained Monty Lowther. 'Hence the bundle.'

'Well, of all the nerve!' exclaimed Figgins, indignantly. 'You jolly well know that I took on that man Jones last Saturday, and jolly well wished I hadn't. You School House fatheads fancy that a School House man can pull it off?'

'Check!' said Kerr.

'Nerve!' said Fatty Wynn.

Tom Merry laughed again.

'I don't feel any too sure about pulling it off, Figgy,' he said. 'I'm going to try hard, but goodness knows how

it will turn out. Wish me better luck than you had, old scout.'

Figgy's indignant face broke into a grin.

'Well, I do jolly well wish you luck,' he said. 'You're taking on a big order, Tommy. But go in and win!'

'Thanks, old boy,' said Tom. 'If I do pull it off, it will be a score for St. Jim's, and never mind which House. Come on, you chaps, we don't want to be late.'

'We'll jolly well come too,' said Figgins. 'By gum, I'd like to see a St. Jim's man stand up to that pug, and bag old Handler's fiver, which he doesn't expect to have to hand out in a dozen years. And we'll help to carry you home after Johnny Jones is through with you.'

'Pleased!' said Kerr, with a grin.

'Come on, then!' said Tom Merry, laughing.

And six juniors, instead of three, followed the footpath through the wood to Wayland. It was 'pax'; and for once, at least, the rivals of St. Jim's forgot House feuds; the New House comrades were as keen as Tom Merry's own chums to see him stand up successfully to the doughty Game One - if he could! The outcome, as none knew better than Tom himself, was very much on the knees of the gods! But it was a cheery party that arrived at Handler's Ring, in the High Street of the old Sussex town.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

LOOKING AFTER GUSSY!

'WE shall have to be vewy careful, deah boys,' said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

'Very!' said Blake, solemnly.

'Awfully!' said Herries.

'Fearfully!' said Dig.

All three of them looked as serious as owls. If the chums of Study No. 6 were not taking Arthur Augustus quite seriously, they at least appeared to be doing so. Gussy himself was extremely serious. It was not a light matter to disregard the authority of his house-master.

Neither was Gussy, as a rule, disposed to kick over the traces in such a way. He did not in the least share his relative Cardew's taste for making game of rules and regulations. Disregard of proper authority was, in Gussy's opinion, bad form – very bad form. Only in a case of urgency could Gussy have thought of it. The case was urgent now – even more urgent than his visit to his tailor the previous week! Reluctantly, but resolutely, Arthur Augustus had made up his mind to pass Railton by like the wind that he regarded not. It had to be!

'You see, Wailton would be watty,' he explained to his chums. 'He has no ideah how important it is, as he knows nothin' about Wally bein' in a scwape, and this bein' the only way out. As Wally's eldah bwothah, I am bound to see him thwough, but I cannot explain all that to Wailton. We must be vewy careful, deah boys, that Wailton does not have a suspish that I have been at Handlah's Wing at Wayland to-day.'



'He won't!' assured Blake, and Herries and Dig, with difficulty, suppressed a grin. As three members of Study No. 6 were quite determined that the fourth member should not go anywhere near Wayland that day, and had their plans to that end all cut and dried, it was fairly certain that Railton would never know that Gussy had been at Handler's Ring! Blake felt that he could give Gussy absolute assurance on that point.

'We had bettah stwoll out in a quite casual mannah,' said Arthur Augustus. 'Just as if we were goin' for a wamble in the woods, you know.'

'Just!' agreed Blake.

'When we weach the stile, we can cut into the footpath, and twot!' added Arthur Augustus.

Blake shook his head. That woodland footpath now being within school bounds again, there was really no reason why the juniors should not walk through the wood to Wayland: no reason but one! That one reason was, that Arthur Augustus was scheduled to arrive at quite another place! But it was quite a powerful reason.

'No!' said Blake, very thoughtfully. 'Better take the train from Rylcombe, I think, Gussy. We settled that, you know.'

'Yaas, but that was befoah the footpath was put in bounds again,' said Arthur Augustus. 'What is the mattah with walkin' thwough the wood, Blake?'

'Suppose Railton happened to be taking a walk in that direction?' suggested Herries. 'Might run into him.'

'Bai Jove! So we might!' said Gussy, unsuspectingly. 'It would be wathah awkward to wun into Wailton, on our way to Wayland. He might guess where we were goin'. Wailton is wathah keen. As a mattah of fact, deah boys,' said Arthur Augustus, sadly, 'I wegwet vevy much that it is stwictly necessary for me to diswegard Wailton in this mattah. It might look like diswespect, if it came out, and diswespect to a House beak is fwightful bad form.'

'Not to mention a whopping from the Head!' said Dig.

'Yaas, that would be vewy unpleasant, too,' assented Arthur Augustus. 'I should vewy much dislike Wailton marchin' me in to Dr. Holmes. We shall have to be vewy careful indeed. Wailton must not have a suspish.'

'Not the ghost of one!' said Blake.

'We're going to take care that Railton won't know you've been anywhere near Wayland this afternoon, Gussy,' assured Herries.

'Every care!' said Dig, with a nod.

'All wight, deah boys. We may as well get off, then,' said Arthur Augustus. 'Mind you look quite casual, just as if we were goin' for a wamble, and not thinkin' about Handlah's Wing at all.'

It was easy for the three to carry out that instruction; for as a matter of fact they were not thinking about Handler's Ring at all, but about the non-stop to Ridgate, into which Gussy was to be safely landed to keep him out of mischief. Happily unaware of that, the swell of St. Jim's walked down to the gates with his comrades. Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, was speaking to Taggles, at the door of his lodge, and he glanced round at the four juniors, and turned to them.

'D'Arcy!' he called.

'Oh, bai Jove!' murmured Arthur Augustus. For the first time it occurred to his noble brain that the house-master might have mentioned the matter to some of the prefects.

Kildare scanned him.

'Going out what?' he asked.

'Yaas, Kildare,' faltered Arthur Augustus.

'Don't forget that Wayland is out of bounds for you to-day,' said Kildare. 'Order from Railton, as I think you know.'

Arthur Augustus did not reply to that. But Jack Blake was prompt with a reply.

'That's all right, Kildare,' he said. 'We're looking after D'Arcy this afternoon, and we won't let him out of our sight.'

Kildare nodded, and the juniors walked on. Out of gates, and out of hearing, Arthur Augustus turned to Blake with a very severe look.

'Weally, Blake, I am surprised,' he said.

'Eh? What's biting you now?' asked Blake.

'Nothin' is bitin' me, you ass! But I am weally surprised at what you said to Kildare. I twust, Blake, that you are not followin' the example of Cardew and Wacke and Cwooke and such fellows, thinkin' that a fellow can tell woppahs to a prefect?'

'Who's telling whoppers?' asked Blake.

'I feah that it is vevy much like it,' said Arthur Augustus. 'You certainly gave Kildare a vevy w'ong impwession, at least.'

'I said we were looking after you, and wouldn't let you out of our sight,' said Blake. 'Wasn't that the frozen truth?'

'Yaas, but it gave Kildare the impwession that you were goin' to see that I did not go to Wayland.'

'Think so?' asked Blake, blandly.

'I do not see how Kildare could have supposed anythin' else, fwom what you said, Blake. He must certainly have had the impwession that you fellows were goin' to see that I did not go to Wayland, and I am afwaid that that is the impwession you intended to give him!' said Arthur Augustus. 'I am suah you meant well, deah boy, but I must wemark that it was sailin' vevy neah the wind, if it was not exactly untwuthful. A fellow cannot be too particulah in these mattahs, Blake! Pway wemembah that, deah boy.'

Having delivered this little homily, Arthur Augustus marched on down the lane. His friends exchanged a wink as they followed him. Arthur Augustus, as yet

happily unaware of their kindly intentions, was also happily unaware that Blake's assurance to Kildare was well-founded. That was a discovery that Gussy had yet to make.

They walked on to Rylcombe. As they arrived at the railway station — their arrival at that spot carefully timed by Gussy's comrades — Blake gave a sudden, dramatic start.

'By gum! Our train's in!' he exclaimed. 'Dash for it.'

'Bai Jove! Is that our twain ——?'

'Run for it!' exclaimed Herries.

'Scram!' gasped Digby.

They rushed. The bare thought of losing the train for Wayland, and arriving too late to take up the challenge of the Game One, was more than enough to make Arthur Augustus stamp on the gas. Blake and Herries and Digby panted into the station, and Arthur Augustus, for once forgetful of the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere, panted along with them.

'The tickets ——!' he gasped.

'Cut on — I'll get the tickets!' shouted Blake. 'You mustn't lose that train, Gussy — cut on.'

'Yaas, wathah!'

Arthur Augustus cut on. Three juniors ran on the platform, where the train was at a standstill on the line. Herries dragged open a carriage door.

'Jump in, Gussy.'

Arthur Augustus jumped in.

Herries and Dig followed him. Arthur Augustus sat down: Herries and Dig crammed in the doorway. They did not want Arthur Augustus to notice that the station clock indicated 2.20, or he might have remembered that the Wayland train was booked for 2.30. Blake came racing across the platform, tickets in hand.

'Here you are, old man!' shouted Herries.

Blake came up panting.

'Caught it!' he gasped.

'Just!' said Digby.

They made room in the doorway, and Blake plunged in, and shut the door. Arthur Augustus, who was sitting sedately polishing his eyeglass, jammed it in his eye as the engine shrieked and the train started.

'Bai Jove! That was wathah a wush!' he remarked.

'But we've done it,' said Blake.

'Yaas, wathah! That's all wight! But we wan it wathah close,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I had no ideah that it was near half-past two! I certainly thought we had a good many minutes to spare. Howevah, we have caught the twain, so that is all wight.'

'Right as rain,' said Blake.

'Couldn't be righter!' grinned Dig.

'All serene,' said Herries.

The train roared out of Rylcombe. It was not till it had passed through a couple of country stations without stopping, that Arthur Augustus sat up and took notice, as it were.

'Bai Jove! Doesn't this twain stop befoah Wayland, you fellows?' he asked. 'So fah as I wemembah, these local twains stop at all the stations. But this one is not stoopin'.'

'Odd!' said Blake.

'Very!' said Dig.

'I wonder why!' remarked Herries.

'They keep on makin' changes in the twains,' said Arthur Augustus. 'Bai Jove! There goes another station - Gweenhill! I am suah this twain always used to stop at Gweenhill. Howevah, I suppose it will stop at Wayland all wight, as it is a market town - they are bound to stop there.'

'I wonder!' murmured Blake.

Arthur Augustus looked from the window. He was welcome to look from the window now, in a non-stop

bound for Ridgate-on-Sea. A puzzled look came over his face, as he failed to pick up familiar landmarks. Another station was passed, and another. Then, at length, a doubt crept into the mind of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

'Bai Jove!' he exclaimed.

'Anything up?' asked Blake, blandly.

'You uttah ass ——!'

'What?'

'We are in the w'ong twain!' exclaimed Arthur Augustus, excitedly. 'This twain is not goin' to Wayland at all!'

'Bless my soul!' said Blake.

'There is nothin' whatevah familiah in the landscape. We are goin' nowhah neah Wayland ——'

'My dear chap ——!'

'I wepeat that we are in the w'ong twain,' howled Arthur Augustus. 'We are not goin' to Wayland - goodness knows where we are goin'. You wushed for the w'ong twain, Blake.'

'Did I?' gasped Blake.

'Oh, you uttah ass! Where on earth shall we awwive, and when?' stuttered Arthur Augustus, in utter dismay. 'We shall be late - why, the show at Handlah's Wing will be ovah - oh, cwikey! You uttah asses, wushin' like that for the w'ong twain! This is not the twain for Wayland. Have you any ideah what twain it is, Blake, you ass?'

'If it isn't the train for Wayland ——'

'I wepeat that it is nothin' of the sort.'

'Then it must be the non-stop for Ridgate ——'

'Oh, cwikey!'

'Then we're booked for an afternoon at the jolly old seaside,' said Digby. 'Might meet some of the Carcroft chaps ——'

'Bothah the Carcwoft chaps!' shrieked Arthur Augustus.

'How am I goin' to box that man Jones, when this wotten twain is taking me ten miles fwom Wayland, and we cannot get back till the show is ovah?'

Blake and Herries and Digby failed to find an answer to that question. Their impression was that Arthur Augustus wasn't going to box that man Jones! And Arthur Augustus, in a state of mingled wrath and dismay and reproach, had to share that impression, as the non-stop roared on to Ridgate, leaving Wayland, and Handler's Ring, and Johnny Jones the Game One, miles and miles behind!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

### AT HANDLER'S RING!

**J**OHNNY JONES gave a little jump, and stared.  
'You!' he exclaimed.

Tom Merry smiled.

Evidently, the Game One was surprised to see him, in the dressing-room at Handler's Ring. Tom was changing, with the assistance of Manners and Lowther, when the Game One strolled in; no doubt to give his coming opponents the once-over before the show began.

The Game One looked like having a busy time in the ring, for in addition to Tom Merry, the youngest in the collection, there were five others who had taken up the challenge. They were local boxers from Wayland, Rylcome and Abbotsford, who were going to try their luck in standing up for three rounds against the Game One, and bagging that five-pound note which Mr. Handler had had on offer for so long. Many friends in the audience had come to see them do it; there was no doubt that Mr. Handler had hit upon a publicity stunt that drew good 'houses' to the Ring. Every Wednesday and Saturday there was a crowd at the Ring and, so far, at least, it had cost Mr. Handler nothing in five-pound notes. The Game One had polished off all his opponents without fail.

Truth to tell, it was rather easy work to Johnny Jones, and he had no anticipation whatever of any local boxer lasting three rounds. In fact being a good-tempered, good-natured fellow, he generally let them off lightly, or as lightly as he could, though sometimes he was



driven to hit, and hit hard, as in the case of the unlucky Figgins. It was business with the Game One, and he could not afford to lose.

He glanced over the local champions in the dressing-room, with a faint smile of amusement on his rugged good-tempered face. But his expression changed as he saw Tom Merry among them. He came over to the St. Jim's juniors.

'You!' he repeated, staring.

'Little me!' assented Tom Merry.

'Suffering cats!' said Johnny Jones. 'You're not taking me on in the ring, young gentleman.'

'Just that!' said Tom. 'I believe I'm last on the list. I hope you'll be a bit tired by that time, Mr. Jones.'

The Game One chuckled.

'Wash it out,' he said. 'Look here, laddie, you did me a good turn – a thumping good turn – on Saturday. If you hadn't come up when you did, those hooligans would have put paid to my boxing for a good while to come. You are a plucky kid, and you did me a good turn – and – and – and I don't want to make a picture-book of your good-looking face, see?'

Tom Merry laughed.

'I hope your fin is okay again now,' he said.

Johnny Jones stretched his right arm.

'Bit of a twinge left,' he answered. 'But that doesn't cramp my style, young 'un. Do you think you have an earthly?'

'I hope so.'

'I'd rather you washed it out,' said Johnny. 'I'd just hate to have to punch you hard, kid.'

'I think I should hate it, too, after what I've seen of your punching,' said Tom. 'But it's all in the game, Mr. Jones. I've taken it on, and I'm standing up to it.'

Johnny's eye ran over the sturdy schoolboy appraisingly.

'You look fit,' he said. 'Fit enough, and a good man

for your age. But ——' He shook his head. 'after the good turn you did me, I'd rather not have to spoil your good looks. You see,' went on Johnny, half-apologetically, 'this is business here – if you tackle me, I've got to let you have it – I couldn't let you last through the three rounds, and cost Mr. Handler a fiver; that wouldn't be playing the game.'

'That's the last thing I'd want you to do,' said Tom. 'My dear chap, I don't want any favours. I want a fair scrap, all out, and if I can't stick the three rounds, I can take what is coming to me. Don't you think for a minute of pulling your punches – I shan't pull mine, I give you my word. I'm going to hit you as jolly hard as I jolly well can, and get through those three rounds if I've got it in me.'

Johnny Jones chuckled.

'That's understood, then,' he said. 'As a friend, I tip you to look out for my left. It comes rather sudden, and rather hard, if you're not looking out.'

'Thanks for the tip,' said Tom, laughing. 'I'm going to give you all the trouble I can, Mr. Jones.'

'Do!' grinned Johnny; and he strolled away, leaving Tom putting on his gym shoes.

'Decent chap,' said Manners. 'But he means business, Tom. If you stick it out, he's got to hit, and we know how hard he hits. If you stopped one or two like those hooligans got in the wood last Saturday ——!' Manners paused. He did not want to discourage his chum, but he was anxious. He could not help remembering what George Figgins had looked like after taking on the Game One.

'I'll do my best not to stop them,' said Tom, cheerfully. 'I can stand a jolt or two, I hope, if they come my way.'

'Last on the list!' said Lowther. He glanced round the room. 'That's to the good, so far as it goes. One or two of those chaps look as if they could put up a spot of scrapping'.

'Every little helps,' said Manners. 'But ——'

'But what?' asked Tom.

'Um!' said Manners. 'I fancy Handler's put you last on the list, Tom, because you're only a schoolboy, and — and ——'

'And easiest of the whole batch for the Game One to knock out, even if he's a bit tired, what?' asked Tom, laughing.

'Well, yes. All the same, it's so much to the good,' said Manners. 'You've got a chance, Tom, at least.'

'I'll make the most of it,' said Tom.

'Nil desperandum!' said Monty Lowther. 'By gum, it will be topping if you pull it off, Tom. By the way, I wonder where old Gussy is all this while. Blake caught that train, I suppose.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

Monty Lowther glanced out at the doorway. There was a buzz from a crowded house. Figgins and Co. sat in a front row. Manners went to join them, Lowther was to act as Tom's second. Mr. Handler, plump and rosy, was in the roped ring, from which coign of vantage he made his usual announcement that the Game One was prepared to take on all comers, with a prize of a £5 note for any champion who succeeded in standing up to him for three rounds. It was open to any member of the audience to add himself to the list, if he liked. The Game One, in his corner, grinned. He had already half a dozen 'scraps' on his hands, but was prepared to make it a dozen, if required. However, it seemed that all the available champions had already given in their names.

'They're just going to begin, Tom,' said Monty Lowther. He gave his chum a rather anxious look. 'Feeling fit?'

'Top hole!' said Tom, with a smile.

'You'll see how the others get through, at any rate,' said Lowther. 'That chap Jones looks as if he expects to

polish them off one after another as easy as falling off a form.'

'He usually does, I believe,' said Tom. 'Hallo, they're calling for the first man!'

'H. Smith!' called out Mr. Handler.

H. Smith was a rather burly young waggoner from Abbotsford. He stepped quite briskly into the ring, and there was a shout of encouragement from his friends in the crowd.

'Go it, Harry!'

'Stick it, Harry.'

Harry did his best to 'stick' it. But the light-footed Game One danced round him, putting in a punch wherever he wanted to, and Tom Merry could see that it was only by Johnny's leave, as it were, that H. Smith survived the first round. In the second, Mr. Handler, who acted as referee, counted him out.

Another and another name was called; and local champion after local champion mounted into the ring, only to meet a similar fate. Only one of them lasted for a third round, but did not get through it; Johnny Jones's left put paid suddenly to him, and he had to be helped out of the ring. And after putting 'paid' to five opponents, one after another, Johnny Jones still looked as fresh as paint.

'T. Merry!'

It was the last name on the list. Tom Merry drew a deep, deep breath. His turn had come, and he was for it now. Monty Lowther gave him an encouraging tap on the shoulder.

'Go in and win, old chap!' he whispered.

Tom Merry nodded. All eyes in the crowded house were fixed on him, as he stepped into the roped ring. Some of the audience grinned, and some shrugged their shoulders. On his looks, it could be seen that Tom was a schoolboy; and after what they had already seen, it was

evident that the patrons of Handler's Ring did not expect him to last long. But there was, perhaps, more in the St. Jim's junior than met the eye. At all events, he was perfectly cool, his step light and springy, his eyes steady. Mr. Handler was smiling. He, too, evidently, did not expect the schoolboy to last long, and if he had felt any doubts before as to the possible destination of the £5 note in his wallet, he did not feel any now. Never, in fact, had Mr. Handler's £5 note seemed to him safer. One round, and one punch, was, in Mr. Handler's opinion, what was coming – unless the Game One preferred to amuse the audience by letting the schoolboy run on for a while. That smile on Mr. Handler's plump face rather nettled Tom Merry. He was going to surprise the proprietor of Handler's Ring, if he could.

Johnny Jones gave him a cheery grin. But cheery and friendly as he was, quite amicably disposed towards the schoolboy who had come to his aid when aid was badly needed, Johnny was going to hit as hard as was necessary. no opponent was going to survive those three rounds, if the Game One could help it.

The boxers touched gloves.

'Time!'

And then it came, and Tom Merry of St. Jim's was in the toughest scrap of his young life.

## CHAPTER THIRTY

### FIST TO FIST!

**T**OM MERRY did not quite know what happened. For several seconds, the Game One had been circling round him, almost dancing on his light toes, Tom watching him like a cat. Then it came. The good-natured boxer had told Tom to look out for his left, and Tom was looking out for it. But he did not even see it when it jolted on his chin, landing rather like the kick of a mule. All Tom knew was that he was suddenly on his back, with the Game One grinning down at him, and a feeling as if his chin was no longer there. He lay and panted.

Mr. Handler smiled at his watch.

'One, two, three ——!' he counted.

He was interrupted by Tom Merry bounding to his feet somewhat like an india-rubber ball. Mr. Handler had not expected that. Neither, apparently, had the Game One, for he was slow to guard as Tom came at him the instant he was on his feet. Bang, went Tom's left into a surprised face — bang went his right, and the Game One tottered back on his heels, amid an excited buzz from the people in front. There was a yell from Figgins.

'Good old Tommy! Back up, St. Jim's!'

For a second it looked as if the Game One would go over. But a swift backward spring saved him. Tom did not follow him up. There was an ache in his chin that could almost have been cut with a knife. His come-back had been swift and effective, but he was a little dizzy,

and quite content to keep the Game One at arm's length if he could.

There was a long minute of circling, both watchful as cats, and when the Game One came in again Tom side-stepped and dodged him, and again they circled. And then —

‘Time!’

Monty Lowther almost hugged Tom, as he came back to his corner. He towelled his heated face. Tom had survived the first round, at all events, which certainly few of the spectators had expected him to do — least of all Mr. Handler. And he had landed at least two good ones, which all the Game One's previous opponents had failed to do. Very, very nearly had he floored the Game One, though not quite. And even if his chin felt as if a mule had kicked it, he was still fresh, and his wind sound.

‘Good man!’ breathed Lowther. ‘You're standing up to him a treat, Tom, old boy! That's one round, at any rate.’

Tom nodded and smiled, without speaking. He was saving all his breath.

‘Only two more!’ added Lowther, hopefully.

Tom chuckled. ‘Only’ two more was a large order. Whether he was good for them, he simply did not know. But he knew that he was going to stand up while a kick remained in him.

The bell rang.

‘Time!’

Tom Merry stepped up briskly at the word. Probably the Game One had expected that jolt on the chin to finish him; he really did not want to have to deliver more punches if he could help it. But he had found out that that was a mistake; his opponent, schoolboy as he was, was not to be so easily and briefly finished. The Game One realised that he had to exert himself a little, to put paid to that schoolboy! He was prepared to do so

in the second round, disinclined as he was to hand out hard punishment to a lad he liked. But business was business: and it was Johnny's business to take care of Mr. Handler's £5 note. There was a hint of grimness in his rugged face, as he faced Tom for the second round. The Game One was on his mettle, now.

Tom Merry's friends looked on breathlessly. They saw the pugilist come in with left and right, and they could hardly believe that Tom, strong and sturdy and wary as he was, could take it.

But Tom did take it. A jarring jolt on his cheek, something that seemed like a cannon-shot on his jaw, he took without flinching, and then, as the Game One came in with a left swing, he saw his chance, and he took that, too – he moved like lightning and his gloved fist got home – this time it was Johnny's chin that stopped the kick of a mule. And there was a roar in the crowded house as Johnny went over backwards, strove in vain for his balance, and crashed.

'Man down!' shrieked Figgins. He waved his cap wildly. Figgy forgot all about his own defeat at the Game One's hands. Figgy fairly chirruped with glee. Kerr and Wynn joined in the roar of applause from the audience. Manners yelled at the top of his voice.

Johnny Jones clambered to his feet.

His fall had surprised the crowd, but it had surprised Johnny more than anyone else. He blinked at Tom Merry, as if hardly able to believe that it was the schoolboy who had landed him on his back.

But Tom gave him no time for blinking, or for wondering how it could possibly have happened. Tom came at him like a tiger, with eyes glinting, and fists lashing, and to his own amazement, the Game One found himself backing and defending, too groggy from the crash to be able, for the moment, to take the offensive.

'Good old Tommy!'



‘Good old St. Jim’s!’

‘Tap him, Tommy!’

‘Bravo!’

The St. Jim’s juniors were yelling, in wild excitement. The whole audience were in a buzz, many on their feet, all excited by the unlooked-for turn of events in the roped ring. Mr. Handler doubted his vision, as he saw his boxer backing and circling and winding, stalling off his boyish assailant. For the first time since that publicity stunt had started, Mr. Handler felt that that £5 note was not so safe, after all, in his wallet. For amazing as it was, the schoolboy for the moment, had the upper hand, and the ‘pug’ was on the defensive all the time. The audience were in a roar.

There was a snap from the bell.

‘Time!’

Never before, in that series of boxing bouts at the Ring, had Johnny Jones been particularly glad to hear the call of time. But he was glad now. It was actually a relief to the Game One to get into his corner.

‘Tom, old man!’ Monty Lowther gurgled with glee. ‘Tom, old pippin!’ He sponged Tom’s blazing face. ‘Tom, old scout, you’re the jolly old goods! Only one more to come – and you’re good for it – hear me? You’re going to pull this off, Tom! You’re going to stick it out for another round, Tom, and we’re going to walk home with that fiver! Glory be!’

Tom Merry hoped that Monty had it right. He did not feel so confident himself – only confident that he was going on till he dropped. But he knew that the Game One would be going all out, in the third and final round, and that it would be the toughest of tough going. Tough as he knew it was going to be, he was going to face it, and fight to a finish; and no fellow could do more.

‘Time!’

‘Go in and win, Tommy!’ came a yell from Figgins.

Tom went in, whether to win or not. There was no smile on Mr. Handler's face now, and he had given his champion one or two expressive looks. Mr. Handler really felt as if that £5 note was getting loose in his wallet. There was quite unexpected stuff in that surprising schoolboy. Mr. Handler was quite anxious to see the K.O. administered.

Johnny Jones was equally keen to administer it. He simply could not let the schoolboy get away with this, if he could help it. In that round the Game One was going all out; for if Tom pulled through that round, the thing was done. He was not going to pull through it, the Game One was grimly determined. The rugged face was quite grim now. The Game One was going to finish this, and the schoolboy was going to receive that for which he had asked!

The Game One came on hard. His gloves seemed to flash like lightning. Tom was driven round the ring, under tap, tap, tap, tap, till it seemed to him that Johnny Jones was tapping as often and as hard as he liked. And they were hard taps – very hard taps! They drove Tom into a corner, but when it looked like the finish he side-stepped and circled, and had the free ring again, and there was a roar from the crowd.

'Good for the little 'un!'

'Good old St. Jim's!' roared Figgins. Figgy, by that time, did not care to which House the champion belonged; he had almost forgotten that there were two Houses at St. Jim's, and that they were deadly rivals. Figgins just roared, 'Good old St. Jim's! Play up, School!'

That yell from Figgins helped to give Tom heart; and he needed it. For the Game One was pressing him hard, handing out severe punishment, and how he stood up to that punishment Tom hardly knew. But he did stand up to it. Again and again he succeeded in disengaging;

again and again the Game One closed in with those deadly jabs. Monty Lowther watched with his heart in his eyes; Manners, sitting with Figgins and Co., hardly breathed. Could their chum, sturdy as he was, plucky as he was, resolute as he was, stand up through that?

He could and did.

And then came Tom's chance again; the Game One pressing too close, captured a jolt under the jaw that made him reel. Tom came on, desperately, hitting for all he knew, and a right-hand drive intended for the Game One's chest was caught on Johnny's arm – and a spasm of pain crossed the boxer's face. And from that moment only his left came into play. Probably the cosh on Saturday had left more than a 'twinge' in the Game One's good right arm. He had not cared for it, or regarded it, in the encounters that had gone before, but he had to regard it now, with the toughest of all the batch, schoolboy as he was, hitting hard and hitting often. His left was deadly, but his right let him down, and it was perhaps due to that circumstance that Tom Merry lived through that round.

For he did live through it. Johnny pressed on again, his left moving like lightning, and coming home to roost again and again. Tom Merry rocked on his feet, but he fought back gamely while he rocked, his face set, eyes glinting, concentrated on holding on, determined to hold on – and he held on. It seemed to him that that round had lasted not minutes, but hours – the seconds seemed to crawl – it was endless, interminable – and while the seconds crawled, that grim rugged face loomed before him, and that flashing left drove in jolt after jolt. Would it never end?

His knees sagged, but he fought on. Was that the tang of the bell at last?

It was!

The bell went, and Tom Merry was still on his feet,

still standing up to it! The third round was over. Another few seconds, and Tom would have been down and out – flesh and blood could do no more. But the tang of the bell came in time; the round was over. Tom staggered, but found his balance again, and even contrived to grin back at the Game One, who was grinning at him ruefully. Mr. Handler also looked rueful, but he was not grinning; probably he was thinking of that fiver.

‘Bravo!’

‘Good for the kid!’

‘Good old St. Jim’s!’

‘Hurray!’

The whole house was roaring. Johnny Jones was popular in Wayland, but his long list of victories over local champions made the whole crowd rejoice that he had failed to pull it off, for once, against local talent: a local lad, and he a schoolboy, had stood up to him, and beaten him to it; and Handler’s Ring fairly shook with applause.

Monty Lowther threw an arm round Tom’s shoulders and led him away. Monty was beaming. Tom was dizzy, breathless, with more pains and aches than he could have counted. But his heart was light.

‘Feel pretty bad?’ whispered Lowther.

‘Rotten!’ said Tom, frankly.

‘But you’ve done it, old boy.’

‘Just!’ said Tom.

‘Three rounds – against the Game One! My hat! Tom, old man, you’d have licked him in a fourth,’ said Lowther, exuberantly.

Tom chuckled breathlessly.

‘Thank goodness there wasn’t a fourth! I don’t know how I got through the third! But – I have!’

He had! On that point there was no doubt, no probable possible shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever! He was feeling rather as if he had been under a lorry,

but he did not care. Amid tremendous applause, Mr. Handler, putting a sporting face on it, presented him with a crumpled and rather greasy £5 note, and he shook hands cordially with the Game One, and his friends marched him away with cheers ringing in their ears as they went.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

### ALL SERENE!

‘**B**AI Jove!’

Arthur Augustus D’Arcy gazed at Tom Merry.

It was tea time when Blake and Co. came up to Study No. 6 in the Fourth. They had returned from their seaside excursion: Blake and Herries and Dig quite satisfied with the way it had gone; Arthur Augustus D’Arcy the very reverse of satisfied. For once, indeed, Arthur Augustus’s serene temper was cross – distinctly cross.

But he forgot that he was cross, as he gazed at Tom Merry. Three Shell fellows were in Study No. 6, apparently waiting for the proprietors of that celebrated study to come in. And Tom Merry’s usually good-looking face did not appear quite so good-looking as usual. No fellow could have stood up to the Game One for three rounds, without taking home with him some very visible signs of his exploit.

‘Bai Jove!’ repeated Arthur Augustus. ‘Where did you get that nose, Tom Mewwy?’

Tom laughed.

‘Won it in a raffle,’ he answered.

‘Weally, Tom Mewwy ——’

‘And where did you get that eye?’ asked Blake, staring. Study No. 6 were unaware, as yet, of what Tom Merry and Co. had planned for that afternoon. But they could see that Tom had been through it, somewhere.

‘Won it in another raffle,’ answered Tom.

‘And that chin?’ said Herries.

'And that ear?' said Digby.

Tom Merry rubbed his nose, his eye, his chin and his ear. Every one of them felt a distinct reminiscence of the Game One and his left.

'Scrapping with the New House?' asked Blake.

'No fear.'

'Well, you look as if you'd been through a mangle,' said Blake. 'Gussy might have looked the same, and more so, only he caught the wrong train this afternoon, and got to Ridgate instead of Wayland.'

'Weally, Blake ——'

'You know, Gussy!' said Herries. 'If there's a wrong train about, Gussy's the man to jump into it.'

'Weally, Hewwies ——'

'Gussy all over!' said Digby.

'Weally, Dig ——'

The 'Terrible Three' chuckled. As Arthur Augustus had not turned up at Handler's Ring that afternoon, they had guessed that Blake and Co. had steered him away successfully, and landed him at Ridgate as per programme. Arthur Augustus, luckily, was unaware that he had been steered.

'Would you fellows believe it?' said Arthur Augustus. 'These silly asses wushed for the twain, and it was the w'ong twain ——'

'Not really?' exclaimed Monty Lowther.

'Yaas, wathah! Of course I thought it was the wight twain, when they wushed for it, and I wushed too!' said Arthur Augustus. 'Fancy thwee fellows bein' such uttah asses as to wush for the w'ong twain!'

'Fancy!' said Manners.

'It has knocked evewythin' out,' said Arthur Augustus. 'I was landed at Widgate, and nevah got anywhah neah Handlah's Wing. It would have been no good goin' there latah, as the show was ovah. It uttably washed out my plan of boxin' the Game One and baggin' that £5

note. Now what I am goin' to do about Wally, I simply do not know.'

Arthur Augustus shook his head sadly.

'You see, it was the last wesource,' he said. 'I have pwomised Cutts, honah bwight, that he will be paid to-day. Now I shall have to ask him to wait till Satah-day - I cannot go ovah to Wayland for that fivah till Satahday. It is vevy upsettin' - and all ththrough those silly asses wushin' for the w'ong twain, and makin' a fellow wush with them.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'I weally fail to see any weason for mcwwiment,' said Arthur Augustus, sternly. 'It is fwightfully awkward.'

'Bit of luck for you that we got that wrong train,' said Blake.

'Weally, Blake ——'

'Didn't Kildare spot us when we came in, and ask us where we'd been!' said Blake. 'Lucky we were able to tell him that we'd been to Ridgate for a sniff of the briny! If we'd been to Wayland, you'd be up before the Head now.'

'But I should have seen Wally ththrough. Blake, and that is what mattahs.'

'How's that?' asked Tom Merry.

'I was goin' to box the Game One, Tom Mewwy, and pick up that £5 note offahed by Mr. Handlah for standin' up to him for thwee wounds ——'

'I can sort of see you doing it!' grinned Monty Lowther.

'Weally, Lowthah ——'

'But where have you fellows been?' asked Blake. 'I can see that you've been up to something - especially Tommy.'

'Oh, we've been over to Wayland,' said Tom. 'We thought we'd give them a look in at the Ring. That chap Jones is worth seeing, with the gloves on.'



'I suppose he knocked out all takers, as usual!' asked Blake.

'All but one.'

'Bai Jove!' Arthur Augustus was interested at once. 'Has a chap turned up at last that can stand up to the Game One for thwee wounds?'

'Yes, one of them pulled through,' answered Tom, and Manners and Lowther chuckled. 'It was a close fit, but he just made it.'

'Anybody we know?' asked Blake.

'Oh, yes.'

'You don't mean a St. Jim's man?' exclaimed Herries.

'As it happens, yes.'

'Bai Jove! Who was it, then?' exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

'Little me,' grinned Tom.

'Eh?'

'What?'

'Which?'

'Weally, Tom Mewwy ——!'

Study No. 6 all exclaimed together. They all stared at Tom. It dawned on them why his face bore those signs of severe combat.

'You!' gasped Blake.

'Oh, cwumbs! Gwattahs, deah boy,' said Arthur Augustus. 'You weally and twuly stood up to that boxah for thwee wounds?'

'Sort of.'

'Gwattahs! But that makes it all the more wotten for you fellows to have wushed me into the w'ong twain!' exclaimed Arthur Augustus, hotly. 'You can see now that it would have been all wight if I had tackled Jones, as Tom Mewwy has pulled it off ——'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Weally, you fellows ——'

'Okay, Gussy,' said Tom Merry, laughing. 'It's all

right now, and Wally is out of the wood. Look here!' Tom drew a rather crumpled flimsy slip of paper from his pocket. 'All serene, old chap! Catch!'

Arthur Augustus caught it as Tom tossed it to him. He stood staring at a £5 note in his hand. He stared at the banknote, then at Tom Merry, and then at the banknote again.

'Bai Jove!' he said.

'Cut off and clear it up with Cutts!' said Tom. 'All serene, Gussy - that's why I took the Game One on - I didn't want these decorations, you know. But there's the fiver, and it's all serene.'

'Bai Jove! That's fwightfully decent of you, Tom Mewwy,' said Arthur Augustus, gratefully. 'I shall wegard this as a loan - a vevy welcome loan - and squah for it when the governah shells out next time. My deah chap, it was fwightfully decent of you, though I wathah wish it had been left to me to put paid to Johnny Jones and pick up the fivah. But I couldn't, when those silly asses wushed me into the w'ong twain ——'

'That's the only reason you couldn't!' said Monty Lowther, gravely.

'Yaas, wathah.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Weally, you fellows ——'

'Cut off to Cutts, Gussy,' said Tom Merry, laughing. 'Never mind who bagged the fiver, now it's bagged: that's the chief thing.'

'Yaas, that is vevy twue!' agreed Arthur Augustus; and he promptly cut off to settle with Cutts, leaving six fellows in the study, laughing.

ALSO WRITTEN BY

**Frank Richards**



JACK'S THE LAD

Jack Nobody – an orphan lad – escapes from the evil pedlar who has brought him up. Betrayed by Lord Cortolvin's promises, he is recaptured. He soon escapes again and finds happiness working in Pimper's Circus. His further adventures are related in *Jack of the Circus*.

JACK OF THE CIRCUS

Although now surrounded by able friends, Lord Cortolvin's malice still pursues Jack Nobody. The peer's valet plots to have Jack dismissed with ignominy from the safety of the circus and delivered once again into the custody of Bill Hatchet, the pedlar from whom he escaped in *Jack's the Lad*.

TOM MERRY AND CO:  
CARAVANNERS

The well-known members of St. Jim's School take a holiday in a caravan, during which they meet Billy Bunter of Greyfriars. A suspicious character persistently attempts to steal the 'van until foiled by a clever scheme.

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## Frank Richards—

has been delighting youthful readers ever since he wrote his first published story at the age of 17. He is probably best remembered as the author of the Tom Merry Series in the *Gem*, and the Greyfriars stories in the *Magnet*. Both of these magazines were started by the Harmsworths in 1908.

From then until they ceased publication at the beginning of the last War, he wrote every issue for both these magazines, using the *nom-de-plume* of Martin Clifford in the *Gem*. During this time he wandered widely over western Europe, living abroad for long periods, but regularly turning out his daily quota of copy.

Despite the disappearance of these two magazines and the handicap of failing sight, he still worked regularly for three hours every day, finding little difficulty in publishing his vast output. He has, for instance, written the stories in *Raymond Glendenning's Book of Sport for Boys* for many years. However, since 1939 he has mainly concentrated on writing books, and in 1950 produced the first volume of a series featuring a new character, Jack Nobody.

He also broke new ground with a Radio play and gave several broadcast talks. Richards' youthful approach is shown by his ready acceptance of a new and unaccustomed medium, for in 1952 he adapted his Billy Bunter series for the B.B.C. Television Service, conquering a generation which accepts television as a natural adjunct to the printed page.