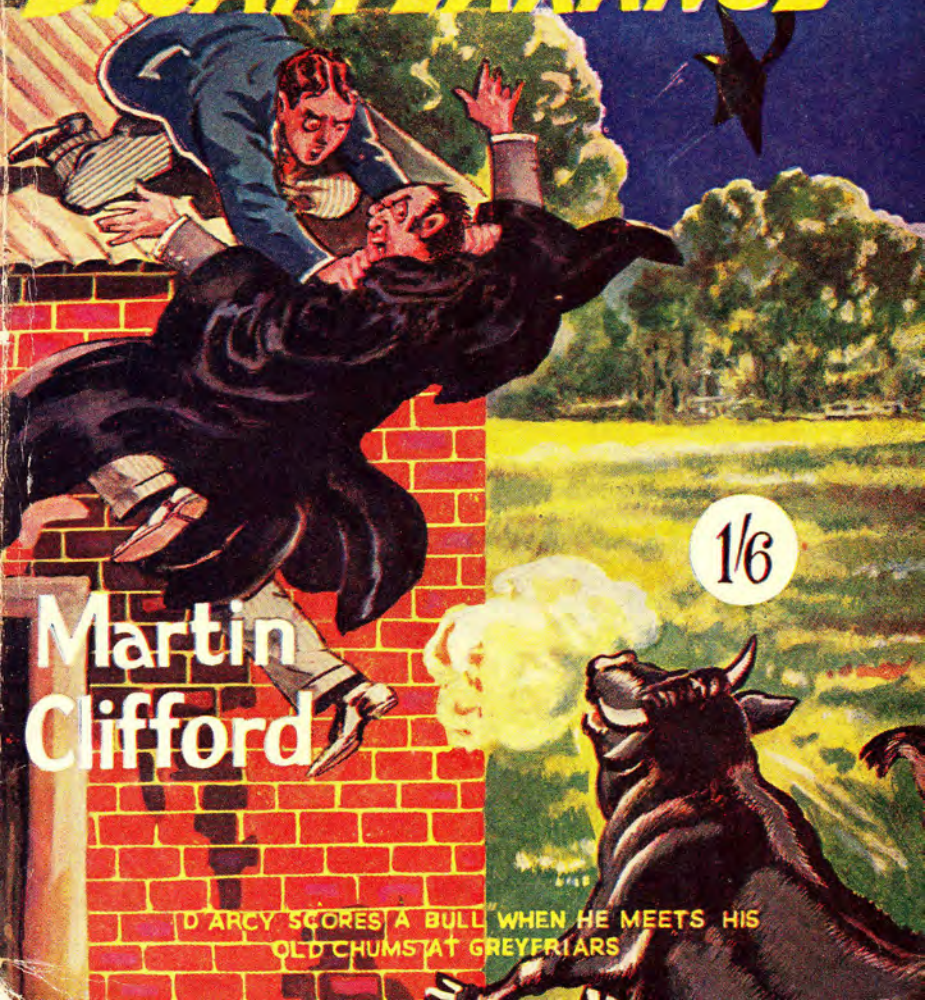




A NEW SERIES FEATURING ARTHUR AUGUSTUS
D'ARCY, THE "SWELL" OF ST. JIM'S

D'ARCY'S DISAPPEARANCE



Martin
Clifford

1/6

D'ARCY SCORES A BULL WHEN HE MEETS HIS
OLD CHUM ST. JIM'S

Our Cover Picture

(Portrayed by C. H. Chapman—the original Billy Bunter artist.)

Arthur Augustus bent over and grasped Mr. Quelch by the collar. Taking a good grip, he heaved with all his strength.

Bellow! bellow! bellow! The bull raged and pawed the ground.

"Ooooh!" gasped Mr. Quelch, exerting all his energy in a desperate effort to reach safety.

D'Arcy's Disappearance

by Martin Clifford

D'Arcy was, as usual, in the wrong place at the wrong time when Cardew The Cad let fly with an inky pellet. Destined for other features than D'Arcy's, it hit him full on his aristocratic nose.

From such a simple beginning disaster follows disaster and D'Arcy finds himself forced to flee from St. Jim's to avoid "unjust and outwageous" punishment—a Head's flogging—as the reward for a crime he had not committed.

Forced to find somewhere to stay during his absence from St. Jim's, D'Arcy decides to visit Greyfriars School, where he meets his old friends, Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry and the notorious Billy Bunter.

From then on events move quickly, until finally Arthur Augustus returns to St. Jim's and puts an end to his chums' worries about "D'Arcy's Disappearance."



1

Six for Cardew !

“**W**OOOOGH! Cardew, you wottah!” spluttered Arthur Augustus D’Arcy.

Every fellow in the Fourth Form stared round at him.

Mr. Lathom, the Master of the Fourth, blinked at him over his spectacles.

It was not like Arthur Augustus D’Arcy to utter sudden spluttering ejaculations, especially in class. In fact, it was quite unlike him. But he was taken by surprise, and startled.

An ink-ball suddenly impinging upon his nose might have startled any fellow. And that was what had happened.

It was strictly against all rules and regulations for ink-balls to be buzzed in class. Certainly, it happened occasionally. Still, a fellow sitting in form, concentrated on Latin, naturally wasn't expecting anything of the kind.

Blake was on "con." D'Arcy had his eyes on Virgil on his desk, following the translation, ready to take up the tale if called upon. Had he remained still, that ink-ball, which Cardew destined for the ear of Figgins of the New House, would have whizzed harmlessly past his noble nose. But it happened that he had to turn a page, and leaned forward to do so, just as the ink-ball shot from Cardew's finger and thumb. That brought him just in the line of fire. That ink-ball, instead of whizzing on and landing in Figgy's ear as per schedule, was stopped in transit. Gussy's nose stopped it.

It was quite a small, light missile, made of blotting-paper kneaded into a ball with ink, not calculated to do damage. But it was startling: and it was inky—very inky! It blobbed Arthur Augustus's noble nose with ink, which trickled down into the corners of his mouth. So really it was no wonder that the swell of St. Jim's spluttered wildly.

"Woouooogh! Cardew, you uttah wottah—you howwid wuffian—woouooogh!"

"Shut up!" breathed Cardew.

"Gwoouooogh!"

Cardew's eyes glinted. Figgins, at a distance, would probably not have known from whose hand the missile came, had it reached its intended target. But as D'Arcy was sitting next to Cardew, he could not fail to be aware of it. He grabbed a handkerchief from his pocket, dabbed his inky nose, and quite forgetting, for the moment, that he was in the form-room, under his Form-master's eyes, gave Cardew a glare of devastating wrath.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "D'Arcy!"

"Woouooogh!"

"He, he, he!" came from Baggy Trimble. Other fellows were grinning. Arthur Augustus, with an inky nose, and trickles of ink running down his chin, did not feel in the least comic, but the other fellows seemed to think that he looked it.

"Cardew!" rapped Mr. Lathom.

Cardew breathed hard.

Arthur Augustus, inky as he was, and exasperated, cer-

tainly would never have intended to draw the Form-master's attention to the fellow who had buzzed the ink-ball. In the excitement of the moment, he had done so unintentionally. Mr. Lathom's frowning gaze fixed on Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"D'Arcy! You may leave the form-room and wash your face!"

"Thank you, sir."

Arthur Augustus left his place, and went to the door. Cardew sat with as innocent an expression as he could muster, under the gaze of his Form-master.

"Someone has thrown an ink-ball," said Mr. Lathom. "Was it you, Cardew?"

There was an instant's pause. Then Cardew answered quite coolly:

"No, sir!"

His friends, Levison and Clive, exchanged an uncomfortable look. George Herries gave a grunt of contempt—Digby a shrug. Cardew, quite indifferent to their opinion, sat cool and composed, meeting his Form-master's doubting gaze with unmoved equanimity. Cardew did not want Extra School, and he was not very particular how he avoided it, so long as he did avoid it.

"Oh, cwumbs!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as he left the form-room. Arthur Augustus would have taken Extra School, or a caning, or a Head's flogging, rather than have made an untruthful answer. But there was little resemblance between the swell of St. Jim's and his relative Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Oh!" Mr. Lathom stared harder at Cardew. "It was not you, Cardew?"

"No, sir!"

"Who was it?" asked Mr. Lathom, glancing over the class.

There was no reply to that! Probably Mr. Lathom did not expect a reply. Buzzing ink-balls in class meant 'Extra': and really no fellow could be expected to ask for 'Extra.'

A pause ensued. Arthur Augustus, in the excitement of the moment when he had caught the ink-ball, had undoubtedly uttered Cardew's name, and Mr. Lathom had heard it. He spoke again at last.

"You tell me that it was not you, Cardew?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Lathom, "show me your fingers, Cardew."

"Oh!" breathed Cardew.

No fellow could knead an ink-ball under his desk without tell-tale inkstains on his fingers. Mr. Lathom evidently doubted Cardew's denial, probably remembering previous occasions on which that particular junior had strayed from the strait and narrow path of veracity. He was going to make sure.

"Do you hear me, Cardew?" he exclaimed, sharply. "Stand up, and show me your fingers at once."

He had no doubt now: Cardew's hesitation eliminated doubt.

There was no help for it: Cardew, with set lips, rose to his feet, and held up his hands to view. Mr. Lathom came a little nearer, and blinked at them over his spectacles. A deep frown gathered on his brow.

"Your fingers are stained with ink, Cardew!" he exclaimed.

"Are they, sir?" said Cardew, hardily. "I must have spilled some ink on them, sir."

"That will do!" said Mr. Lathom. "Do not add to your prevarications, Cardew. Step out before the form."

He turned to his desk, and picked up a cane therefrom. All eyes in the Fourth were on Cardew as he went out before the form. Lathom was a kind and easy-going man: often described in his form as a "good little ass." But it was plain that he was going to be stern now. There was a limit to the patience even of a "good little ass": and Cardew's falsehood was the limit. For once, the Master of the Fourth was coming down hard and heavy.

"I should have given you Extra School for a thoughtless action, Cardew," he said, severely, "but for impudent untruthfulness I shall cane you. Bend over and touch your toes, Cardew."

In silence, with glittering eyes, Cardew bent over and touched his toes. The cane swished in the air.

Swipe! swipe! swipe! swipe! swipe! swipe!

It was a full "six": and well laid on. Little Mr. Lathom hadn't the muscle of Railton, the House-master, but he laid on the cane well and truly. Cardew's face was quite pale as he rose after the infliction.

He went back to his place quietly, but with burning eyes. Lathom laid the cane on his desk.

"You may go on, Blake," he said.

"Con" was resumed in the Fourth Form room. Cardew sat with a sullen face. In dealing with "beaks" he was quite unscrupulous: but to be called out and caned for untruthfulness was a bitter blow to his pride. Lathom dismissed the matter from mind: but Cardew could not dismiss it, and his eyes were evil when they turned on his Form-master.

Arthur Augustus came back into the form-room with a clean face: newly swept and garnished as it were. He gave Cardew a severe glance as he sat down: receiving in return a black scowl that rather startled him.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir."

"You will go on."

"Yaas, sir. Where are we, Blake?"

"*Hic vasto rex Aeolus antro—!*" answered Blake.

"Thank you, deah boy."

Perhaps the interruption of the lesson had disconcerted Arthur Augustus. He was no whale at Latin, anyway. He proceeded to hand out one of the "howlers" with which he not infrequently added to the gaiety of existence in the Fourth Form room at St. Jim's.

"Here the huge king—!" began Arthur Augustus.

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Lathom.

"You ass!" whispered Blake. "Here King Aeolus in his vast cavern—"

"Are you speaking to D'Arcy, Blake?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes, sir."

"Be silent, please," said Mr. Lathom, sternly. "D'Arcy, you have not prepared this lesson! You may sit down: and you will translate the whole passage after class, and bring the translation to me in my study before preparation this evening. You will go on, Kerr."

"Oh! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus sat down.

2

A Spot of Excitement

“**Y**OU fool!”

“Weally, Cardew—”

“You idiot!”

“Is anythin’ the mattah, Cardew?”

“You burblin’ dummy!”

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, of the Shell looked round in some surprise. Fellows sometimes addressed Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, of the Fourth, as an ass, and even a fathead: but such words as “fool and idiot” were unusual in the vocabulary of St. Jim’s fellows. And it was not like Cardew, as a rule, to allow anger to betray him into excited and inelegant expressions. Plainly Cardew was very angry now.

After class, the “Terrible Three” of the Shell had turned out for nets. They were in flannels and had their bats under their arms, when they passed the two Fourth-formers in the quad. They were quite keen to get down to the cricket: but they paused as they came on that altercation. It looked as if trouble was in the air.

Arthur Augustus D’Arcy jammed his celebrated eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed his relative, Ralph Reckness Cardew, with mild contempt. Arthur Augustus, if not his relative, was a whale on the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. A red and angry face, and a raised angry voice, rather got on his aristocratic nerves.

D’Arcy had his Virgil under his arm. Blake and Herries and Digby had gone out of gates: but Arthur Augustus, with that translation on hand, had been unable to go with his friends. He had ambled out into the quad to seek some quiet spot, there to pore and meditate upon the passage in the Aeneid which he had to translate for Mr. Lathom. His

leisurely progress towards a shady seat under one of the old elms was interrupted by Cardew stepping into his path and addressing him in terms which, like those of Truthful James's partner, were "frequent and painful and free."

"You gabblin blitherer! What did you want to give me away to Lathom for?" snarled Cardew.

Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows.

"I did not give you away to Lathom, Cardew! I had no intention of doin' anythin' of the kind, although you smothahed my face with ink, playin' a silly fag trick in form."

"I meant it for Figgins, you idiot!"

"You landed it on my nose—"

"And you had to yell out my name, and get Lathom on my track," hissed Cardew, "and the little beast gave me six."

"I have heard about that fwom Blake, Cardew. Lathom gave you six, not for buzzin' an ink-ball, but for tellin' lies about it! And it served you wight," added Arthur Augustus, warmly. "A fellow with pwopah self-wespect does not tell lies, Cardew. I wegard you with scorn, Cardew."

Cardew did not answer that. He was already in an evil and exasperated temper, and Gussy's words seemed to put the lid on, as it were. Instead of answering, he made a rapid stride towards D'Arcy, his hand up, and his eyes glittering.

A split second more, and that hand would have landed full on Arthur Augustus's face with a resounding smack. Gussy was quite unprepared for it.

But in that split second, the Terrible Three barged in. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, as if all three were moved by the same spring, grasped at Cardew, grabbed him, and jerked him back. They did not jerk gently: and as they let go, Cardew staggered, and sat down in the quad with a bump.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Oh!" gasped Cardew.

"Keep your paws to yourself, you cheeky rotter!" said Tom Merry, with knitted brows.

Cardew bounded to his feet, his face flaming with rage.

"You meddlin' fools!" he panted. "Mind your own business! Get out of the way! Shift!"

"Shift us!" suggested Monty Lowther, politely.

"Bai Jove! Let him come on, you fellows!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with a warlike gleam in his eye. "I am

quite pwepared to give him a feahful thwashin', if that is what he is askin' for."

And Arthur Augustus pushed back his spotless cuffs: his volume of Virgil slipping from under his arm and falling unheeded to the ground. His eyes gleamed at Cardew. He had narrowly escaped having his aristocratic face smacked, which was more than enough to rouse his ire.

"Come on, you wat!" he exclaimed. "I am sowwy that Lathom spotted you playin' twicks in form: but you jolly well deserved a lickin' for tellin' lies—"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners.

"I wegard you with uttah scorn," went on the indignant Gussy. "I am feahfully ashamed that you are a welation of mine. Come on, you wat, if want another lickin'."

"I'll come on fast enough, you burblin' dummy," said Cardew, between his teeth. "Get out of the way, Tom Merry."

"Rats!" retorted Tom. "You can't scrap here, Gussy, in the quad, with the beaks looking out of their windows—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Peace, my infant, peace!" said Monty Lowther. "Let dogs delight to bark and bite—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Will you get out of the way, Tom Merry?" breathed Cardew. "I'm going to punch that fool's idiotic head for getting me six."

"Better not!" said Manners, dryly. "There's your beak coming out of the House. Chuck it, you fathead."

"Bai Jove! There's Lathom—!" Arthur Augustus's noble hands were up, but he dropped them at the sight of his Form-master.

"Hang Lathom!" snarled Cardew.

"Weally, Cardew—oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus's hands went up again as Cardew, giving Tom Merry a sudden shove, sent him staggering aside, and came on with clenched fists and blazing eyes, too enraged to care about the beak in the offing.

"Cardew! D'Arcy!"

Little Mr. Lathom could hardly believe his eyes as he beheld two members of his form engaging in combat in the middle of the quad, under his very nose. He came up with a fluttering rush.

"Stop this at once! How dare you? D'Arcy! Cardew!"

Arthur Augustus dropped his hands at once and backed. Even in the presence of his Form-master, Cardew seemed disposed for a moment to follow him up. However, he thought better of it and stopped.

Mr. Lathom surveyed them sternly.

"How dare you?" he repeated. "Upon my word! Each of you will take two hundred lines. Let there be no more of this, or I shall report you to your Head-master."

"Vewy well, sir," said Arthur Augustus, quietly. Cardew did not speak. It was all that he could do to keep back an insolent reply.

Mr. Lathom frowned at them and walked on.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegwet, Cardew, that I shall be unable to give you the thwashin' you have asked for."

"The old fool!" muttered Cardew. "Meddlin' old fool!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry, in disgust. "What you want, Cardew, is a jolly good kicking."

"Mind your own business! The old fossil's gone now," snarled Cardew. "So come on, D'Arcy!"

"Weally, Cardew, aftah what Lathom said—"

"Funk!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus, at that, forgot all about Mr. Lathom and what he had said, and up went his hands again. "You uttah wat, I—I—I'll—"

"You won't!" said Tom Merry, pushing him back. "Do you want to be reported to Dr. Holmes, fathead?"

"I am goin'—!" roared Arthur Augustus. "You heard what he called me, Tom Mewwy, and I am goin'—"

"You're not!" said Tom. "We'll take care of Cardew! Bat him, you fellows."

"Good egg!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"What-ho!" said Manners, heartily.

Mr. Lathom had disappeared under the old elms across the quad. Cardew, reckless of the consequences, would have carried on. But the Terrible Three put prompt "paid" to that. Three bats lunged at Cardew, and he staggered back as he received the business-end of the willows on his waistcoat.

"Oh!" he gasped. "You rotters—oh!"

"Weally, you fellows—!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Run away and play, Gussy!" said Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—!"

"You're not going to scrap, after what Lathom said! Leave him to us!" said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Buzz off, ass, or we'll give you a few," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—wow!" added Arthur Augustus, as a bat prodded into his ribs. "Oh, cwikey! You uttah ass—wow!"

Arthur Augustus walked on his way. One prod was enough for him. Cardew was getting more than one! He jumped almost like a kangaroo to dodge the lunging bats, lost his footing and sat down with a bump on the Virgil Arthur Augustus had dropped.

"You—you—you—!" he spluttered.

"That do?" asked Tom Merry, politely. "Plenty more if you want them."

"Lots!" said Monty Lowther.

"Better give him a few more," said Manners. "He's landed Gussy with two hundred lines already, and he's not going to land him in a row with the Head! Prod him!"

"Keep off!" yelled Cardew. "You rotters—ow! I'm not goin' after that gabblin' fool, if that's what you want! Get out, hang you."

"O.K.," said Tom. "Come on, you fellows."

The Terrible Three proceeded on their way, cheerily: leaving Cardew sitting in the quad, looking far from cheery. He scrambled to his feet, and, as he did so, caught sight of the book on which he had been sitting. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's Virgil, which the swell of St. Jim's had forgotten in that spot of excitement. Cardew gave it a savage kick, and it flew through the air and landed six or seven yards away. Then, as if a sudden thought had struck him, he stepped quickly after it, picked it up, and slipped it into his pocket.

3

By Whose Hand !

WHIZ!

Bang!

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He sat up and took notice at once.

Seldom had Arthur Augustus been so surprised. Mr. Lathom, the Master of the Fourth, had probably never been so surprised in his life.

It was quite an unprecedented occurrence—probably the first time in history that a school-book had been buzzed at a Form-master's head.

That was what had happened!

Arthur Augustus was sitting on one of the old oaken benches under a shady elm. He had sought that quiet spot to con over the translation he had to do for Lathom. Somehow or other Gussy had to translate a section of Book I of the Aeneid, from "*Talia flammato*" to "*his vocibus usa est*." He was going to give that passage deep thought and consideration in that quiet and secluded spot. There was just one difficulty in the way—having sat down, with a careful regard to the crease in his elegant trousers, which, of course, was a matter requiring first attention, he realised that his Virgil was no longer with him, and that he must have dropped it somewhere between the School House and that shady spot. Which was a little disconcerting.

He had to go and look for that book, obviously, before he could begin conning and pondering over the troublesome passage therein. He was about to start on that voyage of

exploration, when Mr. Lathom came along the path under the shady branches of the elms. And then it happened!

From somewhere—neither D'Arcy nor Mr. Lathom knew where—something whizzed. Lathom caught it fair and square, and uttered a sharp yelp of surprise. It knocked off his mortar-board, and caused him to stagger against a tree, the most surprised Form-master at St. Jim's or anywhere else.

The whizzing object fell at his feet.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Arthur Augustus. He gazed at his Form-master in amazement and horror.

Then he stared round.

Nobody was in sight, excepting Mr. Lathom. Whoever had hurled that object at Lathom's head had been behind a tree and had, in all probability, departed on his highest gear the moment the object was hurled. A fellow who buzzed a missile at a Master's head was not likely to linger on the scene of such an extraordinary exploit.

"Bless my soul!" Lathom was stuttering wildly. "What—what—what—Bless my soul! Something struck my head—what—what—what—?"

He glanced at Arthur Augustus, whom he had not noticed before. Arthur Augustus jumped up and ran forward. Amazement had held him spell-bound for a moment or two.

He picked up Mr. Lathom's mortar-board and handed it to him. Arthur Augustus was always an obliging fellow.

Mr. Lathom took it and glared at him.

"D'Arcy! You—you threw that—that missile at me—You—"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Weally, sir—!" he gasped.

"How dare you, D'Arcy?" Lathom almost shrieked. Good-tempered little gentleman as he was, he was fairly boiling. "You—you—you had the audacity to throw that—that missile at your Form-master—"

"Certainly not, sir! Nothin' of the kind—"

"No one else is here! If you did not throw it, who did?"

"I weally do not know, sir—!"

"I have been attacked—assaulted—by a boy in my form," gasped Mr. Lathom. "Upon my word! D'Arcy, you will go before your Head-master for this—you will be flogged—you may be expelled—"

"But weally, sir, I—I—I—"

Mr. Lathom glanced down at the object that had fallen at his feet. It was a school book: a copy of Virgil's Aeneid.

"Is that book yours, D'Arcy?" he thundered.

"No, sir! Certainly not."

"It was thrown at my head—"

"I am awah of it, sir, but I twust that you do not think me capable of buzzin' a book at a master's head!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"What are you doing here?"

"I was sittin' on that bench, sir—"

"And why were you sitting alone, in this very retired spot, unless you were waiting for me to come along the path?"

"It—it was that twanslation, sir—I was going' to go thwough that twanslation you told me to do—"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Lathom. "If you were going through that translation, D'Arcy, where is your book?"

"I—I dwopped it somewhah, sir—"

"Upon my word! Pick up that book, D'Arcy, and hand it to me."

"Yaas, certainly, sir."

Arthur Augustus picked up the book that lay at Lathom's feet. He handed it to his Form-master.

Mr. Lathom opened it. Names had to be written in school books, and there was no doubt that that particular volume would identify its owner. As Arthur Augustus was the only fellow to be seen on the spot, Lathom had little doubt, or rather none, that he had "buzzed" that missile. But he was going to make sure.

His eyes gleamed over his spectacles, as he read the name written on the flyleaf of the Virgil.

"D'Arcy!" he thundered.

"Yaas, sir."

"You have said that this is not you book."

"Certainly it is not, sir."

"Bless my soul! Such impudence—such effrontery—I am amazed! D'Arcy, this is your book—"

"It certainly is not, sir! I assuah you that I am quite incapable of buzzin' a book at your head, sir."

"Your name is written in it!" shrieked Mr. Lathom.

"Eh?"

"Here is your name on the flyleaf—"

"Oh, cwikey!"

Arthur Augustus blinked at the name written on the flyleaf of that Virgil. He fairly goggled at it. There it was: *A. A. D'Arcy*, in his own hand-writing. Not for a moment had D'Arcy dreamed that it was his book that had banged on Lathom's head. But it was!

His eyes bulged at it.

"D'Arcy! Do you dare to say that this is not your book, when your own name is written in it in your own hand?" thundered Mr. Lathom.

"I—I—I—!" babbled the bewildered swell of St. Jim's, "I—I—I—it d-does seem to be mum-mum-my bob-book, sir—bai Jove! Oh, cwumbs!"

"You stated that it was not your book, D'Arcy!"

"It wasn't, sir—I—I—I mean I didn't know it was—I—I—Oh, cwikey!" Arthur Augustus's voice trailed away. He almost gibbered at the book, and at Mr. Lathom. His noble brain was in a whirl.

He had denied that it was his book: not supposing for a moment that it was. But it was his Virgil. And it had been flung at Lathom's head!

The evidence, to Lathom, was conclusive. It could scarcely fail to be. No one else was anywhere near the spot. D'Arcy was there, and D'Arcy's book had been hurled at his head—hardly ten minutes after he had given D'Arcy two hundred lines for fighting in the quad. Lathom had not the slightest doubt on the subject.

"D'Arcy!" he thundered.

"I—I—I—I—I weally cannot undahstand how it comes to be my book, sir—I—I—I certainly did not know that it was my book—I—I—I—"

"That will do," D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir, but I—I—I—I—!"

"I shall take you to your Head-master this instant! I shall report this act of disrespectful violence to Dr. Holmes, and you will be flogged—"

"But, sir, weally—"

"I shall demand your instant punishment for this unheard of act! Follow me to the House, D'Arcy."

"But—but—but—"

"Not another word! Follow me."

"I—I—I weally did not—"

"Follow me at once!"

Mr. Lathom, with the Virgil in his hand, started for the House. Arthur Augustus, like a fellow in a dream, or rather in the grip of a nightmare, followed him across the quad.

Where is D'Arcy?

"HE, he, he!"

Why Baggy Trimble of the Fourth uttered that unmusical cachinnation as they came into the School House, Blake and Herries and Digby did not know. They paused and stared at the fat Baggy. Trimble seemed tremendously amused about something. His fat face was wreathed in grins.

"Well, what's the jolly old joke, you fat baggage?" grunted Blake.

"He, he, he! You've come in just in time," chuckled Trimble.

"Just in time for what?" asked Dig.

"Hall," answered Baggy. "Every fellow's got to turn up in hall for a flogging."

"Oh, my hat!" said Herries. "Somebody up for the Head's birch?"

"He, he, he! Yes, rather."

"Well, who?" asked Blake.

"D'Arcy!"

"WHAT!" roared the three juniors together.

"He, he, he!"

Baggy Trimble's sense of humour was all his own. Apparently he regarded the fact that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was up for a flogging as funny! He had that view of the matter entirely to himself. Three Gorgons could not have given him more deadly glares than Blake and Herries and Dig.

"You—you—you—you fat worm!" gasped Blake. "D'Arcy up for a flogging! Think we're going to believe that? Is that your idea of a joke? Collar him."

"Here, I say—look here, you know—leggo—I say everybody knows," yelled Trimble, "I say—leggo! Lathom took him to the Head, and said—yarooooooh!"

Baggy Trimble roared, as he was strewn on the floor. Leaving him to roar, the three juniors cut up the stairs, in a hurry to get to Study No. 6 in the Fourth, where they expected to find Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They were very anxious to know what might have happened while they were out of gates.

But they found Study No. 6 in the Fourth vacant. Arthur Augustus was not there. Blake stared round the study.

"Where is that image?" he exclaimed. "What the dickens has he been up to? That fat rotter must have been spoofing—"

"Let's look for him," said Dig. "There's the bell for call-over."

"Come on," said Herries.

They hurried out of the study again. On the study landing, Talbot of the Shell called to them.

"Hall, you fellows! There's the bell."

"Is anything on, Talbot?" asked Blake.

"Oh! Yes! I've heard—" Talbot hesitated.

"Seen D'Arcy?"

"I saw Lathom taking him to Dr. Holmes's study. That was half an hour ago."

Blake and Co. exchanged dismayed glances. That Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could be "up" for a Head's flogging seemed impossible—unthinkable. But evidently something was amiss.

"What was Lathom taking him to the Head for, Talbot?" asked Blake.

Talbot hesitated again.

"The fellows are saying—!" He paused.

"Well, what are they saying?" exclaimed Blake, exasperated. "Can't you talk?"

"They say that D'Arcy buzzed something at Lathom's head, and he's up for a flogging—blessed if I make it out," said Talbot. "They say there's to be a flogging after call-over."

"Oh, crumbs!"

Talbot went down the stairs, leaving Blake and Co. gazing at one another in utter dismay.

"It can't be—!" muttered Dig.

"Buzzed something at Lathom's head!" breathed Blake. "Was he crackers? Right off his onion! Oh, scissors!"

"Let's find him, anyway," said Herries.

They followed Talbot down the staircase. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had just come in, still in flannels: their faces very grave. Blake caught Tom by the arm.

"What on earth's happened, while we've been out?" he exclaimed. "Do you know?"

"D'Arcy—!" said Tom.

"Is he in a row?"

"Looks like it," said Tom. "I can't make it out—"

"That's what Talbot said! But what—?"

"From what everybody's saying, Lathom took him to the Head—"

"We know that!" hissed Blake. "But what for?"

"Chucking something at Lathom—"

"He wouldn't—he couldn't—even Gussy isn't such an ass—!"

"That's what everybody's saying," said Manners. "We heard him give Gussy two hundred lines for ragging with Cardew in the quad and soon afterwards—"

"It doesn't sound like Gussy," said Monty Lowther. "But unless everybody's got it wrong, Gussy laid for Lathom under the elms, and chucked something at his head—"

"He wouldn't!" gasped Blake.

"Rot!" growled Herries.

"He couldn't!" groaned Dig.

"He must have been crackers, if he did!" said Tom. "But that's what's all over the school. A flogging after call-over—"

"It's impossible!" muttered Blake. "But where is he now? Here, Levison, seen D'Arcy?"

Ernest Levison came in with Sidney Clive.

"No!" he answered. "Seen Cardew?"

"Blow Cardew!" howled Blake. "Who wants to see Cardew? Take Cardew away and drown him."

Levison laughed.

"Well, he must have gone out," he said. "It's lines for cutting call-over. I say, I heard somebody say that somebody was up for a flogging after roll—"

"Bother what you've heard!" You seen D'Arcy, Clive?"

The South African junior shook his head.

"No! Come on, Levison—the bell's stopping."

Levison and Clive went on their way. The Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 were left with troubled and dismayed looks. The fact that Cardew was staying out of gates and was apparently going to cut roll mattered nothing. They were wholly concerned about Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Here, Blake." Kildare of the Sixth came up. "Where's D'Arcy?"

"Isn't he in hall?" asked Blake.

"No! You'd better get in—the bell's stopping," said Kildare. "If that young ass is keeping out—"

"I say, Kildare," exclaimed Blake, as the captain of St. Jim's was turning away, "What's up after roll? Is—is—is D'Arcy in trouble?"

"Haven't you heard? He's up for a flogging, for buzzing something at his Form-master's head. The young ass—he might have been sacked for it."

Kildare walked away, and half a dozen juniors exchanged glum looks. There was no doubt about it, after what Kildare had said.

"That's official!" muttered Blake.

"Must have been off his onion," said Dig. "Tain't like Gussy—"

"Poor old Gussy!" muttered Tom.

The juniors went glumly into hall. The bell had stopped, and the whole House was assembled there for roll: with the exceptions of Kildare of the Sixth, and two members of the Fourth Form—Cardew and D'Arcy. Cardew, no doubt, was still out of gates, incurring "lines" for cutting roll, with his usual recklessness. But where D'Arcy was, was rather a mystery. His friends wondered whether Kildare was looking for him, to shepherd him into hall for his flogging, as he had not come in of his own accord.

Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School-House, was taking roll. Everyone noted that the House-master's face was very grave and stern. Mr. Railton's deep voice called name after name. There was no answering "adsum" when Cardew's name was called, and he was marked absent: but no one was interested in Cardew. But when D'Arcy's name was called there was a breathless hush.

"D'Arcy!"

No reply.

"D'Arcy!" repeated Mr. Railton, in a deeper voice.

Probably it had not occurred to the House-master, till that moment, that the junior, who had been sentenced to a Head's flogging had failed to turn up in the crowded hall. His eyes glinted, as he glanced over the silent ranks of the Fourth, and he repeated the name a third time.

"D'Arcy!"

Still there was no reply, and Railton was seen to compress his lips hard. Then he went quietly on with the roll.

When the last name had been called, Kildare of the Sixth came in. Every eye was upon him, as he went up to the House-master, and they spoke together in low tones. No one could hear what they said: but there were six fellows who could guess its purport. Kildare had failed to round up the sentenced junior, and had had to come into hall without him.

"Where on earth is Gussy?" breathed Blake.

"Sticking out of sight somewhere," muttered Herries. "The mad ass!"

"They can't flog him if he ain't here!" whispered Dig. "I say, the Head will be waxy, if Gussy ain't here when he comes in—"

"Oh, the ass!" groaned Blake.

If—as appeared to be the case—Arthur Augustus had "buzzed" something at his Form-master's head, and was to take a flogging for that wild action, it was bad enough. But if he deliberately stayed out of hall, and kept his Head-master waiting in vain for him, it was infinitely worse. Every moment the juniors expected to see Dr. Holmes enter hall by the upper door: Taggles following with the birch. And D'Arcy was not there—and Kildare, evidently, did not know where to find him.

The colloquy between the House-master and the prefect ceased abruptly, and Mr. Railton hurried out of hall by the upper door. Everyone could guess why he went—it was to apprise the Head that D'Arcy was not present, that he could

not be found, and to keep Dr. Holmes off the scene, as evidently the flogging could not take place.

Mr. Railton was absent only a few minutes. He came back alone: the Head was not coming, after all. Seldom had Railton's face been seen to look so grim and stern. He rapped out the order to dismiss: and immediately left hall, probably to take the search for D'Arcy of the Fourth into his own hands. On almost every lip was one question: "Where was D'Arcy?" But that was a question to which no one in the School House knew the answer.

5

Disappeared !

"BLAKE!"

"Yes, sir," muttered Blake.

He was standing before Mr. Railton's table, in Railton's study. He had been sent for, and he had come with a gloomy and worried brow. He could guess that the House-master wished to question him on the subject of the missing Fourth-former: but he had nothing to tell. D'Arcy's whereabouts were as great a mystery to him as to any other fellow in the House.

It was almost time for prep in the studies. Nothing had been seen, or heard, of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Since he had left the Head's study under sentence of a public flogging in hall after calling-over, no one seemed to have seen him. But it had been learned that his bicycle was missing from the bike-shed. It was almost unimaginable to the School House fellows that he could have gone out on his bike in such circumstances. But the bike was gone, and so was D'Arcy: and it looked as if they had gone together.

All his friends—and their name was legion—were worried and troubled. In Study No. 6 in the Fourth faces were gloomiest of all. Often, in that study, Blake and Herries and Dig "slanged" their aristocratic chum: often and often they called him all sorts of uncomplimentary names. But the bond of friendship among the four was strong: and D'Arcy's disaster had cast a deep cloud over the three.

Jack Blake was looking far from cheery as he stood in Railton's study. He had left Herries and Dig equally glum in No. 6.

The House-master gave him a very searching look.

"You are aware, Blake, that D'Arcy appears to have absented himself from the school," said Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir," mumbled Blake.

"Have you any knowledge of his movements?"

"No, sir."

"He appears to have left the school on his bicycle," said Mr. Railton. "Did he say nothing to you before he left? I understand that you are his closest friend in the House."

"Yes, sir, but I was out of gates with Herries and Digby," explained Blake. "We never knew that anything had happened till we came in, just in time for roll."

"You have not seen D'Arcy, then, since he was with the Head-master?"

"No, sir."

"You are not aware that he had any intention in his mind of running away from school?"

Jack Blake jumped.

"Running away from school!" he repeated. "Oh, no, sir! I'm quite sure that Gussy—I mean D'Arcy—never dreamed of anything of the kind."

"That is what he has done, nevertheless," said Mr. Railton. "Apparently he has done so, on a sudden impulse, to escape his just punishment for an act of wild and reckless insubordination. "You can tell me nothing?"

"No, sir," mumbled Blake. "I—I can't make out D'Arcy doing what he did—it's not like him at all. I just can't make it out. I—I—I suppose—" Blake stammered, "I—I suppose there—there isn't any mistake about it, sir?"

Mr. Railton raised his eyebrows.

"What do you mean—a mistake?" he asked.

"I—I—I mean, it isn't like him, sir! I just can't see him chucking—I—I mean throwing—anything at a beak—I—I mean a master, sir. But—but if Mr. Lathom saw him, sir—Did he see him do it, sir?" blurted out Blake.

"I do not think that Mr. Lathom saw D'Arcy in the act of throwing the book, Blake. He did not see D'Arcy till the book had struck him. But there is no doubt about what occurred.

"But—but if Mr. Lathom didn't actually see him throw it, sir," said Blake, with a glimmer of hope, "anybody might buzz a book—and dodge off—"

"It was D'Arcy's own book."

"Oh!" stammered Blake.

"It seems that his Form-master had given him a translation to do, and that D'Arcy had taken the book with him, to sit under the elms," said Mr. Railton. "Then Mr. Lathom came by, and he acted as he did—"

"Is—is it certain that it was D'Arcy's book, sir?"

"His name was written in it—it certainly was D'Arcy's Virgil.

"Oh!" mumbled Blake, again.

"The foolish boy acted, I suppose, upon a sudden foolish impulse of resentment," said Mr. Railton. "That does not excuse him. He must be found without delay, and—"

Buzzzzzzzz!

The telephone-bell interrupted Victor Railton. He turned to the instrument and picked up the receiver. Blake stood where he was, as he had not been told to go.

"What—what—?" Mr. Railton seemed to stutter into the mouthpiece. "What—what—what—Is that D'Arcy speaking?"

"Oh, crumbs!" breathed Blake.

"D'Arcy!" repeated Mr. Railton, in tones of angry astonishment. About the last thing the House-master was expecting was a telephone-call from the missing junior. But that, apparently, was what he was getting. "Upon my word! That—that is D'Arcy speaking?"

"Yaas, sir! Is that Mr. Wailton?"

Jack Blake moved a little nearer. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the phone: and Blake was as anxious for news of him as Railton could possibly be. Blake bent an eager ear: and the voice over the telephone came to him almost as clearly as to the House-master. Railton took no heed of him. He was concentrated on his unexpected interlocutor at the other end.

"This is Mr. Railton speaking! D'Arcy! You have absented yourself from the school without leave—"

"I am sowwy, sir! But in the circs I had no alternative!" came back the voice of the swell of St. Jim's.

"What? What do you mean, D'Arcy?" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "How dare you run away from school?"

"Bai Jove! Did you say wun away fwom School, sir? I

have certainly not wun away fwom School. I have simply wetired fwom St. Jim's for a time, havin' no alternative, sir. I twust that you will not wegard it as wunnin' away from School, Mr. Wailton."

Mr. Railton breathed hard.

"You will return at once, D'Arcy."

"Am I to be flogged, sir?"

"Certainly you are."

"Then I feah that I shall be unable to weturn, sir. I have wetired fwom St. Jim's for a time to avoid bein' flogged, sir! But I assuah you, sir," went on Arthur Augustus's voice, in earnest ones, "it was not wholly on my own account, sir. I did not desiah my wespected Head-mastah to commit an act of injustice, sir, which I am suah he would have wegwetted vewy much aftahwards."

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"And I am suah, sir, that Mr. Lathom would have wegwetted it vewy much also, when it was too late, sir! In the circs, sir, I wegarded it as unavoidable to wetire fwom the School for a time."

"D'Arcy!"

"Pewwaps, sir, Mr. Lathom may be able to find out who buzzed that book at his head, and then it will be all wight, sir."

"What? What? It is for flinging that book at your Form-master that you are sentenced to punishment, D'Arcy."

"But I did not do it, sir."

"What? What?"

"I twust, sir, that I am quite incapable of so vewy diswespectful an act as thwowin' a book at a mastah's head! I should considah it fwightfully bad form."

"Upon my word! D'Arcy, you will return to the school immediately—"

"I am sowwy, sir! I cannot weturn to St. Jim's until it is quite cleahly undahstood that there is to be no floggin' for somethin' I have not done."

"I command you to return, D'Arcy! If you have the audacity to go home, do you suppose for one moment that your father will not send you back to the school without delay?"

"I think vewy likely the governah would wegard that as his duty, sir! For that weason I am not goin' home."

"Where are you speaking from, D'Arcy?"

"I would wathah not mention that sir, in case you might send a pwefect aftah me to bwing me back, sir," said Arthur Augustus, astutely.

"Are you at a distance from the school?"

"I think a good many miles, sir! I wathah put it on, on the jiggah, in case a pwe got aftah me. I am wight out of Sussex, anyway."

"Out of Sussex!" repeated Mr. Railton, blankly. "Upon my word! You have actually crossed the county border, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"You must return immediately—"

"I wegwet that that is imposs, sir! I have wung up to assuah you, sir, that I nevah buzzed that book at Lathom's nappah, sir—"

"That will do! You will return—"

"And I should like you, sir, if you will be so kind, to tell my fwiends that I am all wight! I should not like them to wowwy about me."

"Upon my word! Tell me at once, D'Arcy, from where you are telephoning!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Fwom Kent, sir."

"Give me the name of the town immediately! Answer me, D'Arcy! Do you hear, D'Arcy? I command you to answer me at once,—I—I—" Mr. Railton broke off. The telephone had gone dead: Arthur Augustus, at the other end, had evidently cut off. "Upon my word!"

Mr. Railton was breathing very hard, as he put up the receiver. Then he gave a start, as he saw Jack Blake standing at his very elbow. Blake backed away rather hurriedly.

The House-master gave him a rather sharp look.

"You may go, Blake!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir!"

Blake left the House-master's study: with news for his friends: rather startling news of the extraordinary proceedings of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Mr. Railton was left in perturbed thought. D'Arcy of the Fourth had evidently lost no time: he had covered the ground on his jigger, and was now in the next county. He was not

going home—that was clear—his home, Eastwood House, in Hampshire, lay in the other direction, and Arthur Augustus was in Kent. To follow him, or send a prefect on his track, was scarcely practicable, without a clue—Kent was a large county in which to look for a runaway schoolboy. What the runaway was thinking of doing—or, indeed, whether he was thinking at all—Railton did not know: but he knew that Arthur Augustus was, for the present at least, out of reach. To notify the police, to set the law in motion, was a resource, and it seemed that that was all that remained—sooner or later, no doubt, the fugitive would be rounded up. But for the present, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was on the run: and that was that! D'Arcy had disappeared: and he looked like staying disappeared.

6

Unexpected !

WEASEL JINKINS sat up, in the grass at the foot of the signpost, shaded his little piggy eyes with an unwashed hand, and stared along the road, red in the sunset.

It was a very pleasant leafy Kentish lane along which Mr. Jinkins stared, under the shade of that unwashed hand.

The hour was growing late: but the summer sunset was still red in the sky. It was a lonely road, with deep shady woods on either side. For quite a long time no one had passed Mr. Jinkins, as he sat resting in the grass, with his back to the sign-post, sucking dismally at an empty pipe. Now a solitary cyclist had appeared on the road, coming towards him: and Mr. Jinkins was interested. The cyclist looked like a schoolboy.

Weasel Jinkins was in hard luck. Hard luck was written all over him, from his tattered cap to the toes of his dilapidated boots. A strong disinclination to work, which had haunted Mr. Jinkins all his life, was the chief cause of the trouble. And that day his luck had been harder than usual. Anything that came the Weasel's way, so long as it did not involve work, was welcome to him: from stray chickens to clothes pegged out on a line, from "pinching" bikes to pinching milk-bottles. As a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, he had a good deal of skill, and a good deal of experience. But there were, naturally, set-backs in such a career: and that afternoon Mr. Jinkins had encountered one of the set-backs. He had almost got his leg over an apparently unguarded bicycle, when the owner had suddenly turned up: Mr. Jinkins had been clouted right and left, and had departed in great

haste, and never stopped running for a good mile. So it was a tired, weary, and pessimistic Weasel who sat leaning on the sign-post in that Kentish lane, viewing an unsatisfactory world with a jaundiced eye.

But he sat up and took notice as that schoolboy cyclist came along.

The rider was a mere lad: a mere schoolboy. The bike was a handsome and expensive one. Mr. Jinkins debated in his thievish mind whether it would be practicable to tip him off the machine as he passed, and escape on that handsome jigger—on such a lonely road.

But he shook his head sadly. Mr. Jinkins was a small weedy fellow, which was why his friends had bestowed that nickname on him. He was hardly bigger than the schoolboy on the bike. He was probably not nearly so fit. If that schoolboy showed fight, the Weasel was more likely to collect a black eye than a bicycle. Unguarded bikes were the Weasel's game: especially after his recent misadventure. He shook his head, and sank back against the sign-post, abandoning the idea of a sudden rush at the rider as he passed.

The cyclist came on, and Mr. Jinkins, no longer interested in him, expected to see him pass, and disappear. But the rider did not pass. He glanced at the sign-post, braked and jumped down.

Mr. Jinkins, his hopes reviving, sat up once more.

"Bai Jove!" The dismounted cyclist, holding the bike with one hand, jammed an eyeglass into his eye with the other, and surveyed the sign-post. It was easy to see that he was unsure of his way. "Ashford fifteen miles! I wondah whethah Ashford would be the wight way."

He glanced down at Mr. Jinkins.

"Evenin', sir," said the Weasel, very civilly.

"Good-evenin'!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I am vewy glad to meet somebody heah—I have passed nobody for miles. Pewwaps you know the woads about heah."

"Know 'em like a book, sir!" said the Weasel.

"Pewwaps you can tell me how fah it is to Gweyfwiahs."

"Greyfriars!" repeated Mr. Jinkins, blankly.

"Gweyfwiahs School," explained Arthur Augustus.

But that explanation left Mr. Jinkins no wiser. Apparently he had never heard of Greyfriars School.

"I believe it is somewhah near Folkestone, or Canterbury, or Margate, or Wamsgate, or somewhah!" further explained Arthur Augustus. "It is vewy neah the sea, at any wate."

"Oh, my eye!" said Mr. Jenkins. "You're a good fifty or sixty miles from Folkestone, anyway."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked, as he felt, rather dismayed. He had done almost uncounted miles on that jigger already. Fifty or sixty more, with the summer dusk falling, and the exact location of his destination in doubt, did not seem an attractive prospect!

Mr. Jenkins eyed him curiously. He rose to his feet, and leaned on the sign-post in a perpendicular position. If there was anything like a chance at that bike he was not a man to let his chances like the sunbeams pass him by.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus, "I weally hardly think that I could do that on the jiggah to-night. And it would hardly do to awwive at Gweyfwiahs in the middle of the night, anyway. I weally wish that I had looked at a map befoah I started. Howevah, I had no time for that. I had to wush off in a feahful huwwy."

"Did you, sir?" murmured Mr. Jenkins.

"Yaas, wathah. I shall have to put up for the night somewhah. I did not know how fah it was to Gweyfwiahs," said Arthur Augustus, regretfully. "You see, we go by twain when we go ovah for the cwicket matches, and you nevah notice the distance when you go by twain. It seems to be vewy much furthah off than I supposed. Pewwaps you could tell me the way to some inn in this locality?"

The Weasel's little piggy eyes glistened.

"I could that," sir," he answered. "These lanes are a bit puzzling to a stranger, but I'd show you the way with pleasure, sir."

"That is vewy kind of you," said Arthur Augustus.

"Not at all, sir! Only too glad to oblige a young gentleman like you, sir," said the Weasel, quite briskly. "If you'll step this way, sir, I'll point it out in five or six minutes."

"Thank you vewy much."

Arthur Augustus was tired. He had done a good deal of cycling that afternoon. The prospect of a cosy inn, with a

good meal and a comfortable bed for the night was very attractive. From where he stood, there was no visible sign of any such establishment: and he was glad of Mr. Jenkins's guidance, glad and grateful. Of the Weasel's sinister designs he had not the remotest suspicion. Gussy was not a suspicious fellow!

"This 'ere way, sir," said Mr. Jenkins.

He started up the lane, and Arthur Augustus, wheeling the bike walked with him. How to induce him to let go that bike was Mr. Jenkins's next problem. It proved an unexpectedly easy one.

"Let me wheel the bike for you, sir," said Mr. Jenkins, laying an unwashed hand on the handle-bars.

He scarcely expected to get away with that. But he did! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in fact, was exactly the sort of fellow that a man like the Weasel liked to meet.

"Pway don't trouble," said Arthur Augustus. "That is all wight."

"You leave it to me, sir," said Mr. Jenkins.

"Oh, all wight!"

Mr. Jenkins wheeled the bike.

Really, he could hardly believe in his good luck. He wheeled the machine on for a dozen yards or so, watching the swell of St. Jim's stealthily out of the corner of his eye. Then, with his disengaged hand, he pointed.

"That's the place, sir—you'll see the chimneys over the tree-tops!" he said. "See that chimney, sir?"

Arthur Augustus looked in the direction indicated. He could see no sign whatever of a chimney over the tree-tops. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and looked harder. For the moment, his back was to Mr. Jenkins, which was all that the Weasel wanted.

"Bai Jove! I don't seem to see it," said Arthur Augustus. "I—why—what—stop—what are you up to? Get off that bike! Bwing that bike back! Oh, cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus, as he turned back to Mr. Jenkins, could hardly believe his eyes, or his eyeglass, for a moment. It was so very unexpected. The Weasel had his leg over the machine, his foot on a pedal, and he shot away like an arrow. One shove at the pedal carried him far from the reach of a clutching hand.

"Stop!" roared Arthur Augustus.

It was improbable, in the circumstances, that Mr. Jenkins would heed that injunction. He did not stop! He drove at the pedals and whizzed on.

"Bai Jove! Will you stop? Why, you wascall!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, as he realised what was happening. "Are you twyin' to steal my jiggah? Oh, cwumbs!"

He dashed in pursuit.

Arthur Augustus was a good runner. Between the wickets he moved almost like lightning. But he had no chance against a bike. He fairly tore on the track of the bicycle-thief: but for every yard he covered, Mr. Jenkins, on the bike, covered at least a dozen: and he vanished round a corner and disappeared into space.

Arthur Augustus, panting for breath, came to a perspiring halt.

"Oh, cwumbs!" he gasped.

Mr. Jenkins was gone. The bike was gone! The shades of night were falling fast! And the fugitive from St. Jim's stood in the road, mopped his perspiring brow, and gazed in the direction in which Mr. Jenkins had disappeared, with feelings that could not have been expressed in words.

Gussy's Night Out!

“A CAWAVAN!”

Arthur Augustus halted.

It was past midnight.

A full round moon rode high in the sky. It was a glorious summer's night. Moonlight glimmered on green hedges, on the foliage of trees. Arthur Augustus, at normal times, was not insensible to the beauties of Nature. But at the moment, they were quite lost on him. He would have preferred to see the moonlight glimmer on the sign of an inn, or even on a barn, or perhaps even a cow-shed. He was tired to the bone.

Since his hapless encounter with Mr. Jenkins, and the loss of his jigger, Arthur Augustus had had to proceed on Shanks' pony. That was several hours ago. He had already lost his way when he met Mr. Jenkins. Now he was still more hopelessly lost. Up one leafy lane and down another had he wandered, but no welcome inn met his view: neither did he, at that late hour, fall in with any inhabitant. Indeed, he might have supposed that the populous county of Kent was as unpopulated as Robinson Crusoe's island. Any inhabitant would have been welcome to his eyes, to put him on his way to somewhere where shelter could be found for the night. But in that rural region all the inhabitants were no doubt in bed—as Arthur Augustus would have been very glad to be.

He could not help thinking of the comfortable bed he had left behind in the Fourth-form dormitory, in the School House at St. Jim's. It was lost to sight, but to memory dear.

Only the previous night he had turned in, in that bed, never dreaming of what the morrow was to bring. And now—!

His noble legs seemed almost dropping off. He was tempted to camp out under a tree for the night. But that was a last resource. He trudged on, hoping to find somebody or something, somehow or somewhere: and the night grew older, and the moon sailed higher in the deep blue sky: and so far, there was nobody and nothing—till he sighted that caravan, and came to a halt and gazed at it where it stood in the field adjoining the lane.

So far as they knew at St. Jim's, D'Arcy of the Fourth had simply bolted away from the school, and gone "on the run," to escape the threatened flogging, without any fixed plan in his mind. But as a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus's noble intellect had not been quite idle. He had a plan.

He could not go home! His father, Lord Eastwood, was a very kind and even indulgent parent: but certainly he would not have stood for a schoolboy running away from school. Eastwood House would have been merely a temporary stop on his way back to St. Jim's, to take what was coming to him.

And he was not going to return to St. Jim's and take that flogging. Had he, indeed, so far forgotten himself, and good manners, as to fling that Virgil at his Form-master's head, he would have taken the penalty as a matter of course. But he had not done it.

And he was not going to take a Head's flogging for nothing!

Not that he was thinking wholly of himself in the matter. A flogging from his Head-master's birch, under the eyes of the crowded House in hall, was a most unpleasant and unattractive prospect. But there were other considerations, too. He was guiltless of the offence for which he was going to take toco: and while Mr. Lathom could hardly be blamed for believing as he did, and while the Head had scarcely any choice about acting upon a Form-master's report, the actual fact remained that that flogging was an act of injustice. When the facts came to light, the Fourth-form master would have to realise that he had reported an innocent person for condign punishment: and the Head-master would have to realise that he had inflicted that condign punishment upon the wrong person! Gussy was anxious to spare them the remorse which they would doubtless feel in such painful circumstances.

Few fellows in D'Arcy's peculiar position, perhaps, would have bothered much about the Form-master who had re-

ported him, or the Head-master who had sentenced him to a flogging. But it really was Arthur Augustus all over. What he had said to Mr. Railton on the telephone was quite accurate: in this matter he was almost as much concerned for Mr. Lathom and Dr. Holmes as for himself! That act of unintentional injustice must not take place—and there was only one way of preventing it—by disappearing from St. Jim's before the flogging could be administered.

He was prepared to go back when the facts came to light. Probably they would find the real culprit before long. Still more probably, in D'Arcy's opinion, the real culprit would own up, when he found that another fellow was scheduled to take his gruel. Somebody unknown that buzzed that book at Lathom's head. In such circumstances, D'Arcy would have owned up like a shot: and he was accustomed to judging others by himself: indeed he was surprised that the fellow, whoever he was, had not owned up at once, when the sentence was passed on another.

He had little doubt that the truth would come out: the wish, no doubt, being father to the thought! Anyhow, he was not going to take that undeserved flogging, if he could help it. And as the only way to avoid it was to get out of St. Jim's and plunge into the wide world, he had made the plunge.

But he was not quite without a plan. He could not go home: and he had to find some refuge while he was on the run. No doubt it was because a cricket match with Greyfriars School was shortly due, a topic much discussed in the studies, that he had thought of Greyfriars.

It was far away—on the other side of Kent: far enough to be a safe refuge from pursuit. He knew many fellows there: Harry Wharton, who captained the Greyfriars junior side, and his friends: he was, in fact, on the friendliest terms with the "Famous Five" of Greyfriars. No doubt they would be surprised to receive such a visitor in term time. But if they were permitted to take him in, and put him up for a few days, he had no doubt that they would willingly do so: and that would be that. If that plan proved impracticable, he would at least be a safe distance from St. Jim's, and he would have to think of something else. But Greyfriars School was his first objective.

In the meantime, he was lost at midnight in a wilderness of lanes, and hardly able to put one weary foot before another.

He was hungry, too: even Baggy Trimble had never been more anxious for a meal. The thought of supper and bed haunted him like the mirage in the desert.

He halted, and looked over a low gate into the moonlit field. There, at a little distance, stood a caravan: and the bright moonlight showed that it was not a gipsy caravan: it was quite a large and handsomely-painted vehicle. Some caravanner had camped in that meadow: and Arthur Augustus gazed at the van with longing eyes.

No light was to be seen in it. Doubtless the caravanner had turned into his bunk long ago. Arthur Augustus was a very considerate fellow: and he felt some hesitation in waking a stranger up at that hour of the night. But he was tired, and hungry, weary to the wide: and a caravanner, after all, was likely to be hospitable. He might be a very nice fellow, to the extent of offering the way-worn wanderer a bunk in the caravan. If not quite so nice as that, he might offer him something in the way of supper. At the very least, he would put him on his way, telling him where to find an inn, or a village, or a farmhouse, or some inhabited building, in that apparently uninhabited county. For a good many minutes Arthur Augustus looked over the gate, debating in his mind whether to knock up the caravanner, or amble onward on his weary way. Finally he decided on the former course, opened the gate, and walked into the meadow.

At a distance from the van, where willows and beeches bordered the further side of the meadow, a horse was tethered—evidently the horse that belonged to the caravan. Arthur Augustus glimpsed it in the moonlight in the thick grass. The horse was sleeping: and so, apparently, was the occupant of the van, for there was no sound, and no movement within, as the St. Jim's junior reached it. Once more he hesitated: but his mind was made up, and he knocked at the door.

Knock!

There was no reply from within.

KNOCK!

He rapped more loudly. This time the knock evoked a response: there was a sound of stirring. The occupant of the van had awakened. But the door did not open, and no voice called: and for the third time, Arthur Augustus knocked.

Then a voice came: a deep, gruff voice that did not sound encouraging.

"Who's that?"

"Pway excuse me for wakin' you up!" called back Arthur Augustus, "I am vewy sowwy to do so, at this houah of the night—"

"Go away!"

"Weally, sir—"

"Get out of it."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus had fancied, and hoped, that it might be a very nice hospitable sort of caravanner in the van. This did not sound like it!

"What do you want?" barked the gruff voice. "Who are you? You are trespassing in this field! I don't want any tramps here! Get out."

"I am not a twamp!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, indignantly. "I have lost my way—"

"Go and find it, then."

"I should be vewy glad to do so, if I could," said poor Arthur Augustus. "But it is vewy late, and I am vewy tired, and—"

"If I come out to you, I shall bring a stick with me."

"Oh, cwikey!"

Obviously, that caravanner was not nice at all! By no stretch of the imagination could his remarks be regarded as hospitable.

"I've had enough trouble with tramps hanging about thieving," went on the gruff voice. "Get out of it! If I come out to you with this stick, you'll be sorry you woke me up."

"I wepeat that I am not a twamp—"

"Clear off!"

"I am vewy sowwy that I have twoubled you at all," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great indignation.

"You'll be sorrier if I come out with a stick! I'll break it on you if you don't clear off."

"I shall certainly cleah off, and I wegwet vewy much that I have woken up a person with such vewy bad mannahs! I wegard you with contempt!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You can go and eat coke! Wats!"

And with that, the swell of St. Jim's turned his back on the

inhospitable caravan, and walked away towards the gate.

But he stopped again. His tired legs almost refused to walk. To resume his midnight tramp was really impossible. He had to rest: and his rebuff at the caravan left him no choice: he had to pass the remainder of that night in the open air. So instead of going out into the road again, he crossed the meadow to the clump of trees at the further end, passing the sleeping horse. It was a warm and pleasant summer night: and by that time, the weary schoolboy could almost have slept in a snow-drift. He groped his way under the shade of the trees, selected a spot at the foot of a spreading beech, and sat down, with his back to the trunk. And in less than a minute, he was sleeping as soundly as he had ever slept in his dormitory at St. Jim's.

Thieves in the Night!

“**Q**UIET, Ikey!”

“Oo’s making a row?”

“Well, quiet! If that bloke in the van wakes up, we’ve had it! I don’t want no more of that big stick of his’n.”

“Nor don’t I, Joe ’Arris! But he won’t ’ear nothing from ’ere! We got to wake the ’orse! We can’t lead him away fast asleep, can wē?”

“Oh, don’t be a fool, Ikey! Mind he don’t whinny.”

“That codger wouldn’t ’ear ’im from ’ere if he did.”

“Mind he don’t, all the same! Can’t ’ardly see the brute in this ’ere dark! Mind you don’t stumble over ’im, Ikey.”

“You mind you don’t, Joe ’Arris!”

Arthur Augustus D’Arcy fancied, at first, that he was dreaming this. In that dark spot, under the thick black shadow of the beech, he did not expect to be awakened, long after midnight, by the sound of whispering voices close at hand.

He had slept like a top! But he was awake now, or half-awake, listening drowsily to the voices that came from the darkness.

He blinked into the gloom.

He could see nothing. Out on the meadow, the moonlight was almost as bright as day. Under the thick branches it was black as a hat.

But he realised that at least two persons were quite close to him, between him and the horse sleeping in the grass.

He sat staring, and seeing nothing, and the husky whispering voices ran on, not six or seven feet away: the speakers evidently quite unaware that anyone was there in the dark. A sound of stumbling came to his ears.

"Look out for that there rope, Joe!"

"You 'ad to fall over it, Ikey."

"Think I'm a blinking cat to see in the blinking dark?" hissed Ikey. "Ow's a bloke to see a rope in this 'ere grass, I'd like to know!"

"It's the 'orse's tether! Course he would be tethered! You might 'ave knowed he would be tethered."

"Oh, pack it up! I've 'urt my knee."

"Blow your knee!" grunted Joe Harris.

"I've a good mind to chuck it! So I would, if that old codger in the van hadn't laid his stick round me this afternoon, when he caught me looking into his blinking van. Making out a covey was going to pinch something."

"So you was, wasn't you?"

"Oh, shut up! Are we goin' to pinch that 'orse or not? If we are, shut up your tater-trap and get on with it."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, inaudibly.

He was wide-awake now.

Dimly, like shadows in the dark, he discerned two vague forms—those of Ikey and Joe Harris. From their words, and indeed from the fact that they had crept there stealthily at such an hour, it was quite plain what their intention was: they were there to steal the caravan horse. Apparently they had already had a spot of trouble with the caravanner at his camp that day: and one of them had contacted the big stick he had mentioned to Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus, peering into the dark, wondered what he should do. He was not feeling particularly amicable towards the caravanner, who had turned him away from the van so gruffly. On the other hand, he could hardly remain idle while a theft was carried out, under his very nose. These two rascals evidently intended to walk off the caravan horse, while its owner slept: a proceeding which Arthur Augustus could scarcely allow to proceed, if he could stop it.

"'Ere's the blinking 'orse!" came Joe Harris's whisper.

"Don't you go falling over 'im, Ikey!"

There was a low whinny in the gloom. The horse had

awakened at a touch, and its head was lifted.

"You get 'old of that 'alter, instead of jawing so much, Joe! Like 'im to start running, and give us a chase round the field?"

"He can't run while that rope's pegged."

"We got to get it loose to lead him 'orf, ain't we? 'Ere you are, I've un-'ooked it! Mind he don't cut! I can tell you that I ain't going chasing all over this medder in the middle of the night."

"He won't cut, while I've got 'old of the rope, so you can stow it, Ikey! And keep quiet! I can tell you that 'orse will be worth a good many quids to us if we can get him to the gipsy camp over at Woodley."

"We'll get 'im there all right, once we get him out of this blinking field without waking up that covey in the van. Keep him quiet!"

There was a whinny again, louder than before, as the horse was pulled up, and got on its legs. In the deep silence of the night, it might have been heard as far as the van near the gate, had the occupant been awake.

"Blow the brute!" muttered Ikey. "I've a good mind to give him a swipe, for making that row."

"Want 'im to make more, you idjit? Quiet!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose quietly to his feet. He could see the two sneak-thieves now. Joe Harris had the horse's halter in his hand, and had led him out from the shadows into the moonlit meadow, followed by Ikey.

Across the meadow, the gate stood open on the road. The two thieves had only to lead the horse quietly past the van, without alarming the caravanner, and they were safe with their prize. And but for the unexpected presence of a St. Jim's junior far from his school, Joe and Ikey undoubtedly would have got away with it. It was that unexpected presence that put "paid" to the plans of the horse-thieves.

Arthur Augustus was going to intervene. He simply could not let the caravan horse be stolen without intervening. But he realised that he had to be wary. The horse-thieves were two to one, and there was no doubt that they would knock Arthur Augustus out, without hesitation, if they found him in their way. But their utter unsuspectingness of his presence gave him a chance.

He drew a deep breath and made a sudden rush.

Joe Harris did not know who, or what, suddenly charged into him from under the shadowy trees, and sent him spinning. He gave a startled howl, and spun over in the grass, letting go the halter as he crashed.

Ikey uttered a shrill squeak of astonishment, his eyes popping.

Never had a couple of thieves in the night been taken so utterly by surprise.

Arthur Augustus did not lose a split second. He grabbed at the halter, caught it, and rushed on without stopping, the horse breaking into a gallop under the pull of the halter.

They tore across the field towards the caravan, leaving Joe Harris sitting in the grass, spluttering, and Ikey staring with popping eyes, almost gibbering in his amazement.

A Lodging for The Night !

THUMP! thump! thump!

Arthur Augustus thumped energetically on the door of the caravan.

He had reached it in a matter of moments. He had no doubt that the two horse-thieves would pursue him across the field: and it was urgent to wake the caravanner, and bring him out of the van with his big stick, before they came to close quarters. He thumped almost frantically, shouting as he thumped.

"Wake up! Pway wake up and come out! Do you heah?"

Thump! thump!

There was a sound of stirring within. Then the gruff voice Arthur Augustus had heard before boomed from the interior of the van in angry and exasperated tones.

"Who's that? What's that row?"

"It is I—pway come out at once—"

"You again?" Apparently the caravanner recognised the dulcet tones of the swell of St. Jim's. "You again, is it? If I come out to you—"

"Pway come out at once—"

"If I do, I won't leave a whole bone in you."

"Your horse—"

"Go away!"

"I tell you they are stealin' your horse—!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"What?"

"A paih of wascals are twyin' to steal your horse—"

"Rubbish! Get out, I tell you! Haven't I told you I won't have tramps hanging about? If I do come out, I'll—"

"Come out at once, and bring your stick;" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"By gum! I'll do that, if you won't go away, and you'll be sorry I did," came a howl.

Arthur Augustus was thankful to hear the man in the caravan moving at last. He was growling angrily as he moved: but he was moving.

The St. Jim's junior cast an anxious glance back across the moonlit meadow. He had saved the caravan-horse, so far: but if the horse-thieves ran him down before the caravanner emerged to the rescue, the game was up.

"Oh, cwikey! Help!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

Two dark figures were streaking across the meadow, towards him. Ikey and Joe had lost a minute or two, in their surprise: but evidently they had not given up hope of getting away with the horse, for they were coming on at a rapid run, and were now not a dozen yards distant.

"Help!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"You get the 'orse, Ikey, while I knock out that young codger!" breathed Joe Harris.

"Help!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

The caravan door opened.

A big burly man, with a coat on over his pyjamas, and a big stick in his hand, appeared in the moonlight. He did not look good-tempered. Perhaps being awakened twice in the middle of the night had not improved his temper. He looked, in fact, a very angry man.

"Now—!" he hooted, as he came out of the van with a jump.

Another moment or two, and Ikey and Joe would have reached Arthur Augustus. But at the sight of the big man with the stick they halted. Evidently they had no relish for either him or his big stick at close quarters.

"'Ook it, Ikey!" panted Joe Harris.

"Wotto!" breathed Ikey.

And they bolted.

The big man from the caravan stared at them, blankly: stared at Arthur Augustus with the horse, and stared at Joe and Ikey again. Then, with the big stick uplifted in his hand, he gave chase, uttering a roar of wrath as he raced on the track of Joe and Ikey.

They put on speed, running for the gateway. They had hoped to run with the horse: but they seemed glad enough now to run without him. They fairly flew, with the big caravanner raging on their track.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, watching the chase.

"Yurrooop!" came a loud yell from Joe Harris, as the big stick cracked on his shoulders. He bounded out of the gateway into the road.

"Wow!" came a wild splutter from Ikey, as the next lick from the stick landed on the back of his head. "Yow! Ow! Wow!" He bounded after his comrade.

The big man pranced after them into the road, brandishing the stick. Joe and Ikey were streaking away in the moonlight, both going strong.

They vanished into the night.

"Ugh!" grunted the big man, and he came back into the meadow. He stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, holding the horse by the halter. "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

"Weally, sir, I should wathah think that you could see what I am doin'," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, warmly. "I am savin' your horse fwom bein' pinched by those two wascals—"

"You don't look like a tramp."

"I twust not!" said Arthur Augustus, indignantly.

"It was you woke me up before—"

"Yaas, wathah."

"You look like a schoolboy! What are you doing, out in the middle of the night?"

"I have lost my way—"

"Young ass!" grunted the caravanner.

"Weally, sir—"

"Give me that halter!"

Arthur Augustus handed it over. The big man proceeded to tether the horse to the van.

"Safer there," he grunted. "I've seen those two rogues before—they were hanging about the van in the afternoon, and I gave one of them a taste of the stick. Rogues and vagabonds! Ugh! You've been hanging about ever since you woke me up before?"

"I have been campin' undah those twees, and I was asleep

when those two wogues came aftah the horse and woke me up—”

“Oh! Lucky!” grunted the caravanner. “Silly young ass to lose your way at night, and camp out in the open. Might get rheumatism. The horse will be safe there, if they come back. Ugh! Hold on!” he added, as Arthur Augustus was turning away. “You’ve saved my horse from being pinched. If you’re not a tramp—”

“Weally, my dear sir, I assuah you that I am not a twamp—”

“Well, you don’t look it! Get into the van,” grunted the big man. “There’s two bunks—you can have one for the night.”

“Bai Jove! I should be vewy glad to accept your hospitality, sir, if it will not bothah you—”

“It will!” grunted the big man. “But you can sleep in the van all the same. You’ve saved my horse for me, haven’t you?”

“Yaas, wathah! But—”

“Well, get into the van, and don’t talk so much.”

Arthur Augustus hesitated for a moment. The caravanner’s manners certainly did not seem very polished. But a bunk to sleep in for the night was very attractive. He decided to overlook the big man’s lack of polish, and accept the gruff invitation.

“Thank you vewy much, sir,” he said, gracefully. And he stepped into the caravan.

The big man followed him in, and shut the door. He lighted a swinging lamp, and in its light, stared at Arthur Augustus again.

“Had any supper?” he asked.

“No!”

“Hungry?”

“Yaas.”

Grunt, from the big man. He opened a locker, and produced bread and ham.

“Here you are,” he said.

“Weally, sir, I do not desiah to give you so vewy much twouble—”

“Don’t talk so much.”

“Oh! All wight!”

As Arthur Augustus was almost ravenous by that time, he

really preferred to eat rather than to talk. He sat on the bunk and demolished the bread and ham at a rate that Baggy Trimble could not have excelled. The big man eyed him while he ate.

"Where were you going when you lost your way?" he asked.

"I was headin' for Gweyfwiahs School—"

"Never heard of it. Where is it?"

"Somewhah near Margate or Wamsgate or Folkestone or somewhah—"

"You young ass!"

"Weally, sir—"

"You've set out on a fifty-mile walk, what?"

"I had a bike, but a howwid wottah pinched it—"

"That's the sort of young ass you look.

"Weally, you know—"

"Oh, go to bed and go to sleep!" grunted the caravanner.

The big man threw off his coat, blew out the lamp, and rolled into his bunk. Arthur Augustus had barely time to get into the other bunk before the lamp went out. Undoubtedly that caravanner was a little unceremonious.

"I am vewy much obliged to you, sir!" he said in the darkness. "This is evah so much bettah than the hard gwound. It is weally vewy kind of you—"

"That will do!"

"But weally, my deah sir, I feel bound to express my gwatitude for offerin' me a night's lodgin' in this vewy comfortable bunk—"

"Will you let a man go to sleep?"

"Oh! Yaas, wathah! I wegwet vewy much that your night's west has been so vewy much disturbed—"

"Shut up!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus shut up.

What Did Cardew Know?

“**W**HERE is he?” muttered Jack Blake.

“Goodness knows!” sighed Herries.

“Railton must have asked the police to look for him,” said Dig. “Bound to, when a fellow runs away from school.”

“If he has, they haven’t found him.”

“Poor old Gussy!” said Tom Merry. “Fancy old Gussy taking the bit between his teeth and bolting like that!”

“Well, he wasn’t going to be flogged!” said Blake.

“What the dickens did he expect, after chucking a book at his beak’s head?” said Monty Lowther. “You can’t buzz things at a beak, and nothing said.”

“Hardly!” agreed Manners.

“Haven’t I told you that I heard what he said on the phone to Railton yesterday?” hooted Blake. “He told Railton he never buzzed a book at Lathom.”

“Um!” said Tom, dubiously. “Sure you heard it right?”

“I heard nearly every word! Gussy said he never did it.”

“Well, if he said he never did it, he never did!” agreed Tom Merry. “But it was Gussy’s book, and Gussy was on the spot, and he’d just had lines from Lathom, and—and—and—!”

He paused, and shook his head.

It was the day after Arthur Augustus D’Arcy’s flight. Twenty-four hours had elapsed since the swell of St. Jim’s had departed so suddenly. During that space of time, there had been no news of him.

That Railton, or the Head, had invoked the aid of the authorities to find the runaway, seemed fairly certain. As D’Arcy had revealed the fact that he had gone into Kent, they knew in what direction to look. But if they had looked,

evidently they had had no luck, for there was not a spot of news of the fugitive.

In the junior day-room, the chums of Study No. 6, and the Terrible Three, were discussing it. Cardew, stretched elegantly in the bay window-seat, listened to the discussion, with a faint smile on his face. Other fellows were discussing it, too: in fact, "Gussy on the run" was almost the sole topic at St. Jim's that day. It really was quite an unprecedented happening.

A flogging was rare, very rare, at St. Jim's. In the stern old days they had been frequent enough: but the stern old days were long past. Only on very rare occasions was the Head-master's birch featured in the proceedings at St. Jim's. But on those rare occasions, it certainly had never been known for the destined victim to clear out, and dodge the flogging by the simple expedient of disappearing from the school. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was, in fact, making history!

His friends could not help feeling worried and troubled about him. Arthur Augustus had put through that telephone-call chiefly to relieve their minds on his account: but they did not feel very much relieved.

Arthur Augustus, certainly, had great faith in himself, and complete confidence in his own tact and judgment. But his friends did not share either the faith or the confidence. Their view was that the swell of St. Jim's had gone forth into the wide world rather like a babe in the wood!

"I know it sounds thick!" muttered Blake. "Gussy had a translation to do, and when we went out of gates, he was going to do it. He must have had his book with him: and that book was chucked at Lathom. But—"

"If it was anybody but Gussy, we should think he was fibbing," confessed Herries. "But Gussy wouldn't."

"Never!" said Dig.

"But if Gussy didn't buzz that book, who did?" asked Manners.

"Ask me another!" grunted Blake.

"And how did he get hold of it?" went on Manners. "You left Gussy to mug up that translation. Where was he going to do it?"

"He said he was going to sit under a tree and mug it up."

"Well, that's where he was," said Manners, "and then Lathom came along and got the book on the napper."

Blake glared at Manners of the Shell.

"I've told you that Gussy told Railton he never did it!" he hooted. "Think he would tell a lie about it?"

"No! But—!" Manners shook his head. "Can't make it out! The beaks have made up their minds, anyway."

"He, he, he!" That fag giggle came from Baggy Trimble, who was listening-in. "I say, everybody knows that D'Arcy did it. Of course, a fellow would say he didn't!"

Blake transferred his glare to the fat Baggy.

"So you think that D'Arcy was telling Railton a crammer over the phone, do you?" he growled.

"Of course he was!" said Baggy. "Must be an ass to think he could pull a beak's leg about it. Lathom as good as saw him at it. He copped him and marched him straight off to the Head. D'Arcy hasn't much sense, but he ought to have sense enough to know that it's no good spinning a yarn like that. Bet you Railton never believed him—"

"Perhaps he didn't," said Blake. "But we do—and if you don't—"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Baggy. Evidently Baggy didn't!

"Kick him!" growled Herries.

"Just going to," Blake jumped up. "You fat tick—!"

"Look here, you know—I say—keep off—yaroooooh!" roared Baggy. "Oh, crikey! Why, you swob—yarooooh!"

Baggy fled for his life.

Jack Blake sat down again with a frowning brow. There was some solace in kicking Trimble: but Blake was aware that Baggy was not the only fellow in the House who held similar views. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's word was, as a rule, regarded as being as good as gold; but facts, after all, were facts. And the facts seemed to speak for themselves. There was no doubt in the mind of Mr. Lathom, or Railton, or the Head. Most of the fellows took it for granted that there was no doubt about it. Indeed, D'Arcy's own friends had had no doubt about it, till Blake had heard the telephone-talk in Railton's study. But Gussy's own pals, at all events, could not and would not believe that he had done what he denied having done.

"It beats me," said Tom Merry, shaking his head again. "I

can't imagine old Gussy coughing up a fib, but—"

"But—?" murmured Manners.

"If Gussy never buzzed that book at Lathom, somebody else did!" remarked Monty Lowther. "If that's so, he's keeping it jolly dark."

"Well, he would!" came Cardew's voice, from the window-seat. "Nobody wants a floging, any more than D'Arcy wanted one."

The juniors looked round at Cardew.

"You believe that D'Arcy never did it?" asked Tom.

Cardew nodded.

"Quite sure of it!" he answered. "Isn't D'Arcy my relation, and don't I know him like a book? Wild horses wouldn't drag a whopper out of him. If he told Railton he never did it, he never did!"

"Pity Railton can't see that!" grunted Blake.

"Well, Railton doesn't know him as we do," said Cardew, with a grin. "D'Arcy's the man to stick his head into any trouble that's going—whether it's buzzing Virgil at a beak's napper, or stickin' his silly nose in the way of an ink-ball in the form-room. But he isn't the man to tell crammers about it. Fact is, I never believed it was D'Arcy at all, from the start. Wouldn't he think it bad form to buzz anythin' at a beak—and isn't he a whale on good form? He would no more have buzzed that book at Lathom, than he would have walked in the quad in a yellow necktie with pink spots."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snapped Blake.

"If it wasn't D'Arcy—" began Lowther.

"I've told you there's no 'if' about that!" snorted Blake.

"Well, if it wasn't—"

"Blow your silly 'ifs'."

"Well, as it wasn't, then," amended Monty Lowther. "As it wasn't D'Arcy, it must have been some other fellow—"

"Did you work that out in your head?" asked Blake, sarcastically. "Bright fellows in the Shell, and no mistake."

"Keep it's ickle temper!" said Monty, soothingly. "What I mean is, the fellow who did it must be a frightful rotter—"

Cardew raised his eyebrows.

"Why?" he asked. "Is there somethin' specially iniquitous in buzzin' a book at a napper—even a beak's napper?"

"Yes—when it's another fellow's book, and that fellow

gets landed for it," said Lowther. "I suppose there's black sheep in every flock, and we've got a few here—but a fellow who would deliberately land a thing like that on another chap must be an out-and-out rotter—the absolute limit. Even a worm like Trimble would jib at that."

A faint colour came into Cardew's cheeks.

"Put like that, it does sound pretty rotten," he remarked, slowly. "But it mayn't have been quite like that. Chap might have picked up that book by sheer chance, because it happened to be handy when he wanted something to chuck at Lathom, and never thought for a minute about D'Arcy at all—"

"Oh!" said Tom Merry. "I suppose that's possible—"

"Everythin's possible in this world!" said Cardew, gravely. "I shouldn't wonder if it was somethin' like that. D'Arcy, of course, would be right on the spot when Lathom got it—isn't he always in the wrong place at the wrong time? It was just his luck."

"Well, if that's how it was, the chap may not be such a rotter after all," said Lowther. "But if he isn't a rotter, he would own up now that poor old Gussy has got it in the neck."

"Must be a worm," said Herries.

"But who the dickens was it, then?" said Manners. "You seem to have been thinking it out, Cardew. Got any idea who it was?"

"I've got an idea, at least," drawled Cardew.

Six pairs of eyes were fixed on him.

"You've got an idea who it was—not Gussy?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Quite!"

"Well, who, then?" asked all the six, together.

Cardew shook his head.

"I'd rather not mention names," he said. He rose from the window-seat. "The chap I'm thinkin' of is a bit of a rotter, but he has his good points, and he might own up. The difficulty is that, naturally, he wouldn't want to sample the Head's birch. It's not the sort of thing that any fellow would jump at with both feet, is it?"

"He ought to own up," said Tom.

"Of course he ought! But what a lot of us forget to do what we ought!" sighed Cardew. "I hope that fellow will

own up—he certainly ought to. No doubt at all about that—he ought to! If he could think of some dodge for gettin' out of the floggin', I believe he'd do it like a shot. I'm goin' to argue it out with him, at any rate.

"That means that you jolly well know who he is!" exclaimed Lowther.

"I've got a pretty clear idea, anyway, and I'm goin' to put it to him that if he's got a rag of decency, he will go to the Head about it," said Cardew. "Can't answer for the result: but I'm goin' to do my best."

With that, he strolled out of the day-room: leaving Tom Merry and Co. looking at one another uncertainly.

"Gas!" grunted Blake.

"Well, I don't know," said Tom Merry, thoughtfully. "You never know how to take Cardew—he's always leg-pulling in one way or another. But if he knows who it was, and can get him to own up—!"

"If!" grunted Blake.

"Well, we shall see!" said Tom.

Cardew had certainly excited the hopes of Arthur Augustus's friends. But whether he was in earnest, or whether all this was only some more of his airy persiflage, they could not tell. They could only wait and see whether anything would come of it.

11

An Old Acquaintance !

“OH!” gasped Arthur Augustus D’Arcy.

He was taken quite by surprise.

He was sitting on the stile in Friardale Lane, hardly half a mile from his destination, Greyfriars School.

It was the second day of Arthur Augustus’s odyssey. He was now, at last, near his destination.

He had had, after all, a good night’s rest, in the bunk in the caravan. The gruff caravanner had provided him with breakfast, in the morning. Gruff as he was, quite lacking in Gussy’s own polish of manner, he was not insensible to the service D’Arcy had rendered him in saving the caravan horse from the thievish hands of Ikey and Joe Harris. After breakfast, he had given the swell of St. Jim’s directions to the nearest railway station, which he had reached after walking several miles and taking several wrong turnings.

There were several changes of trains, and Arthur Augustus had missed one or two, and spent a good deal of time that day on platforms and in waiting-rooms. But at long last he had changed at Lantham Junction, changed again at Courtfield, and arrived at Friardale: and was now, at long, long last, on the final lap of his journey.

It was a pleasant walk along the leafy lane, under the sun of late afternoon. Arthur Augustus stepped out cheerfully: rather hoping that he might fall in with some fellows he knew, before arriving at the school. Class would be over at Greyfriars, by that time, and very likely Harry Wharton or some of his friends might be out of gates. Half-way to the school, he came on the stile, which gave access to the footpath in Friardale Wood: and sat down on it, to rest for a few minutes before going further.

It seemed quite a solitary spot. Nobody was about, and

Arthur Augustus had the stile, and the beech that shaded it, all to himself. Behind him was the footpath and the deep dusky wood: and if any pedestrian had arrived from that direction, Arthur Augustus was ready to get aside and give him passage. But he had naturally not expected a pedestrian to arrive like a bullet from a rifle, and crash into him and send him spinning off the stile. That was what happened.

Crash!

Bump!

Arthur Augustus, naturally, had no eyes in the back of his head, and so did not see who or what was coming. A fat figure, shooting suddenly from the footpath at the stile, took him quite by surprise.

"Oh!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! Who—what—Oh, crumbs—oooooh!"

He rolled off the stile, and sat suddenly on the grass by the roadside. A fat figure rolled over the stile in frantic haste, and sat also, spluttering for breath.

"Urrrrrrrggh!" gurgled the newcomer. "Oh, crikey! Urrrrrrrggh!"

"Oh, scissahs!"

"Urrgh! Oooogh! Wooogh!"

"Bai Jove!—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You uttah ass—"

"Groooogh!"

It was quite a duet. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat breathless and a little bewildered, staring at a fat schoolboy. The fat schoolboy sat blinking at him, over a big pair of spectacles that slanted on a little fat nose.

"Oh, lor'!" spluttered the fat one. "Is—is—is it coming?"

"Eh? Is what coming?"

"The bull!"

"Bai Jove! Is there a bull?"

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet. He realised now why the fat schoolboy had hurtled across the stile in so terrific a hurry. Apparently there was a bull in the wood!

He stared across the stile into the dusky footpath under the branches. There was nothing to be seen of a bull.

"Is it coming?" spluttered the fat schoolboy.

"Nothin' is comin'," answered Arthur Augustus, "and I weally think you might look where you are goin', and wefrain fwom knockin' a fellow head ovah heels off a stile, you ass."

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and gave the fat fellow, still spluttering in the grass, a severe look. He had had rather a disconcerting shock. As he looked at the newcomer, recognition dawned in his face. He had seen that fat fellow before. He had, in fact, seen him more than once when the St. Jim's cricketers were at Greyfriars for the matches. Certainly, he had quite forgotten the existence of Billy Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove. But he knew him now that he saw him again. Bunter's circumference, at least, was not easily forgotten.

"Bai Jove! It's Puntah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

The fat junior blinked up at him, setting his spectacles straight on his little fat nose.

"Eh?" he ejaculated. He jerked a handkerchief, much in need of a wash, from his pocket, and mopped a fat brow streaming with perspiration. "Oh!" He recognised Arthur Augustus in his turn. "You! You're D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, Puntah."

"My name isn't Punter—!" snapped the fat junior.

"Sowwy—I mean Gwuntah—"

"Bunter!" hooted the Owl of Greyfriars.

"Oh! Yaas! I wemembah now! Buntah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "Weally, Buntah, even if there is a bull about, you need not have cwashed into a fellow's back and knocked him ovah—"

"Think I was going to let him get me?" gasped Bunter. "I didn't even see you—sitting there in a fellow's way! I say, can you see that bull?"

"I cannot see anythin' of a bull, Buntah." Arthur Augustus gave another glance into the wood, and sat down on the stile again. "He cannot be comin' this way."

"Well, all right, then." Billy Bunter heaved himself to his feet, still mopping a streaming brow. "It's old Giles's bull—the black bull they keep in the field next to the wood—somebody must have left a gate open—I can tell you, that bull's jolly dangerous."

"Did it attack you, Buntah?"

"Think I waited for that?" snorted Bunter. "I can jolly

well tell you I bolted as soon as I saw it. Think I wanted to be bored by a gull—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I mean gored by a bull. Sure he ain't coming?"

"Quite suah!" said Arthur Augustus, with another glance into the dusky footpath that wound away among the trees. "It is all wight Buntah."

Billy Bunter cast an anxious blink over the stile, through his big spectacles. Even with the stile between, he did not seem to feel any too safe from Farmer Giles's black bull. However, there was no sign of a bull to be seen. Apparently he had not, after all, chased Bunter.

"Ooogh! I'm all out of breath!" gasped Bunter. "I jolly well ran for it, you know! Of course, I'm not afraid of a bull," added Bunter.

"Not weally?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. From the frantic manner in which Bunter had hurtled over the stile, he had quite a different impression.

"Oh! No! Not at all! You're all right here, on the safe side of the stile. You needn't be frightened, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove! I am not at all fwightened, Buntah."

"Bet you would be, if you saw that bull—"

"Weally, Buntah—"

"What are you doing over here, in the middle of term?" asked Bunter, blinking at him. "Got an extra holiday? Wish I had—I'd be jolly glad to get away from old Quelch for a bit! By gum, though," added Bunter, as if his mention of his Form-master's name had reminded him of that gentleman's existence, "I wonder if anything happened to Quelch!"

And he turned his little round eyes and his big round spectacles in the direction of the shady footpath again.

"Quelch?" repeated Arthur Augustus. He remembered the name of the Remove master at Greyfriars. His friends, Harry Wharton and Co., were in Mr. Quelch's form: as was also the fat junior now blinking at him through his big spectacles.

"My beak," explained Bunter. "I expect you've seen him at Greyfriars when you were there—long and bony, with a face like a hatchet, and eyes like a pair of gimlets—"

"I wemembah Mr. Quelch," said Arthur Augustus. "But—"

"See anything of him?" asked Bunter. "I expect he bolted, as I did! Must have, if he had any sense."

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Is your Form-mastah in the wood, Buntah?" he exclaimed.

"I passed him on the footpath, you see. I'd been over to Cliff House to see my sister Bessie, and I was coming back, and—"

"Yaas, yaas, but Mr. Quelch—?"

"I'd just passed him on the footpath, when the bull rushed out from the trees. I wonder if he got after Quelch!" said Bunter. "I thought the brute was after me, but—"

"Bai Jove! Did you wun away and leave him to it, Buntah?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, really, D'Arcy—!"

"The bull may be attackin' him! Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus slipped from the stile, on the inner side. Billy Bunter blinked at him in astonishment.

"I say, better keep on this side of the stile, D'Arcy," he squeaked. "Suppose the bull comes this way—I say, where are you going?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not reply. He was running up the foot-path into the dusky wood. Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, followed him in amazement. The fact that a middle-aged gentleman had been left at close quarters with a savage bull seemed to have more effect on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy than it had on William George Bunter.

"I say, come back!" yelled Bunter. "You'll run into the bull! I say, have you gone crackers? I tell you that bull's fierce!"

There was no reply from the St. Jim's junior. He disappeared up the leafy footpath, leaving Billy Bunter blinking.

"Well, my hat!" said Bunter, blankly. "Must be batchy! Catch me going anywhere near that bull! I say, D'Arcy!"

But answer there came none. Arthur Augustus was gone. Billy Bunter gave a last blink up the footpath, gave his perspiring brow a final mop with a limp handkerchief, and rolled away up the lane in the direction of Greyfriars School.

Arthur Augustus to the Rescue!

“HELP!” yelled Mr. Quelch.

Henry Samuel Quelch, a grave school-master, on the shady side of fifty, a calm and dignified gentleman in every way, was not given to yelling. Nobody at Greyfriars School, certainly, had ever heard him yell. Harry Wharton and Co. of the Remove, would have been as surprised to hear a yell from Quelch, as from the bust of Socrates in his study. A wild and frantic yell was the very last thing anyone who knew Mr. Quelch would have expected him to utter.

But circumstances alter cases. Probably it was the first time, since he had been a school-master, that Quelch had yelled. But it was also the first time that he had been cornered and attacked by a savage bull. Now he not only yelled, but yelled on his very top note. A Red Indian on the war-path had simply nothing on the Remove master of Greyfriars, in the matter of yelling, at that exciting moment.

“Help!”

It was no wonder that Quelch yelled, as matters stood. For unless his top-note reached other ears, and brought assistance Quelch was likely to fare very badly. He was in a situation that might have made any middle-aged gentleman’s head swim.

Near the footpath through Friardale Wood was the wood-cutter’s hut, where old Mr. Joyce piled logs and faggots. It had a slanting roof of corrugated iron. Mr. Quelch was clinging, with both hands, to the edge of that roof. He had

reached it with a jump, hoping to clamber on the roof, and get out of the reach of the savage animal that was bellowing behind him. It was his only possible refuge. A desperate bound, of which he would hardly have been capable at a less exciting moment, had enabled him to get a grip on the edge. But he could not drag himself up on the slanting roof. He strove with every ounce of his strength, but the effort was beyond him. He hung there, with dangling legs, and the bellow of the bull in his ears.

"Help!"

Quelch's yell rang far and wide.

No doubt the farmer's men were in search of that bull. Mr. Giles's black bull was far too dangerous an animal to leave at large. But if they were searching for him, they had not found him yet. For here he was, pawing the earth, and bellowing, only a few yards from Mr. Quelch, as the Remove master of Greyfriars clung to the edge of the slanting roof and yelled for help.

Quelch's long legs dangled several feet from the ground. Had he remained on terra firma, the bull would have had him. Had the bull charged at those dangling legs, he would no doubt have pinned them to the wooden wall of the hut. But that idea did not seem to occur to the savage animal. At the moment, he stood pawing the earth, and bellowing, a couple of yards away, his fierce red eyes fixed on the unfortunate form-master.

How long he would keep off, Mr. Quelch could not know. Neither did he know how long he could hang upon his precarious perch. But he knew that it could not be very long. Already his arms were aching terribly under the strain. And as soon as he lost his hold, and fell, the bull would be upon him. There was not the slightest doubt about that: and the prospect was blood-curdling. Really, it was no wonder that Mr. Quelch yelled like a Red Indian on the war-path.

"Help!"

That desperate yell reached the ears of a slim schoolboy speeding up the footpath. An eyeglass gleamed through the trees at the alarming scene.

"Bai Jove! Heah he is!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

And he turned from the footpath towards the woodcutter's hut.

"Help!"

"Hang on, sir!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I'm comin'."

The sound of a human voice, at that moment, was a glad sound to the ears of Henry Samuel Quelch. Clutching desperately at the edge of the corrugated iron, holding on with aching fingers and aching arms, he twisted his head round and stared at Arthur Augustus as he appeared among the trees.

The bull stared round, too, with a deadly glare at the St. Jim's junior. Any victim that came to hand was welcome to Mr. Giles's black bull, in his present temper.

Arthur Augustus waved his hand, as the Remove master looked round.

"I'm comin'!" he shouted.

Up to that moment, Mr. Quelch had been thinking only of his own danger. He would have been glad indeed to see the farmer and his men. But the sight of a schoolboy venturing recklessly into peril was no comfort to him. Dire as was his own peril, his sense of duty as a school-master did not desert him.

"Go away!" he called out.

"What?"

"You cannot help me! The bull will attack you! Go away!" panted Mr. Quelch.

"Bai Jove!"

"Run for your life, you foolish boy!"

"Weally, sir—"

"Go! Go, while you have time! Go."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not heed. He watched the bull very warily, prepared to dodge a rush. As a matter of fact, when he had rushed to the rescue on learning that the Remove master was in danger from the bull, Arthur Augustus had not had the faintest idea how he was going to help. He was going to help if he could, that was all. Billy Bunter had bolted: but Arthur Augustus was not the fellow to bolt in such circumstances. He was going to help Quelch somehow: and, when he saw how the form-master was placed, he immediately decided how.

"It's all wight, sir—!" he called back.

"Go!" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "The bull will be upon you—"

"I'm goin' to help you, sir—"

"You cannot! Save yourself, you foolish lad."

There was a fierce bellow from the bull, and he rushed. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with great alacrity, skipped round a massive oak, and dodged him. The bull careered past: and Arthur Augustus shot like an arrow towards the wood-cutter's hut.

There was another roar, and a fierce trampling of hoofs, as the black bull whirled round and charged again after him.

But Arthur Augustus was swift. His feet seemed hardly to touch the ground as he flew. In a moment, or hardly more, he reached the hut, and made a spring. His hands gripped the edge of the slanting roof, and he swung himself up with the agility of a monkey. What was far beyond the powers of a middle-aged school-master, was well within those of a slim, lithe, active schoolboy. Arthur Augustus almost flew through the air, and landed on the tin roof. A moment later, the bull was prancing and bellowing below. But the St. Jim's junior was on the slanting roof, safe out of his reach.

"Oh, cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he sat up, on the corrugated iron, and glanced back breathlessly at the bellowing bull.

It had been a close thing. But the St. Jim's junior was safe on the roof. He did not lose a moment. He crawled across to the spot where Mr. Quelch was clinging, and the Remove master stared up at him dizzily. It seemed to him almost like a miracle to see the schoolboy where he now was.

"All wight now, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Now I can help you on the woof, sir, and you will be all wight!"

Bellow, bellow, came from below!

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I—I cannot hold on much longer—if you can help me up, my dear, brave lad—"

"Yaas, wathah, sir."

Arthur Augustus bent over and grasped Mr. Quelch's collar. It was a little unceremonious: but it gave a good hold, and it was no time to stand on ceremony, with Quelch sinking from his hold, and the bull raging below. Taking a good grip, he dragged with all his strength.

Mr. Quelch, at the same time, exerted all his energy. Between his own efforts to clamber up, and D'Arcy's strong pull from above, it was done. Slowly but surely Mr. Quelch came up—he got his arms over the roof, and his chest on the edge: and then, with a final effort on his own part, and a final hefty pull from Arthur Augustus, he landed.

Bellow! bellow! bellow!

“Ooooh!” gasped Mr. Quelch.

He sprawled on the roof, utterly spent and breathless. For some minutes he was quite unable to speak. He lay on the corrugated iron, pumping in breath. Arthur Augustus sat and panted. And the bull glared up at both of them, with red, fierce eyes, and bellowed.

13

Bump for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

Five Remove fellows, in No. 1 Study at Greyfriars, uttered that injunction all at once. It seemed to be a case of five souls with but a single thought: five hearts that beat as one!

"Oh, really, you fellows—!" remonstrated Billy Bunter.

"Shut the door after you!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Hook it!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The hookfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed fat Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

The Famous Five, of the Greyfriars Remove, were at tea in No. 1 Study. But tea did not occupy all their attention. They were talking cricket. And there was a wrinkle of thought in the brow of Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. He had, in fact, a problem on his mind in connection with a cricket match due on the morrow: and at such a time Billy Bunter, always superfluous, was more so than ever. He waved an impatient hand at the fat Owl of the Remove, blinking in at the doorway through his big spectacles.

Billy Bunter did not heed. There was a cake on the tea-table: and if that cake did not absorb the whole attention of Harry Wharton and Co. at least it had deep interest for Bunter. He rolled into the study.

"I say, you fellows, I haven't had my tea!" said the fat

Owl, reproachfully. "I say, I've been over to Cliff House for nothing. Bessie's hamper hadn't come."

"And so the poor dog had none!" remarked Frank Nugent.

"And I've jolly nearly been bored by a gull, coming back—I mean gored by a bull! Old Giles's bull is loose in Friardale Wood, and I only just got away from him!" said Bunter. "I jolly well ran for my life."

"The question is, who's going to take Smithy's place," said Harry Wharton, apparently no more interested in the bull than in Bunter. "He had to go and crock his wrist just before the match with the Shell. He can't bat tomorrow."

"Rotten luck," said Johnny Bull. "We want our best men to stand up to the Shell! Hobby's lot are in tremendous form."

"Well, Smithy's out," said Bob Cherry. "He won't be able to handle a bat again for a week. I expect he'll be all right again in time for the St. Jim's match—but tomorrow—!"

"I say, you fellows—!"

"You still here, Bunter? Chuck something at him, somebody."

"Oh, really, Wharton! Can't you shut up for a minute about cricket, when a fellow's just had a frightfully narrow escape from a bull and comes in hungry and tea's over in hall, and—"

"Help yourself to a slice of that cake, and shut up."

It was not a very gracious invitation. But Billy Bunter did not require an invitation to be graceful. So long as he was allowed to get at the cake, that was enough for Bunter.

He cut a generous slice, and shut up—temporarily. But shutting up was not really in Bunter's line. He shut up only long enough to cram his capacious mouth with cake. Then he re-started after the brief interval, his voice coming a little muffled through cake.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Dry up!"

"But I say—who do you think I met in the lane," said Bunter, regardless of grammar, and munching cake. "That chap D'Arcy—!"

"D'Arcy!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"That St. Jim's chap," said Bunter. "Must have an extra holiday at his school. I barged a fellow off the stile, you

know, getting over in a hurry—and it was that St. Jim's chap, D'Arcy."

The Famous Five all looked at Bunter. They were interested at last. They all remembered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and the runs he had knocked up in their last match with St. Jim's.

"D'Arcy over here!" said Bob Cherry. "If he's got a holiday, maybe he's going to give us a look-in. Was he coming this way, Bunter?"

"Well, he was sitting on the stile, till I barged him off," said Bunter. "I'd have asked him, only he cut off so suddenly."

"Your face worried him?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Silly ass, you know," said Bunter, munching, "I told him the bull was loose in the wood, you know, and that it was old Giles's bull, jolly fierce, and he cut off up the footpath."

"He cut off up the footpath, after you'd told him that a bull was loose in the wood!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Off like a shot," said Bunter. "I called to him to come back, but he never even answered. I say, this is a jolly good cake! I'll have another slice, if you fellows don't mind."

"Look here, what do you mean, you fat ass?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "If Giles's bull is loose, he's jolly dangerous. Mean to say that D'Arcy went into the wood after you told him the bull was loose there?"

"He jolly well did!"

"Well, why?" asked Harry, staring at the fat Owl.

"Blessed if I know! He seemed to get excited all of a sudden, when I mentioned that Quelch was on the footpath—"

"Quelch!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Old Quelch" said Bunter. "I passed him on the footpath, you know. Did you say that I could have another slice? This is a jolly good cake! Not like the cakes I get from Bunter Court, but pretty good. I say—here! Leggo! Wharrer you shaking me like that for?" roared Bunter, as Harry Wharton jumped up, grasped a fat shoulder, and shook. "Yow-ow! Leggo! Ow!"

"You fat owl—"

"Urrrggh! Leggo!" yelled Bunter.

"You blithering chump!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Is

Quelch in the wood, with that bull loose there?"

"Urrrgh! Yes! I expect he bolted, same as I did," gurgled Bunter. "Leave off shaking me, you beast! You're making the cake go down the wrong way! Gurrngh!"

"And D'Arcy ran up the footpath when you told him?"

"Urrggh! Yes! Leago, will you?"

All the Famous Five were on their feet now. Not only tea, but even cricket was forgotten. If Mr. Quelch was on the footpath in Friardale Wood, with a savage bull loose on that footpath, the matter was serious—a circumstance that had not, apparently, dawned on Billy Bunter's obtuse fat brain.

"If Quelch is anywhere near that bull, he will be in danger," said Frank Nugent.

"Urrrgh! I'm chook-chook-choking—"

"No doubt about that," said Harry. "How long ago was it, Bunter?"

"Groooooooooogh!"

"How long since you ran away from the bull, and left Quelch there you blithering fat owl?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Wurrrngh! About half an hour," gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, wharrer you getting all excited about? Tain't my fault D'Arcy cut off into the wood after I told him the bull was there, is it? I told him it was jolly fierce! If he'd had any sense—"

"You burbling bloater, he must have gone because you told him Quelch was there—trying to help him—"

"Oh! Think so?" said Bunter. "Well, he must be a fat-head! He couldn't tackle a bull, I suppose! I know I wouldn't try it on—"

"Half an hour!" repeated Harry Wharton. "Why, anything may have happened! Have you warned old Giles that the bull is loose, Bunter?"

"Eh! No! I expect he'll miss him, next time he goes to the field—"

"Oh, my hat! Why didn't you cut to the farm and warn him?"

"Well, I like that!" said Bunter, warmly. "Giles's farm is a quarter of a mile off the road, and I was late for tea already—"

"Tea!" gasped Wharton.

"Yes, tea! I told you I hadn't had my tea. Didn't I

mention that Bessie never had that hamper, and I had my walk to Cliff House for nothing—?”

“Oh, bump him!” exclaimed Johnny Bull.

“I say, you fellows—yaroooooh!” roared Bunter, as the Famous Five grasped him, and he whirled. “I say—leggo—I say—Whooooop!”

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat on the floor of No. 1 Study, and roared. Harry Wharton and Co. rushed out of the study, followed by that roar. Half an hour, it seemed, had elapsed, since D'Arcy of St. Jim's, and Mr. Quelch, had been left in the wood, with a savage bull at large there. What might have happened since, the chums of the Remove hardly cared to think: their only idea now was to get to the spot, in the hope that they might be in time to help, if help was needed.

“Yow-ow-ow-ow! Beasts!” spluttered Billy Bunter. He tottered to his feet, in great wrath. “I say, you fellows, where are you going? I say!”

They were gone! As suddenly as Arthur Augustus had vanished up the footpath in Friardale Wood, Harry Wharton and Co. had vanished from No. 1 Study. Bunter stood and spluttered for breath.

But a grin dawned on his fat face.

For whatever reason the Famous Five had rushed off in such a hurry, they were gone. Billy Bunter was left alone in No. 1 Study—with the cake! He had had one slice, and found it good. Now he sat down at the table, and cut another—and then another—and then another! That cake grew smaller by degrees, and beautifully less, till it vanished entirely. After which, Billy Bunter, prudently considering it best to be off the scene when the owners of the cake returned, vanished also.

All Right for Gussy!

BELLOW! Bellow!

Mr. Quelch shuddered.

He had recovered his breath, and he sat up on the slanting corrugated roof of the wood-cutter's hut. Looking down, he watched the black bull pawing the earth, glaring, and bellowing.

He was safe out of the fierce brute's reach now. But what would have happened, if he had not gained the roof of the hut, was very unpleasant to reflect upon. He could not have held on much longer, and then—!

Bellow! bellow! The bull, disappointed and furious, made the wood ring with his roar. Once or twice he moved away: but came back again, glaring up at the two figures on the roof of the hut, and roaring. Even safe out of his reach, it was rather unnerving to look at him.

Mr. Quelch turned to his companion on the roof. Now that he had time to observe him, something familiar about that slim schoolboy struck him. He had seen him before somewhere.

"You are a very brave lad," said Mr. Quelch, with unusual feeling in a voice that was generally a little crusty.

"Not at all, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy glad I was able to wendah you a twifflin' assistance, sir."

"You were in terrible danger from that bull," said Mr. Quelch. "Even now I hardly know how you escaped his horns. Thank goodness you did."

"Yaas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus. "He looks a wathah fewocious bwute, sir! But we are all wight up heah, till somebody comes along."

"The farmer will be searching for him, as soon as he is missed from his field," said Mr. Quelch. "For the present, I fear that we must remain here. Have I not seen you before, my boy? Your face seems familiar."

"Pwobably you have seen me when I came ovah with Tom Mewwy's team fwom St. Jim's, sir! My name is D'Arcy."

"D'Arcy! Oh! Yes, I remember you now," said Mr. Quelch. "You belong to St. James's School, in Sussex."

"Yaas, sir!"

Mr. Quelch eyed him curiously. No doubt he was surprised, as Bunter had been, to see a St. Jim's junior so far from his school. It was not likely to occur to him, however, that that junior was absent from school without leave. The swell of St. Jim's certainly did not look a fellow likely to be guilty of the wild and reckless act of running away from school.

Not that Arthur Augustus regarded himself as a runaway from school. He had retired from St. Jim's temporarily, for good reasons. That was how Gussy looked at it.

However, he was aware that a school-master was not likely to regard it in the same light, and he had no idea of explaining to Mr. Quelch the whys and the wherefores. Least said was the soonest mended, in Gussy's sage opinion.

"No doubt you are staying in this neighbourhood, D'Arcy," said Mr. Quelch. "A very fortunate circumstance for me, my boy. I can hardly express my thanks for your very courageous action in coming to my help as you did."

"Pway don't mench, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, modestly. "I am not exactly stayin' in the neighbourhood," he added. "But I twust I shall be doin' so. I—I am away fwom school for a few days, sir, and I thought of givin' my fwiends at Gweyfwiahs a look-in!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

He raised his eyebrows slightly.

Arthur Augustus's idea of dropping in on fellows at another school, in the middle of the term, to stay for a few days, seemed to surprise him a little.

"I think that pwobably my fwiends, Wharton and Chewwy and the west will be wathah glad to see me," said Arthur

Augustus, innocently. "We have met a good many times at cricket, you know."

"Oh!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"But I am awah," continued Arthur Augustus, "that there may be some difficulty in the mattah."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch, for the third time.

"Pwobably you, sir, as a mastah in the school, could tell me whather my fwiends would be permitted to put me up for a few days," suggested Arthur Augustus. "Of course, I don't want to be a twouble to anybody."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch, for the fourth time.

He was silent for a moment or two, as Arthur Augustus gazed at him inquiringly. Undoubtedly he was surprised. Even Arthur Augustus realised that it was a little unusual. Quelch paused.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy undoubtedly had saved him from the horns of the black bull. That savage brute, pawing and bellowing only a few yards away, would have had him, but for the happy and fortunate arrival of the St. Jim's junior upon the scene. For whatever reason Arthur Augustus had come to that vicinity, Quelch certainly had reason to be glad that he had come. His face melted into a smile.

"My dear boy," he said. "You will be very welcome at Greyfriars! If you have a few days' holiday from your school, there is no reason why you should not pass them with your friends here. I shall speak to the Head-master on the subject, and the matter will be arranged very easily."

Arthur Augustus's face brightened. He had had some doubts, but they were relieved now.

"Thank you vewy much, sir!" he said. "That is vewy kind of you . . ."

"Not at all," said Mr. Quelch, benevolently. "I am sure your friends will be glad to see you, and you may certainly stay at Greyfriars until it is necessary for you to return to your own school, D'Arcy."

"That will be wight as wain, sir."

"Thank goodness, someone is coming, at last!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, as there was a sound of footsteps and voices on the footpath.

"Halloo, hallo, hallo!" came a shout, and a junior with a

mop of flaxen hair appeared among the trees. "Here they are!"

There was a snort from the bull, and it whirled round towards the footpath. Mr. Quelch called out hastily:

"Take care, Cherry! The bull—!"

"All right, sir!" called back Bob. "The farmer and his men are here—we brought them along from Giles's farm, as soon as we heard about the bull."

"Be careful, Cherry—"

"Yes, sir! Here they are!" roared Bob. "Perched on top of old Joyce's hut! This way, Mr. Giles!"

Bellow! bellow!

"Bai Jove! Look out, Chewwy!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

But Bob was looking out. He dodged behind a tree as the bull rushed. The next moment, Mr. Giles and two of his men were on the spot: and the bull, pausing in his rush, stood pawing the ground, and eyeing them with fiery eyes.

But the farmer and his men were quite able to deal with the black bull, now that they had found him. Mr. Giles tossed a looped rope over the horns, and the savage animal was secured.

"Orright now, sir!" Mr. Giles called up to Mr. Quelch: and the bull, still snorting and bellowing, was led away: much to the relief of the Remove master. Probably he had never been so relieved in his life, as he was to see the last of Mr. Giles's black bull.

Harry Wharton and Co. came at a run to the wood-cutter's hut. The sight of their grave Form-master, perched precariously on the slanting corrugated roof, might have disposed them to smile: but they were very careful not to smile! Mr. Quelch, certainly, would not have been gratified by smiles at that moment.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dropped lightly from the hut. Mr. Quelch's descent was rather more slow and laborious.

He stood on terra firma again, gasping a little for breath.

"Thank you, Wharton, for bringing the farmer and his men here," he said, graciously, "it was very thoughtful of you."

"We came out at once, sir, when we heard from Bunter that the bull was loose," said Harry, "and when we heard

him bellowing, we were afraid that something might have happened—”

“Something certainly would have happened, but for this brave lad, who came to my assistance and helped me to reach the roof of that hut,” said Mr. Quelch. “It appears that D’Arcy was on his way to Greyfriars—I understand that he has a holiday from his school, which he would like to pass with his friends here: and I have assured him that he will be very welcome at Greyfriars.”

“Oh, yes, rather, sir,” said Harry. “We’re jolly glad to see him, sir.”

“What-ho!” said Bob Cherry.

“The gladfulness is terrific!” declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

“You will take D’Arcy to the school, Wharton! When I return from Pegg, I will make all necessary arrangements for his stay. D’Arcy, my dear boy, thank you once more for your very brave and very valuable service.”

And Mr. Quech shook hands with the swell of St. Jim’s and departed: resuming the walk to Pegg which had been interrupted by the black bull. Arthur Augustus was left with his friends. And if they were a little surprised by that unexpected and unusual visit, there was no doubt that they were pleased: and it was a very cheery party that walked back to Greyfriars.

15

Bad Luck for Bunter!

“GUSSY, old chap!”

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced up.

He was a little surprised to see Bunter, just then. It was evening: and preparation was on. Arthur Augustus was in the “Rag”: the apartment where the Greyfriars juniors most did congregate: but at the moment he had it to himself. His friends were in their studies at prep.

Arthur Augustus had had a hearty and cordial welcome at Greyfriars. His friends there had made much of him. Harry Wharton and Co., like Mr. Quelch, took it for granted that he had leave of absence from school, without making any remark on the subject. Arthur Augustus, certainly, would not have said so: and he was glad that no questions were asked: for explanations would have been just a little awkward. Certainly Mr. Quelch would have stared, had he been aware that the guest at Greyfriars had taken French leave from St. Jim's. But as nobody dreamed for a moment of the real circumstances, and as nobody thought of asking questions on the subject, it was all right. Many fellows, as well as the Famous Five, had been very cordial to the visitor: Vernon-Smith, and Peter Todd, Tom Brown and Squiff, Lord Mauleverer and Mark Linley, and many others. The wanderer was made to feel quite at home.

But prep was prep: and when the hour came for prep, Arthur Augustus had to be left to his own company, for a time. Now he was seated in an armchair, in the Rag, quite at

ease, and glad of a rest after his unaccustomed travels. Harry Wharton had sorted out a volume of "Jack of All Trades," to occupy his leisure: and Arthur Augustus was perusing the adventures of that interesting youth, when Billy Bunter entered.

The door opened very softly, and a fat face, adorned by a big pair of spectacles, looked in. Bunter's manner was very cautious. It needed to be: as he had come down from the studies during prep, which was severely against the rules and meant lines or "whops," if a master's or prefect's eye fell upon him. The fat Owl had, in fact, come down from the Remove in fear and trembling: but he had come: having very particular reasons for wishing to speak to the guest from St. Jim's while Harry Wharton and Co. were not about.

He blinked up and down the passage, warily, through his big spectacles, and then rolled into the Rag, and shut the door after him. Once safe within, he had no doubt that he was secure from discovery—until he returned to his study, and he hoped to escape observant eyes on the return journey. It was rather risky: but the business in hand was important, and had to be put through while the rest of the Remove were still at prep.

"Bai Jove! Is that you, Buntah?" said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "Pwep isn't ovah yet, is it, Buntah?"

"No fear!" answered Bunter. "I thought I'd come down and have just a word or two, old chap, as you're all on your own."

"That is vewy kind of you, Buntah, but I am quite all wight! Wharton has lent me a vewy intewestin' book. Wouldn't you get into a wow if you were caught out of your study in pwep? We should at St. Jim's."

"That's all right," assured Bunter. "I'll risk that, Gussy, old fellow, on your account, old chap."

"Pway do nothin' of the kind, Buntah! I weally wecommend you to go back to your study at once."

Arthur Augustus was all politeness. But in point of fact he did not yearn for the society of William George Bunter. Bunter was beaming with friendship—fairly oozing cordiality. But Arthur Augustus was quite unaware of being on such exceedingly friendly terms with Bunter, as Bunter appeared to be with him. Nothing would have induced him

to rebuff the fat junior: but he really wished that Bunter had stayed up in his study: or, alternatively, as the lawyers say, that he would return to it at once.

But Billy Bunter had no intention of returning to his study with his business unaccomplished. Arthur Augustus was as yet blissfully ignorant of the fact that there was business on hand at all.

"Jolly glad to see you here, Gussy," went on Bunter. "I simply couldn't neglect you, old fellow. Real pleasure to see you again, Gussy."

"That is vewy kind of you, Buntah," said Arthur Augustus, wishing that the fat Owl would not address him as "Gussy": but too courteous to give any hint to that effect.

"I want you to come to a spread in my study, while you're here," went on the fat Owl. "I'm expecting a postal-order, and when—when it comes, I'm standing a tremendous spread to a crowd of fellows. I was expecting the postal-order to-day, but it hasn't come. Those delays in the post, you know! It leaves a fellow rather in a hole when he doesn't get a remittance he's expecting."

"I suppose it does, Buntah," assented Arthur Augustus, sympathetically: "It must weally be vewy awkward."

"It will come tomorrow all right," went on Bunter, "or the next day at the very latest. As it happens, I'm stony till it comes. I—I wonder—" Even Billy Bunter paused, for a moment.

"Yaas?" said Arthur Augustus, inquiringly.

"I—I wonder if you could lend a fellow the amount, and take the postal-order when it comes," said Bunter, blinking at the swell of St. Jim's. "It's only for a pound."

Billy Bunter blinked hopefully at Arthur Augustus. His own opinion of Arthur Augustus was that he looked soft enough for anything: just the fellow to be "touched" for a loan.

Arthur Augustus was not exactly "soft": but there was no doubt that he was very innocent. He had not the remotest suspicion that Bunter had chosen that moment, while the other fellows were at prep, to "touch" him for a "quid," on the strength of an unexpected postal-order, whose arrival was extremely dubious and problematical. Had Arthur Augustus been in possession of his usual financial resources, the un-

scrupulous fat Owl would undoubtedly have walked off with a portion of the same. But Arthur Augustus's financial resources had, as it happened, been exhausted by his unaccustomed travelling expenses since leaving St. Jim's, which was rather unfortunate for Bunter.

"I should be vewy pleased indeed, Buntah—!" began Arthur Augustus.

Bunter beamed. This seemed even easier than he had hoped.

"You don't mind a fellow asking, what?" he said.

"Not at all, deah boy."

"You see, my postal-order's practically certain to come tomorrow," explained Bunter. "It's from one of my titled relations, you know."

"Is it weally, Buntah?"

"You hand me the quid now, and I hand you the postal-order as—as soon as it comes," said Bunter. "That's all right, ain't it?"

"Quite all wight, Buntah: and as I have wemarked, I should be vewy pleased indeed, if it were in my powah to oblige you—"

"Eh?"

"But I wegwet to say that I do not possess a pound at the pwesent moment, Buntah," said Arthur Augustus, regretfully. "I had to change my last pound note on the railway."

"Oh! I—I mean to say that the postal-order is for ten bob," said Bunter, hastily. "I—I wonder what made me say a pound! I—I meant ten bob. Make it ten bob, old fellow—"

"It would be a weal pleasuah, Buntah, if I had ten bob," said Arthur Augustus, with the same polite regret. "I am sowwy to say that I have not."

Billy Bunter breathed rather hard.

"Well, look here, lend a chap five bob to go on with, old fellow," he said. "You can trust me for five bob, D'Arcy."

"Certainly, Buntah—"

"Well then—" Billy Bunter held out a fat and rather grubby paw. "I'll settle the minute my postal-order comes, of course. Where's the five bob?"

"I wegwet—"

"What?"

"That I haven't five shillin's, Buntah! The fact is that I haven't half-a-cwown—"

"What?" gasped Bunter.

"Othahwise it would be a weal pleasuah to oblige you, Buntah. The fact is that I shall have to bowwow my weturn fare when I go back to St. Jim's—"

"You silly idiot!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"You jolly wel! won't borrow it off me!" hooted Bunter.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Buntah—"

"Yah!" snorted Bunter.

Arthur Augustus gazed at him. The change in Bunter's manner was really startling. He no longer beamed with friendship or oozed cordiality. He had taken the risk of coming down from the studies in prep, for the special purpose of catching D'Arcy on his own, and extracting a loan from him—only to learn that he was in a state as stony as Bunter's own! The fat Owl's feelings were almost too deep for words.

He gave the astonished swell of St. Jim's a devastating blink through his big spectacles turned a fat back on him, and rolled away to the door. Arthur Augustus stared after him.

"Weally, Buntah—!" he ejaculated.

"Yah!" snorted Bunter, over a fat shoulder. He had no more politeness to waste on a fellow who was as stony as himself.

He rolled to the door. Just before he reached it, it opened. An angular form appeared in the doorway. Arthur Augustus rose politely to his feet, at the sight of Mr. Quelch. Billy Bunter jumped back with a gasp of alarm.

"D'Arcy, my dear boy, perhaps you would like to see the television in Common-Room while you are waiting for your friends—!"

"Certainly, sir! I should like it vewy much."

"Then pray come with me—why—what—Bunter! Is that Bunter?" Mr. Quelch stared at the fattest member of his form.

"Oh! No!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean—no—yes—oh, crikey!"

"What are you doing here, Bunter?"

"I—I—I—"

"Why are you not in your study at preparation, Bunter?"

"I—I—I didn't know you'd be coming here, sir—I—I mean—I—I didn't—wasn't—I never—oh, lor'!"

"Take a hundred lines, Bunter, and go back to your study at once!" said Mr. Quelch, severely.

"I—I—I—"

"At once!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter, with feelings deeper than ever, rolled out of the Rag, followed by Quelch's stern glance. He was the richer by a hundred lines: and his celebrated postal-order had not, after all, been cashed. No fellow's feelings could possibly have been deeper than William George Bunter's, as he rolled back to his study and prep!

16

A Problem Solved!

“SILLY ass!”

Arthur Augustus started.

That, certainly, was not how he would have expected to be addressed, when he looked into No. 1 Study in the Greyfriars Remove.

It was morning: and after third school, most of the Greyfriars' fellows were out of the House, in the bright summer sunshine. The captain of the Remove was alone in his study.

He was sitting at the table, facing the wide-open door: a pencil in his hand, and a sheet of paper before him, with a list of names on it. His brow was wrinkled, and he looked ruffled—not, in fact, in the best of tempers.

“Fathead!” he snapped.

Arthur Augustus coloured.

He had ambled along to that study, to return the book he had borrowed, and which he had finished reading, under a shady tree in the quad, while his friends were in form. It was quite startling to be greeted by such remarks from the captain of the Remove.

Such terms as “silly ass,” and “fathead” were sometimes addressed to him at St. Jim's, even by his own familiar friends. But he had not expected to hear them while a guest at Greyfriars.

“Silly cuckoo!” went on Wharton, crossly.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

“Weally, Wharton—!” he ejaculated.

“Oh!” Becoming aware of Arthur Augustus in the doorway, Harry Wharton looked up. “Oh! D'Arcy—”

"I came heah to weturn this book, which you vewy kindly lent me," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner.

"Oh! Jolly good story, isn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah! Thank you vewy much for lendin' it to me," said Arthur Augustus, in the same stately manner. "I wegwet that I appeah to have disturbed you," he added, with polite sarcasm.

"Not a bit of it," said Harry. He laughed. "Did you hear what I was saying about Smithy?"

"Smithy?" repeated Arthur Augustus, blankly.

"Not that it's his fault, really," added Wharton. "He didn't get himself crocked on purpose, of course. But it leaves a fellow in a hole, all the same. He had to go and get his wrist crocked the day before a match."

"Oh!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

The stately dignity faded from his face. He realised that the remarks he had heard had not been addressed to him. Apparently the captain of the Remove had been uttering his thoughts aloud, and the remarks he had made referred to quite another person.

"Oh! I—I—I thought—I—I mean—!" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"You thought I was putting on steam a little? Well, it's enough to get any fellow's goat," said Harry. "You see, we're playing the Shell this afternoon, and Smithy's one of our best bats, and he will have to be left out. See?"

"Yaas, wathah! I—I see."

"They're an older lot, of course," went on Harry. "We have regular form matches, and we want our very best men to beat the Shell. Smithy being out may make all the difference."

"Wuff luck, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "But you've got lots of jollay good cwicketahs in the Wemove."

"Not up to Smithy's form," said Harry. "If the silly ass had got himself crocked after the match, it wouldn't have mattered—except to him, of course. But he's out now, and I've got to pick a man to take his place—Mark Linley's the next best, but he's swotting for a Latin paper—there's Russell, and Ogilvy, and several other good men—but nobody in the same street with Smithy. I've got to think it out somehow."

"Then I won't intewwupt you furthah, deah boy," said

Arthur Augustus, and he turned to the door.

There was a heavy tread in the passage, and a cheery face, surmounted by a mop of flaxen hair, looked in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Is that Farmer Giles's bull got loose again?" asked Harry Wharton, looking round. "Oh! It's you, fathead! Run away and play while I think out a man to shove in instead of Smithy this afternoon. Or you can go along and boot Smithy for getting crocked."

"That's all right," said Bob.

"It isn't all right, ass! We haven't got a man anywhere near Smithy's form, who isn't in the team already," snapped the captain of the Remove. "I've got to think it out—!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I've thought it out for you, old man," he said.

"Rot!"

"Thanks—and the same to you, with knobs on," said Bob, cheerily. "There's a jolly good man you haven't thought of."

"If you mean Linley, he's swotting—"

"I don't mean old Marky."

"Ogilvy's a good man, but he would never stand up to Stewart's bowling—"

"I don't mean Oggy."

"Perhaps you mean Bunter?" suggested Wharton, sarcastically. "Don't you begin thinking, old chap—it's not your long suit at all."

"My dear chap—!"

"Like to have a shot at the nets, D'Arcy, before dinner?" asked Harry. "Bob will take you along—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Take D'Arcy down to the nets, Bob! And leave me to work it out. I've got to put the names up before dinner."

"But look here—!"

"D'Arcy's waiting—"

"D'Arcy won't mind waiting another minute or two," said Bob. "I tell you I've thought of the very man we want—"

"Some wonderful man I've overlooked?" said Harry Wharton, sarcastically. "Have we got a budding player for England in the Remove, and I've never noticed him?"

"Pack up the sarc, old bean! Not in the Remove—"

"Ass!" said Harry, politely. "It's a Form match, and

we've got to play Remove men. Not that there's a man in the Fourth who would be of any use."

"Special occasion," said Bob. "It will be all right with Hobby! We can fix that O.K. Nice sort of reception to give a fellow, when he comes along to tell you about a man who's as good as Smithy with the willow, and then some, and a few over. Don't we want a first-class bat?"

"Yes, ass, if we can get one."

"Man who's knocked up runs against us, and stood up even to Inky's bowling?" continued Bob. "Isn't that the man we want?"

"Oh! Yes! Got him in your waistcoat pocket?" asked the captain of the Remove, sarcastic again.

"He's available all right," said Bob. "I expect he'd be jolly keen to play, if we asked him nicely. That's up to you."

"Well, who, then?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, impatiently. "What's his name?"

"St. Jim's chap, who happens to be here on holiday!" said Bob, with a grin. "You can guess his name, if you exert that powerful intellect of yours to the very utmost. If you'd like a wet towel to put round your head—"

"Oh!" Harry Wharton gave quite a jump. "D'Arcy!"

"Guessed it in one!" said Bob.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

Harry Wharton's face brightened. Evidently, Bob Cherry's suggestion was welcome to the worried cricket captain.

"By gum!" he said. "If you'd care to play for us, D'Arcy—"

"Not much 'if' about that, I fancy," said Bob.

"Wathah not!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "If you think that I should be any use, deah boy, I should wegard it as wippin'. It would be a weal pleasuah."

"Done, then! You're not such a fathead after all, Bob—"

"Thanks! I'd say the same of you if I hadn't been brought up to tell the frozen truth," said Bob, affably.

Harry Wharton laughed. His problem was solved. He picked up his pencil, and turned to the cricket list that lay on the table. Under the name of H. Vernon-Smith, which had been crossed out, he wrote "A. A. D'Arcy." Then he picked up the list.

"I'll post this up now," he said. "We can fix it with

Hobby all right—he won't mind a guest artist in the show. We'll sort out some of Franky's flannels for D'Arcy—they'll fit him all right! By gum, it's a spot of luck that D'Arcy happens to be here—just the man we want! Jolly glad your Head-master gave you a holiday in the middle of the term, D'Arcy!”

“Bai Jove! I—I—”

“Couldn't have happened better,” said Harry, and he left the study, with the cricket list in his hand.

Arthur Augustus's face was a little thoughtful, as he followed with Bob. His Greyfriars friends took it for granted that he was on holiday from St. Jim's, and it worried him a little: and he could not help wondering what they would have thought, had they known how matters really stood. However, least said was the soonest mended: and at present there was cricket to think of: and Arthur Augustus gave his thoughts to cricket, and dismissed less agreeable matters from his aristocratic mind.

News of The Runaway!

DR. HOLMES, the Head-master of St. Jim's, frowned.

He frowned at Mr. Railton, House-master of the School House, who sat in the Head's study with a worried brow. But that was merely because his eyes were fixed on the House-master. It was not Railton who was the cause of his frown. The cause was absent from St. Jim's.

"This cannot go on," said the Head.

"Certainly not, sir," agreed Mr. Railton.

"The boy must be found."

"Undoubtedly, sir."

"This is—is—is unprecedented!" said Dr. Holmes. "It is a defiance of authority, Mr. Railton."

"Quite so, sir."

"The boy must be traced, brought back to the school, and adequately punished," said the Head. "But it is not only a matter of discipline, Railton. I am concerned for the boy himself."

"I quite understand that, sir."

"He left the school on Monday," resumed the Head, his frown intensifying. "It is now Wednesday afternoon. Yet we have had no news of him."

"None, sir."

"Anything may have happened to him," said Dr. Holmes. "I have ascertained that he has not gone home. Where else can he have gone, Mr. Railton?"

The House-master shook his head.

That was a question to which he could not guess the answer. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had disappeared from St. Jim's: and

from what he had said on the 'phone, he had gone into the adjoining county. But in what part of the extensive county of Kent he might have located himself, was quite unknown. Certainly it was not likely to occur to the Head, or to the House-master, that he had sought refuge at another school: still less that he was, in those very moments, playing cricket on Little Side at Greyfriars!

"He must have found some refuge," said Dr. Holmes. "But where?"

"I cannot imagine, sir."

"He must be found and brought back without delay."

"Quite so, sir."

"You have of course taken all possible steps, Mr. Railton?"

"I think so, sir! The authorities have been notified that a boy is missing from this school, and his name and description given. I have ascertained the make and number of his bicycle, and these also have been made known. Some constable, no doubt, will identify him—in time—"

"He has been at large for two days," said the Head. "Yet we have not had a word of news. I have no doubt that his friends are very anxious about him."

"I believe that is the case, sir!" said Mr. Railton. "Indeed, as I came to your study, Merry of the Shell asked me if there was news. But—"

Buzzzzzzzz!

The telephone-bell buzzed in the Head's study. Dr. Holmes turned to the instrument, and picked up the receiver.

"This may be news," he said. "We may learn where the foolish boy is. Who is speaking?"

"Is that St. James's School, Sussex?" came a deep voice over the wires.

"Yes: Dr. Holmes speaking."

"Very good! This is Inspector Hogben speaking from Ashford. I have news of the missing boy."

"I am very glad to hear that, Inspector. Is he in your hands now?" asked the Head, greatly relieved.

"No, sir! We have not seen him, but we have his bicycle. A man named Jinkins has been arrested, in possession of a stolen bicycle—a well-known bicycle-thief," explained the voice from Ashford. "From the description given, the bicycle appears to be the one on which the missing boy left school."

Make, Moonbeam—number, 2468642. Is that correct?"

"Is that correct, Mr. Railton?" asked the Head. "A Moonbeam bicycle, number 2468642?"

"That is correct, sir."

"Then it is undoubtedly D'Arcy's bicycle. The foolish boy's bicycle has been stolen," said the Head. "It is a clue to him, at least!" He turned to the telephone again. "Yes, that is correct! But is there no news of the boy?"

"I think so, sir! The man Jenkins is in custody, and we have questioned him. He has admitted stealing the bicycle from a schoolboy in a lane about fifteen miles from here. From what he says, the boy desired to find an inn to put up for the night, and was confiding enough to allow Jenkins to wheel his machine. He was trying to find his way to Greyfriars School."

The Head almost jumped.

"Greyfriars School?" he repeated.

"That is what Jenkins has said, sir, and I have no reason to doubt him. It would appear from this that Master D'Arcy left your school with the intention of visiting Greyfriars—a school on the coast of Kent—"

"Bless my soul!"

"The bicycle is safe here, sir, and may be collected. Probably you would learn by a telephone-call to Greyfriars School, whether the boy has actually arrived there, sir."

"No doubt! No doubt! Thank you very much, Inspector."

"Not at all, sir! Good-bye."

"Good-bye!"

Dr. Holmes put up the receiver, and stared at Mr. Railton. Mr. Railton stared back at him. Both were relieved by news of the runaway: but both very much astonished.

"Extraordinary!" said the Head. "No doubt D'Arcy is acquainted with Greyfriars School—I believe matches are played—"

"Quite so, sir! He has friends at Greyfriars, I think," said Mr. Railton. "But—but who could have thought—"

"Most extraordinary!" said the Head. "He may have reached Greyfriars, but could he suppose for one moment that he would be given refuge there, after running away from his own school—!"

Mr. Railton smiled faintly.

"He may not have mentioned the circumstances, sir!" he suggested.

"Oh! Probably not! Probably not!" assented the Head. "But—but—can he be at Greyfriars now, Mr. Railton?"

"It seems that that was his intended destination, at all events, sir. A call to Greyfriars would establish the fact—"

"I will ring them at once."

Dr. Holmes proceeded to put a trunk call through to Greyfriars School. The two masters waited for the call to go through. Mr. Railton looked very thoughtful.

"It might be as well not to mention that the boy has run away from school, sir," he suggested. "If he should take the alarm, and leave before he can be secured—"

"Bless my soul! I suppose that is possible!" said the Head. "If we find that he is at Greyfriars, Mr. Railton, doubtless you would be prepared to go over in the car and fetch him back."

"Certainly, sir."

"It would certainly be unwise to apprise him that he is discovered, before he can be taken away," said Dr. Holmes, with a nod. "I will merely inquire whether he has arrived."

"Quite so, sir."

A voice came over the wires:

"This is Greyfriars School—Head-master's secretary speaking."

"Very good! Dr. Holmes, Head-master of St. James's School, Sussex, speaking: I desire to know whether a boy named D'Arcy, belonging to this school, has visited friends at Greyfriars."

"Yes, Master D'Arcy is staying here now."

"Thank you very much. That is all I wished to know. Good-bye."

Dr. Holmes put up the receiver again, and gazed at Mr. Railton.

"D'Arcy is there," he said. "He is staying there. The matter is quite simple, so long as he does not take the alarm and disappear again before he can be secured. If you will oblige me by taking the car and bringing him back to the school, Mr. Railton—"

The House-master rose.

"I will lose no time, sir," he answered. "D'Arcy will be here again this evening. I will not lose a moment."

"Thank you, Mr. Railton."

The House-master left the Head's study. At the corner of the passage, he almost ran into three Fourth-form juniors. He glanced at Blake, Herries and Dig.

"If you please, sir—!" began Blake.

"I am in haste, Blake! What is it?"

"Is—is there any news of Gussy—I—I mean D'Arcy, sir?" stammered Blake.

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Yes, there is news, Blake! He has been traced: he is quite safe, and I am about to go and fetch him back to the school."

The House-master hurried on. Ten minutes later, he was speeding away from St. Jim's in the Head's car. And in less than ten minutes, all the School House knew that the run-away had been traced, and that Railton had gone to fetch him back to St. Jim's.

18

Not Out!

“GOOD man!”
“Well hit!”

“Bravo, D’Arcy!”

It was rather unaccustomed on Little Side at Greyfriars. Arthur Augustus D’Arcy had kept his wicket up there, more than once: but then he had been batting for St. Jim’s in a School match, and his brilliant hitting had given Harry Wharton and Co. all the leather-hunting they wanted, and a little over: and piled up runs against Greyfriars. Now he was piling up runs for the Remove—and they needed them. And there was a cheery roar, as the fieldsmen chased the flying ball, and Arthur Augustus D’Arcy and Bob Cherry crossed and re-crossed on the pitch.

Arthur Augustus was enjoying life! He was at the top of his form, and just living and breathing cricket. Trouble at St. Jim’s was entirely dismissed from his mind. No doubt he was being searched for: and the Head’s birch awaited him if, and when, he was found and taken back. But for the present moment, at least, all that was forgotten, and only King Cricket was remembered.

It was a somewhat tough match for the Remove, a junior form playing the Shell, who were Middle School: in fact, almost seniors, in their own esteem at least. Hobson, the captain of the Shell, was a mighty man with the willow: Stewart was a first-class bowler: and all the rest were good men and true at the summer game. The Remove had all

their work cut out, if they were going to win that game: and the loss of Smithy, one of their best bats, had made the prospect dubious. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could not have dropped in on his friends at Greyfriars at a more opportune time: for there was no doubt that he filled Smithy's place more than adequately. It was doubtful whether even the Bounder, good man as he was, would have put up a game like this. The swell of St. Jim's really was a prize-packet.

It was a single-innings game, and the Shell had taken the first knock, piling up an exact 100. The Remove innings had opened with Harry Wharton at one end, and the junior from St. Jim's at the other: the "guest artist" being given the distinction of taking the first over. He had taken six on that over, which was a good omen for things to come. Now the innings was drawing to its close, and Arthur Augustus was still batting, though a good many wickets had gone down: and it looked as if Arthur Augustus might wind up "not out" as well as first in.

Harry Wharton watched him from the pavilion, caring little that he had made only a dozen himself, when his fortunate visitor had made twice as many. There was a crowd at the pavilion and round the field, and all eyes were upon the "guest artist." Undoubtedly he was worth watching.

"Good man!" said Harry Wharton. "Jolly good man! That St. Jim's man can bat—eyeglass and all!"

"Topping!" said Frank Nugent.

"The topfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and ridiculous D'Arcy is a bird in hand that is worth a cracked pitcher in the bush, as the English proverb remarks."

"Four!" said Johnny Bull. "That makes eighty! And two more wickets to come—we'll pull this off all right."

"What-ho!"

"Hallo, there goes old Bob!" exclaimed Nugent.

Bob Cherry had the bowling again. From Stewart of the Shell came a deadly ball, which looked like a wide but wasn't! Bob stared down at a wrecked wicket.

"Out!"

Bob Cherry tramped back to the pavilion. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was ready to take his place.

"Rough luckfulness, my esteemed Bob," he said.

"Look out for that dashed Scotsman," said Bob, ruefully. "He caught me napping."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh nodded, and went out to the wicket, to take the second ball of the over. His friends watched him rather anxiously. The Remove needed twenty to reach the rival score, and only Johnny Bull remained to follow the nabob of Bhanipur. Hobson of the Shell, in the field, was grinning cheerily. He had no doubt about the result—though he admitted that the Remove had found a very useful recruit in the junior from St. Jim's. And when the next ball came down, Hobby's grin grew wider.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton, in dismay.

"Inky's out!" said Nugent.

"Rotten luck!"

It was rough luck for the nabob of Bhanipur. He was a useful bat: but Stewart of the Shell seemed a little more useful. At all events, that ball sent the nabob's bails spinning: and his dusky face was serious and solemn as he made the return journey with an unused bat.

"Johnny, old man—!" said Harry Wharton.

"Last man in, and twenty to get!" said Bob Cherry, with a whistle. "Stick it out, Johnny. Back up that St. Jim's man, and leave him the fireworks, old chap."

Johnny Bull nodded. His own style was steady stone-walling, and that was what was needed now, if he was content to leave the "fireworks" to the man at the other end. Which Johnny was quite prepared to do, putting a higher value on the game, than on pyrotechnics on his own account.

"If Johnny keeps the game alive—!" muttered Wharton.

"Touch and go!" said Bob. "That St. Jim's man looks good for sticking it out to the finish, anyway, if Johnny keeps his sticks up."

Johnny Bull concentrated on keeping his sticks up. With calm stolidity he stopped ball after ball, taking no chances, and satisfied with keeping the game "alive." That he succeeded in doing: and the game was still alive when the over ended, no runs taken.

"Now—!" said Harry Wharton.

"Now—!" said Bob Cherry.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had the bowling again, this time from Hobson of the Shell. Hobby was not so good a bowler

as Stewart, but he was a good man with the leather, and had already taken two wickets in that innings. He put up the best he knew. But the best he knew did not avail against the swell of St. Jim's. A gleaming bat met a whizzing ball, and it went on its travels, and the batsmen were running.

"Good man, D'Arcy!"

"Bravo!"

"That will be three!" said Bob Cherry.

Three it was: and it brought Johnny Bull to the batting end. With a phlegmatic calm that delighted his friends, and a little exasperated the enemy, Johnny resumed stone-walling tactics, and stopped ball after ball dead as a doornail till the over finished.

Bob Cherry chuckled, as the field crossed over.

"That's the stuff to give the troops!" he remarked. "We're going to pull this game out of the fire, my beloved 'earers."

The "pull-fulness will be terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Stewart of the Shell was bowling again. But good man as he was, he seemed unable to make any impression on the junior from St. Jim's. There was a cheery click of willow meeting leather—but the batsmen did not run! It was a boundary.

"Good man!"

"Hurrray!"

"A few more like that—!" grinned Bob Cherry.

The ball came in, and was tossed to Stewart. It came down again, and again it went on its travels, and again the batsmen did not need to run.

"Boundaries are cheap to-day!" chuckled Bob. "Ninety-one, my infants! Nine to tie and ten to win! Is that St. Jim's man good for them, what?"

"Looks like it," said Harry.

It did undoubtedly look like it, for another boundary followed with the next ball, and the Remove score stood at ninety-five. The cheery grin had faded a little on Hobby's face. Cricket is an uncertain game: and Hobby had to realise, like many a skipper before him, that a game is not won till it is lost, and not lost till it is won.

But if Hobby's grin was a little faded, the aristocratic countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made up for it.

Never had the swell of St. Jim's played a better game, and never had he been so bucked to play it—all the more because he was giving much needed aid to the friends who had so kindly taken the wanderer in. There was not the slightest hint of "swank" about Gussy: but he looked, as he felt, full of cheery satisfaction. And he was feeling on top of the game: it was his "day."

"Two!" said Bob, after the next ball. "Ninety-seven, my little ones—ninety-seven! We're all right!"

The ball came down again, and Arthur Augustus stopped it dead on the crease. Excitement was keen as Stewart prepared to deliver the last ball of the over. If the bowling came to Johnny Bull again, stone-walling tactics might not pull him through: and if he failed to keep the game "alive"—!

But the heroes of the Remove need not have worried. The last ball of that over was also the last ball in the game. There was a roar as it went, hot from Arthur Augustus's bat. Arthur Augustus did not stir from his wicket. He smiled. He knew it was a boundary.

"Hurrray!"

"Good man!"

"Did I say boundaries were cheap to-day?" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Did I? Did we bag a prize-packet in that St. Jim's man—eyeglass and all! What? Come on, you men—shoulder-high!"

"I say, you fellows—" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Nobody was likely to heed Billy Bunter's fat squeak just then. There was a rush on the field, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was carried off in triumph, rocking on the shoulders of the Remove cricketers. His eyeglass gleamed over many heads as he was borne to the pavilion.

"Bai Jove, you know!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Weally, you fellows—Bai Jove! Weally, you know—"

"I say, you fellows—" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Hurrray!"

"But I say—!" howled Bunter.

"Bravo!"

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter. "D'Arcy's wanted! There's a master from his school—he came in a car, and—"

"Oh, cwikey! Did—did you say a mastah fwom St. Jim's, Buntah?"

"Yes, I jolly well did!" yapped Bunter. "Man named Railton—that's what Quelch called him, anyway—"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"Quelch asked me where you were, and I told him you were playing cricket, and—and I think he's coming for you! Is anything up?" asked Bunter, blinking at the startled swell of St. Jim's through his big spectacles. "I say, D'Arcy, is anything up?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not answer that question. He just gasped. If Mr. Railton, from St. Jim's, had arrived at Greyfriars, it meant that the runaway had been run down—and undoubtedly something was "up"—it looked as if Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's game was up!

19

Light at Last !

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW strolled into the junior day-room, in the School House at St. Jim's, with his hands in his pockets, and with his usual air of cool insouciance. He raised his eyebrows, as he glanced at a group of juniors in the bay window.

On that sunny summer's afternoon, Tom Merry and Co. might have expected to be looking as merry and bright as the sunshine in the old quad outside. But they were not—far from it. The Terrible Three were grave—even Monty Lowther was serious for once. Blake and Herries and Dig looked dismal. Levison and Clive did not look cheerful. It was, in fact, far from a cheery group: and Cardew, from his expression, seemed to be faintly amused.

"Any news of the one and only?" he asked—it was easy for him to guess that that was the cause of the dismal looks of Arthur Augustus's friends.

"Yes," said Blake, shortly.

"Found him?" asked Cardew.

"Yes!" grunted Herries.

"Nothin' happened to him, what?" asked Cardew, and for a moment his careless face was serious.

"Not yet," said Tom Merry. "Something will, I suppose, when Railton comes back with him."

"Has Railton gone for him?"

"He went hours ago, in the Head's car," said Levison, quietly. "They seem to have found out where he is, and Railton's gone to fetch him back. He told Blake so."

Cardew whistled.

The worried juniors in the bay window regarded him with far from amicable glances. They had not forgotten what he had said the previous day. Nothing had come of it: and they had come to the conclusion that it was, as Blake had called it, "gas." Which was irritating enough: for the matter was serious, to D'Arcy's friends, if not to his relative.

Cardew's face was thoughtful.

"So he's comin' back to-day!" he said.

"I suppose he will come back in the car with Railton," said Clive. "We don't know where he is: but Railton must know, as he's gone for him."

"That means the circus, which was unavoidably postponed on Monday, will perform on Wednesday!" said Cardew.

Blake gave him a dark look.

"Do you want your silly head jammed against that wall, Cardew?" he asked.

"Not at all!"

"Then you'd better shut up."

"It's not a joking matter, Cardew," said Levison, sharply. "D'Arcy's booked for a Head's flogging. If you think that's amusing—"

"Hardly," said Cardew. "Never heard of anythin' more completely unamusin'. But it hasn't come off yet. So long as D'Arcy was away, the Head couldn't lay on the birch. The Big Beak can't get busy with the birch till he comes back. And he's not back yet."

"He will be back some time to-day," said Manners. He knitted his brows. "You were saying yesterday that you knew something—"

"Gas!" growled Blake. "D'Arcy never chucked that book at Lathom's head—he says he didn't, and that's good enough. But Cardew no more knows who did than we do. And if you don't take that grin off your face, Cardew, I'll punch it off."

Cardew smiled.

"Peace, laddie, peace!" he said, amicably. "I assure you that I'm sympathetic, and I've been thinkin' the matter over seriously—jolly seriously. So long as D'Arcy was missing it was all right—the Head couldn't get goin' while he was missin'. But if he's not goin' to be missin' any longer—"

"Well, he isn't!" said Tom Merry. "Look here, Cardew—"
He paused.

"Lookin'," said Cardew.

"You said yesterday that you knew, or at least had an idea, who it was—and you were sure that it wasn't D'Arcy—"

"Quite!" said Cardew.

"Well, if that's true—"

"You wouldn't doubt my word, would you, old bean?" asked Cardew, with an air of mild reproach.

"Yes, I would," answered Tom, bluntly. "I've very little doubt that you were talking out of the back of your silly neck—you seem to find other fellows' troubles a sort of entertainment—"

"Why not?" yawned Cardew.

"But if it's true that you know who did it—!"

"Frozen truth!" said Cardew. "Know him like a book! I said I'd argue the matter out with him, didn't I?"

"You said so!" snorted Blake.

"Well, have you?" demanded Tom.

"I have!" Cardew nodded. "I've argued with him, and reasoned with him, and done my best to bring him up to the scratch. The difficulty is that, like D'Arcy, he doesn't want to be flogged. It's a painful process," said Cardew, with a shake of the head. "You excellent characters wouldn't know, but I've been there—and I can tell you it's no joke. The Head packs a lot of muscle. But—"

"But what?" snapped Blake.

"I fancy he's coming round," said Cardew. "I hardly think he will keep mum, and let D'Arcy take that floggin'. My idea is that he will go to the Head and own up, when he knows that D'Arcy is for it. I suppose there isn't any doubt that D'Arcy is comin' back to-day?"

"How can there be, when Railton told us he was going to fetch him," said Blake. "We saw him go off in the car." Blake eyed the dandy of the Fourth, with a slightly more hopeful expression. "D'Arcy's for it, unless the fellow who did it owns up before he gets in. Who was it—if you know?"

"Oh, I know all right," said Cardew. "The fellow couldn't keep it secret from me. And I don't really think he's the man to keep mum and let another chap take his gruel."

"He did on Monday," snapped Blake. "Gussy would have had it on Monday, if he hadn't cleared off, and the rotter never said a word."

Cardew laughed.

"Might have been good reason for that," he said.

"I don't see any reason, except that he funk'd it."

"The things you don't see, old thing, are too numerous to mention," said Cardew, affably. "You could fill the *Encyclopedia Britannica* with the things you don't see, and then have a lot left over."

Jack Blake half rose, with his fists clenched. Tom Merry pushed him back into the window-seat.

"No good punching the cheeky fool's head, old chap," he said. "But you'd better clear off, Cardew. We're worried about this, if you're not."

"But I am!" protested Cardew. "More worried than the lot of you, if you come to that. I feel that it's up to me to get the genuine book-buzzer to go to the Head and own up—and I can tell you that it's not easy. It's all D'Arcy's own fault, you know—"

"How is it D'Arcy's fault, if he never buzzed the book at Lathom?" growled Herries.

"He shouldn't have dropped his book in the quad, just when another fellow was thinking of buzzing something at Lathom's napper while he was meandering under the elms," said Cardew. "Careless of him—dropping a book about, and wandering off and leaving it there."

"Did he?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"He did!"

"How do you know?"

"Because I sat on it when you fellows batted me over, after my argument with the one and only. It was most uncomfortable."

"And you left it there?" asked Tom.

"I gave it a kick when I got up—"

"What on earth for?"

"Because I was shirty," said Cardew, calmly. "Fellows do these things when they're shirty."

"You silly ass! If D'Arcy's book was left lying about the quad, anybody might have picked it up," exclaimed Tom. "That would be proof that he never had it with him when it was chucked at Lathom, if you really saw it—"

"Sat on it, I tell you! I didn't see it while I was sittin' on it—only felt it!" said Cardew. "It gave me quite a jar."

But I saw it when I got up—and saw it picked up after I had kicked it—”

“Oh!” exclaimed Tom. “Then you really know—?”

“Didn’t I say so?” drawled Cardew.

All the juniors were giving keen attention now. Even now they could not be sure whether Cardew was leg-pulling. But if he was stating the facts, it was undoubted that Arthur Augustus D’Arcy never had hurled that book at Lathom, and that Cardew knew who had.

“You see, it happened like that,” drawled Cardew. “That fellow was annoyed with Lathom, and the book came handy. He got Lathom with it from the cover of an elm—never even knowing that D’Arcy was sitting under a tree there under Lathom’s nose, the wrong fellow in the wrong place in his usual style. Perhaps I don’t need to explain that he did not linger on the spot after delivering the goods. He cleared off at about 60 m.p.h. and cut out of gates, and never even knew that Lathom had nailed D’Arcy for it till he came in.”

“Oh!” said Tom.

All the juniors had their eyes fixed on Cardew. They no longer supposed that he might be leg-pulling. It was plain that he knew the whole story: and could, if he liked, clear Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, by giving the name of the real culprit.

“Who, who was it?” demanded Blake. “We’ll jolly well see that he owns up, if we know who it was.”

“Yes, rather,” said Dig, with emphasis. “We’ll give him something worse than a Beak’s flogging if he doesn’t.”

“And then some!” growled Herries.

“Not at all necessary!” drawled Cardew. “I’m happy to report that I’ve prevailed on him to do the right thing. If D’Arcy’s comin’ back to take that whipping, it’s up to him, and he’s got to cough it up. Besides, I’ve been doin’ some pretty stout thinkin’ on the subject, and that helps. Suppose,” went on Cardew, airily, “suppose he never chucked that book at Lathom at all—suppose he chucked it at D’Arcy, and it missed and hit Lathom by mistake—”

“But it didn’t!” said Tom Merry, staring. “From what you’ve said—”

“It didn’t!” agreed Cardew. “Purely for private consumption, among friends, it didn’t. But suppose it did?”

Might work with the Head!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"Might work!" said Cardew, musingly. "That might cut out the floggin', what—and a floggin' is a painful process, as I've remarked before—I've been there, you know. I think I'll try it on."

There was a general jump.

"You!" exclaimed Levison.

"You!" stuttered Clive.

"You!" yelled Blake.

"You!" gasped Tom.

Cardew chuckled.

"Little me!" he said. "That's how I know, you know."

"Oh!" gasped Tom. "I remember you came in late for roll on Monday—"

"Exactly! Never knew a thing till after Gussy had bolted! And so long as he was out of reach of the Head's birch, I wasn't what you'd call eager to sample it myself! But now he's comin' back—" Cardew shrugged his shoulders. "I think I'll trot along to the Head's study now! I wonder if he will swallow a yarn about gettin' Lathom by mistake! You never know your luck, do you?"

And with that, Ralph Reckness Cardew strolled out of the dayroom, leaving Tom Merry and Co. staring after him blankly.

A Lift on the Road!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY came to a sudden halt.

"Oh, cwikey!" he ejaculated.

He stood in the summer dusk, on the road, with dismay in his aristocratic countenance, and his hands in his pockets—fumbling for what was not there!

Arthur Augustus was on his travels again! Greyfriars School had been left behind—in a hurry! Billy Bunter's startling news, that Mr. Railton had arrived in a car, had left the wanderer no choice but to resume his interrupted odyssey—without delay. And there he was—already a couple of miles from Greyfriars, heading for Courtfield railway station, when he suddenly remembered that he was minus that article so indispensably necessary to a traveller—cash!

He stood, going through his pockets, in dismay. He had quite forgotten cash! A fellow couldn't think of everything—and Arthur Augustus hadn't thought of that!

Harry Wharton and Co. certainly would have clubbed up all their funds to lend him, had they been aware of the shortage. But in the excitement of the moment, D'Arcy had not thought of it.

They had been kind and sympathetic. Certainly, they had been astounded to learn that Arthur Augustus was absent from his school without leave, and that his House-master had come to Greyfriars after him. Arthur Augustus had had to tell them, with Railton in the offing, and only a matter of

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minutes at his disposal for escape.

Astounded as they were, they were sympathetic, and they had played up. A hasty change into his own clothes, from Nugent's flannels, had followed: and the astonished Greyfriars juniors had guided him by a secluded way out of the precincts of Greyfriars School: hurried goodbyes were said, and he had departed in haste. If Mr. Quelch was looking for him, to hand him over to his House-master—as no doubt he was—Quelch was not going to find him. Railton, waiting for the fugitive to be delivered into his hands, would have to wait—till he grew tired of waiting, and departed without a prisoner. Arthur Augustus put his best foot foremost as he tramped away from the school where he had hoped to find refuge until matters cleared up at St. Jim's. He was not going back for that flogging—not if he could help it. But—!

"Oh, cwikey!" repeated the swell of St. Jim's.

In the summer dusk, he stared at the few coins he had found in his pockets. The total sum was one-and-ninepence.

Even in the good old days when travelling was cheap, one-and-ninepence would not have carried a traveller very far. And now—!

"Oh, cwikey!" said Arthur Augustus, for the third time.

He realised that there was no railway for him. There was not even a lodging for the night. If he kept on his way, his lodging was likely to be on the cold, cold ground. On the morrow there was pretty certain to be a food shortage! It was dismaying.

But did Arthur Augustus think of surrender? He did not! He knitted his noble brows, set his lips, and tramped on. He had to rely wholly upon Shanks' pony now: and trust to fortune for the morrow. The pressing necessity was to get to a safe distance from Greyfriars, where a St. Jim's House-master's hand was waiting to fall upon his shoulder.

That necessity came before everything, if Arthur Augustus was not to be taken back to St. Jim's, a captured fugitive: and he was quite determined that that was not going to happen.

He tramped on, as the dusk thickened.

Mile after mile passed under his feet, as he trudged along the King's highway. He was tired, and he grew more and more fatigued as he tramped on. But he kept on doggedly. He had to get to a safe distance from the House-master who

was seeking him—that was the essential thing. On and on and on, till his weary legs were almost bending under him. Twice he thumbed a car, in the hope of getting a lift: but the cars whizzed on unheeding. But he was not going to stop and rest, so long as he could keep going.

And he kept going, as the dusk deepened into night.

Another car came flashing by, and once more he signalled. But again the car passed him by like the idle wind and the tail-light vanished into the dusky distance.

Wearily he trudged on his way. A lift from some obliging motorist was just what he wanted: but the motorists on that road did not seem very obliging. And the hour was growing late—cars were few and far between.

Another car came whizzing along, and he glanced round at the gleaming headlights. Once more he faced into the road, and held up his hand. To his great relief, there was a grinding of brakes. At long last a motorist, more obliging than the others, was slowing down in answer to his signal.

It was an immense relief: for he was feeling that his legs would crumple under him.

The car stopped.

Arthur Augustus stepped towards it, hopefully.

"Sowwy to bothah you, sir!" he said—fatigue had made no difference to Gussy's polished politeness—"If you would be kind enough to give me a lift on my way—!"

The driver of the car stared at him in the dimness.

"I should be evah so much obliged—!" went on Arthur Augustus. "I have wathah a long way to go, and I am vewy tired."

"D'Arcy!"

"Eh?"

"D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove!"

The motorist jumped down.

Arthur Augustus fairly staggered. He had expected that motorist to answer, but he had not expected him to answer in the well-known voice of Victor Railton, House-master of the School House at St. Jim's!

A hand fell on his shoulder. If Arthur Augustus had thought of bolting, at the last moment, it was too late now. But the hapless swell of St. Jim's could not have bolted.

There was no bolt left in his weary legs.

"Mr. Wailton!" he said, faintly.

"Yes!" said Mr. Railton, sternly. "So I have found you, D'Arcy! I could wait no longer, and was on my way home, and now—I have found you! Get into the car."

"Weally, Mr. Wailton—"

"Get in!"

"I am sowwy, sir, to diswegard an ordah fwom my House-mastah, but I wefuse to weturn to St. Jim's. I—yawoooooooooh!"

Arthur Augustus was interrupted, by landing in the car in a heap. Mr. Railton drove on—with a passenger. Arthur Augustus was getting the lift he had desired so much—and it was taking him back to St. Jim's! But he was not worrying about it: fatigue and drowsiness supervened, and Arthur Augustus was fast asleep as Mr. Railton drove on through the summer night.

"D'ARCY!"

"Yaas, sir."

Dr. Holmes was frowning. He fixed his eyes sternly upon the sleepy junior whom Mr. Railton marched into his study. The hour was late: St. Jim's fellows were all in their dormitories. Arthur Augustus had slept like a top in the car: and he seemed only half-awake now. But he pulled himself together as he faced his Head-master.

"So you have returned, D'Arcy," said Dr. Holmes, sternly. "You have absented yourself from school without leave—you have caused much trouble and anxiety—"

"I am sowwy, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "But pewwaps you will allow me to point out that I weally had no choice in the mattah."

"What? What?"

"As I assuahed Mr. Wailton on the telephone, sir, I nevah buzzed that book at Mr. Lathom, and I considahed that I could not take a floggin' for somethin' that I had not done—neither, sir, could I allow you to commit an act of injustice—"

"What?"

"An act of injustice, sir, for which I am suah that you would have felt vewy gweat wegwet aftahwards, when the twuth came out—"

"Upon my word!"

"I am suah also, sir, that Mr. Lathom would be vewy sowwy that the w'ong fellow had been punished," said Arthur Augustus, calmly. "In the cirms, sir, I felt that I had no choice but to wetire fwom St. Jim's for a time. And now that I have weturned, sir, I twust that you will allow the mattah to stand ovah until the twuth is found out."

Dr. Holmes drew a deep, deep breath. He turned to the House-master.

"I am very glad and relieved, Mr. Railton, that you have found this foolish boy and brought him back safely to the school. You will be glad to know that some fresh facts have come to light during your absence. It transpires that it was not, after all, D'Arcy who threw the book at Mr. Lathom.

He turned to Arthur Augustus again.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "If you have found out who it was, sir, it is all wight."

"A Fourth-form boy came to my study this afternoon, to state the facts," said Dr. Holmes. "It appears that it was Cardew who threw the book, but he explained that he threw it at you, D'Arcy—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And it missed, and struck Mr. Lathom by mistake. The matter is not, therefore, so serious as it appeared to be. Cardew has been given an imposition for his thoughtless action, and the matter is at an end."

Arthur Augustus stood silent. He had his own opinion about the statement Cardew had made to the Head. But at all events, the culprit had owned up: and the flogging, evidently, was off! The swell of St. Jim's no longer regretted that he had asked that motorist for a lift! He was glad to be back at St. Jim's, instead of facing the wide world on one-and-ninepence!

"But all this," continued Dr. Holmes, "does not alter the fact that you have run away from school, D'Arcy—"

"I am sowwy to intewwupt you, sir," said Arthur Augustus, firmly, "but I am bound to wepeat that I did not wun away fwom school. I merely wetired fwom St. Jim's, feelin' that I had no choice in the mattah—"

"That will do, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir! But—"

"In the circumstances," said the Head, "I think that this foolish boy's inconsequent conduct may be overlooked, Mr. Railton. If you agree—"

"Certainly, sir," said Mr. Railton.

"Very good! You may go to your dormitory, D'Arcy."

"Thank you vewy much, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "And I assuah you, sir—"

"You may go."

"Vewy well, sir, but I assuah you—"

"Please take him away, Mr. Railton."

And Arthur Augustus was led from the Head's study.

Five minutes later he was in bed in the Fourth-form dormitory. A dozen fellows were sitting up in bed asking him questions. But they received no replies: Arthur Augustus was fast asleep again, and he did not reopen his eyes till the rising bell clanged out in the summer morning.

THE END

All characters in this story are imaginary and no reference is intended to any living person.

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