

GUSSY THE MOTORIST!

**A SCREAMINGLY FUNNY
SCHOOL STORY, INSIDE.**

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^d

LIBRARY

OF
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

No. 929.
Vol. XXVIII.
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1925.



GUSSY IS "RUN IN" FOR DANGEROUS DRIVING!

(An "Arresting" incident from the extra-long school story of Tom Merry & Co., inside.)



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

GEMITES can look forward next week to a special issue of their favourite paper. Christmas comes but once a year—everyone knows that. But everyone doesn't know that the good old GEM celebrates the occasion in right royal style. Next week's issue is a winner all the way. Mr. Martin Clifford has piled in with an extra-special story of Tom Merry & Co., describing a peculiar adventure that befalls them during the Christmas vacation. And Tom Merry & Co. in the "St. Jim's News" pages have buckled to with a will to give you a Grand Christmas Number. No need for me to urge the regular reader to order next week's GEM early—he'll do that of his own.

THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY.

Two new numbers of this famous school story library are on sale Friday of next week, and they are both well worth reading. No. 17—"Surprising the School!"—deals with a magnificent story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, introducing Billy Bunter, the fattest and funniest schoolboy in the world. Billy Bunter loses his heart to a fair lady—he loses other things, too, but to "split" about these at this juncture would be spoiling in advance a "good thing." Mind you get this fine story, boys. No. 18—ah, this will interest you—is written by Mr. Martin Clifford and deals, of course, with Tom Merry & Co. The story is entitled "The Millionaire Boot-boy!" and it shows Mr. Clifford bang up to form. Remember, these two new issues of the famous library are on sale Friday of next week—December 4th. Do yourselves a good turn and order your copies now.

A TOPPING SERIES!

Gemites will find in the "Magnet"—our grand companion paper—an excellent series of Harry Wharton & Co. stories, showing the fall of George Wingate from the captaincy of Greyfriars and the rise of his enemy, Gerald Loder. Mr. Frank Richards, the author, has given Magnetites some remarkable stories in the past, but the present series now running in the "Magnet" bids fair to outshine them all. Why don't you read this week's yarn—"The Worst Form at Greyfriars!" It's a real winner, chums.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"SHADOWED FROM SCHOOL!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next week's story deals with the "break up" at St. Jim's and an extraordinary adventure that Tom Merry & Co. "walk into" during their Christmas holidays. Mind you read it, chums.

GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER!

The "St. Jim's News" deals with the festive occasion, and as Tom Merry & Co. have compiled it the quality of this number is known beforehand. Don't miss it.

"A LEADER OF THE LEAGUE!"

By Sydney Horler.

Gemites must not miss the next instalment of this amazing Soccer serial. Goals have been scored ever since the first chapters appeared, and Mr. Sydney Horler carries on with the good work in breezy fashion.

ST. JIM'S JINGLES!

No. 14 in this brilliant series of poems deals with George Herries of the Fourth. Look out for it next Wednesday, boys.

Cheerio,
YOUR EDITOR,

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 929.



You Know A Good Joke? Let's Hear it, Chum.

Delicious Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes
Awarded for Interesting Pars.

All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: The GEM LIBRARY, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

TUCK FOR SHOEBOURNESS! THEN HE "TWIGGED"!

Small Boy (to grocer): "Please, sir, mother says this jam is full of stalks." "Well, what about it? And can't you read? It says, plain enough on the label, 'Dobson's Jams, Branches Everywhere!'"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to E. M. Coe, 158, High Street, Shoeboorness.

A POOR OUTLOOK!

First Tramp: "You won't get anything decent there, mate, so don't go." Second Tramp: "Is that so?" First Tramp: "Yes. Them people is vegetarians, and they got a dog wot ain't!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Shaw, 144, Old Lane, Hollinwood.

THE ONLY WAY!

At a fancy-dress ball for children a policeman was stationed at the door and was instructed by the committee not to admit any adults. Shortly after the beginning of the ball a woman came running up to the door and demanded admission. "I'm sorry, mum," replied the policeman, "but I can't let anyone in but children." "But my child is dressed up as a butterfly," exclaimed the woman anxiously, "and she has forgotten her wings!" "Can't 'elp that, madam," replied the policeman. "Horders is horders, so you'll 'ave to let 'er go as a caterpillar!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to John Garvie, 10, King's Road, Romford, Essex.

COMPLICATIONS!

Doctor: "How often does the pain come on?" Patient: "Every five minutes, doctor." Doctor: "And lasts?" Patient: "Oh, a quarter of an hour at the very least!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Fred. Beardsell, Holme, nr. Holmbridge, Holmfirth, Huddersfield, Yorks.

PROOF POSITIVE!

Manager: "I fear this young man to whom I gave a job last week is dishonest." Assistant: "You shouldn't judge by appearances, sir." Manager: "I'm not, I'm judging by disappearances!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Ross, 3, Carlston Road, Tufnell Park, N. 7.

DEAR LITTLE MITES!

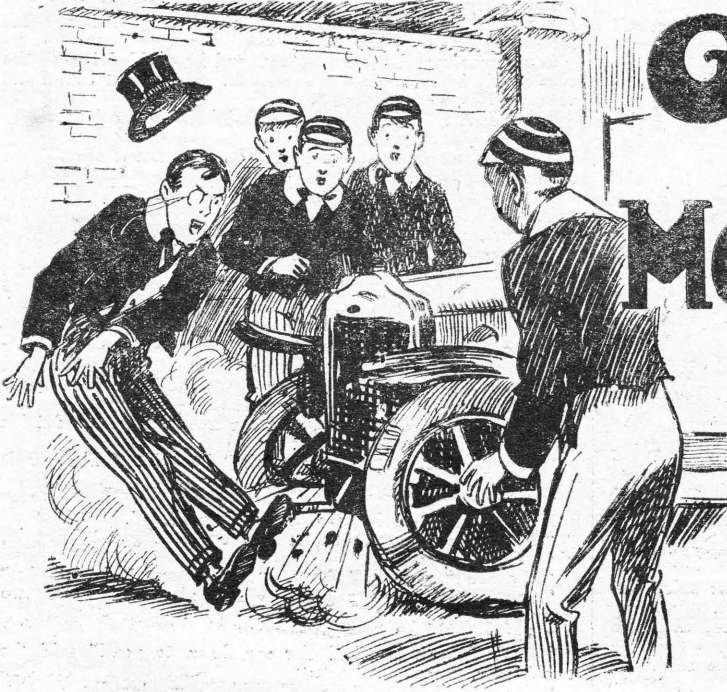
Smith-Robinson came home the other night and found his three little children all busy on the floor with his new and expensive box of cigars. "What are you doing with those cigars?" he roared. "Oh, father," said the eldest boy, pointing to the brown tobacco remnants on the carpet, "we were pretending that they were khaki soldiers, and we took off their puttees, and now we can't get them on again!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Ronald Wakeham, 113, Lynton Road, West Acton, W. 3.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

The GEM LIBRARY,

No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

AN ACCIDENT! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the fastidious swell of St. Jim's, buys a car by accident for "forty bob." And accidents follow one upon the other when he dawns upon his school-fellows in the guise of—



GUSSY THE MOTORIST!

A Screamingly funny story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, featuring Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in a new role.
 By Martin Clifford

CHAPTER 1.

Knocked Down to Gussy!

GOING, going—
 "Gone!" roared Monty Lowther. And the crowd standing round chuckled mightily, for a fine, fat pig had just been auctioned, and as Monty spoke it was "gone" in a literal sense, having broken away from its halter and scurried into the midst of the onlookers.

The scene was in the Market Place at Wayland, and an open-air auction sale was taking place. Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, emerging from the station and seeing the crowd had strolled over to watch the fun.

It was surprising how much could be derived from a country auction sale.

The Terrible Three of the Shell, and Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth had just come over from Rylcombe to get some footer tackle from the sports stores in the High Street. They were unusually flush with money at this particular time, Miss Priscilla Fawcett having sent Tom Merry an extra "quid," and Lowther and Manners, and Blake having received unexpected remittances from doting relatives. As for Arthur Augustus, he was, as Monty Lowther expressed it, "simply rolling in filthy lucre," for Lord Eastwood, his noble pater, had turned up trumps with a fiver.

And so, feeling inordinately cheery and gay, the chums of the School House of St. Jim's had set forth to Wayland after lessons, intending to make sundry purchases there, and have tea at the bunshop.

The auction was now almost over, and the last lots were being put up for sale. The auctioneer, a big, spruce man, with an ample display of gaudy waistcoat, and a voice that carried for miles, was mounted on a rostrum with a clerk seated at a desk at his side.

"Gone!" he said, rather breathlessly, swiping the top of the rostrum with his hammer. "That pig is yours, sir, for the paltry sum of thirty shillings!"

"Lumme! But where is 'e?" said the bewildered-looking countryman who had bid for the recalcitrant porker.

The pig was diving in and out among the crowd. Sundry small youths "shooshed" him away from their vicinity, and the startled pig, with a shrill squeak, made a running dash towards the St. Jim's juniors.

"My hat!" gasped Blake. "Look out, Gussy!"
 "Bai Jove! Yawoooooogh!" roared the swell of the Fourth.

The pig had dashed blindly between his legs, and Arthur Augustus gave a lurch and a wild yell. He clutched Tom Merry almost lovingly round the neck, and the two juniors went staggering. Gussy lost his balance and sat down on the cold, hard cobblestones of the Market Square with a terrific jolt, and Tom Merry fell to earth with him.

Bump!
 "Yow-wow!"
 "Oooooooph!"
 "Haw, haw, haw!" roared the onlookers.

Gussy groped for his monocle, and, sitting on the ground in a most ungraceful attitude, he gave vent to a dismal moan.
 "Oh, deah! Gwoooooogh! That howwid anima—!"

"You frabjous ass, Gussy!" roared Tom Merry, jumping up. "It was all your silly fault! Why didn't you get out of the way of the pig?"

"Yow! Bai Jove! Weally, Tom Mewwy—!"

"Oh, come up, Gussy!" said Blake. "You're distracting attention from the giddy auction, and the merchant on the stand will come down in a tick and give you a biff on the napper with his hammer!"

"Weally, Blake, I should wefuse to have my nappah stwuck with a hammah—!"

"Oh, bow-wow! Kim up!"

Gussy was yanked up by his grinning chums. The pig had been caught and led away triumphantly by its purchaser. The crowd was laughing at Gussy's fall.

"Gwoooooogh!" he ejaculated, adjusting his monocle and looking in deep distress at his trousers. "I am in a feahful fluttah, deah boys. My twousahs have been howwidly eweased, and I'm afwaid I sha'n't be able to appeal like this befoah the young lady in the bunshop—!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Order, order, gentlemen!" roared the auctioneer, thumping away energetically with the hammer. "We now come to the next lot. A fine old violin, gentlemen. It's got a lovely tone, and is really a first-class instrument. What offers?"

"Tuppence!" said Monty Lowther. The auctioneer gave a glare.

"A grand old violin, gentlemen! The older the fiddle, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 929."

Grand
XMAS NUMBER

Next Wednesday
Don't Miss It.

the better the tune, you know. This is the original fiddle on which Néro played when Athens was burning—"

"You're offside there, old top!" said Blake. "It was Carthage, I believe."

"Rome, you mean," laughed Tom Merry. "You aren't very strong on geography, Blake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come, gentlemen, let us cease this frivolity," said the auctioneer. "What shall I take for this fine old fiddle?"

"Two bob!" said a voice.

"And a tanner!" said Blake.

D'Arcy gave him a look of horror.

"Weally, Blake, I considah it most infwa dig to make use of that vulgah expression in public," he said. "It is no more twouble to say sixpence—"

"Two-and-nine!" said another voice.

"Three bob!"

"Three and a tanner!" said Blake recklessly.

"Bai Jove! I weally must insist, Blake—"

"Three-and-nine!" yelled a man at the back.

There was no advance on three-and-nine, so the gentleman in the rear had the violin knocked down to him.

"Not a bad fiddle," said Blake, who was somewhat musically inclined. "I wouldn't have minded it for three and a tanner."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, bow-wow!" said Blake. "Let's see what's going up next."

The next lot was a seedy-looking goat, which evinced a great desire to butt at the rostrum, evidently resenting the indignity of being disposed of by public auction.

Bidding was slow on the goat, and it eventually went to a yokel for ten shillings.

All manner of articles were being put up for sale, and the lots were assorted and varied in the extreme.

Tom Merry & Co. lingered to watch the fun, although Arthur Augustus grew rather impatient.

"Pway let us wun along now, deah boys," he said. "I must get my twousahs bwushed and—"

"Oh, rats!" said Blake cheerfully. "There's the last lot going up now—a motor-car, by Jimmy!"

"Weally, Blake, we have seen suffish—"

"Bow-wow!"

The juniors grinned at the decrepit looking motor-car that was standing near the rostrum. It was marked "Lot 99," and the auctioneer was indicating it with his hammer.

"There we have our last lot, gentlemen! A fine fourteen horse-power Razzler! Look at it!"

The crowd looked at it, and smiled broadly. Several derisive guffaws arose. Tom Merry gave a whistle.

"Whew! What an awful old crock! It must be as old as the hills!"

"Rather!"

The Razzler car was really in a most dilapidated condition. Its body was old-fashioned and badly battered. The upholstery was torn, and the padding—or what was left of it—could be seen exuding through the rents. The tin bonnet was a most ghastly fit, whilst the radiator was rusty and broken in several places. The mudguards seemed to be ready to fall off at any moment. The tyres were well worn and liberally patched, the windscreen was cracked, and the hood was in a horribly tattered and torn condition. In all, the car looked what it was—a crumbling relic of the olden days of motoring.

The auctioneer noted the amused looks of his audience, and he gave the rostrum a resounding whack with the hammer.

"Gentlemen, the car may look old, but, believe me, it's good!" he exclaimed. "It is complete with lamps and horn—"

"Just as it came out of the Ark!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is no laughing matter!" said the auctioneer reprovingly. "Here I am offering you a car that is worth a lot of money—"

"What price of old iron?" said a voice in the crowd, and there was another laugh.

"Come, come, gentlemen!" said the knight of the hammer. "Let us get to business. This car, I say, is not an old crock. There's life in her yet, believe me! I guarantee this car to be in good running order, gentlemen. Now, what offers?"

He looked round, with hammer raised, but there was no response.

Nobody seemed willing to make an offer for the antiquated Razzler.

"A motor-car, gentlemen, capable of many years of faithful service!" cried the auctioneer persuasively. "It is licenced until December, and ready for the road! What bids for this splendid vehicle?"

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed the onlookers.

The auctioneer gave a snort.

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"Come, gentlemen, we must be serious! This car has got to be sold this afternoon, as there is no room for it here. Will you make me an offer, young gent?"

He addressed this question to Arthur Augustus, who was surveying the decrepit automobile critically through his monocle.

Gussy was very keen on motors, and he could drive all the cars at his home at Eastwood House. He looked round the veteran Razzler and shuddered.

"Bai Jove! This is weally a fwightful old cah!"

"You understand motors, sir?" said the auctioneer.

"Yaas, I wathah fancy I know a little about cahs," said Arthur Augustus.

"Then perhaps you'll make a bid for this desirable vehicle, sir?"

Arthur Augustus smiled at his chums.

"A couple of pounds, bai Jove," he said jokingly.

"A couple of pounds!" exclaimed the auctioneer.

"Gentlemen, I am offered two pounds for this car! Any advance on that?"

Nobody answered.

"Two pounds for this car!" cried the auctioneer, raising his hammer. "The vehicle must be sold this afternoon, without reserve. No advance on two pounds? This is your last chance, gentlemen! Going—going—Gone!"

Bang! went the hammer, and the auctioneer held out his hand to Arthur Augustus.

"Two pounds, if you please, sir," he said. "The car is yours."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked bewildered.

"Allow me to congratulate you on your great bargain, sir. Here is your car."

"My cah!" gasped D'Arcy. "But I haven't bought it!"

"Come, come, young gent! You made a bid of two pounds, didn't you?"

"Yaas; but—"

"Well, I have knocked the car down to you!" said the auctioneer.

"Knocked it down to me!" said Gussy dazedly.

"Yes, sir. That car is now your property, and I'll trouble you for the two pounds."

"Bai—bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry & Co.

Gussy's face was a study as he looked first at the battered automobile and then at the auctioneer.

"I—I—I— Weally, you know, I don't undahstand," he stammered. "I wasn't at all sewious when I bid two pounds—"

"You made the bid, sir, and I accepted it," said the auctioneer sternly. "Two pounds, please."

"But look heah—"

"Hurry up, young man! I am waiting to go!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and looked round in great embarrassment. He appealed to his chums.

"I say, deah boys, this is most widic!" he said. "I weally had no intention of acquiwiv' this car!"

"But you bid for it, Gussy," grinned Tom Merry. "You can't go back on your word, you know."

"Bai Jove! Wathah not! But—"

"Stump up, Gussy!" chuckled Blake.

"The car's yours, old man!" chortled Monty Lowther.

"Oh, cwumbs!"

The swell of St. Jim's surveyed the car and the crowd with a very red face. Then he turned to the auctioneer.

"I am afwaid I acted wathah washly," he said. "I wish to withdwaw my offah."

The auctioneer shook his head.

"Sorry, sir, but that can't be done," he said. "The car has been knocked down to you, and you'll have to take it. I have my duties as an auctioneer to perform, and the car has become your property by public auction. I'll trouble you for the two quid, if you don't mind."

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath.

"Bai Jove! Then this—this cah is weally mine!" he gasped.

"Yes, sir."

"And it is impos for me to wetwack?"

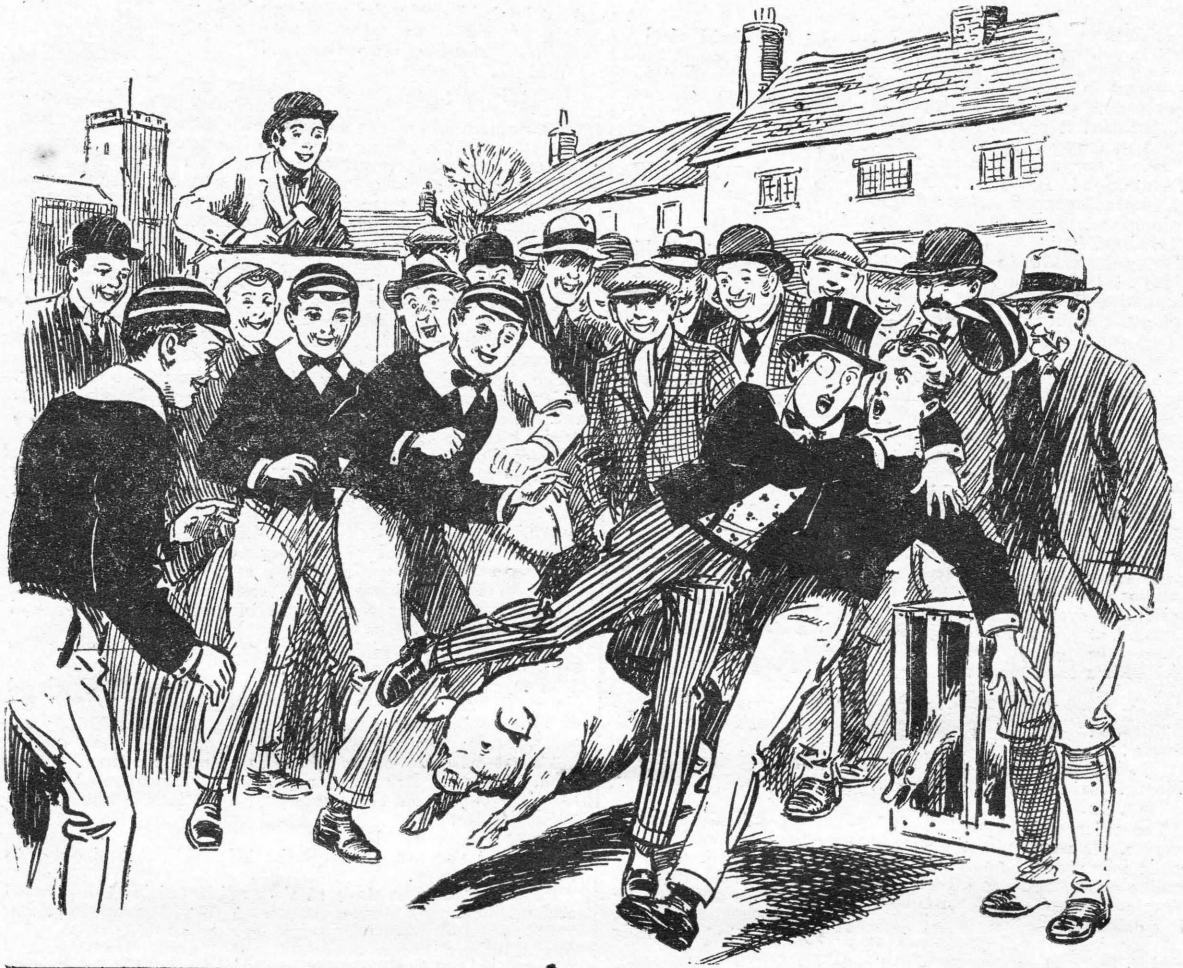
"Quite impossible, sir," said the auctioneer firmly.

"Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus, in deliberate and measured tones. "I did not pwesume that you would take my offah sewiously, but as you have done so I will not go back on my word. Afah all, a motor-cah for two pounds is a great bargain, and undah the circs I will assume the ownership of this vehicle without further quibblin'."

"Hooray!" roared the crowd encouragingly.

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Blake.

The swell of the Fourth took out his Russian leather wallet, and extracted from it the rustling fiver he had received from Lord Eastwood that morning. This he handed to the auctioneer, and received his change of three pounds and a written receipt for the car.



With a shrill squeak, the startled pig made a dash towards the St. Jim's juniors. "My hat!" gasped Blake. "Look out, Gussy!" "Bai Jove—yawoooooh!" roared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The pig dashed wildly between his legs, and Gussy gave a lurch and a wild yell. He clutched Tom Merry lovingly round the neck, and the two juniors went staggering. (See chapter 1.)

"Thank you very much, sir!" said the auctioneer briskly. "Gentlemen, the sale is now over, and I wish you a very good-afternoon!"

"Haw haw, haw!"
 And, amidst the loud laughter of the populace of Wayland, the auctioneer got down from his stand and the clerk closed his book with a snap.

CHAPTER 2.

D'Arcy at the Wheel!

"WELL, Gussy, you chortling chump!"
 Thus spake Tom Merry as he walked up to Arthur Augustus and the car.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "You chuckle-headed fathead!" said Blake. "Fancy bidding for that horrible old crock! Gussy, I'm ashamed of you!"

"Look heah—"
 "Gussy the motorist! Isn't it prime?" chortled Monty Lowther. "What are you going to do with this collection of old iron, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus fixed his monocle firmly in his eye and surveyed his grinning chums with a look of great severity.

"Weally, you boundahs, I quite fail to see any cause whatevah for this wibald mewwint," he said. "I suppose a fellah has a perfect wight to bid at a public auction?"

"Yes; but—but this absolutely takes the cake!" laughed Tom Merry.

"I wathah fancay that I have picked up a weally we-markable bargain," said the swell of St. Jim's loftily. "If the cah is weally in wunnin' ordah I shall dwive it."
 "You—you'll drive it!" said Blake faintly.

"Yaas, wathah!" said his noble chum with spirit. "I

have a dwivin' licence for a bike, you know, and I suppose that will do. I dare say I could manage this cah quite all wight."

"But you're not allowed to drive a car with a motor-bike licence!" remonstrated Blake. "You're under age!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I'm going to dwive this cah and chance it!"

"Great pip!"
 The crowd was getting thicker, and loud were the guffaws at the expense of Arthur Augustus and his decrepit car. The laughter roused Gussy to a good deal of indignation.

"Pway wun away, you howwid persons!" he exclaimed, looking round with a gleaming monocle. "I wegard your wemarks as most oppwobwious!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"
 "Any old iron?"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard through his nose. The blood of all the D'Arcys was seething in his veins. This laughter and ridicule only served to strengthen his determination to stand by his bargain and defy the scoffers. Gussy prided himself on being as firm as a "wock," although Blake likened his firmness unto the obstinacy of a mule.

"What are you going to do, then, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Take it away and bury it!" said one young man in the crowd facetiously.

"I wefuse to buwy it!" said D'Arcy heatedly. "I—I mean—"

"Haw, haw, haw!"
 "I—I— Weally, I—I am in a most fwightful fluttah, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I suppose I must get the beastly thing away."

"Either that or a bobby will come along and pun you in," grinned Tom Merry.

"Oh deah!"

Gussy approached his derelict car and took hold of the starting handle rather gingerly. He gave it a wrench, and succeeded in turning the crank about half way. Then he wrenched again, and his topper fell off. Blake fielded it, and jammed it on his noble chum's head.

"Go it, Gussy!" he said encouragingly.

"Wind her up, old man!"

"Gwoooogh! Bai Jove! This handle is fwightfully stiff, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus, striving hard to turn the engine.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gussy bent low to his task, and wrenched with all his might at the starting handle of the old car. His monocle dropped and dangled on the end of its string, whilst his face grew redder and redder.

Tug, tug!

Bang!

There was a sudden explosion from somewhere beneath the bonnet, and the starting handle gave a violent "kick." Gussy was not prepared for anything like this, and he gave a wild leap backwards. He lost his balance and sat down in front of the car with a nasty jolt.

"Yawoooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared his chums.

Arthur Augustus groped for his monocle and looked round dazedly.

"Ow! Oh deah! Gwoooogh!" he gasped.

He scrambled to his feet and again took hold of the handle and turned it. With topper set well back on his head and eyeglass dangling before him, Arthur Augustus churned at the handle desperately. Tom Merry laughingly opened the bonnet and "tickled" the carburettor, and at last with a loud bang and a splutter, the engine burst into life.

Bang, bang! Whiff-ff! Pop! Whiff-ff!

"Bravo!" roared Blake. "Gussy's worked the giddy oracle!"

"Gwoooooogh! Bai Jove! She's wunnin', deah boys! Whew!" said Gussy breathlessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The old car shook and rattled under the vibration of the engine. It was really remarkable how the body and framework managed to hold together at all. Clouds of pungent smoke arose, and the afternoon air in the Market Place at Wayland reverberated with splutters and pops and deafening detonations.

"My only hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "What a giddy row! But you've one consolation, Gussy—she goes!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Gussy dragged open the front door of the car and climbed gingerly to the driver's seat. He adjusted his monocle, grasped the steering-wheel and looked round.

"Get in, deah boys!" he said.

Tom Merry, Blake, Manners, and Monty Lowther looked very dubious.

"Oh crumbs!" said Blake. "I don't fancy riding in that old tub."

"No fear!"

Arthur Augustus regarded them severely.

"Weally, deah boys, I twust you are not fwightened?" he said. "I'm quite a capable dwivah, you know, and we can have a fine wide back to St. Jim's."

"Ahem!"

"Pway get in, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Come on, kids—we might as well risk it," he said.

"After all, if anything happens, we can jump."

"But—but suppose the old crock blows up?" said Manners nervously.

"Ha, ha! We'll take the chance. We must stand by old Gussy, you know."

"Hear, hear!"

The four juniors stepped towards the car, and Tom Merry tried to open the rear door. But it was jammed, and so was the one opposite. At last, to the great amusement of the crowd, they climbed over the high back of the car and scrambled into seats behind Gussy.

Whiff-ff! Pop! Bang, bang! went the engine.

"Hold tight, deah boys!" said Gussy.

Honk, honk!

The crowd scattered with great alacrity as Gussy struggled to put the car into gear. There was a horrible grinding and grating, and then, as Arthur Augustus' foot left the clutch pedal, the car shot forward in a series of wild jerks.

Gr-rrr! Bang! Splutter! Pop!

"Careful, Gussy!" shrieked Blake, as the rickety vehicle bounced and lurched over the cobblestones.

"All wight, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus, whose topper was set at an ungraceful angle over his left ear

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whilst he held on to the steering-wheel as though his very life depended on it. "I shall get the hang of this thing in a minute, and— Gwooooooogh!"

Biff!

The front off-side wheel struck the side of a vegetable stall in the Market Square, and the man in charge gave a roar of alarm and wrath as potatoes, cabbages, turnips, and apples all went tumbling over into the gutter.

Gussy wrenched desperately at the steering-wheel, and the car gave a sickening lurch sideways. It missed a donkey barrow by mere inches, and the donkey, seeing the whirring, rattling vehicle so close to him, put his ears back and commenced to shy vigorously.

"Hee-haw—heee-ecce-haw!"

Tom Merry & Co. clutched the shaking sides of the car and gazed about them with wild eyes. Gussy, to do him justice, was really working wonders with the car, considering the stiffness of the steering and the obstinacy of the controls.

The donkey bestowed several hard kicks on the car body, which considerably added to the number of dents upon it, and then Arthur Augustus managed to steer a more or less straight course into the High Street.

Honk, honk, honk!

People scattered to right and left, and traffic made way for the old Razzler as it jolted and jerked over the tram-lines. The road was by no means even, and Tom Merry, Blake, Manners, and Lowther in the back of the car suffered a good deal of shaking up. Gussy clung to the steering-wheel like grim death, and, with monocle fixed firmly in his eye, drove on in second gear.

He turned a very red face to his chums after they had been going for a little while.

"What about stoppin' at the sports shop, deah boys?" he said. "It's ovah there on the wight."

"For goodness' sake keep on, now, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Let's get out of the town and back to St. Jim's as soon as possible. I wonder what the Head will say when he sees this little lot?"

"What will the other chaps say, too?" moaned Blake. "Oh, jemimy! Are there any springs on this car? Yow-wow! Steady over the bumps, Gussy! This is shaking all my inside up."

Bump! Bump! Rattle!

On went the car, through the High Street and out into the open country.

People stopped to stare at that aged vehicle as it snorted and rattled on its uneven course. Arthur Augustus, looking very red and harassed, stuck grimly to his task. He gradually grew more confident with the car, however, and when Wayland Moor was reached, he changed into top gear and pressed harder on the throttle. The old engine belched and roared, and the car clattered onward at quite a good pace.

Tom Merry & Co. clung to their seats and trusted to luck. Gussy turned round to them as they neared Rylcombe.

"We're gettin' on splendidly, aren't we, deah boys?" he said.

Blake gave a sickly smile.

"Ye-es!" he gasped. "First rate!"

"This cah goes wemarkably well, considewin' its age," said the swell proudly. "As a mattah of fact, I am wathah glad I bought it. It's fwightfully jollay, you know, bein' the ownah of a cah, and we shall pwobably be able to have some great fun with this old bus."

"Ahem!" His chums seemed doubtful on that point.

They had now entered the main street of Rylcombe.

There were several St. Jim's fellows in the village, and they almost dropped down when they beheld that snorting old car, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at the wheel, and Tom Merry, Blake, Manners, and Lowther behind.

Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger of the Fifth, emerging from the station teashop, stopped short and rubbed their eyes.

"Mum-m-my hat!" ejaculated Cutts. "What is it?"

"Am I seeing things?" said Gilmore faintly.

Honk! Honk!

Gerald Knox of the Sixth strode down the High Street. When he caught sight of Gussy's car his eyes opened wide, and he gave a gasp of amazement.

"G-g-good heavens!" he muttered. "The reckless young sweeps!"

The surly prefect stepped out into the road, and stood in the way of the Razzler. He waved his arms, and glared at Gussy as he approached.

"Stop! Stop, D'Arcy! Do you hear?" he roared. "How dare you drive about in that thing?"

Honk! Honk! Honk! went the horn.

"Out of the way, Knox!" cried Arthur Augustus. "You'll get wun down, bai Jove!"

"Stop!" hissed the prefect. "You little sweeps have no right to make an exhibition of yourselves like that, and— Yarooogh! Yah! Ooogh!"

Knox was not touched by the car, but as it bore down



"Don't wowwy, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, holding on to the steering-wheel as though his very life depended on it. "I shall get the hang of this thing in a minute—Gwooooh!" Biff! Grrr-rrr! Gussy wrenched desperately at the steering wheel as the front wheel struck a vegetable stall. (See Chapter 2.)

on him he imagined that he was, and he gave a leap that would have done credit to a dancing dervish. The people in the High Street roared with laughter, and Tom Merry & Co. roared with laughter, and the car snorted and rattled on its way, leaving Knox standing at the side of the road, shaking his fist furiously after it.

CHAPTER 3.

A Shock for Mr. Ratchiff!

CHONK! Chonk! Chonk! The engine of the car was getting overheated, and all manner of weird noises and knocks came from under the bonnet as Arthur Augustus set her to climb the short hill in the Rylcombe Lane, en route for St. Jim's. The gears grated and screeched in a most disconcerting manner, whilst clouds of smoke blotted out the scenery at the back and caused the passengers to apply handkerchiefs to their noses.

"Groogh! Oooch! Ah-ti-shoo!" sneezed Blake. "We shall all be gassed in a minute! What the merry dickens are you up to, Gussy?"

"I'm twyin' to get up this hill, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus, who was working the gear lever to and fro in a frantic effort to get into low gear.

Grrr-rrrr-rrrr! Bang! "Retard the spark a bit, Gussy!" said Tom Merry chokingly.

Pop! The engine gave a final hoarse bark and spluttered out. The car pulled up with a jerk, and Tom Merry & Co. surveyed each other dismally through the haze of smoke.

"What's up, Gussy?" asked Manners. "I'm afwaid she's konked out, deah boys!" "Oh, my hat!"

A small crowd of St. Jim's fellows came running up. They had followed from the village to watch the progress of

Gussy's car. Racke, Mellish, Gore, and Crooke were there, and they laughed the amateur motorists to derision. George Alfred Grundy and his faithful henchmen, Wilkins and Gunn, and Lumley-Lumley, Cardew, and Kerruish turned up, roaring with laughter.

"Start her up again, Gussy!" "Never say die, old chap!"

Arthur Augustus clambered down and turned at the starting-handle. After winding for some minutes the engine started, but as soon as D'Arcy sat at the wheel again and essayed to drive on, it banged and fizzled and then stopped.

Several times he started the engine, but the car flatly refused to climb the hill. Gussy grew red and exasperated, and the humorous remarks of his schoolfellows did not tend to ease his feelings.

"Theah's somethin' w'ong, deah boys!" he gasped. "Perhaps if I ease the clutch she may get up the hill."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

He discovered a spanner, a wrench, and an oil-can in the tool-box, and a roar of laughter arose from the onlookers as Gussy got out, and, reclining at full length on one of the cushions which he deposited in the road, crawled under the car to effect adjustments.

"Bravo, Gussy!" "Get out and get under, old man!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

Muffled gurgles and sundry weird gasps came from under the car. Only Gussy's legs could be seen protruding. The onlookers shrieked.

"Gwooooh! Yah! Oh ewwubs! Ooooch!" Thus spake Arthur Augustus as he wriggled out again after a good deal of knocking and wrenching.

A roar of mirth greeted his appearance. Evidently there was a chronic escape of oil underneath the car, for Gussy's aristocratic features were liberally spattered with the black, greasy fluid, whilst a stream of it was trickling down his back.

"Gwooooh!" he said, rubbing his nose and thereby trans-

ferring to that organ some of the mixture of oil and dirt with which his hands were smothered. "I'm afvaid I can't do anythin', deah boys. This cah wants seein' to."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So we're stuck, Gussy—eh?" said Blake. "Well, this is prime, I must say! Look at your chivvy, you fathead!"

"Weally, Blake, I wefuse to be chawacterised as a fat-head!" said Arthur Augustus, with asperity. "Besides, how can I look at my face? What is w'ong with it, anyway?"

"I thought that perhaps you had been rubbing it round the engine or ducking it in the oil-tank, that's all," said Blake cheerfully. "But what are we to do now? You can't leave the car here."

"Wathah not, deah boy! Perhaps it would be bettah if some of you fellows kindly lent a hand to push this cah to St. Jim's."

"We'll give you a shove, old chap!"

"What-ho!"

Arthur Augustus clambered back to his seat at the steering-wheel, and his schoolfellows all crowded behind. On the word from Tom Merry to "shove," they "shoved" with a will, and the car went creaking and rumbling slowly up the hill.

"Go it, ye cripples!" sang out Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gussy steered, and the others pushed, and in this manner the car was taken to St. Jim's. The juniors sent it whizzing through the gateway, and Arthur Augustus brought it to a standstill just inside the Close.

"Bai Jove! We're heah at last, deah boys!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors of St. Jim's.

Fellows came dashing up from far and near, and all chortled in high glee when they saw Gussy's car.

Wally D'Arcy arrived at the head of a tribe of fags from the Third. He shaded his eyes as he looked at his aristocratic major, and then he and his fellow fags walked round and round the car and subjected it to the minutest inspection.

"Well, my only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally at last. "Kids, is this a motor-car?"

"It used to be, I should think," grinned Curly Gibson, "somewhere round about the year dot, perhaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Gus, what's the giddy idea?" inquired Wally D'Arcy, looking at his indignant elder brother at the wheel. "Have you been robbing a museum?"

"Weally, Wallay—"

"My word! This isn't your heap of scrap-iron, surely, Gus?"

Arthur Augustus wiped the oil from his monocle, and jammed it into his eye. He fixed a stern look on Wally.

"How many more times am I to impress upon you, Wallay, that as your majah I am entitled to be treated with respect?" he said severely.

"Oh, rats!" said the hero of the Third cheerfully. "You surely haven't bought that thing?"

"This is my cah, Wallay."

"Car?" echoed Wally. "Hark at that, kids—he calls it a car! Oh, my only sainted Aunt Jane! You've got some pluck, Gus!"

"Wallay!"

"Carry me home to die, somebody!" said Wally, in anguished tones. "I have put up with my major's fat-headedness so far, but this is the last giddy straw! Plant a weeping jenny on my grave, kids, and say I died a hero!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wallay, you diswepful little wascal, I shall have no wecourse but to give you a feahful thwashin'!" said the swell of the Fourth heatedly.

"Bow-wow!" said his minor. "Does this thing really go, or do you always have to push it?"

"Let's see her go, Gussy," said Kangaroo of the Shell, with a chuckle.

Arthur Augustus descended and worked at the starting-handle manfully. The engine, after its rest, started with a roar, and the boys of St. Jim's fell back rather nervously.

Arthur Augustus smiled proudly. He clambered back into the car, gave a toot on the horn, rammed home the gear, and let in the clutch. The ancient Razzler jerked forward, and a cheer arose from the onlookers.

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"Let her rip!"

D'Arcy sent the car rumbling up the drive, but he over-shot the corner and went careering into the quadrangle. A roar of laughter arose at this exploit.

Kildare, Darrell and Rusden of the Sixth, standing by the pavilion on the football ground, gazed in horrified wonderment at the strange, snorting apparition in the quad.

A tall, lean figure in cap and gown descended from the

New House and crossed the quadrangle. Tom Merry & Co. gasped when they recognised Mr. Horace Ratcliff, the unpopular Housemaster.

"Look out, Gussy!" called Blake. "Here comes Ratty!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was making efforts to shut off, but by the anxious look on his face it was apparent that something else had gone wrong.

Mr. Horace Ratcliff stopped abruptly when his ears caught the sound of the car in the quad. He turned round and saw the old car rattling towards him, with Arthur Augustus at the wheel.

The Housemaster almost dropped.

"D'Arcy!" he said faintly. "Surely the boy has gone mad—bringing a dangerous automobile into the school precincts! I—"

"Honk, honk, honk!" went the horn.

"Look out, sir!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"B-bless my soul!" spluttered Mr. Ratcliff, his eyes fixed on the oncoming car. "D'Arcy, how dare you! Stop!"

Crash! Bang! Whirrr-rrrr!

"Stop, D'Arcy!" howled Mr. Ratcliff, waving his arms in the manner of windmill sails. "Do you hear me, boy? I command you to stop!"

"I—I can't, sir!" cried Gussy desperately. "The beastly thwottle is jammed open and— Oh, bai Jove!"

The car bore down on Mr. Ratcliff, and the Housemaster, with one long, wild look, turned on his heels and fled, uttering an ear-piercing yell as he did so!

Mr. Ratcliff stood not upon the order of his going, but simply flew, with his scholastic gown billowing in the wind behind him as he ran.

Arthur Augustus kept his eyes on Mr. Ratcliff's fleeing figure, and, quite unconsciously, steered after him. The more he looked at Mr. Ratcliff, the more unerringly he kept on the master's course. The result was most remarkable. The spectacle of Ratty being chased round the quad by that snorting, rattling car was verily a sight to see and wonder at. The speed that Mr. Ratcliff put up was most remarkable. Fear lent the Housemaster wings, and he simply streaked across the quad, romped up the School House steps, and disappeared in a twinkling.

"Oh, my only hat!" gurgled Blake. "Gussy—the awful idiot! Ratty will want to scalp him for that! Look—he's steering straight for the steps, now! Gussy! Stop, you burbling jabberwock!"

The front wheels of the car bumped across the School House steps, the engine chugged and spluttered, but had not sufficient power to propel its heavy load up the steps, so it gasped laboriously into silence—much to D'Arcy's relief.

Tom Merry & Co., and a crowd of laughing juniors ran up and surrounded him.

"Gwoooogh!" gasped the swell of the Fourth; mopping at his oily, perspiring brow with a cambric handkerchief. "That was wathah howwid, deah boys. I weally couldn't stop, you know. The thwottle will have to be seen to."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boys!"

It was the Head's deep voice.

The tall figure of Dr. Holmes appeared at the top of the School House steps. Behind him stood Mr. Ratcliff, his lean features very white, and his eyes glittering.

Dr. Holmes peered in amazement at the car.

"D'Arcy!" he exclaimed. "You have taken the liberty of bringing a car here—into the school! What do you mean by it?"

"I—I—I—"

"The boy should be punished most severely, sir!" grated Mr. Ratcliff viciously. "He refused to stop when I called upon him to do, and actually chased me with that dangerous contraption through the quadrangle. I might have been run over—and killed!"

"Weally, Mr. Watecliff, I am afvaid you have exaggerated the circumstances wathah," said Arthur Augustus, turning frigidly to the Housemaster. "I was unable to stop the cah, otabwise I should have done so. As for chasin' you, I was not aware that I did any such thing. I think the cah was temporarily out of contwol."

"You insolent young scamp—" said Mr. Ratcliff passionately.

"D'Arcy, you should not have brought the car into the school precincts," said Dr. Holmes sternly. "To whom does it belong?"

"It's my cah, sir," replied Gussy.

The Head gave a start.

"Yours, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" said the swell of the Fourth. "I wathah pwide myself on havin' picked up a gweat bargain in Wayland this aftahnoon. The car doesn't look much, and there are several adjustments that have to be made, but she can go, bai Jove!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head. "D'Arcy, am I to understand that you have purchased this car?"
 "Yaas, sir," said Gussy simply. "I bought it at an auction sale in Wayland."
 "Goodness gracious! How extraordinary! You surely cannot afford a motor-car, D'Arcy!"
 "This cah was wemarkably cheap, sir," replied Arthur Augustus. "It only cost me two pounds."
 "Two pounds!" ejaculated the Head, more amazed than ever.
 "Yaas, sir."
 "Forty bob for a car!" gurgled Wally, who was standing near by. "Oh, my only sainted aunt!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Dr. Holmes peered at the car and then at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.
 "D'Arcy, this—this is a most astounding affair," he said. "There must have been some mistake. No man would sell a car—even a car of this description—for two pounds."
 "It was at an auction, sir," replied Gussy. "I suppose eweryone thought this cah was an old cwock, and I was the

sible. You may keep it in the stables for now, D'Arcy, but I shall expect to see it gone within a very few days."
 "Very well, sir."
 Mr. Ratcliff gave a snort.
 "I trust you will not overlook the punishment that is due to D'Arcy for his disgraceful treatment of me, Dr. Holmes?" he exclaimed in a voice like a file.
 "D'Arcy, you will take five hundred lines for driving the car dangerously in the quadrangle," said the Head.
 "Five hundred lines, sir!" hooted Ratty. "He deserves a severe caning, at least. I—"
 "I think that punishment will meet the case, Mr. Ratcliff, in view of the explanation which D'Arcy has given," said Dr. Holmes quietly. "Take that car into the stables at once, D'Arcy."
 The Head strode away, and Mr. Ratcliff followed, bestowing a most choleric glare upon Arthur Augustus.
 That aristocratic youth clambered out of the car, and, opening the bonnet, examined the engine. After a few minutes he straightened up, scratching his oily nose.
 "The carbuwettor has gone w'ong, deah boys," he said. "This cah will have to be ovahhauled somewhat before I



St. Jim's Jingles!



No. 13 BAGLEY TRIMBLE (the Paul Pry of the Fourth).

MOST cheery schoolboys at
 St. Jim's
 Are active, blithe, and
 nimble;
 They lack the plump and lazy limbs
 Of Master Bagley Trimble.
 Some chaps are sturdy, some are
 spare,
 And just a few are scraggy;
 But only Wynn can you compare
 With the inflated Baggy!

He is the Falstaff of his Form,
 And his colossal figure
 Would take a music-hall by storm,
 And make its patrons snigger.
 He turns the scale at fourteen stone
 (Although he's oft denied it);
 His bed begins to creak and groan
 When Baggy gets inside it!

A worm, a toady, and a sneak,
 Is Baggy's reputation;
 He's always running to a "beak"
 With secret information.
 He "listens-in" at every door,
 And likes it more than wireless;
 He gleans news items by the score—
 His energy is tireless!



Baggy Trimble.

The appetite that he can boast
 Would rival that of Bunter;
 He tackles tarts and buns and toast,
 And he's a keen tuck-hunter.
 The helpings he consumes in Hall
 Fill us with consternation;
 And yet he says, to one and all,
 "I'm sinking with starvation!"

He fancies he is brave and bold,
 A valiant son of Britain;
 Yet, if the honest truth be told,
 He's timid as a kitten.
 If Baggy ever saw a spook,
 A phantom fierce and frightening,
 He wouldn't take a second look—
 He'd streak away like lightning!

The decent fellows in the school
 Detest him and despise him;
 They never scruple, as a rule,
 To capture and chastise him.
 A cad, a glutton, and a sneak,
 They cannot suffer gladly;
 He gets a bumping twice a week,
 And needs that bumping badly!

NEXT WEEK :— GEORGE HERRIES

Of the Fourth Form.

only one who bid. I offahed two pounds, and the auctioneer knocked the cah down to me."
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.
 "Silence!" rapped the Head sternly. "D'Arcy, you understand that I cannot allow a pupil at this school to keep a motor-car."
 "I am a capable dwivah, sir," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I dwive cahs at home, and—"
 "But this—this car is different, D'Arcy. Motoring is a very dangerous pastime, especially for a boy, and I certainly cannot allow you the unrestricted use of this car."
 "Weally, sir, I—"
 "You will take it away at once, D'Arcy."
 "But where can I take it, sir?" said Gussy. "I don't suppose anyone will buy it, and if I leave it in the street I shall be liable to be summoned for obstruction."
 The Head paused.
 "You did a very stupid and foolish thing in bidding for this car, which I can well believe nobody wanted," he said sternly. "You must, however, dispose of it as soon as pos-

can get wid of it. However, I am not anxious to part with the old bus. She has the makin's of a good cah, bai Jove! Would some of you fellows, be good enough to give me a hand in pushin' her into the stables?"
 Willing hands were put to the task, and Gussy's car was pushed round to the stables, where it was regarded by the Head's coachman as a great curiosity.
 And so St. Jim's had another acquisition—that ancient Razzler car, the property of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth!

**CHAPTER 4.
 Trouble!**

LOOKS like a row on," said Monty Lowther.
 "What's up, I wonder?" said Blake.
 The Terrible Three and Blake, Herries and Digby were strolling down the High Street at Rylcombe the next evening, when a scene of disturbance met their eyes outside the railway-station.

There was a large crowd gathered, and above the thrum of voices could be heard the shrill sound of rattles, the beating of tin cans and other noisy instruments.

The St. Jim's juniors looked about them, and then they realised what it all meant.

It was an election meeting!

Rylcombe was in the throes of a bye-election, there being a position vacant on the Borough Council at Wayland. The two local candidates, according to the posters that were liberally displayed all over the High Street, were Alderman Hodge and Major Slammer, both of Rylcombe.

Innumerable placards were on view in the shop windows, bearing the legends, "Vote for Hodge" and "Vote for Slammer," with reading matter appended, bearing testimony, in glowing terms, to the high qualifications and unimpeachable merits of the respective candidates.

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled as they approached nearer to the crowd.

Rylcombe was a sleepy little village in the ordinary way, and it was not often that anything happened to rouse it from its lethargy. When some excitement did crop up the villagers made the most of it. This particular election, Hodge v. Slammer, was being fought with considerable determination and vigour on both sides, and Rylcombe had its excitement in full measure.

A small man, with a loud voice, was standing on a little platform, over which flew a huge banner, bearing these words:

"HODGE FOR EVER!"

Round him was gathered most of the male populace of Rylcombe, together with a complement of the inevitable street urchins. The little man was roaring forth his peroration in a very warm and earnest manner, but the actions of a party of rough-looking fellows at the back made it impossible for the audience to hear his words.

It was apparent that the louts at the back had turned up with the special intention of breaking up the meeting. They heckled and shouted incessantly, and there was a continual blaring of hooters and rattles and the noisy beating of tins.

"My word!" said Blake. "They're going it, and no mistake! That poor little chap on the platform can't make himself heard a bit. Look at him! He's going blue in the face!"

The luckless orator really seemed to be on the verge of apoplexy as he strove to shout above the din made by the barrackers.

This is how the speech sounded to Tom Merry & Co. as they stood on the corner near by and listened:

"Gentlemen of Rylcombe"—Bang! Bang! Whirr—rr!—"together this evening to hear"—Crash! Wallop! Biff! Thud!—"crave your attention for a little"—Whizz-zz! Clatter! Crash! Bang!—"highly respected citizen, Alderman Hodge—"

"Yah!" hooted a bullying lout, evidently the leader of the gang. "Down with Hodge! Vote for Slammer! Hooray!"

Crash! Whirr—rr! Clatter! Bim!

The noise in the High Street at Rylcombe was like pandemonium itself. The little man on the platform yelled till he was hoarse, but he could not make himself heard further.

Tom Merry knitted his brows together.

"I say, this is rotten!" he said. "Those rotters might give the chap a fair hearing. One would think that they had been paid to muck up the meeting."

"You're right," said a shopkeeper, standing near by. "A shame, I call it. Alderman Hodge is one of the best, but Slammer's election agent is out to spoil all his chances. Major Slammer himself is an old tartar—he lives just the other side of Rylcombe—but it's that rascal Cripps, his agent, who is organising all this dirty work!"

"A jolly rotten trick!" said Tom, frowning. "Hodge's men are entitled to free speech, anyway. These louts ought to be stopped."

"Rather!" said Blake. "This election stunt is none of our bizney, of course, but we ought to see fair play."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Hark at the rotters!" he said. "They're trying to hustle the speaker now!"

Matters were now taking a serious turn at the election meeting.

The toughs, determined to cause as much trouble as possible, were thrusting their way rudely through the people standing round and were surrounding the speaker's platform in a very ugly manner. Some were armed with sticks.

"Yah! Down with the old fraud!" shouted one of them. "E's one of 'odge's touts—trying to stuff the people of Rylcombe with a lot of lies! Down with 'im!"

"Ear, 'ear!" chorused the rowdies.

The little man on the platform looked alarmed.

Tom Merry turned to his chums.

"Come on!" he said between his teeth. "We can't stand here and let the toughs have all their own way. Fair play's a jewel. This way, kids!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 929.

"What-ho!"

The eight juniors ran across the road and, shouldering their way through the serried ranks of the onlookers, reached the platform where the disturbance was taking place. Two of the rowdies had leaped on to the dais and were manhandling the speaker.

Tom Merry sprang up, pushing back his cuffs in a business-like manner. He leaped to the speaker's side and commenced to hit out straight from the shoulder.

Left and right flashed out in quick succession, and the two louts fell back with fiendish yells. Tom's hard fists had struck one a sledge-hammer blow under the chin, whilst the other had received a nasty jab on the chest.

"Now, you rotters!" panted Tom, squaring his shoulders. "You won't have things quite your own way! Come on, St. Jim's!"

"Back up, kids!" shouted Blake.

Snarling with rage, the rowdies came on. A fierce fight ensued on and around the platform, and the villagers, aroused from their apathy, began to side with Tom Merry & Co.

The plucky juniors gave the toughs a thorough tousing. They knew how to hit, and they hit hard. With a number of lusty village fellows to back them up, they quickly got the better of Cripps' hired rowdies.

Tom Merry and Kangaroo had the leader spread-eagled on the platform, a prisoner, whilst the other members of the gang were being held in strong hands as they essayed to escape.

"Don't let 'em go!" cried Tom Merry ringingly. "This is where we teach them better manners. Let's duck 'em in the horse-trough and cool their ardour a bit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good idea!"

The gang leader struggled fiercely in the hands of Tom Merry and the stalwart lad from Australia.

"Let me go!" he snarled. "I'll make you smart for this! Will you let me go, hang you?"

"Not much!" panted Tom. "You're going in the horse-trough, old tulip. You look as though a drop of water would do you good."

"That's the stuff!" cried a young fellow in the crowd. "That lout Roker needs a lesson badly. Don't let 'im off lightly, whatever you do!"

"This way, Roker!" said Kangaroo.

Roker & Co. were hustled away from the platform and taken to the horse-trough that stood near by. They yelled and roared, but Tom Merry & Co. and their partisans gave them no quarter.

In the midst of a laughing, approving throng they were raised on high over the trough and thrown in one after another.

Splash! Splash!

"Groooooogh!"

"Yah! Oooooooh!"

"Yerrrugh!"

Those, and other weird gurgling noises, rose on the evening air as Roker & Co. underwent the process of ducking.

Tom Merry & Co. were nothing if not thorough in their work, and the old High Street rang with the laughter of the villagers.

"There!" said Tom Merry, as he ducked Roker again. "Perhaps you won't be so keen next time to break up a peaceful meeting."

"Gerrrooooooh!"

A motor-car drew up, scattering the crowd to right and left. At the wheel was a stiff, austere, military-looking gentleman with a bristly moustache, and by his side was a fat, coarse-looking man dressed in a suit of loud pattern and wearing a grey bowler-hat.

"Ere's a lark!" said a jovial-faced farmer standing near the trough. "It's Major Slammer and old Cripps, the election agent."

The car stopped, and Major Slammer and Cripps stood up.

They gazed in speechless amazement at Roker & Co., who presented a dismal and bedraggled appearance indeed!

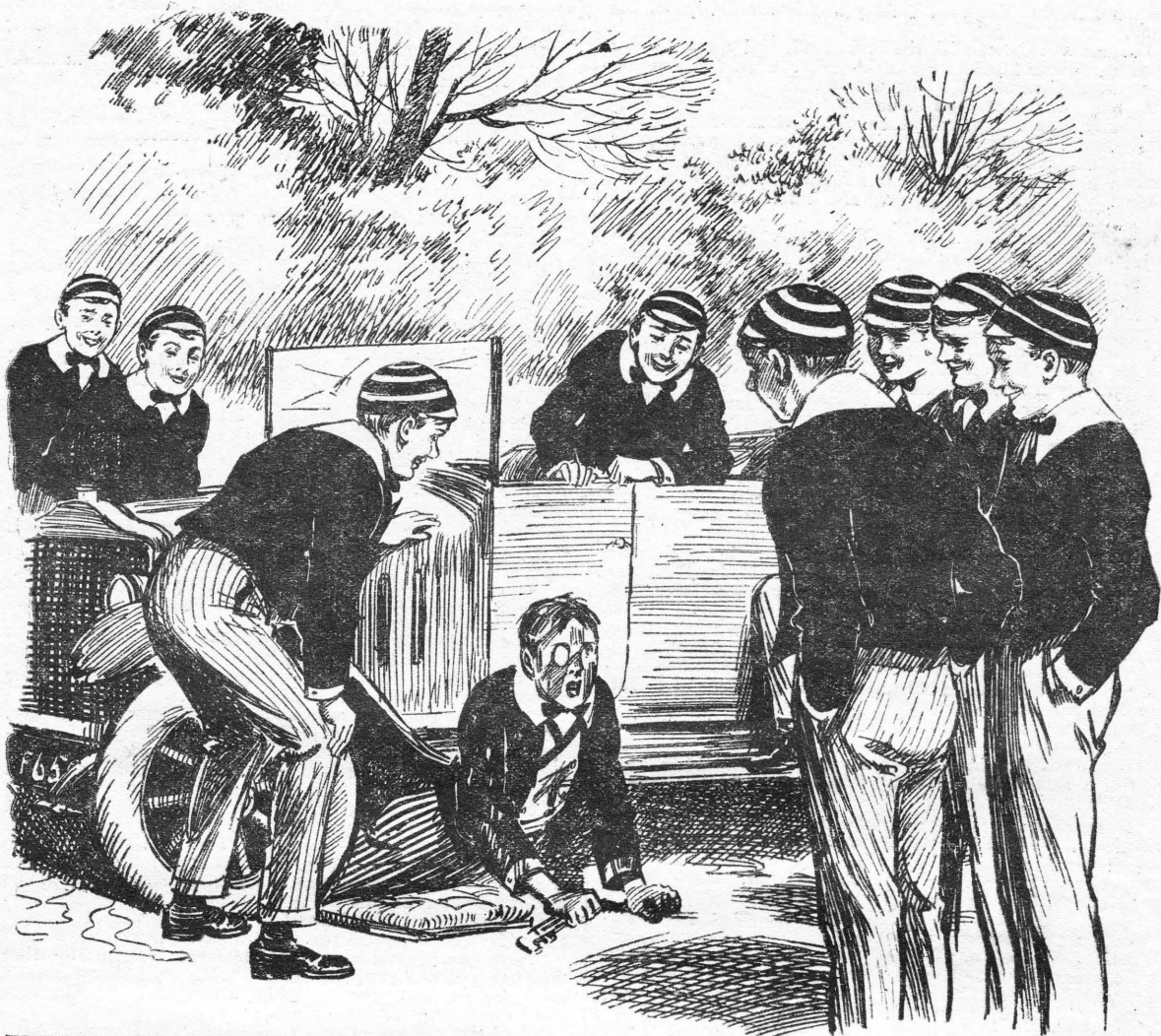
"By thunder!" roared the major, in a rasping voice.

"What does this mean—hey?"

"It means that we're out to see fair play for Alderman Hodge, sir," rapped back Tom Merry sharply. "These rotters apparently were trying to break up a meeting that was being held here by your opponent in the election, and when things got a bit thick we chipped in."

"You—you insolent little jackanapes!" gasped the major, going quite purple. "How dare you!"

"How dare you employ such a rascal to carry through your election campaign!" exclaimed the little man whose speech had been interrupted. "I don't know whether you approve of Cripps' methods, but I'll take this opportunity of informing you, Major Slammer, that his methods are underhand and dirty, and not at all in keeping with the



A roar of mirth greeted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he wriggled out from underneath the car. "Gwooooh!" he said, rubbing his nose and thereby transferring to that organ some of the mixture of oil and dirt with which his hands were smothered. "I'm afraid I can't do anythin', deah boys. This cah wants seein' to!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the stranded juniors. (See Chapter 3.)

traditions of fair play which you, as an Army man, should be the first to uphold!"

"Hear, hear!" roared Tom Merry and his chums with one accord.

Major Slammer's face was a study.

"What do you mean, Tomlinson?" he cried. "You dare insinuate that I—"

"I insinuate that Cripps is a rascal, and he will probably do your campaign more harm than good if he is allowed to proceed without restriction or supervision!" retorted Mr. Tomlinson heatedly.

"The man's making false accusations!" snarled Cripps.

The major looked wrathful.

"I am quite satisfied with Mr. Cripps," he snorted. "As for these young nincompoops," he added, turning to the St. Jim's juniors, "their headmaster shall hear of this!"

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances.

"You boys will learn to your cost that it pays to mind your own business!" rasped Cripps, with an ugly look at them.

"We'll always do our best to see fair play, whatever it costs us," was Tom's quick retort.

Roker & Co. staggered away, shedding a long, long trail of water as they went. They were followed by a chorus of boos and hisses from the populace.

Major Slammer gave a fiery snort and drove on, with Cripps sneering at his side.

Mr. Tomlinson turned to Tom Merry & Co.

"I am very much obliged to you lads for what you have done," he said. "I am Alderman Hodge's election agent, and I say without hesitation that Cripps is a rascal. I do not fear him, though, and will fight this election in spite of his roguish tactics. Major Slammer is completely in his

hands. I will see, however, that he does not get you into trouble at your school."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Tom. "We—we only did what we thought was right."

The crowd dispersed, and the chums of the School House walked on to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 5.

Wanted!

IT was dark by the time they arrived. From the distance came sounds of a car running noisily, with many splutters and backfires.

Blake grinned.

"So Gussy's still tinkering about with that old creak of his," he said. "Let's go over and see how he's getting on."

The juniors wended their way across the darkened quadrangle towards the stables, where D'Arcy's car was incarcerated.

"I think Glyn has been lending Gussy a hand in overhauling and improving the giddy Rolls Royce," said Tom Merry. "Gussy was talking about some new invention of Glyn's that is supposed to put new life into old engines, or something like that."

Blake chuckled.

"Yes, I've heard a bit about Glyn's latest," he said. "I expect it will end in blowing Gussy and his car sky-high."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They walked into the large stable, and there, in the glare of two electric lamps which had been hastily connected,

they saw Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Bernard Glyn of the Shell.

The car was there, with the bonnet off, and a most weird contraption was fitted to the carburettor. Glyn was bending over the apparatus, adjusting a lever.

Arthur Augustus was clad in overalls, which had originally been brown, but which were now smeared with oil and grease. Gussy's face, likewise, looked particularly grimy, and his hair, usually so carefully brushed and parted, was in a dishevelled state. His hands, in which he held various spanners, screwdrivers, and small wrenches, were really black with dirt and oil.

"Hallo, deah boys!" he said, as his chums entered. "We're gettin' on. Glyn has made a wippin' impovement in my cah."

Glyn straightened up and wiped a smear of oil from his nose.

"What do you think of this apparatus?" he said, indicating the weird contraption he had fitted to Gussy's engine. "This is the first opportunity I've had of trying it out. My pater, you see, absolutely refused to let me experiment with his car, and so Gussy, buying this lot for a couple of quid came in very handy. I've given him a hand in putting a few things right, and in return he's allowing me to fit my patent Supercharger to try it out."

"Your whatter?" said Tom Merry.

"My Supercharger," said the inventor of St. Jim's proudly. "It's the finest thing for cars ever invented!"

"Great pip!"

Bernard Glyn was the school mechanical genius, and many and varied had been the "patents" he had perpetrated at St. Jim's. To give Glyn his due, he was quite clever, and some of his inventions had been really ingenious. What was more, he usually managed to make them work—for a time. His inventiveness knew no bounds, and he had applied it in many directions. This was the first time, however, that Bernard Glyn had tackled the problems of motor-car engineering.

Tom Merry & Co. regarded the "Supercharger" with considerable interest.

"It looks like a tin can with a nutmeg-grater let into one side of a funnel at each end," said Blake. "What does it do, Glyn?"

"It super-charges the engine with gas," said Glyn impressively. "Instead of the ordinary mixture entering from the carburettor, the cylinders are charged with a highly compressed vapour from the Supercharger. Most of the usual engine troubles are thus eliminated."

"Good word that!" said Monty Lowther approvingly. "Worth a guinea a box, old chap!"

"Idiot!" said Glyn, glaring. "My Supercharger is going to do great things! It will live up old engines and put new pep into 'em; knocking, pre-ignition, and slow combustion will be unknown, and I dare say that we shall find a hundred per cent increase in horse-power for any given cylinder capacity."

"Sounds all right, anyway," grinned Tom Merry. "You mean, Glyn, that you're going to give Gussy's old motor a tonic and make a goer of it?"

"That's the idea!" said Glyn, rubbing his oily hands. "You chaps won't know this car by the time I'm finished with it."

"When will that be?" inquired Lowther sweetly.

"On Saturday," said Glyn. "We're going to make things hum, aren't we, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have ewevy faith in Glyn's ability to wejuvenate my cah, deah boys."

"Another good word!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm blessed if our two tame mechanics haven't been swotting up a dih between 'em."

"Oh, wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "You fellows appeal to be in a wathah wumpled condish. Have you been fightin'?"

"Yes; we got mixed up in an election serap in the village," said Tom Merry. "There's an election on, you know—Alderman Hodge and old Major Slammer are putting up as candidates."

"Bai Jove!"

Tom recounted their recent adventure in Rylcombe. "What a wotten twick, to employ wowdies to bwreak up a meetin'!" exclaimed the swell indignantly. "I vewy gweatly approve of your action, deah boys."

"Oh, thanks awfully, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther. "Now we breathe again!"

"Weally, Lowthah, I must wequest you not to wot!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"What wot!" said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Honk! Honk!

The blowing of a motor horn, and the hum of an engine sounded in the distance, from the direction of the gates.

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The juniors gazed through the darkness and saw a car draw in and stop at Taggles' lodge.

Blake gave a whistle.

"Whew! That's old Major Slammer, for a cert!" he said. "He's come to get us into a row with the Head."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Just what old Slammer would do!" growled Kangaroo. "I've heard he's an unreasonable and tyrannical old rotter."

The juniors looked quite anxious.

"Don't wowwy, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, wiping his monocle carefully. "I'll put mattahs wight for you. I'll speak to Majah Slammah, and, as a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"You'd better not put your oar in, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "Besides, you can't speak to anyone in that grabby state, you know."

"Bai Jove!" said Gussy. "Perhaps, undah the cires, I shall have to wewain fwom speakin' to the majah on your behalf."

"This is a great blow, Gussy, but we'll try to bear up," said Lowther solemnly.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Tom Merry & Co. went indoors, leaving Glyn and Arthur Augustus to proceed with their work on the ancient Razzler.

Ten minutes later, Toby, the page, looked into the Common-room, where Tom Merry & Co. were recounting their experience to an interested group of juniors.

"Master Merry and Master Blake are wanted in the 'Ead's study," he said. "Also all the boys who were with them in the village a little while ago."

"Major Slammer there?" asked Blake.

"Yes," said Toby, with a commiserating look. "Which I'm afraid you young gents 'ad better look out for squalls."

"All serene, Toby."

The eight juniors trooped away to the Head's study. They entered that dread apartment in response to Dr. Holmes' call to them to come in, and there they beheld Major Slammer in all the majesty of his wrath.

"Those are the little rapsallions, sir!" fumed the major. "They assaulted my men in Rylcombe, and created a disgraceful disturbance! Possibly they have been coerced into siding with my opponent, Alderman Hodge, and have set their minds on doing harm to my canvassers."

"Nothing of the kind, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly. "Your canvassers, as you call them, tried to break up a meeting, and acted like hooligans. They weren't giving the speaker a fair chance. After all, this is a free country, and Alderman Hodge's agent has as much right to hold a public meeting as you or Mr. Cripps. When we saw what rowdyism was going on, we chipped in to see fair play."

Dr. Holmes regarded the juniors sternly.

"Boys, you should not have interfered in a matter that does not concern you," he said. "You do not understand local politics, and were no doubt misled into believing that you were acting for the right."

"We know we were doing right, sir," said Tom spiritedly. "Insolent little puppy!" snorted the major. "What they want, sir, is discipline! By thunder, sir, if I had the unruly young rascals in my regiment, I'd discipline 'em! I demand that they shall be punished severely, sir!"

"My dear sir," said Dr. Holmes quietly, "justice shall be done."

"Hum!"

"I dare say you lads were actuated by very good motives," said the Head, turning to the juniors, "but as Major Slammer assures me that your conduct was quite uncalled for, considering the circumstances, I have no recourse but to punish you."

He reached for a cane, but as he did so the telephone bell rang. He took up the receiver and listened.

"Yes, this is St. Jim's. Dr. Holmes is speaking. Who is that? Alderman Hodge? Dear me! Yes. Yes, I have heard from Major Slammer that— Bless my soul!"

Dr. Holmes' face underwent a change as he listened to the message over the telephone. At length he rang off, and turned to Major Slammer.

"I have just received a call from Alderman Hodge, who has explained the circumstances of the episode in the village," he said. "His statement throws quite a new complexion on the affair, Major Slammer."

"What—what!" fumed Major Slammer, his moustache bristling like the quills on a porcupine. "That scurrilous rascal has had the unparalleled impudence to—"

"Pray modify your expressions in the presence of these boys, major," said the Head coldly. "Alderman Hodge has given me a satisfactory explanation of the action taken by these lads, and I therefore do not see it necessary to punish them."

Major Slammer went pink.

"By thunder, sir! You—you refuse to punish these little reprobates?" he choked.

"Under the circumstances, I must decline to take any action against them," said Dr. Holmes coldly. "We will now consider the incident closed."

The major gave a snort like that of an infuriated war horse. As for Tom Merry & Co., they looked jubilant.

At a word from the Head they left the study—"without a stain on their character," as Monty Lowther put it.

As they reached the hall, Major Slammer came stamping out of the Head's room. His face had turned from pink to purple, and he was fairly seething with wrath.

He gave Tom Merry & Co. a terrific look as he passed them. If looks had the power to kill, those juniors would have been petrified on the spot! But, instead of being petrified, they smiled broadly, and Major Slammer, breathing very heavily, stamped off to his car and drove away from St. Jim's.

The Terrible Three and Blake bore the glad news down to the stables, where Gussy and Bernard Glyn were working away like Trojans.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "So Alderman Hodge wam up in the nick of time and saved you ffrom a lickin'! How weally wippin' of him! I wegard Alderman Hodge as a weal sport!"

"Hear, hear!" said the others heartily.

"I twust," said Gussy impressively, "I twust to have the satisfaction of seein' Alderman Hodge woump home with fyin' colours at the election. If theah is anythin' we can do to help him defeat that wascally old majah, we'll do it most willin'ly, bai Jove!"

And the others responded with great heartiness:

"Yes, rather!"



Roker & Co. yelled frantically, but Tom Merry & Co. and their partisans gave them no quarter. In the midst of the laughing throng Roker & Co. were raised on high over the trough and thrown in one after the other. Splash! Splash! "Grooooh!" "Yah!" "Ooooooooh!" "Yarrugh!" Those, and other weird gurgling noises rose on the evening air as Roker & Co. underwent the process of ducking. (See chapter 4).

CHAPTER 6.

Figgins' Wheeze!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, in his new role as a motorist, displayed a keenness that greatly amused his chums. He put in all his spare time in working on the car down in the dim confines of his temporary "gawage" in the school stables. Footer went by the board, and, what was more wonderful than all, Gussy even began to neglect his personal appearance.

Instead of appearing always as spotless as a new pin, Mr. Latham noticed that D'Arcy frequently appeared at classes with oil stains on his hands, or smears of grease on his collar. The swell of the Fourth was now the proud owner of a car—a real motor-car, albeit an old one—and nothing else mattered to him for the time being.

Bernard Glyn, having a great mechanical bent, took as much interest in the car as Gussy himself. Every evening, and at odd hours during the day, he and D'Arcy were to be found in the "garage," working with unabated zeal on that ramshackle relic of the past.

Fellows looked in to poke fun at Gussy and his car, and the two amateur car mechanics had quite a busy time in driving away the humorists of the school. Figgins & Co. of the New House took a special delight in strolling over to chip Gussy, and drove that noble youth to such depths of exasperation that he took to hurling sundry bits of the car at his tormentors from the rival House across the way.

But, in spite of all setbacks, the old Razzler in a few days began to take on quite a new appearance. D'Arcy and Glyn

worked wonders between them. The car body was given a coat of paint and some of the rusty parts removed. The bonnet was altered, the upholstery renovated where possible, a new running board fitted, and the mudguards strengthened. But it was in the engine that the best improvements were made. Bearings were tightened, the valves reseated, and the innumerable oil and air leaks stopped up. These alterations, coupled with the fitting of Glyn's patent Super-charger, made a marvellous difference to the running of the motor.

On Friday night Arthur Augustus came into the Common-room, just before bed-time, looking very dirty and oily but supremely cheerful.

"The cah is now in fine wunnin' condish, deah boys," he said. "I have been thinkin'—"

"What with?" inquired Monty Lowther innocently. "Weally, Lowthah, I wegard that we mark as most oppwobwious!" said Arthur Augustus, with some heat. "Go hon!"

"I shall take an early opportunity of administewin' a feahful thwashin', Lowthah! As I was sayin', deah boys, when that fwabjous ass Lowthah intewwupted, I have been thinkin' that, as we have no 'foothah fixture on for to-morrow aftahnoon, and as theah is evey indication of it bein' a fine day, we might have a wun out in the cah togethah."

"Ahem!"

"Hum!"

Gussy's chums did not appear to be very enthusiastic over this idea.

"There is plentay of woom in the cah for a partay of eight," said Arthur Augustus. "The Head hasn't forbidden me to dwive it, and theah is nothin' to pwevent us havin' wathah a wippin' aftahnoon wun."

"Suppose the giddy car breaks down?" said Blake dubiously.

"The cah will not bwreak down, Blake. Glyn and I have effected all the wepaiahs necessary."

"But still, Gussy, it would be a bit risky, wouldn't it, taking out such a crowd?" said Tom Merry.

"Not at all, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus confidently.

"You youngstahs may twust yourselves in my hands, you know."

"Oh, great pip!"

"What do you say, deah boys?" asked Gussy eagerly.

"We—we'll see."

That was how the matter was left.

Saturday was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the weather on this particular afternoon was fine. Footer was off, and as soon as dinner was over Arthur Augustus made haste to bring out his car.

It was surrounded by an interested crowd in the quadrangle.

"So you're going to take it out, Gussy?" said Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah! The engine is wunnin' wippin'ly Look, deah boys."

Gussy took hold of the starting handle and, with a couple of hard twists, brought the engine into life. It ran with quite a musical purr, and the onlookers looked impressed.

"H'm! She seems all right," said Blake.

"Rather!" said Tom Merry and the rest of the Co.

"I'll dig out those two motoring rugs of yours, Gussy," said Blake.

"Wight-ho, deah boy."

The Terrible Three and Blake, Herries and Digby ran off to the School House.

Figgins & Co., and Redfern, Lawrence and Owen of the New House were standing near by. They had been regarding Gussy's car in great amusement.

"Old Glyn has worked marvels in that rackety engine," said Kerr thoughtfully.

"What about bagging the bus for ourselves this afternoon?" murmured Figgins.

"Eh?"

"I can drive a car, and if we could manage to nab that old tub and make off with it for the afternoon, it would be one in the eye for those School House bounders," said the New House leader swiftly. "Wouldn't Gussy, and Merry, and the rest of the crowd tear their hair!"

"By jingo!" breathed Fatty Wynn. "It would be great! But, Figgy, I don't see how—"

"I've got a wheeze—a real corker of a wheeze!" chuckled Figgins. "Listen, kids, and ye shall hear. If it works, it will be the jape of the season. It's about time we did something to show Merry and his mouldy crew that New House is still cock house at St. Jim's. Now, my idea is to hold Gussy up in Rylcombe and run him in."

"Run him in!" gasped Lawrence.

"Yes, rather! Kerr is a dab hand at make-up, and he can work an impersonation as easy as rolling off a form. We've heaps of make-up in our amateur theatricals box, and we've also got a complete policeman's uniform. Listen, Kerr, old man—supposing you dressed up as a policeman, and—"

Figgins went on to explain his great wheeze, and when his chums heard it they chuckled mightily.

"Do you think you can do it, Kerr?"

The canny Scots junior grinned broadly.

"Trust me!" he said. "I can work that little stunt off my head!"

"Come on, then!" said Figgins. "There's no time to be lost, kids!"

The six juniors hurried off to the New House, and when they emerged, Kerr and Figgins were each carrying a parcel.

By that time Tom Merry & Co. had returned to the gates, and were embarking on the car.

"All weady, deah boys?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Ready, ay, ready!" sang out Blake.

"What about a pair of goggles, Gussy?" inquired Monty Lowther. "All motorists wear goggles, you know. You could wear 'em round your toppeet—that would look rather natty."

"Weally, Lowthah, your attempts at humour are fwightfully feeble," said Gussy witheringly. "I wegard you as an ass!"

"Go hon!"

Tom Merry & Co. clambered into the car, and in a few moments they were bowling away merrily down the Rylcombe Lane in a cloud of dust and smoke, looking forward to a pleasant afternoon's run!

CHAPTER 7.

Arrested!

"LET her go, Gussy!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Razzler rattled along at a good pace down the Rylcombe Lane. Tom Merry & Co. were surprised at the extra speed which Glyn's Supercharger had imparted to the old car.

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As they neared the cross-roads, they saw a farm cart drawn across their path, and Arthur Augustus had to slow down.

Toot, toot, toot! went the horn.

The driver of the cart did not seem in a hurry to move on. In fact, he positively refused, at first, to budge even an inch.

Gussy stopped the car and looked indignantly at the red-faced yokel on the cart.

"Pway get out of my way!" he exclaimed. "You are obstwuctin' the woad, my man!"

The driver did not seem to hear.

"I wepeat, you boundah, you are obstwuctin' the woad!" said D'Arcy, in tones of great indignation.

The yokel looked at him, but that was all.

The St. Jim's juniors looked at each other.

"My hat!" said Blake. "That chap is deliberately stopping us from going on."

Gussy breathed hard through his nose.

"I say, you boundah, will you kindly allow us to pass?" he exclaimed.

The yokel spoke at last.

"Sorry, young gents, but my hoss is tired," he said.

"Bai Jove! What is theah to pwevent you fwom leadin' him to the side of the woad?"

"Hoss is too tired," said the yokel obstinately.

"You—you howwid wottah!"

The yokel smiled and lit his pipe leisurely.

Figgins & Co. had paid him half-a-crown to hold up the car for as long as possible, and, being a conscientious fellow, he meant to do his best for the money.

Some minutes passed, and when Tom Merry & Co. evinced a desire to jump out of the car and take matters into their own hands, the yokel thought it best to move on. This he did very slowly, keeping to the middle of the road so that, try as he might, Gussy could not get past with his car.

After another most exasperating five minutes, the cart ahead had to give way to another motorist coming from the opposite direction, and, seizing his opportunity, Gussy scraped through!

The car went on, and Tom Merry & Co. looked daggers at the fellow on the cart as they passed. That worthy did not seem to be in the least impressed. He had delayed the car, and felt that he had earned the half-crown.

Gussy, with the road clear in front of him, soon began to make up for lost time. He gave the engine plenty of throttle, and the aged car whizzed at a really fast pace towards Rylcombe.

They were just entering the village when a figure in blue uniform ran out from the side of the road ahead and, standing in the middle of the road, raised his right arm as a signal for the car to stop.

"Oh, jemimy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It's a policeman, Gussy!"

"He's holding you up," said Blake. "He looks as though he means business, too!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Stop!" rapped the "constable," in a deep voice.

Gussy shut off, applied the brakes, and the old car drew to a halt. The man in blue walked over, a very grim expression on his rubicund face. Tom Merry & Co. looked at him in dismay. They could not remember ever having seen this particular constable before. P.-c. Crump was the local policeman, and the only arm of the law that Rylcombe possessed. But since electioneering had started in the village, and Roker & Co. had made their disturbances at the meetings held there, one or two extra police from Wayland had been drafted in.

So the School House juniors, of course, had not the faintest suspicion in the world that it was a bogus constable who was holding them up.

"You want me, officah?" asked Arthur Augustus, jamming his monocle into his eye.

"Yus, I do want you, you reckless young rip!" was the deep, ominous reply. "Coming down the road at that speed—exceeding the limit, you was!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Which you're a danger to the public and a menace to the community at large," went on the "constable" in deep accents. "A mad-brained young idiot like you ought not to be allowed to 'ave charge of a car."

"Oh, cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus crimsoned.

"I mean it!" said the "constable" grimly. "And, wot's more, I'm a goin' to run you in for dangerous driving."

"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "You must be undah a misapprehension, officah. I was certainly not dwivin' dangewously—"

"Don't argue, my lad! Come houter there!"

"But look heah—"

"Come hout!" repeated the man in blue, flourishing his notebook.

This was said in such a ferocious voice that Arthur Augustus made haste to comply. Tom Merry & Co. all left the car.

No sooner had Gussy reached the road than the "constable" clapped a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"Which Hi arrest you in the name of the Law, my lad," he said. "The charge is for drivin' this 'ere car in a manner dangerous to the public, contrary to the Act, and with malice aforethought!"

"Bai—bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, whose monacle had fallen limply from his eye. "Awwested! Oh deah!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked frozen with horror. As for Arthur Augustus himself, he was utterly bewildered.

A crowd was assembling, and a good number of St. Jim's fellows were present. Mellish and Baggy Trimble of the Fourth were conspicuous in the forefront. Those two youths in particular, were immensely amused.

"He, he, he!" sniggered Baggy. "D'Arcy arrested! Oh, my word!"

"Run in, by gum!" murmured Mellish. "Gussy run in, he, he, he!"

Arthur Augustus looked round wildly.

"Welease me, constable!" he exclaimed in horror. "Weally, I cannot subject myself to awwest! It is uttably wide, bai Jove! I wufuse to be awwested!"

"You refuse—hey?" roared the constable. "We'll soon see about that, my lad. Let me warn you that anything you say may be used as hevidence against you!"

"Oh deah!"

"You've got to come alonger me! No larks, my young cock-sparrer!"

Poor Gussy almost swooned with shame and humiliation. He turned appealingly to his chums.

"Pway explain mattaths to the officah, deah boys," he said. "This is a tewwible pweddic, bai Jove!"

"I say, constable, you might go easy, you know," said Tom Merry. "D'Arcy wasn't driving really dangerously, and—"

"No lip from you, my lad!" said the "constable" pompously. "I might 'ave to run you in, too, for hobstructing a officer in the execution of his dooties."

"Oh, jemimy!"

The man in blue commenced to drag at Arthur Augustus.

"Come along, my lad! You'd better come quietly—unless you'd like me to slip the bracelets on you!"

"Bwacclets! Bai Jove!"

"How'd you like me to march you to the station with the darbies on—hey?"

"The darbies! Oh deah!"

"You'd better go quietly, Gussy!" yelled Kerruish from the throng of onlookers. "We'll come along and bail you out!"

"It's a fair cop, Gussy!" chuckled Cardew.

Tom Merry & Co. looked desperate.

"Might as well make the best of it, Gussy," said the Shell captain. "We'll go with you to the station and see what can be done."

"All wight, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus distressfully. "But to be dwagged ibthrough the sweets of Wylcombe undah awwest like a common felon! Oh cwumbs, it—it seems imposs!"

There was no help for it.

Arthur Augustus was marched along by the "constable," and the crowd followed in high glee. Tom Merry, looking deeply concerned and angry, accompanied Gussy, and quite a procession formed down the High Street, with D'Arcy and the pseudo constable at the head.

No sooner had Tom Merry & Co. and the onlookers departed down the road, than George Figgins, Fatty Wynn, Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen of the New House came out of hiding from behind the bushes. They were simply doubled up with mirth.

"Oh, my only Sunday topper! That was rich—really rich!" gurgled Figgins. "Old Kerr is working the giddy oracle a treat! He's run old Gussy in, and the others are following like lambs, ready to bail him out—Ha, ha, ha!"

His followers also roared with mirth.

Their deep-laid scheme was working according to plan.

"Now, all we have to do is to capture this giddy car, pick up old Kerr, and make off for the afternoon!" said Figgins, wiping his eyes. "Get in, my sons!"

"What-ko!"

The New House heroes tumbled into the car, and Figgins started it up. He took the wheel and drove at a steady pace down the High Street.

The procession had now reached large proportions. The sight of the swell of St. Jim's under arrest was truly one to make all beholders stare! Figgins blew the horn incessantly as he drove to the scene of the excitement, and the onlookers scattered like chaff before the wind.

Tom Merry & Co. turned when they heard the unmistakable sounds of Gussy's car behind, and they gave vent to gasps of amazement on seeing Figgins & Co. on board the ramshackle vehicle.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" ejaculated Blake. "Those New House rotters have boned the car!"

"What fearful cheek!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We—we— Oh, mum-m-m-my only hat!"

The "constable" who had arrested Gussy did a most surprising thing at that moment. With a quick movement, he jammed Gussy's topper over his eyes, and then darted to the car.

Redfern held the door open, and the "constable" scrambled in with the New House fellows.

"Yawwoooogh! Oooogh!" spluttered Arthur Augustus, wrenching at his topper. "Bai Jove, I—"

The swell of St. Jim's was interrupted by a wild howl from his chums.

The "constable" was standing up in the car and was removing his disguise. Within a few minutes the well-known figure of George Kerr was revealed!

Tom Merry & Co. almost fainted.

As for Gussy, who had by now removed his topper, he stood there gazing at Kerr like one in a dream.

"Kerr!" said Tom Merry in a faint voice.

"Then it wasn't a policeman at all!" gurgled Blake.

"Only that New House bouncer!" spluttered Herries.

"Bai—bai Jove!" was all Gussy could say.

Figgins & Co. gave a triumphant shout as the car backed through the crowd.

"Gussy, you are let off with a caution!" roared Kerr, wagging a forefinger at the flabbergasted swell. "We've decided to arrest the car instead!"

"You—you rotters—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spoofed!" howled Blake wildly. "We've all been spoofed by those New House rotters! Oh, my only hat!"

"After them!" shouted Tom Merry. "Don't let the bouncers make off with Gussy's car!"

A rush was made towards the car, but Figgins had turned it deftly into a side street, and, tooting loudly on the horn, he drove away at a good speed.

Tom Merry & Co. and the rest of the infuriated School House juniors commenced to give chase, but to catch the old Razzler was hopeless!

Figgins & Co. looked back and blew kisses to their rivals.

CHAPTER 8.

The Ambush!

"DISHED, diddled, and done brown!" gasped Monty Lowther.

Blake clutched at his hair.

"What can we do, Tommy? We're the laughing-stock of the village! Hark at those chaps cackling like a barnyard of hens!"

Mellish, Racke, Baggy Trimble, and the others were chortling in high glee at the discomfiture of Tom Merry & Co.

Tom Merry set his teeth.

"Figgins has taken the road towards the moor," he said swiftly. "They'll probably go through Wayland, and if we can get there first—"

"But how?"

"I saw Joe Freeman's car standing by the station. He's using it as a taxi now, in Wayland. He's evidently brought a fare over here for the election, and may be looking for someone to take back. The election takes place this evening, you know. Anyway, we may be able to hire him."

"Oh, good egg!"

The juniors dashed back to the High Street. A smart-looking car, with a taximeter fitted for hire purposes, was standing in the station-yard. Joe Freeman, an old acquaintance of the St. Jim's juniors, was seated at the wheel, smoking and reading a newspaper.

"Arternoon, young gents!" he said, touching his peaked cap cheerily.

"Can you take us over to Wayland Moor by the short cut near the quarries?" asked Tom swiftly. "Some chaps at our school have just made off with D'Arcy's car, and we want to intercept them."

Joe Freeman grinned.

"Right-ho, Master Merry!" he said. "I can manage that all right. 'Op in!"

The juniors "hopped" in with a will, and a minute later the car was buzzing along the High Street, en route for Wayland Moor.

Once out of the village, Joe Freeman opened his throttle and his car, which he always kept in good condition, fairly romped along. He took the short cut to the moor, as Tom had indicated.

As they passed over the brow of the hill that led down to the quarries, Arthur Augustus gave a cry.

"Look, deah boys! Theah's my cah, comin' up the Moor wood!"

From their position on the hill they could see for a good distance over the moor. The unmistakable outlines of the ancient Razzler could be discerned on the road below, coming slowly from the direction of Rylcombe.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Oh, good! Then we've raced those rotters! Thanks, Joe—you can drop us here. We'll barricade the road and waylay the giddy car."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Joe Freeman was paid, and he drove back to Rylcombe to wait for Mr. Tomlinson, the election agent, who had commissioned him for the afternoon.

Tom Merry & Co. hurried down to the old quarries, their hearts agog with excitement.

The road was narrow, and it took a sharp turn near the quarries, and it was an ideal spot for an ambush.

"Bring up some of those large chunks of rock, my sons!" said Tom briskly. "We'll plant such a barrier across the road that Figgins will have to stop."

"What-fo?"

Gussy's car could now be heard, rattling along in the distance. Figgins, apparently, was not so used to cars as Gussy, for he was driving at a very moderate pace over the treacherous Moor road.

The School House juniors clambered down into the large quarry near-by, and dragged large boulders of rock back to the road.

The old car was now approaching the bend. It was puffing and rattling at a great rate. Tom Merry & Co. crouched behind the boulders and waited.

A cloud of smoke appeared, and then the car, with Figgins at the wheel. No sooner had the New House leader rounded the bend than he gave a gasp and shut off the engine.

"Oh crumbs! The road's blocked, and—"

"Sock in to 'em, boys!" shouted Tom Merry, leading the attack with cuffs pushed back.

"Down with the New House rotters!"

"Huwah!"

Figgins sprang up with a cry of alarm.

"Why, what the— Yaroooooop!"

Tom Merry sprang at him, clambering up over the bonnet, and the two rival leaders next minute were locked in a far from fond embrace!

Blake, Gussy, and the others poured over the sides of the car and attacked with flying fists.

The New House juniors put up a valiant fight, and soon the interior of the old car was a mass of struggling, heaving humanity.

Biff! Crash! Wallop! Thud!

The car shook and rattled under the weight of the conflicting juniors. One of the doors came off, and then another, and soon the fur was literally flying as the cushions one by one were ripped to pieces.

"Go it, kids!" panted Tom Merry, who had Figgins' head in chancery.

"We're winnin', bai Jove!"

Fatty Wynn was the first out of the car. Manners and Digby rolled him out, and he fell to earth with a bump and a loud yell.

Lawrence, fighting gamely to the last, was the next to be pitched forth, and he was followed quickly by Kerr.

"Start the engine, Gussy!" panted Blake. "We sha'n't be long now!"

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

Gussy leaped down from the car, turned the crank, and the engine burst obediently into life. Figgins gave a wrathful roar and yelled to Fatty, Lawrence, and Kerr to come on. But before those three had time to hurl themselves again into the fray, Gussy let in the clutch and sent the car careering backwards round the bend.

Steering was difficult, with that struggling crowd on board, but he managed to get the car round and drive off at a fast pace over the moor, leaving Fatty Wynn, Kerr, and Lawrence stranded.

"That's three less to contend with!" gasped Tom Merry. "Stop her, Gussy, and we'll get rid of the rest."

Biff! Wallop! Crash! Thud!

Figgins and his remaining henchmen fought valiantly, and telling blows were delivered on either side. But the School House juniors had more advantage now. They pitched into their rivals and smote them hip and thigh. Figgins took a high dive over the radiator and landed in the road with a jolt. Redfern and Owen were then thrown off on either side.

"That's the lot!" said Blake, with rather a twisted grin. "Now, then, Gussy, right away!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus had kept the engine running. He blew a fantasia on the horn, and Figgins hopped out of the way only just in time, his lanky legs carrying him to the side of the road in one wild leap, something like a kangaroo's.

Rattle! Rattle! Rattle!

Away went the car across the moor in a cloud of blue

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smoke, with Arthur Augustus at the wheel and Tom Merry & Co. again victoriously in occupation!

Figgins stood up and shook his fist after them. But Figgins & Co. were sportsmen, for in answer to a yell from Tom Merry, the New House juniors cleared the road of the boulders that had proved their downfall.

Tom Merry daubed at his streaming nose and chuckled. "Well, we won, after all!" he said. "It was touch-and-go at first, though."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The old tub looks battered about a bit," remarked Blake ruefully. "There are only two doors left, the rear mudguard is hanging on by one bolt, and the bonnet's had a fearful biff. She looks like a giddy cruiser after the Battle of Jutland."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nevah mind!" said Arthur Augustus proudly. "We've got the cah back, and we can now continue with our wide, deah boys."

"Rather!"

And with their good spirits fully restored, the heroes of the School House motored on.

CHAPTER 9.

Gussy's Little Mistake!

GUSSY'S car, despite its battered and bent appearance, ran remarkably well, and as the juniors had plenty of time to spare, they ventured far afield.

As the dusk of evening drew on, a fog began to gather, and by six o'clock it had become quite thick.

Tom Merry & Co. had had tea just outside Abbotsford, and were starting out on the return journey to St. Jim's when the fog crept up.

"Oh crumbs! We shall have a bit of a job to get home, Gussy," said Blake, viewing the gathering mist in some dismay. "You'd better put a bit of speed on."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm afraid we've come out a bit too fah, deah boys. However, we'll get back to St. Jim's now as soon as poss."

They sped on towards Abbotsford. As they neared the town the fog grew thicker, until it was practically impossible to see ten yards in front of the car bonnet.

"Steady, Gussy!" warned Tom Merry. "We don't want a smash up, you know, and—"

BANG!

A deafening explosion rent the air, and the old car gave a sickening lurch.

"Gug-good heavens!" stuttered Digby, going pale. "Wh-what's happened, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus was heard to give a gasp of dismay.

"Oh ewumbs! I wathah fancy it's a tyre burst, deah boys."

"Great pip!"

Gussy's estimation was correct, for the car commenced to bump and lurch more wildly than ever on the rear offside wheel.

Arthur Augustus stopped and went to the back of the car for an examination.

"Bai Jove! The tyre's quite flat, deah boys. It means a long job, wapaiwin' it, too."

"Oh, help! Such are the giddy joys of motoring!" moaned Blake. "Let's all lend a hand and get on with it, then. It's getting horribly dark, and the fog's much thicker."

The juniors all got out and assisted in the task of jacking up the car and removing the wheel. Fortunately, they had a tyre repair outfit in the toolbag, and then began the tedious process of mending the burst tyre.

Darkness fell quickly now, and as the fog grew thicker every minute it seemed to the juniors that they were alone in a wilderness. Everything about them was impenetrably dark.

"Wheah's the solution, deah boys?" gasped Arthur Augustus, in anguished tones.

Tom Merry struck a match.

"You're kneeling in it, you frabjous ass!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Get a move on, Gussy, for goodness' sake!" growled Herries. "We sha'n't get going at all, at this rate."

"We won't be long now, deah boys."

The patch was made, the tyre fitted, and the wheel replaced.

Tom Merry & Co. clambered aboard again, and Arthur Augustus turned the starting handle.

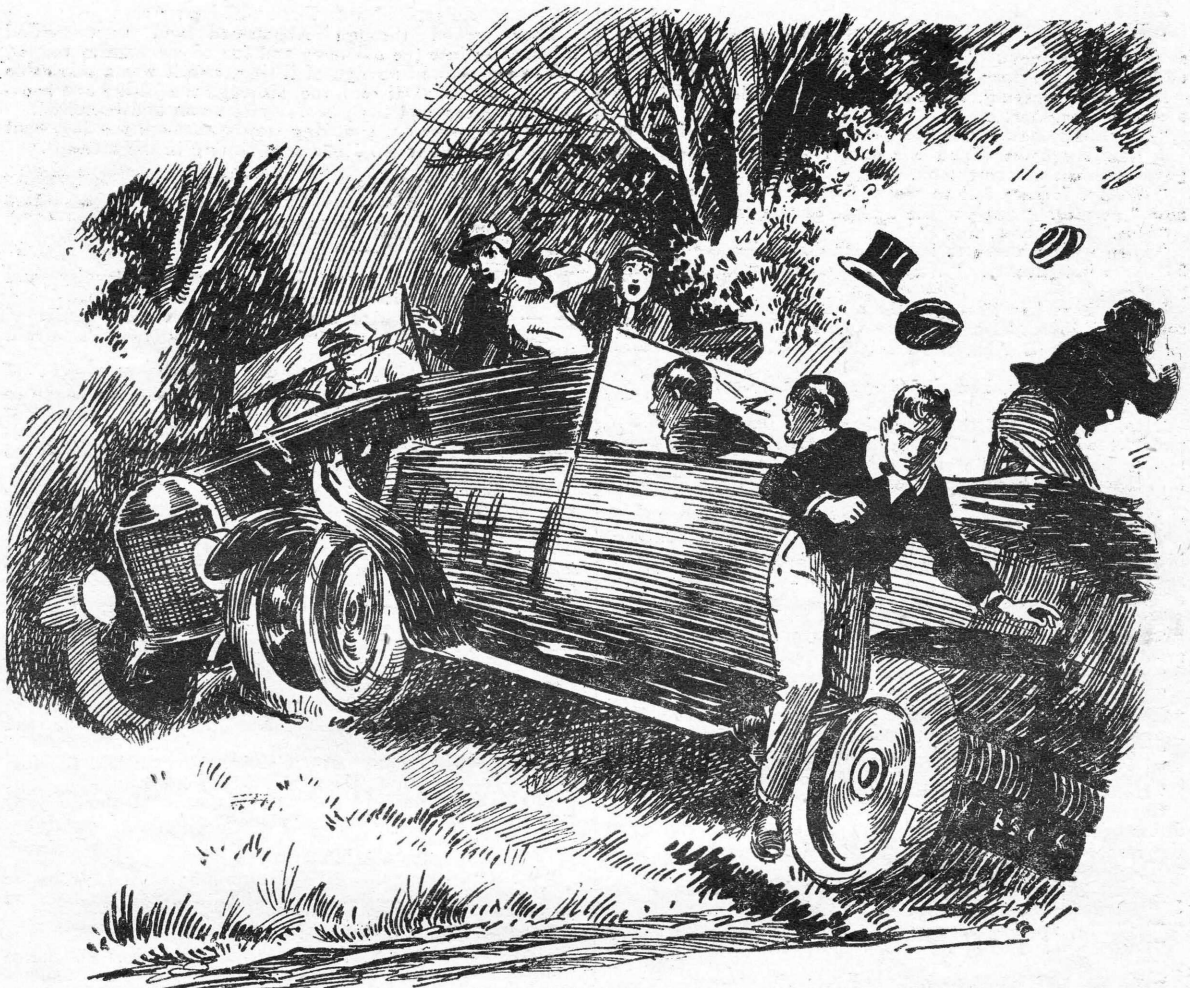
Chonk! Chugger! Chonk!

"Anything wrong with the engine, Gussy?" inquired Tom Merry anxiously, as he heard his noble chum puffing and gasping down in the road.

"Gwoooogh! She won't start! I'm afraid—"

Bang! Splutter! Whirrrr-rrrr!

The sound of the engine starting to life was like sweet music unto the ears of the anxious juniors. Gussy again took the wheel, and they set off—at a very slow pace.



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wrenched desperately at the brakes, but with no avail. The car lurched madly, its speed scarcely checked. "It's no use, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in horror. "Jump for your lives!" Tom Merry & Co. leaped from the car as it tore its way through the grass and bushes, straight towards the other vehicle. There was a sickening crash as the two cars met. (See chapter 11.)

The oil lamps with which the car was equipped shed only a weak, fitful light into the darkness and fog ahead. The engine began to run most erratically, and progress was made in a series of spasmodic jerks.

"Oh, help! We sha'n't get home till morning at this rate!" moaned Blake. "What's up with the engine, Gussy?"

"I weally don't know, deah boy," said the swell, in distress. "Perhaps the fog doesn't suit Glyn's Supercharger."

"Oh, scissors!"

They ground on through the fog and darkness, until at last the welcome lights of Abbotsford began to show. Gussy drove the car gingerly into the main street of the town. Pitch darkness and fog hung everywhere, and even the lights in the shops were not of much service to the hapless schoolboy motorists.

"Go steady through the town, Gussy," said Tom Merry anxiously.

"All wight, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I'll be vewy careful. I'll follow this cah in fwont."

Another motor vehicle was moving slowly along ahead of them, its red tail lamp flickering faintly through the gloom.

The fog was just as thick in the town as in the open country outside, and Arthur Augustus followed the motor ahead very carefully.

At length the car in front stopped, and Gussy stopped. He drew up close behind the other vehicle.

"Theah's somethin' in the way, I expect, deah boys," he said. "Weally, it's quite imposs to see a yard in fwont of us through this howwid fog."

They waited for some minutes, but still the motor in front did not move. Tom Merry & Co. stamped their feet in the old car, growing impatient.

"It's a jolly long wait, I must say!" growled Blake. "Are we ever going to move?"

"Perhaps theah's a block in the twaffic in fwont, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus.

Several more minutes passed, but still there was no sign of movement from the car ahead. Tom Merry & Co., who found it cold waiting there in the stationary car, became exasperated.

"This is the limit!" exclaimed Herries. "Why don't you pass on, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"That wouldn't be safe—not in a fog, you know," he said.

"But there's room to pass on the near side," said Tom Merry.

"Safety first, deah boys. We'd bettah wait till the twaffic moves on."

At that moment a toot-toot of a motor horn sounded behind, and a car loomed up at their side. It did not stop, but passed on, and disappeared into the darkness ahead.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other.

"Well, I'm jiggered! That giddy car has just got by," said Blake. "There can't be much of a traffic block Gussy."

Arthur Augustus looked perplexed.

"Weally, that is must surpwisin'," he said. "I will blow the horn, deah boys."

Gussy gave several toots on the horn, and a few minutes later a burly figure in a peaked cap and a heavy overcoat with brass buttons came out of the fog to the car in front.

He stared hard at Gussy's car and at the shivering passengers within it.

"Allo!" he said, in a gruff voice. "Wot are you doin' 'ere?"

"We have been waitin' to move on for the past ten minutes or more," said Arthur Augustus.

"Wot!"

"Pway, what is the cause of this obstuction?" said the swell of the Fourth. "We are vewy anxious to pwoceed on our journey, bai Jove."

Instead of replying, the man in the motor hat burst into a roar of laughter.

"Haw, haw, haw! That's rich, that is! Ho, ho, ho!"

Arthur Augustus wiped the mist from his monocle and gave the man a severe look.

"Weally, I quite fail to see any cause for laughtah, my man," he said. "Are you the dwivah of this cah in fwont?"

"Yus. Haw, haw, haw!"

"Then what is there to laugh at?" demanded the swell of St. Jim's indignantly. "Why don't you move on and let me pwoceed?"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the man, as if in possession of some huge joke. "Do you know where you are, my back?"

"Yaas; this is Abbotsford High Street, isn't it?" said Gussy innocently.

"Yus; but—haw, haw, haw!—you're on a taxi rank!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Ho, ho, ho! Hif that don't beat blue blazes!" said the motorist mirthfully. "That 'ere car in front is my taxi, and I drew up on the rank. You don't mean to say, my lad, that you've been waitin' on this rank for ten minutes?"

"I—I—I—"

Arthur Augustus was too astounded to speak at first.

The taxi man yelled with laughter, and his loud guffaws brought other taxi-men to the spot from higher up the rank. They, too, laughed, when their comrade told them of Gussy's little error.

Tom Merry & Co. were furious.

"You idiot, Gussy!" howled Blake. "You blithering maniac!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You fatheaded chump! You chuckle-headed cuckoo!" yelled Lowther. "You've kept us here on a taxi rank for nearly a quarter of an hour, you—you—you—"

"Bai Jove! This is most extwaordinawy, deah boys—"

"Extraordinary! You—you dummy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the taxi men.

Gussy got out, set his topper firmly on his head, and bent down to start the engine. He turned and turned, but all the response he got from the engine was a series of pops and splutters.

The laughter of the taxi-men increased, and Tom Merry & Co. waxed more wrathful.

"Start her up, Gussy, will you?" howled Blake.

"Gwoooogh! I—I'm doin' my best, deah boy!" puffed Gussy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared one of the taxi-men. "Keep it up, my lad. Wot 'ave you got there, anyway—a new form of coffee grinder?"

Arthur Augustus glared at the man through the fog.

"Weally, I must wequest you to wefwain fwom passin' oppwobvious wemarks concernin' my cah!" he said, with a good deal of dignity.

"Car!" echoed the taxi-driver. "Ark at that, mates—'e calls it a car! Why, it's a disgrace to our rank, to 'ave such a thing put on it. Let's shove it off!"

"Wot-o!"

The taxi-men all got behind Gussy's car and shoved. Arthur Augustus gave a yell and jumped out of the way. Tom Merry & Co., inside cried out wrathfully, but the car was pushed to the side of the road by the chuckling taxi-men.

"You howwid boundahs!" said Gussy heatedly. "I have a good mind to give you a feahful thwashin', one atah anothah!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Oh, come on, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We want to get back to St. Jim's!"

Arthur Augustus walked over to the car and managed, at length, to start her up.

The taxi-men sent up a shout of laughter as the ancient vehicle rattled onward through the fog.

Tom Merry & Co. were not feeling exactly happy, and some of the remarks they made to Arthur Augustus were quite hair-raising.

"I think we'd better dump this old grid in a garage somewhere and go on to Rylcombe by train," said Blake despairingly.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"That's no go, I'm afraid," he said. "No trains will be running in a thick fog like this. We'll keep on and make the best of it. You know the way home, don't you, Gussy?"

"Ya-as."

"For goodness' sake get on with it, then!"

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Clatter, clatter! Spit! Pop! Whirrrr-rrrrr!

They jerked through Abbotsford and then rattled laboriously into the darkness and fog of the country roads.

The fog showed no sign of lifting, and it was a miserable ride indeed! It was cold, too, although the jolting and heaviness of the car kept the juniors quite warm and exercised.

But they kept on, chogging slowly through the fog, bent on getting back to St. Jim's or perishing in the attempt.

CHAPTER 10.

The Plot!

HALF an hour passed, but it seemed an eternity—and a nightmare—to the schoolboy motorists.

"Fine sort of night for the Rylcombe election—I don't think!" said Blake lugubriously. "I'm afraid it will be a wash-out, unless the fog goes off."

"Yes, it's jolly rotten," said Tom Merry, nodding.

But soon, to their great joy and relief, the fog began to lift, and the moon appeared in the dark heavens above. It seemed that the atmosphere really did affect Glyn's Supercharger, for the old car gradually increased in power as the fog thinned out.

"Oh, bwavo!" said Arthur Augustus jubilantly. "She's wunnin' all wight again, deah boys, and now I can see what I am doin', we shall be able to get along bettah."

Tom Merry & Co. looked round in the moonlight.

"My hat!" exclaimed Manners. "Where are we, for goodness' sake?"

"Gussy's taken the wrong road!" gasped Blake. "I don't recognise this part at all. Oh, crumbs! That's done it!"

They were traversing a road in a part of the country quite new to them. On one side of the road was a wood, thick with dark, gaunt trees, whilst on the other hand stretched a wild, desolate, expanse of moorland.

D'Arcy adjusted his monocle and gave a gasp as he took stock of his surroundings.

"Bai Jove! I must have mistaken the woad in the fog, deah boys," he said. "How fwightfully howwid!"

"Frightfully horrid!" snorted Blake. "I should jolly well say it was! We're lost, you idiot!"

"Oh deah!"

Tom Merry gave a helpless gesture.

"We must carry on, that's all, until we meet someone, or find a signpost," he said. "This is a giddy go, and no mistake!"

But their troubles were not yet over!

They had scarcely gone another half-mile when the engine suddenly ceased to function. Arthur Augustus made a hurried examination, and at length discovered that there was no petrol in the tank.

"Bai Jove! We've wun out of petwol, deah boys!" he said.

"What!" hooted Blake. "Does that mean, Gussy, that we're stuck?"

"Yaas," replied the swell of St. Jim's, surveying the car in deep distress. "I'm afraid we cannot pwoceed any furthah until we get some petwol."

Tom Merry & Co. gasped.

"But—but the tank was full up when we started!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Yaas; but apparently the engine consumes much more petwol with Glyn's Supercharger fitted," said D'Arcy.

"Well," said Blake, in measured accents, "if this doesn't beat the band! So we're stranded, after all, miles from anywhere, in a strange place, and no petrol! Glyn ought to have his rotten invention rammed down his neck! I—I'd give him Supercharger!"

"The blitherer!"

"Well, it's no use moaning," said Tom Merry philosophically. "The question is—how can we get some petrol? We must get back to St. Jim's to-night."

"Look!" said Manners suddenly. "Did you see that light—up the road there, among the trees?"

The juniors followed the direction indicated by Manners, and saw a light flickering in the darkness among the trees some distance down the road.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Perhaps there's a house along there," he said. "At any rate, we can't stick here like a lot of dummies, so we might as well go along and see. Coming, Gussy?"

"Yaas, deah boy."

The others remained in the car while Tom Merry and Gussy set out down the road in the direction of the light. They had not gone far before it disappeared, but the two juniors kept on.

Rounding a bend in the road they came upon a rambling, tumbledown old house standing in the midst of wild grounds that were overgrown with weeds and bushes. The house itself lay some distance back from the road, and most of it was screened by overhanging trees of the adjacent wood.

"Rummy looking old show—eh, Gussy?" said Tom.
 "Yaas, watahah! But this is appawntly where the light came from, deah boy!"

The Shell captain nodded.
 "Let's walk in and try our luck, anyway," he said. "If we can't get any petrol, we may be able to find out just where we are. That will be useful."

They walked in through the front gateway and traversed the grounds, coming at last to the front of the house, where some crumbling stone steps gave access to the front door. Tom Merry went up to the door and rapped with his knuckles. There was no knocker, and the rusty bell-pull was broken.

There was no response to his knock.
 Everywhere was darkness and silence, and the two juniors could not repress a shudder as they looked round.

"Ugh! This place gives me the creeps!" said Tom. "It looks as though it must have been empty for years."

"But the light seemed to come from heah, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "Perhaps we shall find a caretakah, or somebody, at the wear of the house. I'll go wound there and have a look."

"Right-ho, Gussy!" said Tom. "I'll stay here, in case anyone comes to the door."

He watched his chum walk away and disappear into the heavy shadows of the house grounds, and after D'Arcy's footsteps had receded in the distance there was an oppressive stillness.

Suddenly a sharp cry rang out through the darkness, seeming to come from inside the house. Tom Merry's heart gave a leap.

"That was Gussy!" he muttered. "I—"

Again the silence was broken by a voice—this time in the form of a coarse shout, evidently made by a man. Tom heard sounds of a far-away scuffle—then silence reigned again.

Tom Merry squared his jaw.
 "Gussy has met with foul play; he probably ran into

"We have no time to lose now. The election is probably in full swing, as the fog has cleared off."

Tom thrilled as he recognised the voice. He had only heard it once before, but there was no mistaking the deep, rasping accents.

It was the voice of Cripps, Major Slammer's election agent.

"Slammer has at last got wind of what has been taking place, and I don't suppose I shall get another pound in payment out of it," went on the voice. "But we sha'n't have had all our trouble for nothing. Slammer's house will be practically empty now, as he and most of the servants will be in Rylcombe, at the polling station. Now's our chance, then, if we act quickly. I've found out the combination of Slammer's safe, and there are valuables inside worth having, my bucks. We have the car, and can be well on the way to Southampton before the police get wind of it!"

"Right you are, Cripps," said another voice. "We'll start now, without delay. Where's Roker? We shall need him."

"He's down in the cellar, with the boy we've just caught prowling outside. He'll make him secure and then come up."

"All right, chief."
 Heavy footsteps sounded in the distance, and Tom drew quickly back into hiding, guessing that Roker was returning to his confederates. Peering from the doorway, he saw Roker's burly form pass.

A few minutes later four men left the house—Cripps, Roker, and two others.

Were these four the only members of the gang, or were there others remaining in the house?

Sounds of a motor-car outside came to Tom's ears, receding gradually in the distance. Cripps and his companions had driven away in a car, and they were going to Major Slammer's house, to rob it!

Tom set his teeth and left his hiding-place. He made his way swiftly in the direction from which Roker had first appeared. D'Arcy, then, was down in the cellar. It ought

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someone at the back of the house, and they've captured him!" He found himself muttering these words intensely. "Shall I call the others, or—"

He made up his mind to act alone, and thus save time.

The shutters at the windows were broken away, and Tom, clambering up on the balustrade at the side of the steps, found that he could reach the sill of the nearest window easily.

He crouched on the sill, and grasped the crazy wooden structure that barred his way. It came away after a small wrench, and Tom dropped it into the evergreens below, where it fell noiselessly.

Peering in through the window, he saw that the large room beyond was empty. He clambered through, and stood down softly on the floor.

Then, scarcely daring to breathe, the captain of the Shell made his way with infinite caution to the door opposite.

Once or twice the wooden boards creaked beneath him. He reached the passage beyond, and, with heart thumping wildly, he proceeded to steal down it.

As he reached the bottom he caught his breath.

Footsteps sounded round the corner, not far away. Some men were coming!

There was a door opposite, half open. He darted inside and crouched down, peering intently out into the corridor beyond. Two men passed the corner, and Tom heard them open a door a little farther on and enter. After that muffled sounds of voices came to his ears, but he could not distinguish the words.

That something lawless and underhand was being enacted in that old house Tom felt instinctively to be the case. And the men, whoever they were, had D'Arcy in their clutches.

Tom wondered whether his own presence there was known or suspected. Perhaps the men thought that D'Arcy was the only caller!

The captain of the Shell braced his nerves and stepped out from his hiding-place. Treading noiselessly, he walked round the corner, and looked down the dark, eerie corridor before him.

From underneath one of the doors on the right a shaft of light came out, and it was from this room that the men's voices were proceeding.

Tom crept nearer until he was able to hear the words:

not to be difficult to discover the whereabouts of the cellar.

Tom Merry descended the back stairs slowly and carefully, his nerves tensed and ears strained to catch the slightest sound that might come out of the darkness below.

He reached the bottom without mishap. All about him was impenetrable blackness; the atmosphere was dank and earthy. Might he be walking into some trap—into the hands of some of Cripps' gang, lurking down there to pounce on him from the shadows?

But he did not think of turning back. D'Arcy was a prisoner somewhere near at hand. He knew that, and was determined to do his best to secure his release.

A glimmer of light showed on the stone floor ahead. It came from a chink in a door. Breathlessly, not daring to make a sound, Tom drew up to the door. It was a crazy wooden affair, and he was able to see through one of the innumerable cracks.

He drew a deep breath of relief and joy.

The cellar was lit by an oil lamp, and in its yellow radiance he saw the form of his chum, lying on some sacks in a corner, his arms bound to his sides by means of rope.

Without more ado Tom pushed open the door and stepped quickly within.

D'Arcy started up to a sitting posture and gave a low exclamation.

"Bai Jove! Tom Merry! Then you've got past those wascals, deah boy!"

"Yes, Gussy," muttered Tom, and then he became aware of two more persons lying, prisoners like D'Arcy, on the floor near the door.

They were Joe Freeman, the taxidriver, and Mr. Tomlinson.

Tom made haste to release the three captives.

"You have acted splendidly, my lad!" exclaimed the election agent fervently. "We thought we should be kept here the whole night, at least. This house seems to be the rendezvous of Cripps and the rogues he has in his employ. This evening, whilst Freeman was driving me from Rylcombe to Wayland, the car was waylaid on the moor, near the old quarries, and we were made prisoners and driven here. I don't know what the idea is, unless it is to prevent me from carrying out certain election plans I had in mind for this evening; but if so, Cripps will not succeed, for I

have left full instructions with my colleagues in Rylcombe, and these plans will be carried out, despite my absence."

Tom Merry nodded.

"It seems to me, sir, from what I heard, that Cripps realises that the game's up, so far as he is concerned," he said. "Major Slammer has found out what a rascal he is, and Cripps is desperate."

Swiftly Tom related to Mr. Tomlinson all he had heard of the gang's conversation upstairs. His listeners were thrilled.

"Then the scoundrels are on their way now to Major Slammer's house, to burgle it while the occupants are away at the election!" exclaimed Mr. Tomlinson. "How fortunate that you were able to overhear the plan! We must stop the scoundrels!"

"But my car is undrivable, sir," said Joe Freeman ruefully. "When that hound Roker took it down the drive he ran into a post and damaged the steering."

"Then your taxi is here—at this house!" ejaculated Tom eagerly.

"Yes. Roker drove us here after we had been waylaid on the moor."

Tom drew a deep breath.

"We'll do them yet!" he exclaimed, gritting his teeth. "Your car, you say, Joe, is outside? Have you any petrol to spare? Gussy's car is only a little way down the road, and all it wants is petrol."

"There are two cans of juice on the car, Master Merry," said the taximan.

"Oh, good egg! Then let's get along as soon as possible. There isn't a moment to waste!"

They made their way out of the cellar and went upstairs. They were alone in the house now, Cripps having taken all his men with him.

Joe Freeman's taxicab was standing in the drive at the back of the house, its front wheel bent and the steering-gear jammed. The two tins of petrol were taken off, and Tom Merry, D'Arcy, Mr. Tomlinson, and Freeman hurried down the road.

Gussy's car was still there. The juniors were getting impatient.

"My hat! So you've come at last!" said Blake. "Where have you been?"

Tom quickly explained the situation, and cries of amazement arose from his chums.

"Great pip! That beats the band!" exclaimed Lowther. "We'll go after Cripps and Roker, of course, Tommy!"

"You bet!"

The tank of Gussy's car was swiftly replenished, all clambered aboard, and Gussy started up the engine.

The air was clear and crisp now, and the moon, dispersing the last traces of the fog, was shedding a mellow radiance over the countryside. Two turns of the crank, and the car engine burst into life with a deep roar.

"Now, then, Gussy, let her rip!" muttered Tom Merry, as Arthur Augustus took the wheel and let in the clutch. "Joe will tell you which way to go."

"All sewene!"

And the car, jerking at first under its heavy load, went onward with ever increasing speed.

CHAPTER 11.

Bravo, Gussy!

DIRECTED on his course by Joe Freeman, who knew every inch of the road, Arthur Augustus "let her rip," as Tom had urged him. The car was now behaving splendidly. Glyn's wonderful Super-charger, so delicate to the change of the atmosphere, put into the old engine a power that was astonishing.

They reached the outskirts of Wayland in record time, and, stopping for only the briefest space whilst fresh fuel was poured into the tank, they went on into the main streets of the town.

Mr. Tomlinson got off at the police-station to acquaint Inspector Skeat of the facts of the case. Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. drove on at top speed to Major Slammer's house.

They could, at least, try to hold the thieves until the police arrived.

Joe Freeman knew the way, and soon they came to the narrow lane that led to the major's residence.

"There's the house—you can see it between the trees yonder," said Joe, pointing up the lane.

Tom Merry set his teeth.

"We'd better stop here," he said. "If Cripps and his gang are about the sound of his car will warn them of our coming. And we're out to capture the rotters, of course."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The car was stopped and the juniors and Joe Freeman jumped out.

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With fast-beating hearts the party hurried along the narrow, tree-bordered lane, until they reached the iron gates that gave access to Major Slammer's house.

It was a large building, of the manor-house type, standing in spacious grounds and surrounded by a high brick wall. The gates were closed and bolted, and Tom looked through them in the semi-gloom.

Suddenly he caught his breath.

"Look!" he muttered, pointing towards the house.

In the moonlight a man could be seen clambering down a rope from one of the darkened upper windows. Another man leaned out of the window and dropped a bag, which his confederate below caught. The second man then climbed down the rope and the two disappeared into the dark shadows of the grounds.

The St. Jim's juniors at the gates looked excitedly at each other.

"Then—then they've opened the safe, and are getting away with the swag!" muttered Blake tensely.

"We've arrived just in time!" exclaimed Tom between his teeth. "I don't suppose they'll leave the grounds through these gates. I wonder—"

He broke off, as the staccato roar of a motor-engine burst out of the darkness in the road in front of them.

"Bai Jove! They've got a cah, deah boys!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "The wascals are escapin'!"

A minute later a pair of gleaming headlights pierced the gloom, and a car swung out of the shadows by the wall.

As it turned into the road the glaring lights shone full on the St. Jim's juniors. There came a snarling cry from the car.

"It's those little school brats! Drive on—quickly!"

Tom Merry, Blake, and D'Arcy sprang out at the car as it drew alongside them. It was moving slowly, owing to the sharp bend, and the three juniors succeeded in jumping on the running-board.

Cripps and two burly-looking rascals were in the back seats, whilst Roker was driving.

"Now, you wascals—" began D'Arcy, and broke off as Cripps aimed a savage blow at him with his clenched fist.

"Go on, Roker—go on!" shouted the rascally election agent.

Roker, apparently, was not an expert driver. His mishap in driving Joe Freeman's car bore testimony to that. He ground at the gear-lever and sent the car in a zig-zag course up the lane, with Tom Merry, Blake, and D'Arcy still clinging to the side.

Cripps swore savagely, and his two companions sprang to the side of the car to beat off the juniors.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

He saw it was useless to remain there, clinging to the thieves' car in that precarious position. So he beckoned to Blake and D'Arcy. The car was gaining speed, but had to slow to negotiate another bend, and the three juniors leaped off.

They landed in the grass at the side of the road. The car disappeared into the darkness ahead with a reverberating roar.

"Come on!" shouted Tom. "Your car isn't far away, Gussy. We'll give chase!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

They tore down the lane, followed by Joe Freeman and the rest of the juniors until they reached the car.

"Get the engine started, Gussy!" rapped Tom Merry.

The engine started, and Tom Merry & Co. clambered aboard. The car shot forward.

D'Arcy was ready and eager for the chase. He crouched low at the wheel, and, with foot hard down on the throttle, he sent his old car lurching and tearing in pursuit of the robbers.

Joe Freeman was at his side, pumping oil into the roaring engine. Tom Merry and the others hung on grimly as the car raced onward, swinging round bends and rocking over the bumps in the road.

D'Arcy did not falter in his grim task. The road was dark and narrow, abounding in sharp turnings, and his headlamps were not good, shedding only a dull yellow glow on the road ahead. But he kept the throttle wide open and drove on at top speed, and the old engine, bellowing musically, gave of its best.

Trees and gateposts flashed by; the night air whistled past the juniors' ears as they crouched in the swiftly-moving car. D'Arcy made no errors in his steering; he amazed and thrilled his chums by his magnificent driving. Mile after mile was traversed at breakneck speed, and at length the outline of a car with glaring headlights showed up on the road in front.

"That's the cah, deah boys!" shouted D'Arcy over the roar of his engine.

"Good old Gussy!"

"Keep her going!"

The old car rattled and shook as it careered madly down the country road. The vehicle ahead was being driven recklessly, too, and the excitement of the chase sent the hot blood tingling through the juniors' veins.

Would Gussy's "old crock" manage it?

The road now was long and straight, and the two cars hurtled down it at tremendous speed, belching smoke and roaring like mad things. Gradually—ever so gradually, but surely—Gussy's car drew closer to its quarry!

"Hurrah!" shouted Blake hoarsely. "We're gaining!"

"Keep it up, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus, with monocle jammed firmly in his eye and jaws set squarely, kept it up.

They were going down a long, steep hill, but he did not relax his speed one iota. The car went tearing down, gaining rapidly now on the fugitives.

Tom Merry & Co. drew close; so close that they could see Cripps leaning out, waving his arms frantically to the driver of his car. They were almost into Rylcombe, now, and at the bottom of the hill was a level crossing over the railway.

Tom Merry gave a shout as he saw the large red light ahead.

"The gates are closed! They'll have to stop!"

The heavy gates of the railway crossing were closed, barring the road. Would Cripps stop, or would he take the desperate alternative of driving on?

"They're not slowing up," muttered Blake, his eyes strained as he peered into the darkness ahead. "They—they mean to break through the gates!"

"Good heavens!"

There was a red glare in the darkness over the trees and the shriek of an engine whistle.

A train was approaching the level crossing!

The juniors were on their feet now, hearts thumping wildly with excitement.

"Slow up, Gussy!" cried Tom. "It's madness to keep on like this! Those fools will be killed if they go through the gates, and— Oh, look out!"

Roker's nerve had failed him on hearing the oncoming train. It was too late, however, to stop before the level crossing gates were reached, so he swung the car round to the side of the road, cutting right across D'Arcy's path.

Arthur Augustus shut off and wrenched at the vibrating wheel, but too late! The old brakes were not proof against the strain, and the car lurched madly, its speed scarcely checked.

"It's no use, deah boys!" cried the swell in horror. "Jump for your lives!"

The juniors leapt from the car as it tore its way through the grass and bushes, straight towards the other vehicle.

There was a sickening crash as the two cars met in a terrific impact. Tom Merry & Co. lay in the grass, hurt and too dazed to move for some minutes. When they staggered to their feet they saw the cars overturned at the side of the road. The train had now passed the crossing.

"Gussy!" shouted Tom hoarsely. "Where are you, Gussy?"

"Heah, Tom Mewwy! It's all sewene, deah boy!"

D'Arcy's chums drew deep breaths of relief as he appeared, struggling out of the twisted front of his car.

"Are you hurt?"

"My hand is cut, that's all, deah boys," he said. "But what about those wascals—"

He broke off as he saw a dark form, followed by another, spring up from the other side of the road and dash off towards the level crossing gates, which were slowly opening.

One of the pair was Cripps, and he was carrying a bag.

"After them!" shouted Tom. "Don't let the rotters get away!"

The juniors dashed after Cripps and his companion. Both men, apparently, had been slightly hurt in the accident, and the boys caught up with them as they were crossing the rails.

Cripps and the other, snarling, turned at bay, but against those lusty, hard-fisted juniors they stood no chance. There was a short, sharp struggle, in which the two rascals were hurled down on the railway lines and overpowered.

"Got you, you wascals!" panted D'Arcy, picking up the bag, which had rolled over on the flints.

"Have you got the swag, Gussy?" asked Blake, who was sitting astride Cripps' chest.

"I'll have a look, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus opened the bag, and a cluster of glittering gems, together with some gold and silver articles and a thick wad of banknotes and Treasury notes, were revealed.

"Bai Jove! These are the valuables all wight!"

"Good egg!"

Cripps and his confederate were hustled back to the scene of the smash.

Joe Freeman was assisting Roker out of the debris. The

roughs' leader was moaning, and his head was streaming with crimson.

"He's not hurt much," said Joe in response to Tom Merry's horrified, inquiring look. "I found him lying here stunned. The other chap is down there, too, with his leg hurt. But there are no bones broken, and we are jolly lucky to have escaped so easily."

"Yes, rather!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Well, that little bit of excitement was worse than a nightmare!" he exclaimed. "I thought we were all going to be killed. Look at your car, Gussy."

"Bai—bai Jove!"

Gussy's car, as a motive means of conveyance, was no more. It was reduced to a garish mass of ruin and debris.

Monty Lowther rubbed a bump on his forehead, and gave a grin as he surveyed the remains.

"My word! I wonder how much that little lot will fetch as old iron?" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Considering the nature of the smash, it was really miraculous that no one was more seriously hurt.

Tom Merry ran to a wayside inn and rang up Inspector Skeat. Two cars were immediately despatched from Wayland, and it was not long before they reached the scene.

Cripps, Roker, and the other two were arrested and taken away by the inspector and his men, whilst two local constables, after taking particulars, were left to mount guard over the two smashed cars.

And Tom Merry & Co. returned to St. Jim's, looking rather dirty and shaken, but otherwise little the worse for their exciting adventure.

Next morning Major Slammer called at St. Jim's, but on a far different errand from the one he had previously come on. Tom Merry & Co. were summoned to the Head's study, and the major shook each one of them effusively by the hand.

"You have saved me from incalculable loss, my lads," he said. "Had that rascal Cripps, who has deceived me right and left, got away with the valuables he had in that bag, and disposed of them, they could never have been replaced. By thunder, these are lads to be proud of, Dr. Holmes!"

The Head smiled.

"I rejoice to hear you say that, Major Slammer."

"But D'Arcy is the one deserving of all the praise, sir," said Tom Merry. "The way he drove that car was marvellous. Had it not been for him, the thieves would have got away."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I am much obliged to you, Master D'Arcy," said the major. "I believe your car has been smashed. The least I can do, by thunder, is to buy you another."

This time Dr. Holmes did not smile.

"I am afraid I cannot allow that, Major Slammer," he said. "Motoring is far too dangerous a pastime for school-boys to indulge in. D'Arcy, no doubt, is a capable driver, but he cannot keep a car at St. Jim's. You understand, D'Arcy, that you must relinquish any desire to continue in the very hazardous sport of motoring."

"Vewy well, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I have the greatest respect for your wishes, Dr. Holmes, and, undah the cires, I will give up motowin'."

After Major Slammer had gone, the news of the election result came through. Alderman Hodge had won, beating the major by a wide margin. Tom Merry & Co. had said that it was hard lines on Major Slammer; but, after all, he should have exercised more discretion in the first place in the choice of his election agent.

As it was, Cripps and Roker and the rest of the gang would languish in prison for some weeks to come, to meditate on the error of their ways.

A motor lorry drove up at St. Jim's that afternoon, laden with a miscellany of metal bits and scrap-iron, which, on closer examination, were recognised as the remains of Gussy's car.

Arthur Augustus gazed sorrowfully through his monocle at the twisted and battered remnants of what had once been his motor-car, whilst the rest of St. Jim's roared.

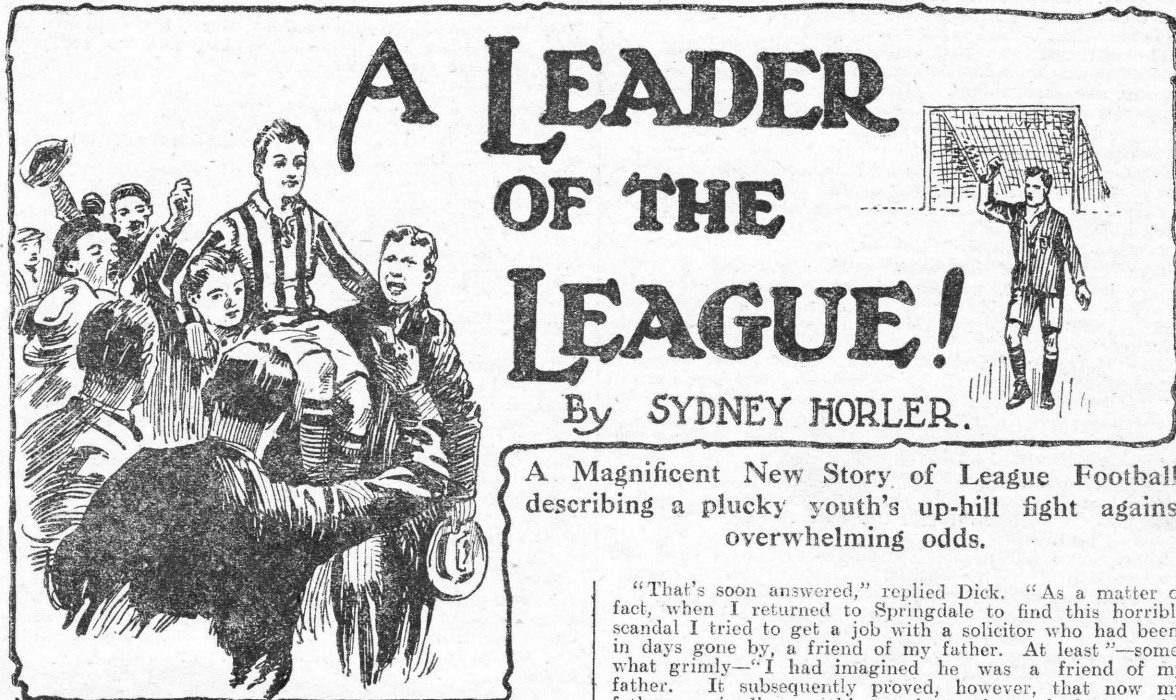
The swell of the Fourth did not keep the debris so kindly forwarded him by the local police. He made a present of it to the lorry driver, who drove straightaway to the old-iron dealer's in Rylcombe, and sold the lot for a few shillings.

And that was the last of Gussy's car, and, as a natural consequence, the end of Gussy the Motorist.

THE END.

(Look out for a thrilling and dramatic story of Tom Merry & Co. entitled "SHADOWED FROM SCHOOL!" By Martin Clifford in next week's BUMPER CHRISTMAS NUMBER of the GEM.)

THE DIRTIEST TEAM IN THE THREE LEAGUES! That's how people speak of Springdale Albion. But young James Burn, the local newspaper reporter, hopes to improve this rotten state of affairs. How does he get on?



A Magnificent New Story of League Football, describing a plucky youth's up-hill fight against overwhelming odds.

An Unexpected Ally!

IT had been a rather difficult matter for Dick Hastie to secure lodgings in the town where his father's name was held by everyone in ignominy, and the couple of rooms he had secured were in a mean street on the outskirts of Springdale.

It was with a faint feeling of shame, therefore, that he heard his landlady's announcement that evening that a visitor had called to see him.

At first he thought it must be Charles Best, his father's late managing clerk, but when the visitor was ushered into the room he proved to be a complete stranger.

"My name's Burn," said the tall, spectacled youth, dressed somewhat untidily, holding out a hand as Hastie advanced. "I'm the new football reporter for the local paper, the 'Gazette,' and I've called, Mr. Hastie, to make your acquaintance, and to congratulate you upon the wonderful show you put up in the match this afternoon."

Dick felt embarrassed. This was almost the first kindly word he had received since returning home, and it was not surprising, therefore, that he should warm to the visitor at once.

"It's awfully decent of you to have called," he said. "I'm a bit of an Ishmael, as perhaps you know."

"Oh, yes; I've heard all about that rotten side of it," returned Burn, "and I want you to know that, so far as I'm concerned, at any rate, you are going to get a fair deal. Whether your father did or did not sneak five thousand pounds of clients' money is nothing to do with me. What does affect me, however, is the way you can play football. Springdale Albion is a pretty rotten team to-day—in fact, I don't think I should exaggerate if I called it the worst team in the three divisions of the League. Its tactics on the field are dirty, and there's an unpleasant atmosphere surrounding everything connected with it."

"But, as I say, I'm determined, if public opinion will only support me, to try to improve this state of affairs. Although a Pressman is supposed to have no enthusiasms, I don't mind telling you, Mr. Hastie, that I'm just about as keen on professional football as any school kid. I write about it because I love it. But that's enough about myself. Do you mind answering me one question?"

Dick smiled. He had already conceived a liking for this somewhat strange youth who was not very much older than himself, and he answered readily enough:

"I'll answer anything you like."

"Well, my question is: Why did you play for Milltown Athletic this afternoon instead of for Springdale Albion?"

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"That's soon answered," replied Dick. "As a matter of fact, when I returned to Springdale to find this horrible scandal I tried to get a job with a solicitor who had been, in days gone by, a friend of my father. At least"—something grimly—"I had imagined he was a friend of my father. It subsequently proved, however, that now my father was in disgrace this certain gentleman had no use for me. I suppose he thought that I should not only disgrace his staff, but contaminate his office. Failing to get a job in my own line," Dick went on, somewhat bitterly, "I determined to become a professional footballer. You see, I had been offered terms by the Swifts," he added in explanation.

"The Swifts! Why, they are the finest team in London!" put in Burn.

"I know. It was whilst I was playing for the Bohemians that one of the Swifts' officials, a gentleman named Tovey, approached me and said that the Swifts would be prepared to play me either as an amateur or a pro. They offered me five pounds a week to start. I did play one match—as an amateur—against Clapton Orient, and then came a telegram from my sister, calling me home."

"But haven't the Albion offered to sign you on, especially after what you did this afternoon?"

"I'm afraid I'm not very popular with the Albion, Mr. Burn. You see, I had a row last week with the chairman, Mr. Benjamin Travers. It was at a meeting of my father's creditors. Mr. Travers made some very insulting remarks about my father, and I—well, I hit him."

"And serve him dashed well right, too!" exclaimed the football reporter warmly. "He's a rotter, that man! One has only to look at his beastly face to see it. But carry on, I am sorry I interrupted."

"Well, I was telling you. I determined, since I had to get some money from somewhere in order to pay back at least a portion of the money my father owed, to become a pro. Naturally enough, I wanted to go back to London and play for the Swifts, but then it seemed to me a coward's trick to run away, especially after I had given my promise to stay in the town and to do my best to pay off, as well as I could, my father's debts. So the only thing was for me to try to get a job with Springdale Albion. They laughed at me, and Mr. Benjamin Travers actually ordered me out of the manager's office!"

"The blighter!" commented Burn.

"It was while I was hanging round that an old pal of mine—a man I used to play with in the Bohemians' team in London—slapped me on the shoulder. Dunster surprised me by saying he was playing against the Albion that day for Milltown Athletic. He introduced me to Billy Maxwell, the captain, and the latter offered me a vacant place, owing to one of his team not turning up. Now," concluded Dick, with a smile, "you know as much as I do myself."

"And thanks for telling me, old chap!" replied the football reporter. "What this town is going to be asked in Monday evening's paper is why Springdale Albion, a team that is notoriously badly off for decent forwards, allows one of the most brilliant inside-lefts I have ever seen to be snapped up by some other club. It seems to me that Mr.

Benjamin Travers will find it rather an awkward matter to answer that question satisfactorily.

"But I must be off now. Thanks ever so much for seeing me, and remember this, for what it's worth, you've got a pal in me, Hastie!"

Something suspiciously like a lump came into Dick's throat as he wished this unexpected ally good-bye. He wanted a real friend just now very badly.

Introducing David Martin!

WHILST Dick Hastie was having his exceedingly interesting talk with the new football reporter of the "Springdale Gazette," an equally momentous conversation was taking place in another part of the town. Again the subject was football; again the Springdale Albion and its chairman, Mr. Benjamin Travers, were discussed; and again more than passing references were made to the young forward whose play had electrified the local football crowd that afternoon.

It has already been stated that Mr. George Garrity, a member of the F.A. Council, was a shrewd reader of character. His visit to Springdale that week-end had not been any haphazard affair. The evil repute of the Albion team—which had descended from the First into the Second, and then into the Third Division of the English League—had engaged the attention of the football authorities for some considerable time past.

Referees' reports of the unsportsmanlike character, not only of the Albion players, but of the local crowds that gathered to witness the home matches, had lately increased in number, and it was as the official representative of the League authorities that Garrity had visited Springdale. He was a man who liked to see things for himself and to form his own opinion. Fair-minded to a degree, he had not allowed his initial impression of Benjamin Travers—a distinctly unfavourable one, by the way—to weigh with him unduly. It is true that he had been shocked not only by the terrible scene in the dressing-room, but by Travers' obviously untrue explanation (the lad Hastie had been the cleanest player on the field); but it was only after the chairman of the Albion team had flatly turned down his suggestion that the brilliant young forward should be signed by Springdale, that Garrity told himself that Travers was impossible.

The F.A. councillor was now sitting in front of a cheery fire in a comfortable room that was half library and half a "den." Opposite him was a ruddy-complexioned man of his own age. David Martin was a local cloth manufacturer, and, although their ways had lain apart, neither had forgotten the friendship which had existed when they were schoolboys. Directly he knew he was coming to Springdale, Garrity had wired his old friend, and Martin was doing his best to make his guest comfortable.

The cloth manufacturer had been a noted footballer in his day—indeed, the two friends had once formed a very formidable right wing—and it was only natural, now that the evening meal was over, that the talk should turn on the greatest game in the world.

"You've never told me, Dave," said Garrity, "why you have allowed all your interest in local football to stop. Why, I can remember the time when you were willing to talk about Springdale Albion all day and every day! What's the reason?"

David Martin blew a cloud of smoke ceiling-wards.

"If you don't know the reason, George, after being in the company of the present directors of the Albion team, and after watching that same team play what they presume to call football, you haven't as many wits about you as

you used to have. Since you ask me the reason why I stopped taking any interest in the Springdale Albion Club—in fact, I never go to a match nowadays—is because the team, instead of being a credit to the town, is a disgrace.

"When the side fell from the First Division, through no fault of its own, let me add, the wrong element got control. Players who were known to be unscrupulous were engaged, dirty tactics were deliberately encouraged, and the result was inevitable; the decent people in the town stayed away, and the club went from bad to worse. If you had not asked me, George, I should not have given you this information, and I don't want you to be unduly prejudiced by what I have told you. I am speaking to you now as a friend and not as a member of the F.A. council. You understand?"

"All that you have told me I guessed for myself," replied Garrity. "Reports have reached us of an unsavoury nature for some time, and it was because of this that I came to Springdale to-day. Things proved to be worse than I had imagined; at half-time there was a free fight in the dressing-room, and when I asked the chairman of the Albion for an explanation, he told me what was obviously a deliberate lie."

Martin snorted.

"That's the type of man Travers is," he said; "and so long as he is in control, I will have nothing to do with the Springdale Albion Club, although, goodness knows, they want a different type of man on the directorate from what they have now."

Garrity leaned forward and touched his friend's arm.

"Dave," he said, with some earnestness, "what do you know of a young lad named Hastie?"

Martin blew another reflective cloud.

"I used to know the boy years ago," he replied, "and I always liked him. It's a thousand pities that this disgrace should have come on him just as he was starting his career."

"I heard something this afternoon about his father having absconded with some money."

"Robert Hastie certainly has left the town," replied Martin; "but whether he is the guilty man people say he is is a matter for doubt in my opinion. The evidence is certainly very black against him, but I have known Robert Hastie for the last twenty years—ever since I came to Springdale, as a matter of fact—and a whiter man I never met. The thought of his being a defrauding lawyer is inconceivable to me, and always will be."

"Did you know that young Hastie had come home, Dave?"

"Yes; and I had intended to look him up. I should have done so if I hadn't been called away to Burnley. That boy will require a bit of help now, and I'll see he gets it."

"I have an idea, Dave, that a great deal will be heard of young Hastie in the near future," said Garrity. "For one thing, he's a brilliant footballer, and for another thing I admire his pluck. To stay in a town which is as hostile to him as Springdale requires grit, and I am very glad indeed to hear that you intend to give him a bit of help."

However hard David Martin might try, his interest in football could not be entirely repressed.

"Did you say young Dick was a good player?" he asked.

"He played against the Albion for Milltown Athletic this afternoon and scored two of the finest goals I have ever seen this season," was Garrity's reply. "I suggested to the chairman of the club that he should be signed on, but Travers ignored what I had to say. But young Hastie need have no fear; if Springdale Albion won't sign him, there's plenty of other clubs who will. From what he told me this afternoon I gather that the Swifts have already been after him."

David Martin banged his fist on the arm of his chair.

"There you are! How can you expect a team to do anything with a fool like that on the board?" he demanded. "There's

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

DICK HASTIE, a young fellow of twenty, and a born footballer, playing for the Bohemians, a clever amateur side, is approached by

J. B. TOVEY, a football "scout" on the look-out for fresh talent, who declares that if Dick will join the famous Swifts he will make an International of him within two years. Dick, however, has to turn the tempting offer down, for

ROBERT HASTIE, his father, suddenly disappears, leaving behind him a host of clamouring creditors.

Despite evidence to the contrary, Dick believes in his father's innocence, and promises the angry creditors, who storm the office, that he will pay back every penny entrusted to his father.

With only a few shillings in his pocket, Dick sets out to find work, but he is viewed with suspicion everywhere he goes. In utter despair, he realises that he must rely on football for a living. Having pledged himself to remain in Springdale, he seeks a coaching with the notorious Springdale Albion—a club renowned for its shady reputation—who are "at home" that day to Milltown Athletic. But BENJAMIN TRAVERS, the Albion's managing-director, happens to be one of Dick's father's creditors, and the lad again draws blank.

Dick manages, however, to get a game with Milltown Athletic, who are playing the Albion that afternoon. Despite the repeated attempts of his opponents to crack him, Dick's play attracts the attention of MR. GARRITY, an F.A. official, who tells Benjamin Travers that he will be missing the chance of a lifetime if he does not sign Dick on.

(Now read on.)

many a good lad has had to leave Springdale after being turned down by the Albion. I could name you a dozen at least, and now there's young Hastie."

The speaker mused for a moment, and then leaned forward in his chair.

"George," he said determinedly, "this talk of ours has made me feel sort of ashamed-like. I feel that I am a coward to stay at home here allowing these fellows to play ducks and drakes with what was once a really first-class football club. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to have a shot to get on the board myself, and see if I can't rake together a sufficiently decent element in this town to improve the Albion.

"Even if we can't make the team what it used to be, at least we can stop it being the disgrace to the town which it is at present. There's a vacancy on the board, and I'm going to slip round among what friends I have and see if they won't nominate me."

"If they have any sense, they'll nominate you quickly enough," put in Garrity.

"Well, we shall see. I don't mind telling you that one of the chief reasons I have come to this decision is you telling me how scandalously young Dick Hastie has been treated. Rather than that boy should be forced out of his own town, I'll raise Cain! By Sam, I will!"

"I thought I should rouse you, Dave!" commented George Garrity, with his slow, characteristic smile.

Events moved quickly during the next few days. David Martin was a deservedly popular person amongst the best section of Springdale Society, and his decision to come out into the open and to put up a fight against the reactionary element that now controlled the Springdale Albion club was greeted with enthusiasm. So strongly entrenched were Benjamin Travers and his gang, however, that fears were entertained as to Martin's success in gaining a seat on the directorate.

His rival for the position was the local publican, Sam Simister, who had lately worked harder than he had ever done in his life before in order that nothing should be left to chance. He recognised that Martin was a formidable opponent, and admitted as much to Benjamin Travers on the night before the election by the shareholders was due to take place.

"Don't get frightened, Sam," jeered Travers. "I've seen to it that he won't have an earthly. You know the reason why he wants to get on the board, don't you?"

"No."

"Why, he was a pal of Robert Hastie, and the first thing he'd do would be to play that rotter's son in the team."

Sam Simister leaned forward and breathed heavily.

"Ben," he said, "before we finish with him we'll make that young whelp wish he had never been born! The sooner he's out of the town the better!"

Benjamin Travers bellowed.

"I know that, Sam," he said, "and we'll see about it at once!"

Springdale is Startled!

THE prediction of Mr. George Garrity that Dick Hastie would soon leave his mark on the town received early confirmation in Springdale. The sensational events surrounding the game with Milltown Athletic provided a keen topic of conversation amongst all classes. The

rumour had spread that the extraordinary scene in the home dressing-room, which had resulted in a free fight amongst the Albion and Milltown players, was due primarily to the son of the absconding local solicitor, and this caused Dick's name to be on the lips of everyone. Coupled with this was his sensational football success against the local team. The two facts combined forced him into the limelight to such an extent that he became the most discussed personage in the town.

On the top of this excitement came the extraordinary article which the "Springdale Gazette" printed. As early as four o'clock in the afternoon newsboys went screaming through the streets, displaying placards on which were printed in heavy type the words:

"LOCAL FOOTBALL SENSATION!"

Although the fortunes of the Albion club were at a very low ebb, this arresting phrase caused passers-by to stop and eagerly buy the papers. On the front page of the enterprising "Gazette" was an article headed:

"SPRINGDALE ALBION AT THE CROSS-ROADS.

ARE THE DIRECTORS GOING TO PLAY THE GAME?

EXTRAORDINARY CASE OF RICHARD HASTIE.

There can be no gainsaying the fact that the affairs of Springdale Albion, once a very famous League club indeed, are in a very sad state. We intend from now on to deal with this important local sporting topic fearlessly. The light of publicity will be allowed to shine in matters which have become devious and dark. It is high time, in our opinion, that the Springdale public should take a hand in the possible salvaging of this once historic team—now more or less a disgrace to our city, but once its honour and pride.

We are in the position to inform our readers of an extraordinary blunder which has recently been made by the Springdale Albion directorate. It concerns a local youth, whose playing ability is such that a no less famous club than the London Swifts have actually offered to sign him, either as an amateur or as a professional.

For private reasons into which we do not intend to delve at the moment, Richard Hastie was forced to return to Springdale. Wishing to play football, he applied to the Albion directors for a trial. In spite of the fact that he was able to produce credentials worthy of the consideration of any team in the country, he met with a point-blank refusal, and, moreover, was not only turned down, but was insulted.

Thus history repeats itself. How many men whose names are now famous in the football world have been forced to leave their native town because the local club refused to give them a fair chance?

We do not hesitate to say that this treatment of Hastie is scandalous in the extreme, and we warn the present directors of the Springdale Albion club that, in the interests of the local sporting public, we intend to fight this almost criminal lethargy tooth and nail.

In an interview with the writer on Saturday evening, Hastie declared his willingness to play for the Albion, if he were asked.

He must be asked!"

This outspoken article certainly fanned the flames of excitement. Everywhere it was discussed—in the home, in the streets, in the clubs, and in the recreation rooms of the city. It had the decided effect of making the supporters of the Albion club, who had watched the growing degeneration of their favourite team for years past without doing much more than merely talk about the circumstance, decide that something must certainly now be done to support the startling action of the new football writer of the "Gazette."

In common with the rest of the town, Dick Hastie read the article. He did not know whether to be sorry or glad that the man who had declared himself to be an ally of his should have written so forcibly. After the treatment he had received, it was only natural that Springdale Albion should be the last team for which he would have played had his hands been free; but as he had decided to stay in the town, he left it to Fate to determine whether he should wear the colours of the Albion or whether he should never have another game in big football. For on this point he was resolute—he would either play for the Albion, or he would play for no professional team. Why he should have come to this decision he did not know himself, but the fact remained.

He had just put the paper away when a knock sounded on the door.

"A gentleman to see you," announced his landlady.

A ruddy-faced man entered the room. He looked at Dick searchingly for a moment, and then said:

FREE!

Topping CHARLIE
CHAPLIN
NOVELTY

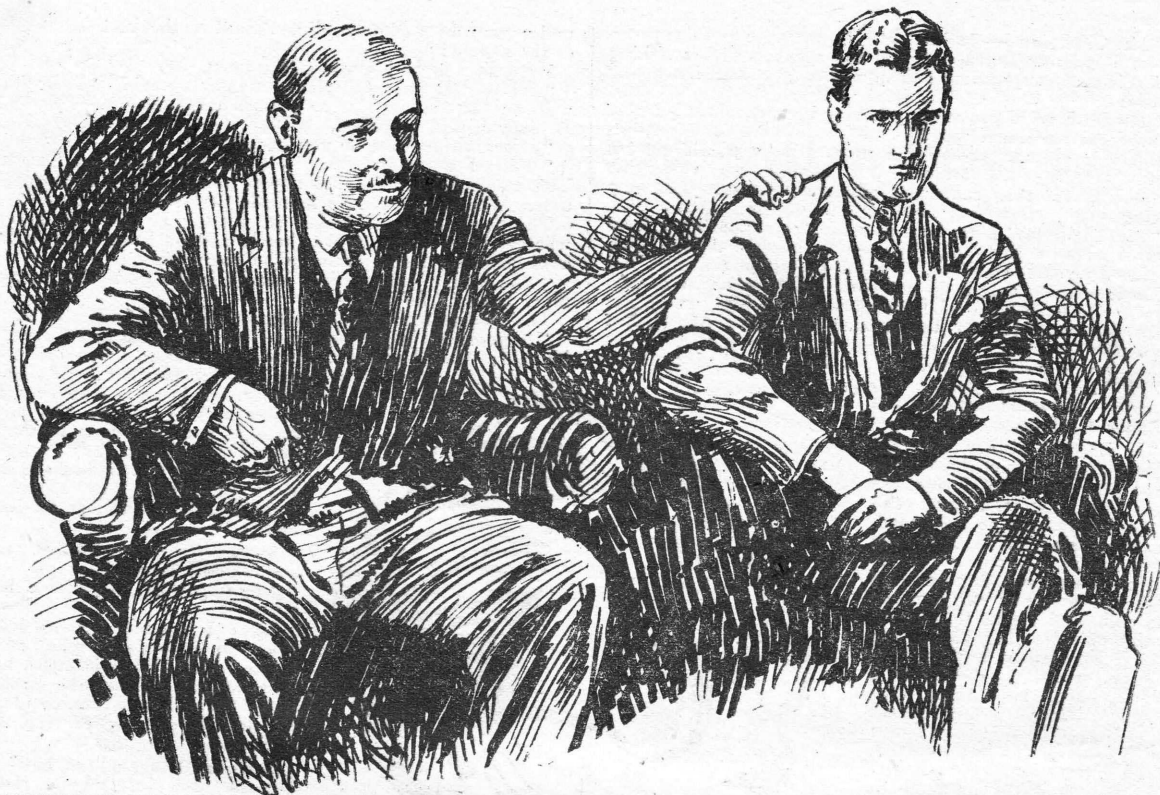
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Dave Martin stretched out a hand and touched Dick Hastie on the shoulder. "I'm going to take a chance with you, my boy," he said. "You can come down to my office in the morning and hang your hat and coat up. There will be a job for you there." (See this page.)

"My name's Martin. You may not have heard of me, but I was a friend of your father."

Dick took his caller's hat and coat and pushed forward a chair.

"Any friend of my father is welcome, Mr. Martin. I am sorry that you should have come to such a poor place, but these rooms are the best possible at the moment. My name's Mud in Springdale just about now, as I dare say you know."

The visitor stretched out his hand before seating himself.

"Never mind about that now, my lad," he replied as he gripped the young footballer's hand. "We all have to go through the mill at one time or another in our life, and nothing is ever quite so black as what we imagine. Before I say anything else, I want you to know that I believe from the bottom of my heart that your father is an innocent man."

Dick gulped.

"I know he is, Mr. Martin, but you don't know how much good it does me to hear one of his friends say so. I went to a man—I need not mention his name—who pretended to be a friend of dad's in the old days, and all he did was to offer to lend me ten pounds. Naturally, I didn't accept it."

"I should say not, indeed! Ten pounds! Well, I don't want to pose as being any better than the next man, Richard, but it's a practical good turn that counts when one is in deep trouble. Now, I can guess how you are fixed. You've lost your home and you haven't a job. Is that right?"

"That's true enough, sir," replied Dick grimly.

David Martin stretched out his hand and touched the boy's shoulder.

"I'm going to take a chance with you, my boy," he said. "Not that it's so much of a chance, I'm ready to wager. To-morrow morning you can come down to my office and hang your hat and coat up. There will be a job waiting for you there."

"Do you mean that, sir!" exclaimed Dick eagerly.

At first he thought that Fate was playing yet another trick on him, that what he had just heard could not be true.

"Of course I mean it. I know you were trained to be a solicitor, but your legal knowledge won't do any harm in my warehouse. In about a month's time you ought to get the hang of the business, and then, if you like you can start out as a commercial traveller. Everybody in the North of England knows the name of 'David Martin' on a bale of goods, and the fact that very soon you'll be a celebrity on your own account through your football playing, won't hurt

your prospects, either. Within six months you ought to be earning a very good income."

Dick's sense of gratitude was overwhelming. He tried to express his thanks, but the words stuck in his throat.

"You needn't try to thank me, son," said David Martin. "It will be time enough to do that when you've proved yourself to be the man I think you are. I can expect you in the morning, then?"

"I'll be there any time you like, Mr. Martin."

"Nine o'clock will do. Seventeen, Penton Street. I'll be expecting you."

David Martin was putting on his coat when a thought suddenly seemed to strike him.

"What are your views about playing football for the Albion?" he asked.

"I should be very pleased to play if the present officials weren't so rotten," he replied.

"Well, perhaps there'll be a change in that direction soon," was the visitor's cryptic comment, as he shook hands once more before leaving.

Dick's heart beat wildly. What could David Martin have meant? Would he be able to play football, after all?

Straight from the Shoulder!

THERE was malice in Benjamin Travers' heavy face as he stood up to face the crowded meeting which had been called to elect a director to the vacant seat on the board of the Springdale Albion F.C.

"The ballot-papers have been carefully counted and scrutinised," he announced, "and the result of the voting I have now to declare. Our old friend, Mr. Sam Simister"—the speaker paused to permit a section at the back of the hall to break into raucous applause—"has a majority over the other gentleman"—here the speaker's voice became a vocal sneer—"of seventeen votes. I therefore have great pleasure in announcing that Mr. Sam Simister will join the rest of us on the directorate of Springdale Albion."

The raucous-voiced section at the bottom of the hall broke into fresh cheers at the announcement, but mingling with those cheers were many murmurs. At length a man, sitting half-way down, rose and said:

"Mr. Chairman—"

Mr. Benjamin Travers viewed the speaker with anything but a friendly expression, and immediately retorted with the words:

"The business of the evening having been concluded, I now declare the meeting closed!"

But this did not satisfy the man, who was still on his feet. Keeping his temper, but raising his voice, he responded to this somewhat summary interruption by saying:

"Mr. Chairman, I am here as a lifelong supporter of local football, and a shareholder in the Springdale Albion Club of twenty years' standing. I want to tell you firmly, but without offence, that I do not consider the election of Mr. Simister to have been fairly conducted. Besides, we do not want Mr. Simister on the board; we want Mr. David Martin."

The words were greeted with a loud burst of applause which lasted at least two minutes. At the conclusion the speaker continued:

"It is local history how the affairs of the Albion have gone from bad to worse during the time that you and your colleagues have been on the board, Mr. Chairman, and this dry rot must be rooted out. We, as shareholders, are not satisfied with the way you are running the club, and I take this opportunity of informing you of the fact. Springdale has been indifferent too long. We, as a town, have not taken the practical interest in our football team that we should have done; but it is never too late to mend, and I give you my solemn warning that, unless your methods are altered and improved, we, representing a considerable proportion of the shareholders, will take the law into our own hands, and turn you out!"

A medley of sounds greeted this challenge. The supporters of the speaker cheered it to the echo, but the adherents of Travers and the rest of the directors yelled in disapproval. Something like a general squabble was threatened when the speaker, having said his say, retired, leaving a hubbub of consternation behind. The jubilation of Mr. Benjamin Travers at the success of his friend, Mr. Samuel Simister, became somewhat tarnished as a result.

Events moved quickly after this. James Burn, the new football reporter of the "Springdale Gazette," experienced something of a shock the following morning when, just outside the main entrance to the principal station of the town, he encountered a man, who beamed at him in recognition.

"Why, Mr. Tovey," he said, "what on earth are you doing here?"

"I might well ask you the same question, Jimmy," was the answer. "The last I heard of you was at Burnley. Have you changed your job?"

"Yes. I'm on the local 'Gazette'—being given a free hand, and I'm jolly well making use of it, too!"

"You'll need to, if you hope to make anything out of Springdale Albion football," was the somewhat caustic comment.

Then the speaker's expression changed. He caught the younger man by the arm.

"I don't want you to mention anything about seeing me, Jimmy," he said earnestly. "I'm here on a very special stunt."

"Football, of course!"

"Yes," admitted the scout. "I want you to keep this

under your hat, Jimmy; but I'm after the best inside-left of the season!"

Burn pricked up his ears at the news.

"I'll bet you I can tell you his name," he said. "It begins with an 'H,' unless I'm very much mistaken."

Tovey looked surprised.

"How in the deuce do you know?"

"Well, I do know! And I'll tell you this, Mr. Tovey. You won't get him! That boy is going to stop in Springdale. What is more, he's going to play for the Albion."

The football scout looked as though he did not know whether to be angry, or whether to pass off these words with a disbelieving smile. Finally he compromised.

"You seem to take a great interest in this particular young man, Jimmy," he said.

The football reporter's eyes beamed behind his spectacles.

"A great many people would laugh at me, Mr. Tovey," he said; "but I came to Springdale, not so much because

the new job meant a little more money, but because I believed I had a sort of mission. In this town is a once-famous football team slowly dying. It's my job to try to bring it to life again. Now you know why I don't want Dick Hastie to sign for the Swifts."

The Swifts' representative was undoubtedly startled.

"You know Hastie, then?" he asked.

"Yes, I met him for the first time on Saturday night, and I liked him. What is more, he told me that, although he would like nothing better than to play for you, he's going to stop in Springdale."

Burn could have added, but he did not, the information that the local team had turned down the young forward's application for a trial. The battle over Hastie between Tovey and himself would be difficult enough in any case, he imagined. Tovey settled his hat with a determined air.

"Jimmy," he said, "I like you very much—I always have liked you—but I'll be hanged if I'm going to allow you to stop me signing the finest young forward I've seen this season! There's no sentiment in business, so I warn you not to try to interfere."

The reporter fell into step by the other's side.

"After all, the final word will be with Hastie himself," he answered; "so we needn't fall out until he's made his decision. You won't be able to see him until this evening because he started a job to-day. And now,

if there's anything more I can do let me know."

A truce having thus been made, the two, who were friends of four years' standing, walked off in the direction of the town. They lunched together at the reporter's expense, and spent an enjoyable afternoon reviving old memories of famous games and players. At six o'clock Tovey rose.

"You won't mind me coming with you?" questioned the reporter. "After all, it's a good 'news' story for me, you know—whether Hastie signs for you or not."

"No, I don't mind. As a matter of fact I'm relying on you to take me to the house."

Twenty minutes later the two were outside the door of Dick Hastie's humble lodgings. In answer to an inquiry, the young footballer's landlady announced that her boarder had just finished his tea.

Dick sprang up in surprise and astonishment when he saw who his second visitor was.

"Mr. Tovey!" he exclaimed.

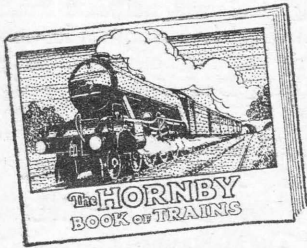
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JAMES BURN.

(The Football Reporter of the Springdale Gazette.)

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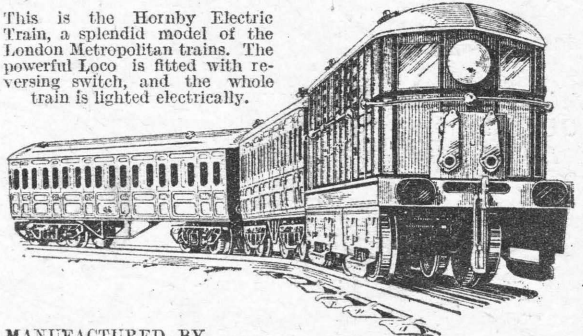


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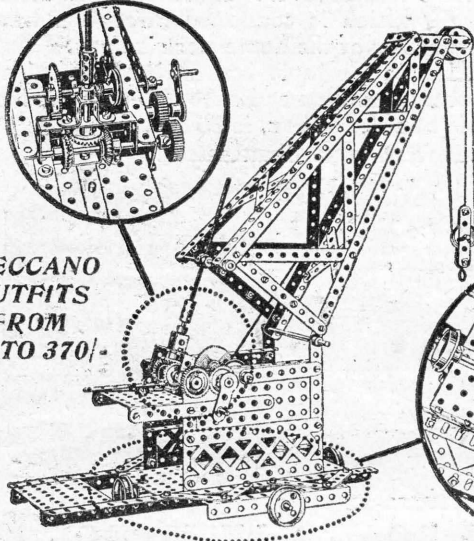
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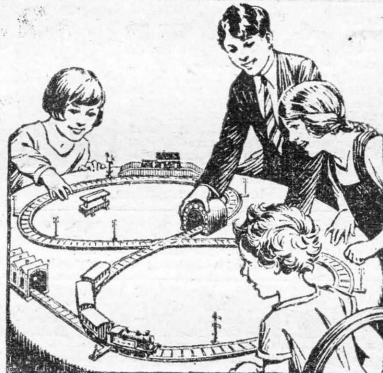
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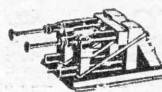
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