

"THE ST. JIM'S SPEED COPS!" RIPPING LONG COMPLETE YARN WITHIN!

The GEM

2^d



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FIGGY'S FIERY STEED!

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CHAPTER 1.

Fixing up for
Founder's Day.

TOM MERRY was sitting on the table, his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets, and a frown of portentous thoughtfulness on his brow, when Manners came into the study.

"Hallo, Tom!" said Manners, staring at him.

It was not usual to see Tom Merry, the merriest junior in the School House at St. Jim's, so deeply immersed in reflection.

"Hallo, Tom! Are you trying to think out some awfully deep problem in mathematics, or have you got a pain in your gear-box?"

Tom gave a grunt.

"I'm trying to think out a plan for to-morrow."

"Ah!" said Manners, looking serious at once. "Founder's Day!"

"Yes, old kid. We shall have a whole holiday to ourselves, and we must make the best of it. We want to do something really ripping—something that will take the shine out of those New House bounders. What shall it be?"

Manners looked properly solemn and thoughtful. Founder's Day at St. Jim's was always a whole holiday, and as it came but once a year the juniors naturally wanted to make the most of it. For some time past the approach of Founder's Day had caused a good deal of excitement in both Houses at St. Jim's, and many of the youngsters had their plans for the day settled a long way ahead.

But the Terrible Two of the School House had not yet made up their minds. Monty Lowther was still away from St. Jim's, so they only had themselves to think of.

"There's the football," said Manners.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We can have football any half-holiday," he said. "We get a whole holiday only once in a blue moon. On a special occasion like Founder's Day we have to do something special."

"Figgins & Co. are going pretty strong," said Manners, referring to the famous trio who were the leaders of the New House. "Those New House bounders know how to do things in style, Tom. Figgins and Kerr are going on their motor-bikes for a whole day out."

"What about Fatty Wynn?"

"He's going in a sidecar with Figgins."

"That's jolly!" said Tom Merry. "They ought to have a good day out in the country—provided they don't have any trouble with their motors."

Manners chuckled.

"I don't know what Study No. 6 are doing," Tom remarked. "But I fancy they've got something on. What are we going to do, Manners?"

"Blessed if I know! You're leader—lead!" said Manners tersely.

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"My old governess has written to me," said Tom reflectively. "She thinks it would be a good idea to go and picnic in the grounds of Laurel Villa, at Huckleberry Heath."

"Not a bad idea!" said Manners.

"Only Huckleberry Heath is a long way from here, and we don't want to spend Founder's Day buzzing about in railway trains," said Tom.

"That's so."

"I wish I knew what Blake—Hallo! Talk of angels!" Jack Blake of Study No. 6 in the School House put his cheery face in at the door.

"Hallo! I see you're at home," he remarked. "I say, what are you chaps doing to-morrow?"

"Ask us another," said Tom.

"Haven't settled yet?"

"No."

"Good!" said Blake, with a look of satisfaction. "What do you say to joining forces with us for the day? That will make five, and as there are six seats, that will leave one for the lady."

Tom Merry and Manners stared at him.

"What are you talking about?" demanded Tom. "Six seats in what?"

"A car," said Blake—"a real, live, giddy motor-car! What do you think of that, my kids? What do you say to a day out in a car?"

Tom Merry jumped off the table excitedly.

"Ripping!"

Manners looked suspicious.

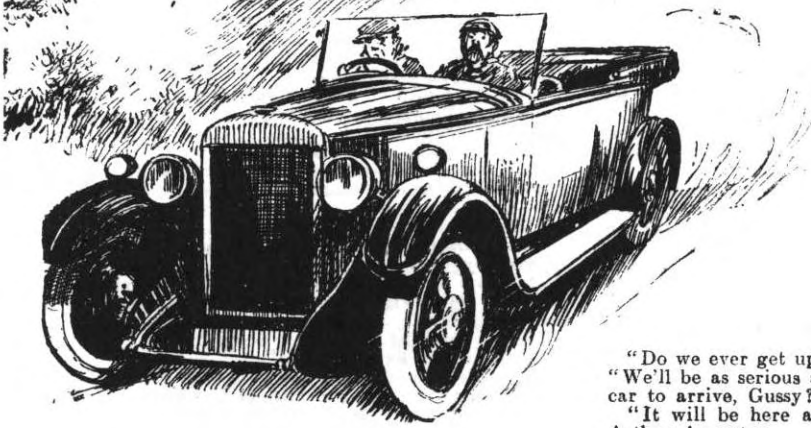
"I say, you're not rotting, Blake?"

"Honour bright!" exclaimed Blake. "It's D'Arcy's motor-car—at all events, his governor's. Arthur Augustus

RECKONED WITHOUT FIGGINS AND KERR ON THEIR MOTOR-BIKES!

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By
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has persuaded his governor to let him have it for the day. There's a chauffeur coming, too. But you know how to drive a motor, don't you, Tom?"

"Rather!" said Tom.

"That's what I was thinking. We'll shove the chauffeur into some ditch, and have the car out all on our own. These governors at home are ridiculous old chaps," said Blake. "They think we can't take care of ourselves. Which, of course, is—"

"Absurd!" said Tom Merry. "It's jolly decent of Gussy's governor, and it's jolly of you to ask us, Blake."

"My dear chap, we shall be happy," said Blake, with a wave of the hand. "We can't have any of our usual little rows on Founder's Day—it's not the thing—and so we may as well chum up, as we can't slog one another."

"Jolly good idea!"

"As for exes, we whip round and contribute equally, and appoint a treasurer to spend the cash. That's agreeable?"

"To a 'T'!"

"All right, then. Come along to tea in Study No. 6, and we'll jaw it over."

Willingly enough, the Terrible Two accepted that invitation to Study No. 6.

Herries and D'Arcy, Blake's chums, were there, getting tea ready. D'Arcy was laying the table, and Herries was toasting muffins and making tea. He looked up with a really beautiful crimson countenance to nod a welcome to the visitors.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a loaf in one hand and a butter-dish in the other, but that did not prevent him making a really elegant bow.

"Glad to see you, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "I hope you have decided to honah us with your company on Foundah's Day. I weally think we shall have a wippin' time in my governah's motah."

"Oh, yes, they're coming!" said Blake. "And as Tom Merry can drive, it doesn't really matter if anything happens to the chauffeur. We shall make a nice little party, and I fancy we shall put Figgins & Co. in the shade this time."

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus, with much satisfaction—"especially as we shall have a lady in the party."

"My hat!" said Manners. "Who's the lady? You're not thinking of taking Mrs. Mimms, the House dame, are you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake. "I can fancy Gussy taking the House dame out for a ride!"

"Oh, weally, Blake! Certainly not, Mannahs! What an idea! My governah is livin' at a house called Cwessy Lodge, at pwesent—it belongs to us, you know. We are going to call at Cwessy Lodge for my cousin."

"Your cousin?"

"Yes, my Cousin Ethel—a weally wipping girl!" said D'Arcy. "She motahs, and knows all about exhaust pipes and carburettors and things. My idea was to get to Cwessy Lodge about lunch-time, and take Ethel in the car for the aftahnoon. Cwessy Lodge is about eighty miles ffrom here."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "We must all put our best bibs and tuckers on, then, as there's to be a lady in the party—and mind, you chaps, no larks!"

Blake looked solemn.

"Do we ever get up to any larks?" he said reproachfully. "We'll be as serious and solemn as a funeral. When is the car to arrive, Gussy?"

"It will be here at eight o'clock in the morning," said Arthur Augustus.

"Good! I say," said Tom Merry, "which direction does Cwessy Lodge lie in?"

"Stwaight towards Bwighton ffrom heah," said D'Arcy.

"Then that's on the way to Huckleberry Heath."

"What about it?" asked Blake.

Tom Merry smiled.

"It's where I come from. My old governess, Miss Fawcett, wants me to go down and picnic on the grounds of Laurel Villa for the holiday. We might do worse, chaps."

"Perhaps she won't want a crowd."

"Oh, that's all right! If I drop her a line to-day she'll have a ripping feed ready. It would be a run of a hundred miles from here, over some of the prettiest country in England. Shall we make that our objective?"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

And the chums of Study No. 6 assented.

"I say," exclaimed Tom, stopping with a cup of tea half-way to his lips, "what's the thundering row? Sounds like a motor-bike with a bad cough."

Blake grinned as he stepped to the window and looked out into the sunny quadrangle.

"It's only old Figgy trying his motor-bike," he said. "He doesn't look at all happy with it, either."

The juniors crowded to the window. Figgins had mounted his brand-new motor-cycle outside the New House, to give it a run round the quadrangle.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn, his trusty chums, had helped him to start, and now they stood watching his progress with anxious looks.

The long-limbed Figgins was usually quite at home on a motor-cycle, but he had put on too great a speed to start with, and in the quadrangle it was not like riding on an open road.

He buzzed along the path across the quad, and looked as if he were going head-first into the wall at the end; but fortunately he turned the cycle upon a flower-bed, and ploughed across it, leaving ruin in his track.

Then the motor-bike seemed to take a fancy into its head for going on a little excursion of its own, and its taste lay in the direction of the Big Side football ground, where the Sixth Form were at practice in a scratch match.

Pup-pup-pup! Hoot-toot-toot!

The footballers looked from their game in amazement to see the long-legged chief of the New House juniors bearing down upon them in wild career.

"Hallo!" shouted Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's. "Where are you coming, Figgins?"

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When Tom Merry & Co. went out in a Daimler they thought they were one up on Figgins & Co. on their motor-bikes. But Figgins & Co. were not so sure—neither were Tom Merry & Co. in the end!

"Get off the ground!" roared Monteith, the head prefect of the New House.

"I ku-ku-can't!" gasped Figgins. "The beastly control's gone wrong, and the brake won't work, and—"

"Clear out of the way!" yelled Kildare.

The footballers scattered, and the motor-cycle tore across the centre of the ground, leaving its track on the green turf. Pup-pup-pup it went on its wild career, Figgins sitting like a statue, and clutching the handlebars.

Little Side was the next spot to be visited. It was crowded with juniors of both houses at practice, and a yell of alarm went up at the sight of Figgins on his fiery steed.

"Take that beastly thing off, Figgins!"

"Stop, can't you?"

"Take that sniff-box away!"

"I can't!" yelled Figgins desperately. "I can't! Get out of the way, you asses!"

Right on tore the motor-bike. It was really a wonder that Figgins controlled the snorting monster as well as he did, and kept his seat as it plunged onward.

He succeeded in turning it again, and went tearing away towards the School House, heading for a place where Taggles had reared a ladder against a low study window-sill, in readiness for doing some painting.

Shouts of alarm from Kerr and Fatty Wynn caused Taggles to look round and hop aside as the runaway bike charged for the ladder.

With a bump that nearly threw Figgins off, the machine mounted the first five rungs, then it slid over the side of the ladder.

Bump!

Figgins almost shot over the handlebars as the front wheel descended to the ground again, and it was only by luck that the New House leader kept his seat as the bike, in some miraculous manner, swerved away from the ladder, missed the corner of the School House by inches, and went careering over a lawn towards the New House.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn were watching him with pale faces.

Figgins had at last succeeded in stopping the bike. The rear rim brake jammed on, and Figgy jumped to the ground, holding on to the bike, which had very nearly gone over him.

"My word!" gasped Kerr.

"My hat!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Hallo!" said Figgins coolly. "What's the matter with you?"

"Thought you would get your neck broken, that's all," said the Co.

"What rot!" said Figgins. "It's a very simple matter. Lucky there's no damage done."

"I don't know whether the Head will agree with you when he sees his flower-beds."

"Oh, blow the flower-beds!" said Figgins. "I don't mind an imposition, and it won't mean anything worse than that, kids. And it's jolly lucky I gave my new bike a trial before we started out to-morrow."

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "Why, I might have been with you in the sidecar! I say, Figgy, I really don't know whether you're safe."

"Oh, that's all right, Fatty!" said Figgins reassuringly.

"It would take a forty horse-power cycle to run away with your weight in the sidecar, and mine's only three and a half."

Fatty Wynn sniffed, and said no more.

"Well," said Tom Merry, turning away from the window of Study No. 6, and finishing his muffin—"well, if that's how Figgy is going to enjoy himself to-morrow, I think we shall have a quieter time in Gussy's motor-car."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 2.

Rival Motorists!

ALL St. Jim's soon knew of the projected expedition of the five juniors. The fact that the Terrible Two were chumming up with Study No. 6 showed that something unusual was afoot, and the School House soon learned what it was, and then the New House came to know.

"Rather rotten!" said Figgins, that evening. "We were going to knock 'em with our motor-bike run, and now the bouncers have got a grand car, and that puts us in the shade."

"They're always up to something!" grumbled Kerr.

"Well, we generally are, too!" grinned Figgins. "I've been thinking whether it wouldn't be possible to take a rise out of those innocent kidlets. Do either of you know the direction they're going in?"

"Rather!" said Kerr. "They're going to call at Gussy's governor's house for a lady cousin of Gussy's, and then

motor on to Huckleberry Heath, the charming spot that Tom Merry comes from."

"And where is D'Arcy's baronial hall?"

"It's called Cressy Lodge, and it's on the road to Brighton."

"My hat!" said Figgins. "That's the way we were going. Kids, we're going to keep an eye on those School House youngsters. That chap Merry actually had the cheek to tell me that if I was killed on my motor-cycle he would be glad to bring home the remains in the car if I liked."

Kerr grinned.

"Yes," he remarked, "and they're going to start very soon after we do, Figgy, and they'll pass us on the road and chip us no end. It is rotten!"

Figgy's brow contracted.

"H'm!" he said. "They're going to pass us on the road, are they? Perhaps it may happen that they'll start later than they intend."

"How could you fix that?"

"There are ways and means, my son," said Figgins, with a wave of the hand. "Gussy's car is coming in the morning, ain't it?"

"Yes, it's going to be here at eight o'clock."

"His lordship's chauffeur is to be in charge of it?"

"Exactly."

"Suppose when the time comes to start the chauffeur was missing," said Figgins darkly. "What price the giddy excursion then?"

The Co. chuckled in chorus.

"But can you fix it, Figgy?"

"Leave it to me," said Figgins. "The School House kids are not going to pass us on the road, that's a dead cert! I think it very likely that when the dear boys are ready to start, the chauffeur will be locked up somewhere where they won't find him in a hurry. We shall see what we shall see, my sons!"

Quite unaware of the dark schemes of Figgins & Co., the allies of the School House were joyously making their plans for the day out.

Funds had been pooled, and among the five they raised quite a respectable sum of money, the largest contributions being made by Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus, Tom Merry having just had a fiver from Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and Arthur Augustus being always in plentiful funds.

Tom Merry, who had had a great deal of experience in that line, assumed the role of caterer, and the supply of provisions he laid in seemed sufficient for fifty juniors, rather than five.

But the youngsters had a marvellous stowing capacity at feeding-time, and none of them thought that the hero of the Shell had overdone it.

Then there was the question of the rig-out. Arthur Augustus was induced to forgo his tall hat for the ride. He said that occasion might arise upon which he would desire to appear looking well dressed, and so room had to be found for a hatbox with Gussy's silk topper in it.

"You can take the topper," said Blake severely. "I don't want to bring down your grey hair with sorrow to the crematorium, and so I won't part you from your topper; but I bar any boxes of fancy waistcoats, and you are strictly limited to one eyeglass."

"Oh, weally, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, weally, fathead!" said Blake.

"You know, accidents may happen," said Arthur Augustus persuasively. "Suppose I got some mud on my waistcoat and hadn't a clean one to change into?"

"Of course, that would be awful!" admitted Blake.

"Then I simply must have some clean collars, and—"

"Oh, let him put in anything he likes," said Tom Merry. "It will be easy enough to sling it out on the road when we're started."

"Ha, ha! Right-ho, Adolphus! You can pack in your whole giddy wardrobe, if you like, and we'll pave the road to Huckleberry Heath with high collars and fancy waistcoats."

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"The most important thing," said Tom, "is the grub. That's all arranged, and I really don't think we shall go hungry. Have we got sufficient cutlery to go round? Miss Fawcett will provide everything we want at Huckleberry Heath, but we shall require two or three feeds before we arrive there. It's astonishing what an appetite the open air gives you."

"The knives are all right," said Blake. "We're rather weak in forks and spoons, but I've borrowed some out of Kildare's study. I forgot to ask him, but I'll mention it when we get back. Then there's old Darrell's spirit-stove. That will come in handy."

"Has Darrell lent it to you?"

"Yes. He doesn't know anything about it yet, but he has. I looked into his study, and borrowed it."

"As for crockeryware—"

"We're rather strong in that line," said Blake, "and I've borrowed a lot of things in the Fourth Form. I think we shall do pretty well. Hallo! Come in!"

The consultation was taking place in Study No. 6, just before bed-time. There had come a light tap at the door, and in response to Blake's invitation, Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, walked in. He gave the boys a genial nod.

"I hear that you youngsters are going for a run in a motor-car to-morrow," the Housemaster remarked.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry. "Founder's Day, you know, sir. We're going to have a day out."

"H'm! Yes, that is a good idea in some respects," said Mr. Railton, eyeing Tom in a very doubtful manner. "But an excursion in a motor-car is a little rash for lads of your age, unless in charge of a person of proper age and experience."

"Oh, I am going to look after these youngsters, sir!" said Tom loftily. "Blake and the rest won't come to any harm while I'm with them, sir."

The Housemaster quitted the study.

"Good old Aubrey!" exclaimed Tom Merry, slapping Arthur Augustus on the back with a force that made him drop his monocle. "You've saved us!"

"I wish you would not be so dreadfully wuff, Tom Merry!"

"But, I say," said Blake dismally, "what we said to Railton amounts to a promise. We can't get rid of the shover on the road, as we thought of, now."

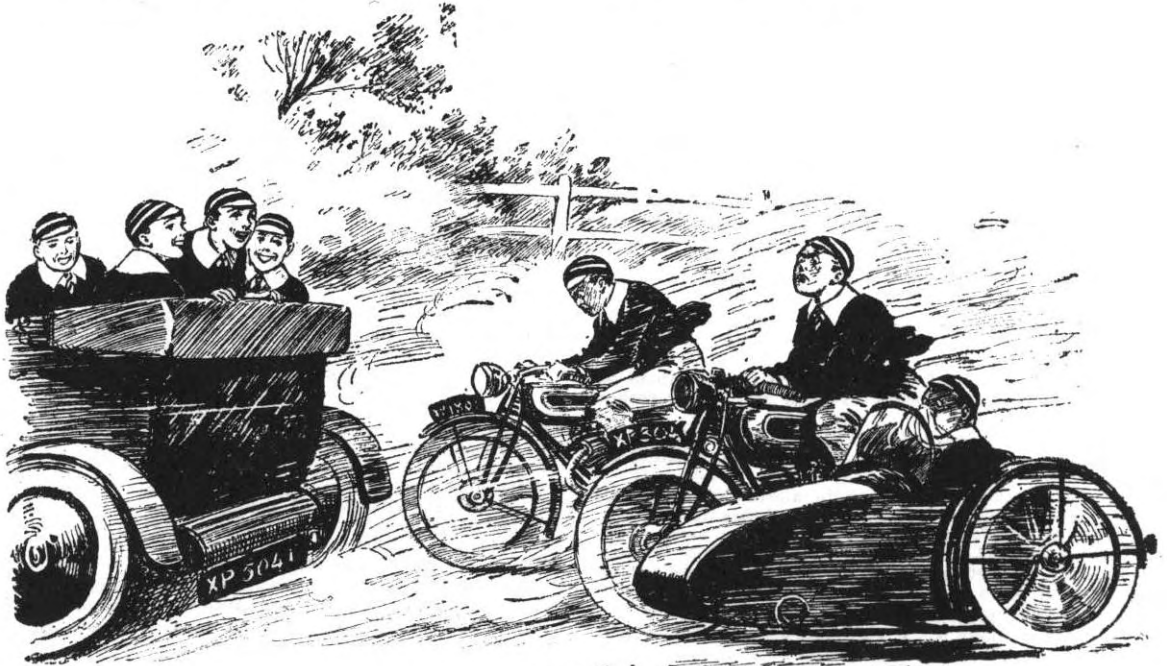
Tom Merry nodded.

"No, I suppose not. But perhaps he may break his leg, or something," he said hopefully.

The juniors went to bed filled with joyful anticipations of the morrow.

Tom Merry was first out of bed in the Shell dormitory in the morning. A bright and sunny dawn was shining in at the tall windows, and the heart of the hero of the Shell rejoiced within him.

"Wake up, Manners!"



Tom Merry drove the large Daimler along the road just in front of the New House juniors, covering them in a cloud of dust, while Blake & Co. grinned at them over the back of the car!

"Who are you calling youngsters?" demanded Blake, getting red in the face.

"You Fourth-Form kids!" said Tom.

"How much older are you than I am, you bouncer?"

"Two months and seven days," said Tom severely.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Railton, coughing. "So you are going to look after the Fourth-Formers, are you, Merry?"

"Yes, sir."

"And who is going to look after you?"

"Me, sir?" stammered Tom, a little taken aback by the question, at which the chums of Study No. 6 grinned joyously.

"Yes, you, Merry. From my experience of you, I shall be surprised if you do not get into quite as much mischief as any boy in the Fourth Form."

"Oh, sir!" said Tom reproachfully.

"And so—" said the Housemaster.

"There will be the chauffeur," said Arthur Augustus. "He is quite a respectable man, and vewy steady and solemn, and I think my governah will have instwucted him to keep an eye on us, sir."

"Ah, that alters the case!" said Mr. Railton. "If the car is in charge of a competent chauffeur, there is no reason why you should not have a safe and enjoyable run."

Tom Merry breathed again. For the moment he had feared that the projected expedition was to be tabooed; but Gussy's explanation had saved the situation.

"I hope you will enjoy yourselves, my lads," said Mr. Railton. "Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir, and thank you!" said the juniors, in chorus.

Manners snored. Tom stepped to his bed and jerked off the bedclothes. Manners started and shivered.

"Get up, lazybones!"

"G-r-r-r!" said Manners, who wanted a little more sleep.

"It ain't time yet. Lemme alone!"

Tom picked up his sponge and dipped it into his water-jug.

"Are you going to get up, Manners?"

"Ye-es!" gasped Manners. And he scrambled out of bed. He knew what was coming if he remained there.

The chums were soon dressed. The rising-bell had not yet gone, and the Terrible Two felt correspondingly virtuous as they gazed at the long line of beds tenanted by slumbering forms.

"There's a shocking lot of laziness goes on in this school," said Tom. "The Fourth Form are not stirring yet."

"Shocking!" said Manners. "Just like those little pigs to stick in bed till the last possible moment! What are you grinning at?"

"Nothing. Let's go and see that Blake doesn't oversleep himself. As we're so chummy now, it's only friendly to do him a good turn."

Manners chuckled.

"Right-ho! Take your sponge!"

The Terrible Two made their way to the dormitory where the Fourth Form slept, and where Study No. 6 were still happy in the arms of Morpheus, unconscious of the kind intentions of their new allies.

Tom Merry looked into the dormitory. A sound of heavy

breathing mingled with snores greeted him. Not one of the Fourth-Formers was awake yet.

"Lucky we thought of giving them a call," said Tom. "The lazy bounders might have slept on till noon if we hadn't been so thoughtful. Will you wake up Gussy, Manners, while I attend to Blake?"

"Rather!"

Arthur Augustus was in the midst of a blissful dream in which he fancied himself clad in a waistcoat containing twice as many colours as the rainbow, when he was suddenly startled from the joyful vision by the bedclothes being jerked off him.

He sat up, rubbing his eyes.

"Oh, weally—Wooroch!"

A wet sponge squelched in his face. He gave a yell, and hopped out of bed. At the same time there came a roar from Blake, who had been awakened in the same gentle way. Startled by the noise, Herries sat up in bed.

"Hallo, there! What's the matter?" exclaimed Herries. "What are you making all that giddy noise about? I—G-r-r-roch!"

Tom Merry squeezed his sponge over the head of Herries. "G-r-r-r! You beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Is that what you call gratitude? We came along to wake you, because we thought you might oversleep yourself."

"This outwage is weally inexcusable!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "Tom Mewwy, I no longah wegard you as a friend!"

"Oh, don't say that!" exclaimed Tom Merry, falling upon D'Arcy's neck and clasping him affectionately, and sobbing violently on his shoulder. "Don't say those cruel words, Gussy!"

"Let me go, you boundah!"

"Oh, don't be so cruel, Aubrey! Don't be so harsh, Adolphus. Don't—"

"You're twecding on my toes!" wailed the unhappy D'Arcy. "You wuff bwute, let me go, or I shall get angry and stwike you!"

Tom Merry released the swell of the School House so suddenly that Arthur Augustus sat down on the floor with a bump.

"Let's get out, Manners," said Tom. "D'Arcy is getting angry, and he is going to stwike us. Let's bunk before we get damaged."

And the Terrible Two rushed in alarm from the dormitory. Blake grinned. The rising-bell began to clang just then, so the Fourth-Formers had not lost much sleep.

"We may as well get dressed, I suppose," said D'Arcy, getting upon his feet again. "I think Tom Mewwy's taste for practical jokes is most wewehensible, and some day I shall lose my tempah and do somethin' weally violent."

The chums of Study No. 6 were first down of the Fourth, thanks to Tom Merry's thoughtfulness in awakening them.

"Thanks awfully, Merry!" said Blake, as they met at breakfast. "We'll do as much for you and Manners some time!"

And Blake said that in an extremely significant way.

CHAPTER 3.

The Kidnappers.

BREAKFAST was a free-and-easy meal at St. Jim's on Founder's Day. The boys stayed as long as they liked, as there were no lessons. But the five comrades did not linger long. The buzzing of a car in the quadrangle called them out.

"That's my governah's car, deah boys!" exclaimed D'Arcy. And the excursionists rushed out to view the vehicle in which they were to spend their day out.

It was indeed the car belonging to D'Arcy's "governah." It was a splendid open Daimler six-seater, and of the most luxurious construction throughout. The chauffeur had brought it to a halt outside the School House. He touched his cap to D'Arcy, greatly impressing thereby the crowd of juniors who were gathered round to look at the car.

"How do you do, James?" said D'Arcy affably. "Any message from the governah?"

"Only that I am not to leave the car, sir, all the time that the excursion lasts, sir," said James.

"That's just like my governah," said D'Arcy. "He thinks we don't know how to take care of ourselves. We don't want to bothah you too much, James. Tom Mewwy knows how to dwive a motah."

"Beg pardon, sir, I must obey his lordship's instructions," said the chauffeur, touching his cap again, but evidently as firm as adamant.

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"Well, vewy well," said D'Arcy. "What do you think of the motah, chaps?"

"Ripping!" exclaimed his four comrades enthusiastically. "We shall have a jolly run and a high old time!"

"Yaas, wathah! Let's go and get weady!"

The excursionists were soon busy preparing for the start. The chauffeur descended and stood by the car, much admired for a time by a crowd of small boys, who were soon, however, drawn away by other interests, and the chauffeur and the big car were left alone in their glory. It was just then that Figgins & Co. came along.

"Hallo!" said Figgins affably. "You're Lord Eastwood's chauffeur, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir," said James, touching his cap.

"Ah, I thought you were the chap! You're going to take some kids for a run, aren't you? Dr. Holmes is rather anxious about their safety. He's nervous about motor-cars. I suppose you'll see 'em all safe, won't you?"

"Yes, sir," said James with a smile. "Does Dr. Holmes wish to speak to me?"

"That's what I came to tell you," said Figgins. He jerked his thumb towards the New House. "You'll find him in there."

And Figgins & Co. strolled carelessly on. James, the chauffeur, glanced at his car, hesitating to leave it by itself. Just then Arthur Augustus came out of the School House.

"We shall be weady in a minute or two, James."

"Yes, sir," said James. "Dr. Holmes wants to speak to me, sir. Would you mind keeping an eye on the car while I'm gone, Master Augustus?"

"Certainly, James; it would not be safe to leave it alone, with so many small boys about," said Arthur Augustus.

The ghost of a smile flitted over the chauffeur's solid face.

"Thank you, sir!"

He walked away towards the New House. D'Arcy rather wondered to see him take that direction, but he concluded that the Head must be there, as James had said he was going to see him. D'Arcy was not given to reflecting very deeply, except upon the subject of personal attire. He stood by the car now, thinking out the pattern of a new waistcoat, while the chauffeur walked into the porch of the New House.

Figgins gave a chuckle.

"Get him, kids!"

He joined the chauffeur in the porch.

"This way," he said. "Shall I show you the way?"

"Thank you, sir!"

The chauffeur followed Figgins up the stairs, and Figgins politely knocked at a door, and in response to an imaginary "come in," opened it, and stood aside for James to pass.

James entered the room, cap in hand. He expected to see the form of the doctor, but he was disappointed. He saw nothing round him but bare walls and old boxes. There were two windows in the room, both high up out of reach. James looked around in amazement, and was still more amazed when the door shut sharply behind him, and he heard a key click in the lock.

He swung round towards the door. It dawned upon him at last that this was a little joke of the juniors, and that he had walked into a trap. James was a good-tempered man, and he took it calmly. He went to the door and rapped on it.

"Hallo, youngster!"

"Hallo!" responded Figgins, through the door of the box-room.

"Let me out!"

"Can't!"

"I must return to my car."

"It can't be did old chap. It's no good kicking the door or making a row because this is Founder's Day, and we can make as much row as we like, and you won't be able to make yourself heard. We're not going to hurt you—"

The burly chauffeur grinned at this kind assurance from the junior.

"Thank you kindly, sir!" he said. "I'm not afraid of that; but I must go back to my car."

"Be patient, James, old dear, and I'll explain," said Figgins. "This is a little game to prevent those School House kids from starting for an hour after us. We're going on a little run, and we want to get ahead. In an hour's time Pratt will come and let you out."

"Then it wasn't true that the doctor wished to see me?" exclaimed James.

Figgins chuckled.

"I never said the doctor wished to see you, did I?"

"You said—"

"I said that you'd find him in here, and so you will, if

you come at the proper time," said Figgins. "I didn't say when. He'll be in this house some time during the day."

"Look here! Just let me out!"

"Can't, old dear. Now we're not going to be hard on you. There's a bottle of ginger-beer and some sandwiches on one of those boxes, and all you've got to do is to sit down and enjoy yourself. You'll find five shillings on the same box. That's a tip—compensation, you know. I think we're treating you well."

James grinned

"You must let me out, sir."

"Anything but that, Jamesy, my pippin. Those School House kids can't start without you, and we're going to get ahead of them on the road. Understand?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I must really come out," said James.

"Oh, rats! You're like a giddy parrot. You keep on saying the same thing over and over again!" exclaimed Figgins. "Can't you think of something original?"

The chauffeur began to kick at the door. He thought he would soon make noise enough for a master to hear, and then he would be speedily released from durance vilc. But, as Figgins had said, on Founder's Day the juniors could make pretty nearly as much noise as they liked without hindrance.

A score of the New House juniors had entered gaily into Figgy's little plot, and some of them were in a group under the box-room windows, singing loudly the old St. Jim's boating song, while the rest were in the passage with Figgins, and as soon as the chauffeur started kicking the door they started playing leap-frog in the passage, and the din made by the prisoner was lost in the din made by the juniors.

The chauffeur shouted, and the juniors shouted and sang, and James soon realised that he would never succeed in making himself heard by anyone who would be likely to come to his rescue.

Then, like a wise man, he accepted the inevitable, and found out the box Figgins had spoken of, pocketed the five shillings, and commenced operations on the sandwiches.

"Good!" said Figgins. "He's safe for an hour. Mind you let him out in an hour, Pratt."

"Right-ho!" grinned P-att.

"Now, kids, it's time we were off!"

Figgins & Co. had their motor-cycles ready. The sidecar was standing attached to Figgy's machine for Fatty Wynn. They were soon ready to start.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus was still keeping watch over the motor-car, and waiting for James, the chauffeur, to return. The others of the party came out and joined him, and their various belongings, including D'Arcy's invaluable hatbox, were deposited in the car.

"Where's the giddy chauffeur?" demanded Blake. "Where has he disappeared to, Gussy?"

"He's gone to speak to the Head," said Arthur Augustus.

"Has he? I didn't see him, then. I just came past the Head's study, and I noticed that Railton was there."

"He went to the New House to see the Head."

"What's that?" exclaimed Tom Merry, smelling a rat immediately. "He went to the New House? That looks fishy. Who brought him the Head's message?"

"I didn't see."

"Was Figgins anywhere around?"

"Yes; I think I noticed him talking to Kerr and Wynn, deah boys."

"Aha, I sniff nice!" exclaimed Blake. "Hallo! There go Figgins & Co."

The New House trio were mounted and making for the gates.

"Going for a little run on the footer ground, Figgy?" bawled Blake.

Figgins did not deign to take notice of the inquiry. He steered for the gates, with Fatty Wynn in the sidecar and Kerr at his side. They passed out, and disappeared from view.

"Hallo! They've gone our way!" Tom Merry remarked. "They've got off first. I shouldn't wonder if Figgy has fixed up the shover somehow so that we can't get off."

"Looks like it," said Blake.

It did look like it. Several New House juniors were gathering round politely inquiring when the School House boys were going to start, and whether they had lost a chauffeur.

The chums looked at one another. A merry twinkle came into Tom's eyes.

"Look here, kids," he exclaimed, "we were going to put up with the grandmotherly care of the shover all day, just to please Railton. But now the chap's gone and buried himself somewhere, we're not called upon to wait till Doomsday for him, are we?"

"Rather not!" exclaimed Blake. "You know how to drive

a car, Tom. I believe I could do it, too. I've never tried, but it looks easy."

"It may look easy," said Tom; "but it's a good idea not to try on an expensive car. A hundred-pounder is good enough to turn into scrap-iron."

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Oh, rats! Don't start rowing now!" said Manners. "The question is, what are we going to do? Shall we start without the shover?"

"We'll do the fair thing," said Tom Merry, taking out his watch. "We'll give him five minutes to turn up in. If he doesn't reappear then—why, we'll consider ourselves entitled to do as we like. Is it a go?"

"It's a go!" responded three voices unanimously.

And Arthur Augustus chimed in:

"Yaas, wathah!"

They waited. They were all ready to leave, and Tom Merry, in a leather coat, looked quite business-like enough to pass for a chauffeur.

"We might find the chap if we looked in the New House for him!" Manner suggested.

Tom Merry gave him a withering look.

"There isn't the slightest reason to suppose that the chap may be found in the New House," he said severely.

Manners stared.

"Why, you yourself said—"

"Never mind what I said. There's no reason to suppose that the chap is in the New House. Why should we suspect Figgins of doing these things? It's not charitable. We can't take it for granted that Figgins & Co. have kidnapped a chauffeur, can we? Certainly not! The chap has wandered off, and in two more minutes we'll be off, too."

"Good!" said Manners.

The two minutes elapsed. Still no sign of the chauffeur.

"Time's up!" said Tom Merry. "It's impossible to exceed the time limit, so we shall have to finish the game—I mean, start the motor."

They took their places in the car, Tom Merry in the chauffeur's seat.

Tom Merry, boy as he was, knew the mechanism of a motor inside out, and he was quite capable of taking care of a car—if he chose—as any chauffeur on the road. Tom had a turn for mechanics, and a relative who possessed a car, hence his knowledge.

Tom Merry got into the driving-seat. There was a shout from the New House. The chauffeur was standing on a box in the box-room, and looking out of the window. He saw Tom Merry's action from the distance and shouted. But a crowd of juniors were shouting, too, and the chauffeur's shout was lost in the rest.

Pup-pup-pup! Hoot-hoot!

Dr. Holmes glanced out of his study window. He saw the motor-car gliding down the drive to the gates, and noted the figure, in the leather jacket, in the driver's seat, his hands on the steering-wheel.

"Yes, Mr. Railton, the boys will undoubtedly be quite safe in the charge of Lord Eastwood's chauffeur," said the Head. "I hope they will enjoy their holiday."

But the Head of St. Jim's would have said something very different if he had recognised Tom Merry in the guise of the chauffeur, and known that Lord Eastwood's driver was a prisoner in the box-room of the New House.

But he did not know. And soon it was too late. For the big Daimler buzzed out of the gates of St. Jim's and took the southern road. Tom Merry was fairly started on his day out!

(Continued on the next page.)



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CHAPTER 4.

The Rivals on the Road!

PARP-PARP-PARP!

Figgins & Co. heard the sound behind them as they dashed along the wide, country road.

Parp-parp-parp!

"Beastly road-hog!" growled Figgins. "Some fellows want all the road! What's he want to keep on parp-parp-parping like that for, the silly owl?"

Parp-parp-parp!

"Here, look out, Figgy!" said Fatty Wynn, who wasn't wholly at his ease in the sidecar. "Why don't you get in?"

"I've got in!" called back Figgins, drawing to the side of the road a little. "I'm not going to run into the blessed hedge for any beastly motorist that ever motored!"

"You're not in far enough!"

"Yes, I am."

"What's that chap keep tooting for, then? You're in the way of his car!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn nervously.

"That's all right!" cried Figgins. "We've left him plenty of room, and if he runs into us it's his own fault, and he's responsible for all damage done!"

Fatty Wynn gave a howl.

"I don't care a rap who's responsible! That won't mend my bones, will it, fathead, if I get them smashed up to a jelly?"

"You haven't any bones. You're all fat."

"Look here——"

"How can I look there, silly, when I've got to keep my eyes ahead?"

It was evident that Figgins was not to be reasoned with. Parp-parp-parp!

Parp-parp-parp!

The horn of the pursuing motor was sounding closer and more threateningly. Fatty Wynn turned his gaze backward in alarm.

A big Daimler was rushing along the white road, and a boyish form in leather coat and goggles was in the chauffeur's seat. Behind him four juniors were standing, waving their caps.

Fatty Wynn uttered a startled exclamation.

"It's those School House cads!"

"What?" yelled Figgins.

"It's Tom Merry and Blake and the rest."

"Impossible!"

Figgins did not care to look back just then, much as he wanted to do so. But he soon received proof that Fatty Wynn's statement was correct.

"It can't be!" he howled. "I tell you the shover was shoved into the box-room, and he's still there! He can't have got out!"

"Well, he's driving the car now, anyway; and there's Blake!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn.

Parp-parp-parp!

"Where's Tom Merry?"

"He's not there. No—yes, he is! It's not the chauffeur at all! It's Tom Merry driving the blessed car!" exclaimed Fatty, in amazement.

"Well, of all the cheek!" gasped Figgins.

Parp-parp-parp!

"Here, give us room, you kids on bikes!" shouted Tom Merry, slowing down to pass the motor-cyclists. "What do you mean by wobbling all over the road?"

"We ain't wobbling!" yelled Kerr.

"You are! I thought it was some kind of a snake at first, when I caught sight of you; and I do really think you kids ought to learn how to ride before you start on the road."

"Yah! School House cads!"

"Figgins, why don't you leave the road clear?" Tom Merry was keeping pace with the New House party, handling the big Daimler as if he had been born to it. "Figgy, why don't you stick to the old bike, and not try those dangerous things? Figgy——"

"Oh, shut up!" yelled Figgy. "Get on, if you're going to, and take your face away with you!"

"I'm keeping an eye on you. I'm afraid you're running into danger, Figgy. I should be so sorry if anything happened to you, Figgy. What should we do without you, Figgy?"

The exasperated Figgy would have given a week's pocket-money to be within hitting distance of Tom Merry's features at that moment.

He set his teeth and accelerated his bike, in the vain hope of escaping the car. A very vain hope, for the big Daimler could have passed like a flash of lightning if Tom Merry had chosen, and it was easy for the scapegrace of the School House to keep pace.

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"Get on, can't you?" howled Figgins. "What are you sticking alongside us for?"

"Looking after you," replied Tom Merry. "Is that what you call gratitude, Figgy? Oh, Figgy!"

"I'll give you gratitude when I get you in the quad at St. Jim's again!" growled Figgy.

"Oh, Figgy! Don't be cross, Figgy!"

And the four School House juniors in the car chimed in, imploringly:

"Oh, don't be cross, Figgy!"

Or, to be more absolutely exact, Blake, Herries, and Manners said that, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy said:

"Don't be crows!"

Figgins breathed hard.

"Ha, ha!" yelled Blake. "Hear me smile, Figgy? Who kidnapped a chauffeur—eh, Figgy? I say, Merry, it would be only a kind action to get a little ahead of these kids, and keep the wind off them. Figgy looks very hot!"

"Good!" chuckled Tom Merry.

The car buzzed ahead of the New House motor-cyclists.

Now the motor-car drew a little to the left, and drove along the white country road, just in front of the motor-bikes, Tom Merry skilfully keeping at the exact speed necessary. The result was not to keep the wind off, as Blake had humorously suggested, but to send a cloud of dust, mingled with the smell of oil, into the faces of Figgins & Co.

Figgins and Kerr sniffed and snorted. The four juniors in the car faced towards them, making various mocking gestures, and passing all sorts of rude remarks upon Figgins & Co.

"I say, Blake, don't you think Figgy looks warm?"

"Looks as if he's going to have a fit."

"Perhaps he's in a bad temper. Are you in a bad temper, Figgy?"

"It isn't that. He's got a prize porker in the sidecar, you know, and weight tells."

"The road's rather dusty for motor-cyclists, isn't it?"

"Oh, Figgy doesn't mind that. See how he's snuffling in the dust. He likes it."

Figgins was almost in a homicidal frame of mind by this time. To see the School House juniors sitting there, cool and comfortable, while he choked in the haze of dust and oil smell, was distinctly exasperating.

"Get on!" yelled Figgins. "What are you slacking for?"

"We're looking after you, Figgy. You New House kids ought not to be trusted out alone."

"I think it's kind of us to look after you, Figgy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no good!" growled Figgins. "Slack down, Kerr."

It was evidently the only thing to be done. The School House juniors were loth to lose their fun, but they had a long run to make, and did not wish to lose time.

The distance between the motor-cycles and the car increased. Blake waved his hand in farewell.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" he shouted. "See you again, some time, Figgy. I hope our next meeting won't be in a mortuary. Good-bye, ducky!"

Figgins & Co. made no reply. They were only too glad to get rid of their tormentors.

"Well," growled Figgins, as the big Daimler disappeared in a cloud of dust ahead. "Well, kids, I don't want to waste Founder's Day going on the warpath, but I'd give forty whole holidays to get level with those bounders for this little jape."

"Rather!" said Kerr. "We'll keep on their track, anyway, and perhaps our time will come."

The big Daimler buzzed on. The School House party were enjoying their run immensely. Tom Merry handled the car splendidly, and it was evident that there was no danger, unless Tom should get reckless, which, of course, might happen.

They passed all kinds of vehicles on the road, and greeted them with good-tempered chaff as they passed—chaff that was not always received as good-temperedly as it was given. However, that did not worry the School House juniors. They were out for fun, and fun they were determined to have.

The morning was bright and sunny, the country green and fresh and beautiful, and the car buzzing along at a fine speed without a hint of any mishap.

What more could five healthy lads require to make them merry? And merry they were. But presently Blake looked at his watch.

"Half-past eleven!" he exclaimed. "I thought I was getting empty!"

The others confessed that they were rather empty, too.

"Hallo, chauffeur!" exclaimed Blake. "Are you hungry, or will you keep on while we have our lunch in the car?"

Tom Merry's reply took the form of a question.

"Are you looking for a thick ear, kid?"

Blake grinned.

"Then we'll stop, and have the first instalment of the picnic."

"Good idea!"

Tom Merry looked for a suitable halting-place. The car slowed down, and finally came to a halt in a lane branching off the road, close to a high hedge. There was a gap in the hedge, and within the field was grass and clover, with a shady tree near—an ideal spot for a rest and feast.

"Halt!" exclaimed Blake. "Now, out with one of those hampers."

CHAPTER 5. Stranded!

TOM MERRY descended from his seat. He removed his goggles and joined the other juniors, and between them they soon had a feast prepared on the inward side of the hedge. It was luxurious to lie on the thick grass, and hear the birds sing and the insects buzz, and eat cakes and drink lemonade and ginger-beer.

They might have passed for Weary Willie and Tired Tim, without making up for the parts. They were in tatters, and their ragged clothes had never fitted at the best of times. Their boots were aged and worn, and their hats would have disgraced any self-respecting dust-heap. Their faces were shaggy, and their hair unkempt. They were dirty and they were lazy; that could be seen by a single glance at them. Yet there was something humorous in their unshaven faces and little twinkling eyes.

"Them young gents is enjoying themselves, 'Erbert," remarked the shorter and stouter of the two tramps, watching the feast with envious eyes.

Herbert sighed as he heard the sound of lemonade gurgling into a glass.

"They is, 'Enry."

"I could do with some of that tommy."

"So could I."

"I say, 'Erbert"—Henry lowered his voice mysteriously—"they came in a motor-car."

"Yes. There it are, in the lane."

"You used to drive a motor, 'Erbert."

"That was a long time ago, 'Enry. When I was respect-



As Blake burst through a gap in the hedge, Tom Merry crawled out of the ditch on the opposite side of the road. The car was rapidly drawing away, 'Erbert at the wheel!

"This is all right," said Blake lazily. "That's the best of a giddy car. We've come a spanking long distance, and don't feel a bit tired."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry. "I think I shall become a chauffeur when I grow up. We must keep an eye on that car, though. It might get stolen."

"Rather a big thing for anybody to snatch up and run away with, ain't it?" Blake suggested.

"Somebody might get in and drive off, stupid!"

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy.

"We'll keep a watch on it, then," said Manners. "I can see it where I'm sitting."

But Manners presently changed his position for a more comfortable one, and lost sight of the car. The hedge was high and thick, and could only be seen through the gap opened in it. And it must be confessed that the juniors, under the influence of the excellent lunch, grew careless.

They did not know that two pairs of keen eyes were watching them through a little gap in the hedge, farther up the lane, or that whispering voices were passing comments on the situation.

Two ragged-looking figures were crouching in the hedge.

able. Afore I knew you," said Herbert.

"Now, then, 'Erbert, don't be nasty! I was thinking that them young gents have forgotten all about the car, showin' a childlike faith in human nature, and I was thinking—"

Herbert's eyes sparkled.

"My word, 'Enry, it would be as easy as winking to get away with the car!" he murmured.

"That's the idea!"

"But what would we do with it, though? Not much good a couple of chaps like us trying to sell a car," grinned Herbert.

"I dessay we should find a lot of valuables in it. A good many things worth our while, at any rate."

"My word, it's a good idea!"

"Let's 'ave a go at it, anyway."

"I'm on!"

The two rascals withdrew from the hedge and crept down the lane towards the stationary car. The lane was a lonely one, and no one was in sight, and the high thick-set hedge hid the five juniors from St. Jim's from view.

The boys had not the faintest notion of the proximity of the tramps. Tom Merry glanced at his watch.

"Time we were on the road, kids, if we're to get to Cressy Lodge in time for lunch," he exclaimed.

"Oh, that's all right!" said D'Arcy. "They'll expect us when they see us, deah boys. And I was thinking that I would like to stetch my legs wound the field a bit before we get into the motah again."

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Blake. "I'll race you across the field, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I don't think I am equal to such a wuff exahcise," he replied. "I will take a little twot, if you like."

"Gussy, old kid, I promised, a long time ago, to make an athlete of you," said Blake solemnly. "I can't let you get into these lazy habits. You must take that run."

"Too much fag, deah boy."

"Manners, take Gussy's left arm, will you, and I'll take his right," said Blake. "If he's so fagged we must help him along. Herries, you can bring up the rear, and if Gussy lags, you know what to do with your feet."

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

"Oh, weally!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Stay and look after your car, chauffeur," said Blake to Tom Merry. "Come on, Aubrey!"

"Oh, weally!"

"Come on!"

Blake and Manners took D'Arcy by either arm and ran him off. There was no help for it; the swell of the School House had to go. Herries ran behind, keeping pace, and launching out his right foot to help D'Arcy whenever he showed signs of slacking down.

Tom Merry stood watching them and laughing heartily. Every now and then Study No. 6 became "fed-up," as Blake expressed it, with the languid ways of Arthur Augustus, and then it was their custom to give him some violent exercise and see that he did it.

Away went poor Gussy, gasping, between Blake and Manners.

"Getting on all right, Adolphus?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy. "It is not at all weally necessary for Hewwies to kick me in that wuff way. And, besides, he is soiling my twousers!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Keep it up, Herries, unless he leaves you behind!"

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

Away they went. Arthur Augustus did his best, and really put in a good run. Right across the field they went, and at the opposite side Blake stopped, panting.

"Feel better, Gussy?"

"Certainly not! I feel extremely exhausted!"

"He wants another run," said Blake. "Now back again at the same pace. We're going to keep him going till he feels better. That feeling of exhaustion only comes from lazy habits, Aubrey. When we've run you to and fro about fifty times you'll feel as fresh as a daisy!"

"Blake, I insist—"

"Come on!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Manners. "Where's Tom got to?" They looked towards the far-off hedge. Tom Merry had disappeared. The buzz of the starting motor-car could be heard through the clear, sunny air.

"He's starting his smell-box," said Blake.

"Hallo! What's that?"

It was a shout ringing across the field.

"Help! Help!"

It was Tom Merry's voice.

"Help!"

"Something's wrong!" gasped Blake. "Come on! Run like the dickens!"

Blake was off like a shot. Manners and Herries were close behind, sprinting across the field for all they were worth. And even the swell of the School House ran well, too, forgetting in the excitement of the moment that it was too much fag.

"Help! Help!"

Blake burst through the gap in the hedge into the lane. Tom Merry was crawling out of a bed of nettles at the bottom of the ditch—fortunately a dry one. The car was vanishing down the long, white road.

"Hallo! What's happened?" gasped Blake, seizing Tom by the collar and helping him out of the ditch.

"They've collared the car!"

"Who have?"

"A pair of beastly tramps."

"What?"

"I heard 'em trying to start it, and came through the hedge," explained Tom. "Then one of them knocked me into the ditch and sat on me while the other started."

"My hat!"

"Then he left me and jumped into the car. They're gone. So is the car!"

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That much was evident.

The car disappeared in the far distance, sending back a faint pip-pip from afar.

The five juniors looked at each other in blank dismay.

The big Daimler was gone!

They were stranded on foot in the heart of an apparently uninhabited country.

What was to be done?

"My only Panama hat!" exclaimed Blake. "This is a giddy fix, and no mistake! Gussy, your governor will get his rag out over this!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus seemed really the least disturbed of the quintet.

"We've got to do something!" said Tom Merry desperately. "Telephone or telegraph or something, and get the police to stop the brutes!"

Blake looked up at the telegraph wires along the road.

"I don't see how you're going to wire from here," he remarked.

"Fahead! We shall have to walk to the nearest town."

"Know how far it is?"

"Three miles."

"My hat!"

"I say, I've heard of people tapping the telegraph wires," said Herries, staring at the wires overhead. "If we had the things they use—I don't know what they are—we could do it, you know."

Blake slapped him on the back.

"By Jove, Herries, you are the chap to have with one in a difficulty!" he exclaimed. "You make such jolly useful suggestions!"

"Oh, don't rot, Blake!"

"We shall have to walk on to the next town," said D'Arcy. "It is weally a feahful fag, deah boys, but there's nothin' else to be done. I think we ought to let the police know as quickly as poss, so that they may have a chance of catchin' the wascals. Come on!"

"That's unusually sensible for you, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "Let's hoof it. The thing's got to be done, and the sooner the quicker."

So the five juniors started off on foot along the dusty road.

It was rather a change after the delightfully smooth run in the big Daimler.

The sun was hot, the road dusty, and the anxiety as to the fate of the car was troublesome. The tramps could not sell it, and they were not likely to damage it more than they could help. Probably they would rifle it of all the valuables they could find, and abandon it in some deserted lane. But it might be a long time before the owner recovered it. And, meanwhile, what of Tom Merry & Co.'s day out?"

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Tom. "They'll be expecting us to lunch at Cressy Lodge, and it's another twenty miles yet! And Miss Fawcett will be expecting us at Huckleberry Heath in the afternoon, and we shall never arrive there at all!"

"My Cousin Ethel will laugh," said Arthur Augustus. "She's an awfully whipping girl, but she does laugh at a fellow!"

"Well, we shall look pretty funny crawling in on foot, covered with dust and perspiring from head to foot!" growled Blake. "It will be enough to make Cousin Ethel laugh!"

"Can't something be done?" demanded Herries.

"What can be done?"

"You're leader."

"No, I'm not. Tom Merry's leader to-day. Tom Merry, think of something."

"The only thing I can think of," said Tom, after some reflection, "is for you to shut up, and keep your breath for walking!"

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Blake. "Step it out, kids!"

They tramped on.

"It wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for those rotten motors!" said Herries presently, as a hoot was heard behind them. "The hogs want all the road, I think!"

"Yes," said Manners, "and what a beastly niff of petrol they leave behind! And look at the dust they make! What are you cackling about, Blake?"

"Your remarks struck me as funny, that's all. I dare say Figgy thought motors very nasty and smelly a little way back."

"Oh, that was different!"

"Of course it's different, my son; it's always different. It depends upon whether you're in the car, or tagging along behind it. If you're in the car, it's the finest mode of travelling in the world, but if you're riding behind it, it's a fearful, nasty, smelly, infernal machine, taking up all the road, and ruining the landscape. A lot depends on the point of view."

Toot, toot, toot!

"Hallo, that's a motor-bike," said Herries, looking back, and mopping his perspiring brow. "Why, my hat! If it isn't Figgins & Co.!"

"Figgins & Co.!"
"As large as life!"
It was true.

Two motor-cyclists, one with a sidecar, came buzzing along the road. The five School House boys stood in a group to watch.

Figgins and Kerr were tooting their horns for all they were worth. Fatty Wynn was leaning comfortably back in the sidecar, taking his ease.

"Hallo, there!" shouted Figgins. "Get out of the road! What are you blocking up the way for? Why, carry me home on a stretcher if it isn't that School House gang!"

"Hallo!" shouted Kerr. "Where's the giddy motor?"
"Ha, ha, ha!" bawled Fatty Wynn. "Has it run away and left you to walk?"

Tom Merry waved his hand to Figgins.

"Stop!"
"What for?"

But Figgins had already slowed down. Keen rival of the School House juniors he might be, but he had a generous heart, and he saw at once that the five were in distress. And a true motorist is always a brother to another motorist in misfortune.

"We want you!"

"Well, that's pretty cool!" said Figgins, jumping off his machine. "What do you want?"

"The car's been stolen!"

"My Aunt Matilda! Won't Gussy's governah be pleased!"

"Two beastly tramps boned it while we were lunching in a field."

"You School House chaps always did pay too much attention to your grubbing."

"Oh, don't be funny, Figgins! You look funny enough, without saying anything to enhance the effect," said Tom.

"Are you going to help us?"

"Of course we are, if we can do anything," said Figgins. "What can we do?"

"Lend us your motor-bikes to go after the thieves."

"Yes, I can see us doing that," said Kerr, grinning. "I can see myself trusting my cycle to one of you School House kids, and hoofing it back to the school!"

"I tell you what," said Figgins. "We'll go after the rascals ourselves, if you'll tell us all you can, and see if we can catch them."

"Good idea!" agreed Kerr. "We'll do that!"

"It's jolly good of you, Figg," said Tom Merry gratefully. "You'll know the car when you see it. There's two tramps in it, and I heard 'em call each other 'Erbert and 'Enry. They are a pair of horrid-looking wasters, but one of them knows how to drive. If you can't catch the car you can inform the police in the next town, and they can 'phone round for everybody to be on the look-out for the Daimler."

"I don't see why we shouldn't catch them," said Figgins. "They won't go at top speed, and they won't suspect anything when they see two motor-bikes after them. Jump out, Fatty!"

"What for?" demanded Fatty Wynn.

"You don't think I'm going to carry your weight along in a race, do you?"

"But—"

Figgins uncoupled the sidecar.

"You kids will have to get that along between you," he said. "Ready, Kerr?"

"Rather!"

"Then off we go!"

Pup-pup-pup!

Away went Figgins and Kerr with a whiz, leaving the School House juniors behind, looking and feeling a great deal more hopeful.

CHAPTER 6.

Catching the Car Thieves!

F IGGINS kept a keen look-out ahead as he dashed on, keeping the motor-cycle right up to its fullest speed.

Kerr, whose machine was of equal power, kept pace with him.

The New House juniors, in spite of their late experience at the hands of Tom Merry and his party, had thrown themselves whole-heartedly into the chase.

At home they might be foes and rivals, but outside the walls of St. J'm's, New House and School House ever stood shoulder to shoulder against all comers.

Figgins had not calculated upon spending his holiday chasing a stolen motor-car along a dusty road, but he was quite ready to do it.

Pip-pip-pip!

Car after car came into view, some slow and some fast,

and as they sighted each, the hearts of the pursuing pair bounded.

But the big Daimler was not to be seen.

The summer sun was blazing down upon the road, and the heat and dust were intense, but Figgins and his comrade never faltered.

A mile—another mile!

The hedges seemed to flash by.

They had passed no road into which a big motor-car was likely to have turned. The chances were that so far the thieves had kept to the main road, but how far ahead were they?

Crack—crack!

"There's another!" gasped Kerr. "It's back-firing, Figg! Look at it; it's about the size."

Crack—crack!

Figgins looked hard at the motor in front, which was back-firing merrily as it tried to climb a steep incline in the road. He gave a gasp of relief.

"That's it, Kerr! That's the car we want!"

"Good!" said Kerr. "I can recognise it now. They don't seem to be managing it very successfully."

"No. Something's gone wrong with the works, perhaps. All the better. We shall be alongside in a couple of minutes, Kerr."

"And then, Figg?"

"Then we'll get ahead and stop in the road. They won't dare to run into us, you know. They'll have to stop, and then—"

"I say, that's risky."

"Can't be helped."

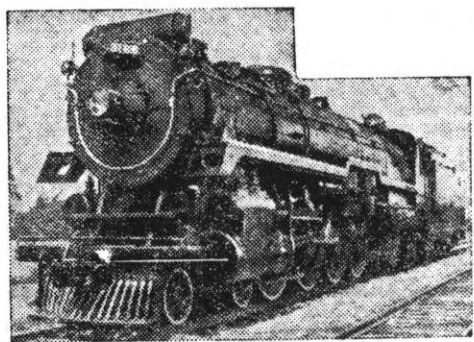
The motor-cyclists shot past the hunted motor-car.

'Erbert, in Tom Merry's seat, had put on the coat and cap Tom had left in the car, and so passed, without close examination, for a chauffeur. 'Enry was keeping well down in the tonneau, so as to escape observation. It was likely, of course, to rouse suspicion, even in a country policeman, if he saw two tramps in possession of such a car.

Right ahead went Figgins and Kerr, leaving the motor behind. It was true that at one time in his chequered career 'Erbert had been employed at a garage, and had even driven a car. But his knowledge of automobiles was limited, and he was far from easy with his new possession. He dared not let her "rip," and he was not quite sure of

(Continued on next page.)

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his knowledge of the mechanism. Consequently, the stolen motor had not covered very much ground, though, of course, it had easily left the owners far behind.

Figgins and Kerr dashed on a little distance ahead of the motor, and then jumped off their bikes. They stood with them in the middle of the road, waving their hands to the big Daimler and shouting.

It was certainly a risky proceeding, though, of course, if the Daimler had come on, they could have jumped aside in time, leaving their bikes. But as the Daimler could not have run down two motor-bikes without a serious accident to itself, 'Erbert had no idea of resorting to such a desperate device to clear the road. He shouted to the two juniors:

"Clear off! Get out of the way!"

"Danger!" bawled Figgins.

"Stop!" yelled Kerr.

"Danger!"

"Stop!"

'Erbert knew nothing of any connection between the two motor-cyclists and the party he had robbed of their car. At the cry of "Danger!" he jammed on both foot and hand-brakes, and the car came to a halt.

Figgins and Kerr left the motor-cycles and ran towards the halted car.

"Wot is it?" demanded 'Erbert.

Figgins did not reply. Without a word he jumped into the car and hurled himself upon 'Enry. The rascal was taken entirely by surprise.

Kerr was backing up his leader in a second, and before the astounded 'Enry knew what was happening he was hurled forth into the ditch beside the road. He disappeared from sight into a bed of stinging-nettles, whence arose a wail of anguish the next moment.

'Erbert swung round in amazement. He came near starting the car again, but Figgins had planted a loving clasp round his neck from behind.

"If the car starts," said Figgins, "you'll go under the wheels, old dear. Mind that!"

"Who are you?"

"Don't ask questions. Are you giving in, or are you going to give me the trouble of throttling you first?"

"I'll break your neck!"

"I look a good deal more like breaking yours," said Figgins. "Give him a clump on the head with that spanner, Kerr."

"No, don't!" gasped 'Erbert. "I give in. It was all 'Enry's idea. I didn't want to bone the old thing."

"Get out, then!" said Figgins.

'Erbert got out, with Figgy's assistance. He alighted in the road on his head, and then reclined at full length in the dust gasping like a stranded fish. He sat up in the dust and blinked at 'Enry, who had just got his head out of the stinging-nettles.

"Well, my word!" gasped 'Enry.

"My word!" spluttered 'Erbert.

Figgins waved his hand.

"If you scoundrels cut off at once you may be able to leg it before the police get hold of you!" he exclaimed. "It's a chance you don't deserve."

'Erbert and 'Enry looked at Figgins and then at one another. They saw that they had only a couple of lads to deal with, and 'Erbert was rather inclined to show fight. But the stinging nettles had taken all the fight out of 'Enry.

And just then the toot of a motor-horn came along the

road and another car came into view. There was assistance at hand for Figgins if the tramps showed fight, and so 'Erbert and 'Enry decided to accept Figgins' kind offer.

"Come on, 'Erbert!" gasped 'Enry.

"I'm a-comin', 'Enry." 'Erbert picked himself up out of the road. "Mebbe I'll see you again, young shaver!"

"I dare say you will when I identify you in a police station," said Figgins cheerfully.

'Erbert scowled, and disappeared through the hedge with 'Enry.

"Good enough!" said Figgins, with satisfaction. "I don't know how we should have handled those two chaps, Kerr, if they had had the nerve to show fight. Lucky for us that car was coming along.

"Better try to get this one out of the road, Figgy."

Hoot-toot!

The oncoming car slackened down, and a tall man who was driving it shouted to the two juniors:

"Hallo! What are you blocking up the road for? Anything wrong?"

"Yes," said Figgy.

The stranger brought his car to a halt.

"Can I help you?"

Figgins explained.

The motorist listened with amazement to the tale, and burst into a laugh when Figgins had finished.

"Well, you are a couple of plucky youngsters!" he exclaimed. "I'll tel you what I'll do. Get the car out of the way—or, rather, I'll do it for you—and then I'll run back and pick up your friends. I'm not in a hurry."

The car was drawn up to the hedge. Then Figgy and Kerr stood by their motor-cycles watching the car, while the good-natured motorist turned his Darracq and buzzed back the way he had come.

"I say, I never bargained for this," said Figgins. "Tom Merry and his lot are making a big hole in our holiday, Kerr."

"We're returning good for evil," grinned Kerr. "Makes me feel quite good. Never mind. We may get a chance of returning them something else before the day is out."

"Wouldn't be a bad idea to empty their petrol into the road and leave 'em to push the thing along," Figgins remarked thoughtfully.

"They'd borrow some o' that chap."

"So they would. It would be a joke to do it at Huckleberry Heath, though, if we could get a chance."

And Figgy and his trusty comrade chuckled gleefully at the idea. They were still chuckling when the Darracq car came into sight again and buzzed to a halt, and five juniors bundled out into the road. The kind-hearted motorist descended and unfastened the sidecar which he had brought on the carrier behind the car.

"Anything more I can do?" he asked.

"No, sir. Thanks very much," said the juniors in chorus.

The Darracq buzzed away, and Tom Merry looked at Figgins.

"Figgy, you're a good old sport!" he exclaimed. "You've done us a jolly good turn this time, and no mistake! Three cheers for the St. Jim's Speed Cops!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I say, Figgy, will you come on with us to Cwessy Lodge and lunch with us?"

Potts, the Office-Boy.



"We'd slacken pace and keep with you," said Tom Merry, donning his leather coat. "We wouldn't mind losing a bit, Figgy."

Figgins shook his head. "You've lost enough time already," he replied. "You've got no more to lose, if you're going to get to Huckleberry Heath to-day."

"Many thanks, but we won't come," said Kerr. "Off with you!"

"Right you are, kids!"

Tom Merry climbed back into his accustomed seat. The four School House boys took their places in the car.

"Good-bye!" said Figgins. "Perhaps we'll see you again at Huckleberry Heath."

The School House boys laughed. They did not think it probable that the motor-cyclists would get so far.

"Good-bye!" said Blake, waving his hand; and the car hummed off down the road.

Figgins attached the sidecar to his motor-cycle again. He mounted his machine, and Kerr followed his example. Fatty Wynn lolled back luxuriously in the sidecar. The walk had not lasted long, but it had tired the fat boy of the New House. And off went Figgins & Co., following the big Daimler at a more moderate pace than that kept up by Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 7.
Cousin Ethel.

"CRESSY LODGE," exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

Blake looked at his watch.

"Time, too!" he said. "I'm ready for lunch, kids!"

"So am I," said Tom Merry, as he "tooled" the big Daimler into the gateway, and buzzed on up the wide gravel drive. "We're not very late, after all."

"That's all right," said D'Arcy. "Hallo! There's my Cousin Ethel. Isn't she a ripping girl, deah boys?"

A girl of about Tom Merry's age was standing on the lawn near the house, and she looked up as the motor-car came up the drive.

The juniors all took off their caps at once, as if moved by the same spring.

The girl smiled. She was an extremely pretty girl, with rosy cheeks and blue-grey eyes and sunny brown hair, and her smile was bewitching.

Tom Merry halted the car. D'Arcy sprang out and made his most elegant bow.

"I've awwived, you see, Cousin Ethel," he said. "I know it's howwid bad form to be late fo. lunch, but we had a slight mishap on the woad."

"I am very pleased to see you all," said Miss Cleveland, with a sweet smile. "Lunch is waiting and I have waited, too. But where is James the chauffeur?"

"Weally, Ethel, I don't quite know."

"He hasn't been hurt?"

"Oh, no! We left him at the school; but whethah he's still there, of course, I cannot say for cert. The pwobability is that he is in a twain."

"You see, Miss Ethel," explained Tom Merry, "some of the fellows belonging to the other house at St. Jim's kidnapped the chauffeur, and shut him up somewhere, so that we shouldn't be able to get off."

"So we had to start without him," said Blake.

"Which, of course, we wegwetted vevy much," said Arthur Augustus.

The young lady smiled.

"Yes, I suppose you did," she replied. "I don't know what your father would say, Arthur. He would be full of fears for you."

"Oh, no; not if he knew how Tom Mewwy can dvice!" said Arthur Augustus. "Tom Mewwy is weally vevy useful, and I think he would make a vevy good chauffeur. But, I say, I hope the governah isn't down here, Ethel."

"No, he is still in town."

"Thank goodness!" said D'Arcy, with a sigh of relief. "Gwown-up people are so unweasonable. He might think we weren't safe in the car without the chauffeur, which, of course, is all wot. I was awfraid, for a moment, that he had come home, Ethel. You quite fwightened me. If I had thought of it, en route, I think I should not have come in to lunch, weally."

"That would have been a pity," said Ethel demurely. "I should not have had the pleasure then of seeing your friends, Arthur. Won't you come in?"

"Yes, come in, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "There's no weason why we should wait any longah for our lunch. I am weally quite hungwy."

Lunch was a plentiful meal, the housekeeper of Cressy Lodge knowing what five hungry boys would be like, and having wisely prepared for the raid.

It was an enjoyable meal. Ethel chatted cheerily with the boys. The discovery that Tom Merry was in charge of the car had made her hesitate for a minute or two about coming with them for the afternoon's run; but she admitted that if Tom had brought the car safely all the way from St. Jim's there was no reason why he shouldn't take it safely on for the remaining twenty miles or so to Huckleberry Heath.

The juniors enjoyed their lunch and the luxury of a wash in Arthur Augustus' quarters, and the afternoon was still young when the party were ready for the road again.

Ethel Cleveland looked charming in a motor-coat. Tom Merry handed her into the car with the air of a cavalier, quite ousting Arthur Augustus from the task of looking after his cousin. But D'Arcy was a good-natured fellow, and he did not seem to mind.

"Dear me!" said Ethel. "What are all these packages here?"

The juniors looked a little confused. But D'Arcy answered promptly enough:

"Gwub!"

"What?"

"Gwub—pwovisions, you know! We're going to picnic on Huckleberry Heath, and we want to have enough gwub, you know. It's most important."

Ethel laughed.

"But do you carry provisions in a hatbox?"

"Oh, that's Gussy silk topper in that!" laughed Tom Merry. "He couldn't travel without it, so we brought it along."

"Oh, Arthur!"

"It's all vevy well to laugh, Ethel, but an occasion might arise when a decent appearance would be absolutely necessary," said D'Arcy. "Of course, it doesn't matter so much about these boundahs—"

Ethel laughed merrily, and Blake mentally promised

(Continued on next page.)

And How!



Arthur Augustus a thick ear when they were home again in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry got into the chauffeur's seat again, and the car started. From a good many windows in Cressy Lodge curious eyes watched them go; but in the absence of the "governah," Arthur Augustus was monarch of all he surveyed at Cressy Lodge, and there was no one to say him nay.

And Tom showed that he knew how to handle a car. He took the Daimler out of the drive into the road in a masterly manner, and turned in the direction of the distant Huckleberry Heath. In the car, Ethel Cleveland laughed and chatted cheerily enough with the juniors, every one of whom regarded her as a stunning girl.

Tom kept the car at a moderate pace, as there was no further need to hurry, and he had a lady passenger inside. Huckleberry Heath now lay ahead. It was a wide heath, patched with golden gorse, and it looked very gay and inviting under the summer sun.

Right on they dashed over the far-stretching heath. A thin column of smoke rising above the gorse first indicated that they were approaching a human habitation. Presently Tom Merry turned the car into a rather narrow lane, and a house, standing in its own trim grounds, surrounded by a trim hedge, came into sight.

"Here's Laurel Villa!" exclaimed Tom.

Laurel Villa looked very trim and neat. Tom Merry sounded his horn loudly and incessantly as he dashed up to the gate.

A trim, feminine form appeared in the doorway. It was that of Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess. She had been startled by the tooting of the horn, and she came down to the gate. Her face was a little anxious in its expression.

Miss Priscilla could never realise that Tom Merry was a growing lad. To her mind he was still the little chap whom she had tenderly cared for in his infant years. Tom was very much attached to his old governess, but sometimes he wished that Miss Fawcett had a more accurate idea of the flight of time and the change it wrought. He stopped the car with a last ear-splitting selection on the horn. Miss Priscilla opened the gate.

"Tommy!"

She looked anxiously into the car. A run in a comfortable, roomy Daimler was not an expedition of a very desperate nature to an ordinary mind, but Miss Fawcett had grown up before the era of motor-cars. She indulged herself in all sorts of fears as to what might have happened to Tom Merry en route, and had pictured him crushed under the wheels, blown up by the engine, run down by another car, or maimed and shattered by an overturn on the road.

Had she known that he was driving the car she would probably have been in hysterics by this time; but, fortunately, she was ignorant of that. The fact that Tom was perfectly familiar with motor-cars made no difference to Miss Priscilla. She was anxious and uneasy about him from force of habit.

"Tommy!" Her face grew very anxious as she looked over the juniors and failed to see Tom. "My dearest Tommy! Is he not here? Oh dear—oh dear, my sweet Tommy has been killed! I felt it all along. I knew these fearful motor-cars would kill my dearest Tommy!"

"Hallo! I'm not quite dead yet!" said Tom, jumping down and throwing his goggles aside. "Here am I, nurse, as large as life and twice as natural!"

Miss Priscilla gave a cry of relief.

"My darling Tommy!"

And, to Tom's great horror, she hugged him round the neck hysterically.

"Here, chuck it!" roared her darling Tommy. "Back-pedal!"

"My sweetest boy," said Miss Priscilla, releasing him, and disclosing Tom's face as red as a beetroot, "I was so afraid for you. Do you mean to say that you have been driving that terrible motor-car?"

"I've driven it all the way from St. Jim's."

"My goodness! Has the chauffeur been killed? Has he—"

"The chauffeur's all right. Nobody's been killed," said Tom. "Now, do reassure yourself, nurse, and—"

"My dearest Tommy, yes—yes, in one moment. But you have been driving, rushing along at a terrific pace—are you sure you are sufficiently thickly clad?"

"Yes, I—"

"Have you your chest-protector on?"

"I—"

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"And your thickest vest, Tommy? And your—"

"That's all right," said Tommy hurriedly. "I'm all right. We're all right. It's all right!"

"If you are sure you have not taken cold—"

"I haven't taken anything," said the unhappy object of her solicitude. "I'm as right as rain, and as fit as a fiddle!"

The chums in the car were trying hard not to giggle, but Ethel was the only one who kept a perfectly straight face. Tom stole a sidelong look at her and was greatly relieved to see that she was not even smiling.

"We've come to the picnic," said Tom, more cheerfully. "Jolly day, isn't it? This is Miss Cleveland, who has kindly joined us. She isn't afraid of my driving, nurse—are you, Miss Cleveland?"

"Indeed—no!" said Ethel sweetly. "I think Tom would make an excellent chauffeur, Miss Fawcett."

She kissed the old lady in her sweet way.

"You know all my chums, nurse," said Tom. "You've met them all before. Now, I hope, in your anxiety, you haven't forgotten to arrange that picnic, nurse."



Without a word Figgins and Kerr jumped into the car, and before the astounded 'Enry knew what was happening he found himself hurled from the car into the ditch, while 'Erbert was quickly grasped round the neck from behind.

"Everything is arranged," said Miss Priscilla, with an affectionate look at Tom. "As if I should forget, my dearest Tommy! I have prepared everything you could possibly like, I am sure; and I have also prepared some things for you to take back to St. James' College with you. I think you must by this time have finished the last bottle of cod-liver oil I sent you."

Tom made a grimace.

"That wasn't any good, nurse."

"Haven't you finished it?"

"Yes. I didn't want to waste it, so I tried to use it in my cycle lamp, but—"

"Tommy—Tommy! You should have taken three tablespoonfuls after each meal, and four before going to bed. You are so delicate—"

"Never mind my delicacy," said Tom hurriedly. "What price the picnic?"

"But about the cod-liver oil—"

Tom would not listen.

"Where are we going to shove the car?" he exclaimed. "It will be jolly to picnic down by the stream. I'll take care this time to leave the car so that it can't be started, so there won't be any danger of its getting pinched a second time."

"Has the car been pinched?" asked Miss Fawcett, looking at the big Daimler in a puzzled way.

"Yes. A couple of tramps pinched it."

"But how did they pinch it? And why?" asked the puzzled old lady.

Tom laughed.

"Boned it, I mean," he explained. "When I say pinched, of course, I don't mean pinched."

This was so lucid that Miss Fawcett gave it up.

The car was run into the garden, and the young chauffeur soon rendered it impossible for it to be started in a hurry. To make assurance doubly sure, he moored it to a tree with a chain and padlock.

"And now for the picnic," he said cheerfully.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

The ride since lunch had made the juniors hungry again. Miss Fawcett had certainly made ample preparations for the picnic. Added to the supplies in the car, there seemed enough provisions to feed a small army; but at feeding-



time the juniors of St. Jim's had a way of distinguishing themselves which made it best to provide a wide margin.

Hampers and lunch-baskets were carried down to the side of the sunny stream, where, under the shade of the old trees, they sat down to the picnic.

CHAPTER 8.

Something Like a Picnic!

IT was a jolly picnic. All the lads were hungry, and the spread was the finest possible. There were ham-sandwiches and cold meats and hard-boiled eggs for the solids, flanked with cold fowl and pie. Then came puddings and cakes galore.

Black and red currant wine, lemonade, and ginger-pop washed down the solid portion of the feed in the most satisfactory manner.

The popping of corks and the gurgling of liquids mingled cheerily with the buzz of talk and the happy laughter of the picnickers.

Ethel Cleveland, with Tom Merry on one side and Arthur Augustus on the other, was naturally very well looked after. If she had eaten a tenth part of the good things her cavaliers wished her to partake of, she would certainly have rivalled the greatest feats of Falstaff or Fatty Wynn.

The boys enjoyed themselves amazingly. By the silver stream, under the shady tree, in the sunny afternoon, a picnic was a most pleasant function, and the honour of having a lady in the part was keenly appreciated by the juniors. And such a nice girl, too! There were, in fact, two ladies in the party, for Miss Priscilla consented to join the picnickers, and Ethel made the dear old lady sit down beside her, ousting Arthur Augustus from his position for that purpose.

But Gussy did not mind. His face was beaming with good nature, and he surveyed the happy faces round him through his eyeglass with a benignant expression. It was, in fact, very jolly.

And though Cousin Ethel was certainly the belle of the party, it was very pleasant to see how kind and attentive the youngsters were to Miss Priscilla, and how they were careful that she wanted for nothing, and how they kept solemn and serious faces when she told them stories about Tom Merry's interesting childhood.

Tom's face went scarlet when he heard Miss Priscilla confiding to Manners her keen anxiety at the time when Tom had been a victim to a ferocious attack of measles.

Measles was a thing that every youngster had to go through; but Tom's attack was a most serious one, and Miss Priscilla had been all the more alarmed because the medical man had not realised the true gravity of the case.

He had, in fact, treated the matter almost off-handedly, while Miss Fawcett had been convinced that her darling lay hovering between life and death.

Tom's recovery on that occasion Miss Priscilla looked upon as little short of a miracle. Manners listened with an expression upon the right side of his face, which was turned towards Miss Priscilla, as solemn as that of an Egyptian mummy.

But with his left eye, it is greatly to be feared that Manners winked at Blake, causing that bright youth to have a sudden accident with a glass of lemonade he was drinking.

"Oh, I say!" murmured Tom under his breath. "She'll get to the time I fell into the river next, and then there'll be no stopping her!"

"How fond your old nurse seems of you!" Miss Ethel remarked to Tom.

The hero of the Shell looked at her rather suspiciously. He had an idea that Miss Cleveland saw the humorous side of the situation. But her face was very kind and serious. Its expression gave Tom courage.

"Yes," he replied. "She is the dearest old soul; but she makes a chap feel an awful ass sometimes."

"I don't see why," said Ethel, with a smile. "It is something to be proud of, I think. It shows that you are a nice boy."

Tom coloured a little deeper.

"Thank you!" he said.

"I mean it," said Ethel. "I think she is the dearest old lady I have ever met, and I am quite in love with her."

Tom brightened up. Boy-like, he had dreaded appearing absurd to a girl, but to Miss Ethel's kind heart there was nothing absurd in Miss Fawcett's tender affection towards the boy she had brought up from his infancy, and to whom she had been almost a mother.

"Thank you for saying that, Miss Ethel," he said. "The chaps chip me a lot about it sometimes, but I don't care for them."

Miss Fawcett did indeed in the fullness of time arrive at the childish adventure of Tom's when he had fallen into the water; but now Tom did not mind.

And the juniors were careful not to let his old governess see that they saw anything comical in the narration. It was probable that Tom Merry would hear of it again at St. Jim's, but for the present it passed without a hint of a joke.

The afternoon was passing very pleasantly. A considerable inroad had been made upon the provisions, and of the great number of bottles half had been emptied.

The youngsters, very satisfied and happy, toyed with dessert, finding room for oranges and apples and nuts and muscatels when the more solid viands had been dealt with. It was really a treat to watch Arthur Augustus dissecting an orange for Ethel, and Tom Merry carefully preparing an

apple for the same dainty lips. But at last Arthur Augustus glanced at his watch.

"Oh, don't say it's time to move!" said Manners. "We're all so comfy."

"We've got a long wun back to St. Jim's," said D'Arcy. "I weally think it is time to make a start, deah boys."

"We needn't get in much before midnight," said Tom Merry. "It's Founder's Day, you know, and the Head will never make a fuss."

"I'm afwaid we shan't be in much before midnight, anyway," said Arthur Augustus; "and we must take my cousin home before dark, deah boys."

"Oh, I suppose we'd better make a move!" said Blake, with a sigh. "It has been ripping. Hasn't it been jolly, kids?"

"Awfully jolly!" said everybody.

"I've enjoyed myself very much," said Ethel sweetly. "It was kind of you to call for me and take me."

"One and all declared that it was an honour and a pleasure they would never forget to their respective dying days."

"But are you going home in that dreadful motor-car?" said Miss Fawcett nervously.

Tom laughed reassuringly.

"We've come in it, nurse."

"But to drive after dark—"

"We have electric lamps as large as my head," said Tom. "Besides, it's really safer after dark, because you're more careful, you know."

This specious reasoning somewhat comforted Miss Priscilla.

"You wouldn't like me to back out of driving home," said Tom aside. "I should be the joke of the school. They'd say I fukked it."

That settled Miss Priscilla. She was torn between her

uneasiness for Tom and her firm belief that anything and everything was possible for Tom Merry.

"They depend on me, you see," said Tom.

"Very well, dear Tommy, you shall go; but you will be careful?"

"Oh, rather! D'Arcy's guv'nor would pull a long face if I smashed up his motor, I expect!" grinned Tom.

"Never mind the motor. We could buy a new one, but you cannot buy a new arm or leg," said Miss Priscilla.

"I'll be careful, nurse—awfully, fearfully careful!" promised Tom.

They returned to Laurel Villa and the motor-car.

"Hallo! What's the matter now?" exclaimed Tom, as he looked into the car. "Somebody's been playing a little game here!"

"What is it?"

"The spare petrol-can is gone!"

"What?"

"It's a fact! Somebody has taken the petrol-can away. And, by Jove, the tank is empty, too! This is a little joke of somebody."

"Dear me!" said Miss Priscilla.

"Who could have done it?" exclaimed Ethel, looking alarmed.

Tom looked amazed.

"Can't imagine! Some silly bounder has done it for a joke, I suppose. We can't move the car without petrol."

"Cannot you buy some in the village?"

"They've no garage at Huckleberry Heath," said Tom dismally, "and the nearest town is six miles away. I might be able to borrow some from a farm, but it would take the Dickens of a time!"

The juniors looked at one another blankly. They were certainly in a fix. The car could not be driven without petrol, and of petrol hardly a drop remained in the big Daimler.

The extra supply of the spirit was carried in the car in a spare can, in the usual way, and the can was gone, without leaving a trace behind.

It was undoubtedly a joke; but it was a joke that was likely to prove somewhat serious for the unfortunate motorists; for there were the picnickers stranded in a petrol-less condition, and the afternoon rapidly waning towards evening.

Ethel Cleveland looked a little alarmed. She had promised to be back at Cressy Lodge by dusk, and the housekeeper there, in whose charge she had been left, would certainly be uneasy if she did not come, especially as the Daimler had been taken out in charge of a boy. What was to be done?

"Hallo! Anything the matter there, kids?"

It was a familiar voice at the gate. The School House boys looked round as if electrified. Three forms were leaning on the gate, and Tom Merry gasped:

"Figgins & Co.!"

CHAPTER 9.

Figgins Scores!

FIGGINS & CO. raised their caps politely to Ethel Cleveland and Miss Priscilla. Tom Merry came hastily towards the gate.

"Look here, Figgy—"

"How do you do?" said Figgy.

"Have you—"

"Nice afternoon, eh?"

"Taken our—"

"But the evening's drawing in."

"Petrol?"

"But it's going to be a fine night, I think."

"Have you taken our petrol?"

"Your what?"

"Petrol! P-o-t-r-o-l! Petrol!"

"What do you think I want your mouldy petrol for?"

"A silly-ass sort of joke, perhaps!"

"Have you taken his sweet-scented petrol, Fatty Wynn?"

"No," said Fatty. "I've no use for it. But I think I saw a chap carrying some petrol-cans!"

"What did he do with them?"

"I think he must have hidden them."

"Look here, you chaps, there's a lady in the case! Miss Cleveland has got to get back to Cressy Lodge by dusk."

"That's what I hailed you for."

"What do you mean?" asked Tom, staring at Figgins, who was smiling in the most affable way.

"Why, you see," explained Figgins, "I saw a chap with your petrol, and I thought the lady might like a lift home in a sidcar. Fatty Wynn will abdicate in favour of Miss Cleveland."

Figgins & Co. chuckled at Tom Merry's wrathful stare.



"Peter Frazer— Ironmaster"

Boss of a huge works—at eighteen! It's "some" job young Peter Frazer takes on when, straight from school, he sets out to run his dead uncle's great iron foundry. It's a dangerous job, too! His workmen are hostile, a vicious gang are doing all they can to ruin him, and more menacing still, there's a skulking, ruthless enemy only waiting his chance to strike. But Peter's a fighter! Win or bust, he's going to put Frazer's on its feet again and make his footer team the finest in the North Country! Meet him in this smashing, top-speed yarn.

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BOYS' FRIEND
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Tom understood now how the petrol had vanished, and why.

The School House had put the New House decidedly in the shade by having a motor-car out for the day, and taking a lady in the party.

Figgins had hit upon that device for getting level. It would be one for the New House, with a vengeance, if Figgins carried off the lady under the noses of the School House boys.

Ethel, who was a little curious, came towards the gate. "Mind, not a word!" whispered Figgins. "Don't tell tales out of school, you know. Mustn't row before a lady."

Tom checked the words that were on his lips. He turned a chagrined face towards Ethel.

He knew his Figgins. Figgy would never give up the petrol unless he had his way, and it was impossible to "row," as Figgins said, before the girl. It would not be exactly the thing to tell Ethel that Figgy had raided the petrol. But to let Figgins have his way was distinctly exasperating.

"Introduce me, Tom!" said Figgy, in a stage whisper. "Allow me to introduce Figgins & Co., Miss Ethel," he said—"Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, three horrid bound—I mean, three of the best, Miss Cleveland."

Figgins & Co. raised their caps and bowed. Ethel smiled. "I am very pleased to make the acquaintance of Figgins & Co.," she said gravely.

"You haven't told Miss Cleveland that I am quite at her service in this little difficulty," said Figgins. The girl looked inquiringly at Tom.

Figgins has offered to take you home in his sidecar, Miss Ethel," said Tom. "Fatty—I mean, Wynn—will stay, and come in the car when we—when we find the petrol."

"How kind of Mr. Figgins!" said Ethel, smiling brightly on the chief of the famous Co. of the New House at St. Jim's.

The "Mr. Figgins" and the smile between them made Figgins her slave for life.

"I should be so delighted, Miss Cleveland!" he said eagerly. "Tom Merry knows that I am a safe and reliable driver, and—"

"Yes," said Manners gravely, "especially when you get going on a footer ground!"

Figgins looked daggers at him. "And I could run you to Cressy Lodge before dark, Miss Cleveland. It would be a real pleasure to me!" he said.

The girl hesitated. She very much wanted to get home before dark—very much indeed—and Figgy's offer seemed a really excellent way out of the difficulty. Yet she hesitated to leave her friends, especially in their present plight.

It was Tom Merry's turn to speak. He knew that the petrol would not be forthcoming until Ethel had gone with Figgins, and that it would be forthcoming as soon as she was gone.

"I think it's a good idea, Miss Ethel," he said. "We're awfully sorry to lose you for the drive back, but we can't start without the petrol."

"But what will you do?"

"Oh, Fatty—I mean, Wynn—saw the chap take it, and I've no doubt we shall be able to find it in time," said Tom. "Then you think I had better go with Mr. Figgins?" said Ethel, with a sweet smile that sent Figgy into the seventh heaven again.

"I'm afraid it would be best," said Tom dolefully. "We shan't find the petrol till you're gone with Figgy—I mean, we may not find it—"

He broke off, turning rather red.

Ethel glanced from the School House juniors to Figgins & Co., and from Figgins & Co. back to the boys of the School House.

Perhaps she guessed something. At all events, her look became very demure, and a smile lurked round the corners of her little mouth.

"Very well," she said. "What do you say, Arthur?"

"I'm afraid there's nothing else to be done," said D'Arcy. "I'm weally afraid we shan't find the petrol for some time, Ethel!"

"Then I will go with Mr. Figgins, if he is sure that I shan't be putting him to a great deal of trouble."

Figgins was quite sure—eagerly and ecstatically sure. And so Ethel, taking her leave of Miss Priscilla and the School House boys, wrapped her motor-coat around her and took her place in the comfortable, roomy sidecar, and Figgins started up his motor-cycle.

Pip, pip!

Away went bike and sidecar, Figgins tooting his horn, and Ethel waving her hand to her friends as they stood at the gate. Miss Priscilla went into the house as soon as they were out of sight, leaving the boys to search for the lost petrol.

"You beasts!"

"You rotters!"

"Let's duck 'em in the water!"

"Let's jump on them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Pax!" exclaimed Kerr and Fatty Wynn, chuckling. "It's the joke of the season! Ha, ha, ha! Who's putting on side about taking a lady out in a giddy motor? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Once aboard the sidecar and the girl is ours!" giggled Kerr. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Blake. "You'll make me tired with your cackling!"

"You made us tired with your cackling when you dusted us on the road!" grinned Kerr. "Mind, it's pax, and a seat in the car for Fatty, or you'll never see your petrol any more!"

"Pax, of course!" said Tom Merry, breaking into a grin. "It wasn't a bad wheeze for you New House chaps. Now, where's the petrol?"

Kerr led the way, and indicated a hollow in a bank of earth where the several cans of petrol reposed. Figgins & Co. had had a couple of empty cans in the sidecar, and had run the petrol out of the Daimler's tank into them. Kerr and Wynn were chuckling all the time, seeing the humour of the situation far more clearly than the School House youngsters did.

The petrol was carried back to the car, and Tom Merry refilled the tank.

Miss Pawcett was informed that the lost petrol had been recovered, and she took a cordial farewell of the juniors, above all impressing upon Tom the necessity of slowing down whenever he passed a cart, and of stopping altogether whenever another motor passed him.

Kerr mounted his bike, and Fatty Wynn took Ethel's place in the car. They started off, Miss Priscilla waving her handkerchief from the gate till they were out of sight.

Kerr kept pace with the motor, Tom keeping it at a moderate speed. After the compact it was not in the game to pass Figgins on the road. It was well after dark, therefore, when the car came in sight of the big gates of Cressy Lodge, and they found Figgins waiting in the road with his motor-cycle and sidecar.

He grinned as the big Daimler halted.

"Where is my cousin?" asked D'Arcy. "I hope she awvived all wight!"

"Ten minutes ago," said Figgins. "You found the petrol, then?"

"Yes, you boundah, we found it!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Who scores this time, Merry?"

"Oh, rats! You can get into your old sidecar now, Fatty Wynn!"

Fatty Wynn chuckled as he got out of the car.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins & Co., as the Daimler started off again. "Ha, ha, ha! Hear us smile! Who leads at St. Jim's?"

The Daimler rushed on.

And Figgins & Co., still chuckling hugely over the success of their joke, followed on their motor-bikes, Fatty Wynn in the sidecar.

"Well, we were done that time!" said Blake, grinning. "Old Figgins has got a bit of his own back for the dose we gave him this morning."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Never mind. We've given the New House the kybosh often enough to be able to give Figgy a little run for his money every now and then. I say, chauffeur!"

"Hallo?" said Tom Merry, without looking round.

"When shall we be home?"

"This side of midnight—I don't think!" said Tom cheerfully.

"Well, Figgins & Co. will be in later. That's one comfort."

And the car rushed on through the warm evening. For many and many a mile it rushed on, skilfully steered by the hero of the Shell, while the time passed swiftly enough.

Long before St. Jim's was reached the juniors had made a fresh inroad upon the remains of the picnic that had been repacked into the car.

Then they burst into song, and the sound of their voices floated far through the night as the big Daimler hummed and buzzed on its way.

Through sleeping towns, along silent roads, under the soft, bright stars went the big Daimler, with never a halt as mile after mile of the road slipped under its wheels.

The juniors were roaring out a chorus as they dashed into Rylcombe, and more than one window opened, and a sleepy head was thrust out to see what the uproar was about.

The car buzzed on the road to St. Jim's, and in the starlight the top of the familiar old clock tower rose into view above the trees.

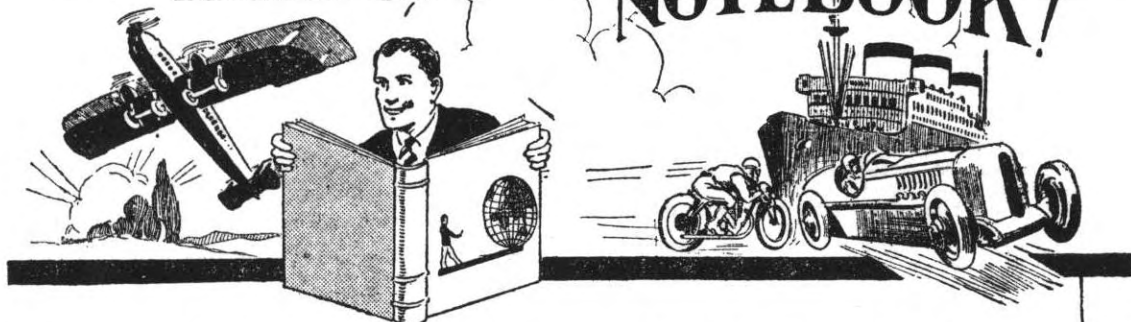
A quarter-past midnight chimed out as Tom halted the

(Continued on page 28.)

WRITE TO YOUR EDITOR—HE LIKES TO HEAR FROM YOU!

The Editor's

NOTE-BOOK!



Address all letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

BETTER than seeing a first-class show! That's my opinion, chums, of next Wednesday's side-splitting story of Tom Merry & Co., Blake & Co., and Figgins & Co. You will laugh loud and long over the humorous adventure brought about by the combined efforts of these juniors to stage a successful play. Martin Clifford has certainly excelled himself in

"ST. JIM'S ON THE STAGE!"

and you will vote the latest yarn from his pen a winner all the way. Whatever you do, don't miss this topping story of the chums of St. Jim's when they turn their remarkable talents to acting!

Others, too, take up acting in the snappy complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, entitled:

"TUBBY'S UNCLE CHARLIE!"

Tubby Muffin's Uncle Charlie comes to the school, then another turns up, and, finally, a third! Three Uncle Charlies—and Tubby thought he had only one. What's happened? You will find the solution to Tubby's perplexing state of affairs in next week's humorous yarn.

Finally, to complete this magnificent programme, there is another thrill-packed story of

"THE WINGER!"

and Potts, the Office-boy, continues his comical antics. Make sure of this number, chums, by ordering your copy early.

THE HUMAN PARCEL.

The fellow who walked into a vast office and asked to be posted home would either get a thick car or a savage scowl and told not to be funny. But a Belgian did that sort of stunt the other day. He actually had himself stamped and registered and dispatched by Air Mail from Brussels to Croydon! Had he gone as an ordinary passenger he would have had to fork out £1, the usual fare. As a parcel, he went for £2. 8s. It must have been a staggerer for the officials at the Belgian aerodrome, but, apparently, they didn't want to turn down custom, so the human parcel was hoisted aboard. Of course, there's a snag in it—they don't give Air Mail letters or parcels a comfortable seat. They don't give them a seat at all. So if you are thinking of copying the

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enterprising Belgian, don't expect any other accommodation aboard the plane than the parcels get!

SEA-WALKING MADE EASY.

Until a brainy and fearless Austrian proved otherwise, the other day, folk thought the only untried way of crossing the English Channel was by walking along the sea-bed in a diving suit. The Austrian had a brain-wave. He fixed big skis to his feet and walked over the surface of the sea! Twenty miles is that crossing, and it took him nine hours. His skis were fifteen feet long, and he had a ten-foot paddle to help him along and assist in balancing himself. It must have been more of a shuffle than a walk—when it wasn't a sort of rollicking fox-trot—for the sea was very rough and those cork-and-wood contrivances on his feet must have got themselves tangled up with one another a time or two. But he's had a bit of practice, for he claims to have walked up and down the Rhine and the Danube for not less than 2,500 miles!

THE WANDERING WHEELBARROW.

Talking of queer ways of travelling, what about pushing your way right round the jolly old earth with a wheelbarrow for companion? Two young fellows are at this moment doing it—two Russians, who started last July to trundle their barrow from world's end to world's end. Whether they intend to give each other rides in it when their feet give out is not clear. But here's wishing them luck! At the end of three years we shall probably be hearing of them again—if not before—for that is the time they are allowing themselves to complete the trip. That's going one better than the Red Indian who reached here early this year after tramping completely round the world. He was eight years older when he finished—and probably a bit shorter, for he MUST have worn his feet down considerably whilst footing it all those miles and miles and miles!

SWAT THAT EAGLE.

They're paying 2½d. apiece for real, genuine eagles in America to-day. The bird is an outlaw with a price—even if it is a trifling one—on its unfortunate head. The noble-looking bird is, according to American farmers and others, just a low-down, greedy sneak-thief, who grabs birds and sheep from the farmyards and wings off with them to its mountain lair, where it enjoys a good feed—at the said farmer's expense. Hefty

things for a man to tackle for 2½d. are these eagles. Some of them have sharp, curved talons four inches long—cutting and tearing weapons capable of inflicting awful wounds. And the wingspread of a full-grown eagle may be as much as ten feet!

HE CHEWS IRON.

Well, not exactly chews it, but he does with iron bars the sort of thing you would do with a bit of liquorice if you didn't want to gobble it. He's the new strong man, recently giving exhibitions of his terrific jaw-strength and skill in this country. Give him a three-eighths inch thick iron bar and he'll grip it between his amazing teeth and with his powerful hands tie it into a knot! He is just as happy doing tricks with the top of his head. He shows you how to balance thereon a long iron bar nearly three inches wide and three-quarters of an inch thick, and then let five men hang on each end of it. Don't any of you fellows talk about simple headaches after that!

LIGHTNING SMILES.

Your speediest smile would look like a painfully slow wrinkling of cheeks if projected on to a cinema screen from a new and amazing gadget they've got in Japan. They take photos on a roll of film at the rate of 2,160 miles an hour—the speed with which the film travels through the special camera—and then the pictures are thrown on to the screen at the rate of sixteen per second. That, of course, slows down the original motion to a particularly idle snail's pace, so that the world's speediest aeroplane "caught" by this astonishing camera in full career would, shown on the screen, appear to be mooching through the sky as though it had sleepy sickness. Now, who's going to invent a camera that will beat this one—with its achievement of 50,000 pictures a second!

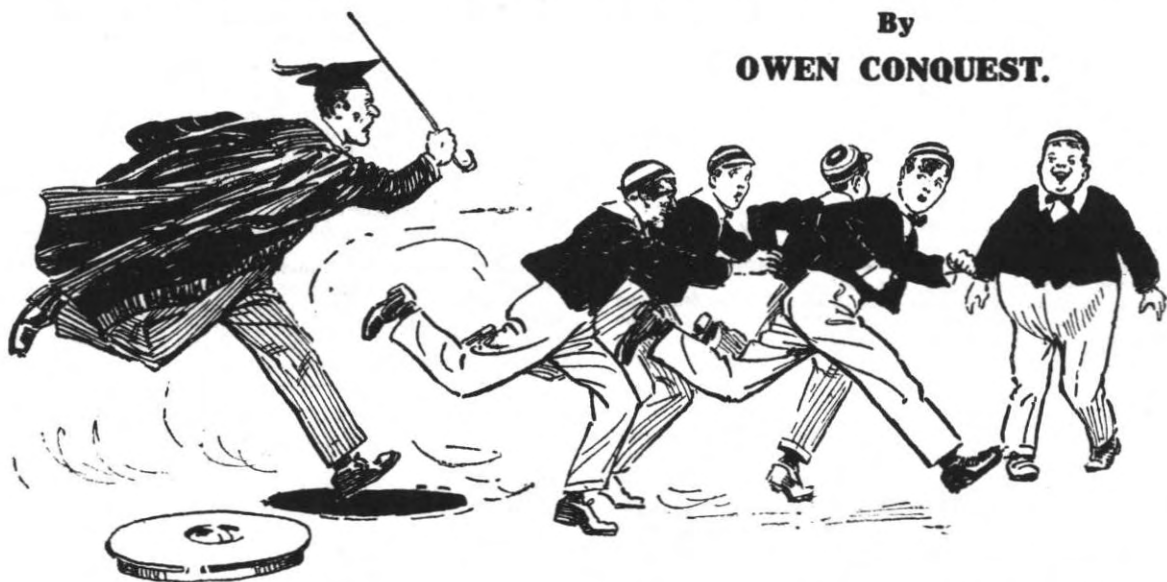
FISHERMAN'S SHOCK.

An experienced fisherman unexpectedly found a giant turtle on his hands the other day—900 pounds of it, with flappers two feet across! He caught this nightmare creature off Daytona Beach, (where Kay Don and the other speed-kings go to knock lumps off the world's racing car records), and folks who know declare the creature to be two centuries old. He's not quite four feet in width, and from nose to tail he's six foot six. Not the sort of thing you'd care to keep in an aquarium!

AMAZING NEW COMPLETE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. AT ROOKWOOD!

HANSOM'S HOPELESS HOAX!

By
OWEN CONQUEST.



CHAPTER 1.

Understudying Horatius!

HALLO! Here come those cheeky Fourth kids!" Hansom spoke carelessly, disparagingly. Hansom was a Fifth-Former, with a very good opinion of himself. It was an opinion shared only with himself. But he was captain of the Fifth at Rookwood, and his fellow Fifth-Formers often wondered why he ever troubled even to notice the mere existence of kids in the Fourth.

But Hansom did. Though unusually conceited, Hansom was rather an overbearing youth. He had what he called a "heavy hand" with fags, and he seemed to consider it was his chief job in life to keep the fags in order.

Which was a mistake on Hansom's part—a mistake for which he often suffered.

At the moment, Hansom, with his chums, Lumsden and Talboys, was seated on the handrail of a tiny footbridge spanning a stream that ran through Peck Mill Hollow. In

the afternoon sunshine four juniors came sauntering down the steep woodland path towards the bridge. They were Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome.

"Those cheeky Fourth kids!" repeated Hansom. "Look at 'em! Fancy themselves, don't they? I suppose they think we're going to move for them? Well, we're not!"

"Oh, cheese it, Hansom!" yawned Talboys. "Blow the dashed kids! Let them pass, if they want to. They've as much right here as we have, I suppose!"

"Too dashed hot to row with them, anyway!" said Lumsden lazily.

"Who's going to row with them?" said Hansom. "I'm only going to put the cheeky kids in their place. I'll make 'em go round by the road. You see!"

To show that he meant it, Hansom seated himself more firmly, and placed his feet on the opposite handrail of the bridge.

Jimmy Silver & Co., chatting cheerily, came along and stepped on the footbridge. Lumsden and Talboys loftily and lazily moved aside to let them pass.

But Hansom sat firm. Jimmy Silver & Co. came up against Hansom's long legs, and they were obliged to halt.

"What's this little game, Hansom?" asked Jimmy Silver mildly. "We want to pass, old chap!"

Hansom grinned.

"Sorry, but this giddy bridge is closed to grubby fags to-

day," he remarked blandly. "You can go round by the road, kids!"

"Look here——" began Jimmy.

"We're jolly well not!" snorted Lovell. "Why, you cheeky ass, Hansom——"

"Easy, Lovell, old man," said Jimmy Silver, with disarming meekness, "you mustn't forget that Hansom's a senior, you know. I'm sure if we ask him nicely he'll let us pass!"

"That's your little error, Silver," grinned Hansom. "I'm understudying giddy old Horatius to-day! I'm keeping the jolly old bridge, infants! You'll go round by the road!"

"You refuse to allow us to pass, Hansom?"

"Exactly!"

"We're passing all the same," smiled Jimmy.

So saying, Jimmy Silver placed one hand on Hansom's chest, and one arm under Hansom's long legs. With one swift movement he pushed with his hand and lifted with his arm.

Hansom howled as his legs went up and his head went down. Both legs and head described a circle as he somersaulted backwards. Another wild howl escaped Hansom as he hit the stream with a mighty splash.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver. "What price Horatius? Run for it, chaps!"

The chaps ran for it, yelling with laughter, Raby just dodging Talboys' desperate clutch as he dashed away.

Hansom scrambled to his feet in the little stream. It was a pretty stream, and the water was deliciously cool and clear. But it was like any other kind of water—very wet.

Dripping and raging, Hansom scrambled out and up the bank. His face was red with rage. That cooling water had certainly not acted in a cooling way on his temper.

"Come back, you little fiends!" he roared furiously. "After them—after them, you idiots!"

Lumsden and Talboys grinned; they could not help it. Most likely they felt that Hansom had got just what he had asked for. But they obeyed, and followed Hansom, as that raging youth went tearing after the juniors, shedding water in showers.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had stopped, but they started off again as they glimpsed pursuit—hastily. Hansom was a handful, but three seniors was much too much of a handful for them, so they fled.

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Said Hansom: "Greely is a funk;
I'll give him a surprise!"
But Mr. Greely, strange to say,
Gave Hansom two black eyes!

Bellying out ferocious threats, Hansom led the way in pursuit.

Up the woodland hill went the laughing juniors, across a ploughed field, and then over the stile that let to the main roadway.

As they emerged on to the roadway they almost charged into a stout, middle-aged gentleman, who happened to be walking past. It was the podgy Mr. Greely, master of the Fifth at Rookwood.

Mr. Greely glowered at them.

"Reckless young scapegraces!" he puffed. "Had I crossed the stile one second earlier you would have collided with me. How dare you rush about like wild hooligans!"

"We—we—we—" panted Jimmy Silver. "I—I say, sir—look out!"

The warning was necessary. Mr. Greely was standing at the foot of the stile now, preparing to mount it. And the swift clump of Hansom's boots was rapidly drawing nearer. But evidently Mr. Greely did not hear. Mr. Greely enjoyed nothing better than an opportunity of scolding members of another master's Form.

"There is no excuse!" he boomed. "Silence! There is no excuse for rushing about like that—"

Mr. Greely got no further than that. For suddenly the Fistical Four's excuse for rushing about arrived on the scene. It arrived in the form of Edward Hansom, who swarmed over the stile and crashed on top of the podgy, puffing Mr. Greely.

Crash!

"Oh, my hat!"

Mr. Greely was a big man, but he wilted under the weight of Edward Hansom. He gasped as Hansom jumped on him, and he howled as Hansom landed half on his plump chest and half on his pet corns.

"Whoop! What—what— Oh-h-h-h-hooohch!" howled Mr. Greely, forgetting his august, plump dignity for once in his anguish. "Ooooooooh! Upon my soul! Ooooooh! What—whom— Hansom! Villain! Ooooooh!"

Mr. Greely clasped his waistcoat, and then he grabbed his foot, and danced about on one leg in dire anguish.

"Oh lor!" panted Hansom, nearly fainting. "Greely!"

"Yes, Hansom! Groooogh! It is I—Greely, as you disrespectfully term me!" hooted Mr. Greely, ceasing to dance, and bestowing the luckless Hansom a box on the ear. "How—how dare you, sir? I repeat—how dare you rush about in that mad, ruffianly manner?"

"Sus-sus-sir!" gasped Hansom.

He rubbed his ear and glared. For the moment the startled juniors almost expected Hansom to punch the master's nose. But apparently wisdom prevailed. In the circumstances, even Hansom must have understood the master's anguish and anger. Mr. Greely gasped and resumed.

"Ruffianism! Hooliganism! Senseless and childish buffoonery! Hansom, how dare you, I say!" he boomed wrathfully. "How dare you rush about in that dangerous manner?"

"Well, wouldn't you rush about if you'd been pitched into a stream like I have?" howled Hansom, forgetful of respect and everything else as he rubbed his burning ear. "Look at me—wet through to the skin! Look at me, I'm—"

"Silence!" thundered the podgy master, shaking with wrath. "I am hurt—hurt most severely, Hansom! And whatever the excuse, you, as a senior, should have more dignity and self-respect than to go rushing about in that reckless, childish manner."

"But these young rotters—"

"Silence! I repeat that I do not want to hear any excuses! I have had occasion before to speak to you in regard to senseless horseplay with juniors. I have forbidden you to take part in childish disputes with juniors. Once again, Hansom, you have defied me. You have disregarded the fact that you are a senior. You are unfitted for the position you hold, Hansom!"

"Sus-sus-sir—"

"Silence! You are quarrelsome and defiant, Hansom! You—you are a—a buffoon, sir!" gasped Mr. Greely, clutching his burning corn again. "You—you are a bully, sir!"

"B-bub-bully!" gasped Hansom.

"Yes, sir!" hooted Mr. Greely. "And a coward, sir!"

"K-kik-coward!" gasped Hansom.

"Yes, Hansom! Only a bully and a coward would be constantly engaging in disgraceful and undignified quarrels with juniors!" snorted the irate master. "I am ashamed of you, sir! You should be ashamed of yourself! I—I will speak to you later about this, Hansom. Enough!"

Mr. Greely mounted the stile, puffing and gasping. He went limping off towards the bridge without a glance at either the juniors or the staring Talboys and Lumsden.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,232.

"A—a bully!" gasped Hansom faintly. "M-mum-me a bully! And a—a coward! Me a coward! You—you heard the tick, you fellows?"

"Y-yes, Hansom!" gasped Lumsden. "By Jove! You fairly got his rag out that time. What happened? Did you—"

"He—he boxed my ears—me!" gulped Hansom. "The—the tick boxed my—"

Hansom said no more then. He suddenly sighted Jimmy Silver & Co. Those juniors dare not laugh aloud in case Mr. Greely heard. But they could grin and giggle, and they were doing plenty of both—far too much for Edward Hansom, who instantly ceased speaking, and went for them with a rush. Apparently Mr. Greely's severe remarks had done Edward no good whatever.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. did not wait for him. Edward Hansom looked far too dangerous just then. They fairly flew. And after chasing them for a few yards Hansom gave it up and returned to his pals. He looked like a fellow in a dream, as if he could scarcely believe it had happened.

He, Edward Hansom, captain of the Fifth, had been called a coward and a bully by old Greely. He, a senior, with a big position in the school, had had his ears boxed by old Greely—and before grinning juniors! Hansom boiled with fury as he led his pals back to Rookwood. Something had got to be done in the matter!

CHAPTER 2.

On Vengeance Bent!

"THERE he is! Look at the tick! Listen to him!" said Hansom bitterly.

It was after tea. Hansom had not been able to eat any tea. Never had the lordly Fifth leader felt in less trim for tea. His ear still burned, but his wrath, indignation, and injured dignity burned still more.

Hansom was not a revengeful fellow. But something had to be done now to avenge his boxed ear and injured dignity. Over tea—while Talboys and Lumsden attended to the grub—Hansom seethed and outlined plans of revenge on Mr. Greely, plans which ranged from reporting him to the Head to boiling him in oil, afterwards tarring and feathering him.

Something had to be done. Hansom's dignity and prestige was at stake. By this time every fellow in the Classical side would have heard the story from Jimmy Silver & Co.

Lumsden and Talboys were sympathetic, but not helpful. After tea, Talboys suggested a stroll in the quad in an effort to take Hansom's mind off the subject. But Hansom was still "going it" when they went out. And on the Classical steps they saw—and heard—Mr. Greely. He was laying down the law to Mr. Dalton, master of the Fourth, and his rich, fruity voice reached them clearly.

"Absurd—perfectly absurd!" he was booming. "Ridiculous! That fellow Dingley must be a hopeless coward—a poltroon, my dear Dalton! Had I been in his place, Dalton, I should have defied him—yes, sir—defied him and knocked him down! I should have thrashed him, sir, club or no club, and then I should have handed him over to the police!"

"Listen to him!" repeated Hansom bitterly. "Hark to the braggart! Can you see him defying a blessed footpad and knocking him down? I don't think! That fat fumbler—that podgy funk! All swank and brag!"

"Cheese it, Hansom!" urged Lumsden, in alarm. "He'll hear you!"

"I don't care!" scowled Hansom. "For two pins I'd tell him what I think of him to his face! The man's a braggart! He's a fat, footling funk! He—he— By Jove! That's an idea!"

"Oh dear!"

Both Talboys and Lumsden groaned. They were fed-up with Hansom's weird and wonderful ideas. But their chum and leader went on.

"Got it—the very wheeze I wanted, you men!" he breathed. "Talk about poetic justice—I've got the very idea! I'll show him up, just as he showed me up! I'll teach him to treat me like a fag out of the dashed Third!"

"Now look here, old man, do drop—"

"You shut up. Talboys—I'm talking!" said Hansom. "Now listen! You heard Greely? You know what the fat tick was gassing about? One of the Barshot masters—a fellow named Dingley—was held up and robbed by a footpad yesterday. The funk allowed the brute to take his dashed purse and get clear."

"We know all about it," groaned Lumsden. "But what has that to do with—"

"Heaps!" said Hansom, with a harsh, bitter laugh. "I'll admit that chap Dingley's a fearful funk. But who's

Greely, to call him a coward and a dashed poltroon? That—that fat tick! Why, could you imagine Greely being anything else but a funk? That fat, flabby mountain of flesh! Bah! That braggart—that fat bluffer! Well, I'm going to show him up just as he showed me up. And I shall want you, Lumsden!"

"Me?" said Lumsden. "Now, do drop it, Hansom, old man. Look here—"

"Shut up! Yes, we'll jolly well see what he does when attacked by a footpad!" said Hansom, with a grin like a screen villain. "I shall want you, Lumsden, to be ready to snap him with your camera. That's your job!"

"Oh—oh, is it?" stammered Lumsden. "My job, is it? You mad ass! What hare-brained plot have you got now, Hansom?"

Hansom smiled.

"I should have thought you'd have spotted the idea," he said. "It's just this. I'm going to prove to Rookwood that Greely's a braggart and a flabby funk! Greely's going to be faced with the same position Dingley was faced with yesterday. He's going to be held up by a footpad, and you, friend Lumsden, are going to snap him in the act of showing himself the craven, flabby coward he is. See?"

Lumsden and Talboys stared. They didn't see!

"You—you benighted ass!" breathed Lumsden. "That footpad will be in the next county by this time, you dummy! Think you can hire a footpad like hiring a dashed porter? Where—"

"Fathead!" said Hansom witheringly. "I shall be the footpad, of course! I shall disguise myself—heaps of clobber and stuff in the property-box, and there's that old horse-pistol we used in that highwayman play we staged last term. I shall make Greely plead for mercy on his knees. That's where you come in with your camera, Lumsden!"

"Do I?"

"Yes. You snap him, and we'll have scores of prints taken and distributed about the school!" Hansom laughed again—bitterly, harshly. "I'll show him up! And now's the time! Greely's got his hat on now—he's just going to a lecture at Combe. I heard him tell Bohun. I shall get him on his way back. You, Lumsden— Here, where are you off to?"

"I—I've just thought of something!" gasped Lumsden.

"Going to get your camera ready? Good!" said Hansom. "Buck up!"

"Nunno—I mean, yes!" gasped Lumsden, giving Talboys a meaning look. "Just that, Hansom!"

He hurried away indoors.

"Come on, Talboys," said Hansom briskly. "None too much time! You can help me make up. Get a move on!"

He hurried indoors. Talboys followed him to the steps. As Hansom vanished inside, Talboys sent a hunted look after him, and then dodged desperately back, and scudded round the back of the school. Evidently Talboys didn't wish to help Hansom make up.

Hansom was half-way up the stairs before he discovered that Talboys was not behind him. He stared back, and then he frowned.

"The—the awful funk!" he breathed. "I'll lick him for that! He funks it, blessed if he doesn't! Well, Lumsden's the man I want!"

He hurried on up to his study. He entered the room just in time to catch Lumsden closing the lid of the coal-scuttle. Lumsden straightened himself with a startled, red face.

"Hallo! Got your camera ready, Lumsden?" said Hansom crisply. "I say, where is it? It was on the bookshelves this morning. Look here—"

"You—you're not having my camera, you born idiot!" said Lumsden desperately. "And I'm not helping you with your silly, crackpot plot, Hansom! Look here! Don't do it, for goodness' sake, Hansom! It's the pottiest idea I've ever—"

"What?" roared Hansom. "You too, Lumsden! Going to let me down, too, are you? We'll jolly well see about that! I'll lick you until— Here, come back, you— Why, you rotter!"

Lumsden jumped for the door. Hansom jumped after

him furiously. Unluckily for Hansom, Lumsden dragged the door partly to as he rushed out to make his escape. Hansom ran into the edge of the door with his face and howled.

By the time Hansom had recovered from the collision Lumsden had vanished. As Hansom rushed out into the passage he almost collided with Jimmy Silver & Co.

Hansom had almost forgotten his row with them that afternoon—all his vengeful thoughts were of Greely. But he suddenly remembered that Raby had a good camera.

"Here, hold on, you kids!" he snapped.

"Just off to the village, old bean!" said Jimmy. "Sorry we can't stop, Hansom! If you're hunting for trouble, though—"

"I've decided to overlook what you did this afternoon," said Hansom loftily. "Raby, I want you to lend me your camera!"



Hansom howled as his legs went up and his head went down, and he proceeded to do a somersault into the stream!

"Nothing doing!" said Raby.

"You won't?" snapped Hansom.

"Not much, old scout! I wouldn't trust a garden-roller with you, Hansom, much less a camera!"

"Why, you—you cheeky young sweep!" roared Hansom, catching Raby by the shoulder. "Won't you, by jingo! Then I'm going to lick you for—"

That was as far as Hansom got. As one man, Jimmy Silver & Co. grasped him, and sat him down with a terrific bump on the linoleum. Then they each carefully wiped their boots on him as he grovelled there, and then they passed on, chuckling. When Hansom scrambled up, dusty and raging, the Fistical Four had vanished.

Hansom returned to his study. Somehow he had to get a camera. And then, suddenly, he remembered something—that guilty, suspicious look on Lumsden's face as he rose from the coal-scuttle! Was it possible—

It was! Hansom rushed across to the coal-scuttle and raised the lid. Inside the empty scuttle was Lumsden's camera—where Lumsden had hidden it from him!

"The—the rotter!" gasped Hansom. "The—the mean rotter! Well, I've got it now. Be better if I could trust someone to do the trick; but, after all, I can easily frighten that tick Greely into running away, and then—well, then I'll snatch this from my pocket and snap the brute! Good! I'll show 'em!"

Evidently Edward Hansom was in deadly earnest. Neither risk nor faithless friends would turn him from his revenge on "that tick, Greely!"

CHAPTER 3.

Too Hot for Hansom!

"POOF!" Thus Mr. Edward Greely, master of the Fifth—Greely the Magnificent, as some of the misguided juniors disrespectfully termed him!

Mr. Greely was returning from the lecture. Mr. Greely was a plump, over-weighted gentleman, and he found walking on that autumn evening decidedly warm, not to say sultry.

After crossing the stile leading on to the short cut to Rookwood, Mr. Greely paused to mop his perspiring and scholastic forehead.

"Poof!" he puffed. "The atmospheric conditions are decidedly salubrious, but confoundedly hot! Poof!"

He resumed his pompous, dignified walk towards Rookwood. And it was just before he reached Peck Mill Bridge, in a shaded spot beneath the trees, that Hansom, in his guise as a villainous footpad, ambushed him.

Sailing along like a full-rigged ship before the wind, Mr. Greely's stately progress came to an abrupt halt. There was a rustle in the bushes, and a huge, long-barrelled horse-pistol was rammed into his plump chest.

Behind the pistol showed a fairly well-built individual, in baggy, rather grubby trousers, a ragged outside in coats, and a ragged cap. He sported a large, heavy, walrus-like moustache, and his features were coated thickly with grease-paint—though in the shadows under the trees Mr. Greely could not be expected to note that!

Mr. Greely staggered a pace backwards and fairly blinked at the sudden apparition.

"Put 'em up!" ordered Hansom, in a deep voice. "Grab the sky and 'and over yer cash, mister!"

"G-g-good heavens!" gurgled Greely. "What—what—A dastardly footpad! Doubtless the same villain who accosted Dingley! Upon my s-sus-soul!"

"Put 'em up!" snapped Hansom, in the best talkie manner. "Put 'em up, an' 'and over yer cash, or I'll fill yer plumb full of lead!"

Mr. Greely puffed and gasped, staring thunderstruck.

Hansom smiled inwardly. So far all was going according to programme. Soon Mr. Greely would be on his knees or taking to headlong flight. Then the camera would be whipped out, hurriedly focused, and—

But, alas for Hansom's hopes! It was just then that Hansom's masterly scheme came unstuck.

For podgy as Mr. Greely was, boaster as he possibly was, pompous as he undoubtedly was, he was not a funk! At all events, he showed no sign of funk now, the moment he had got over his amazement. He stared for a long minute at the threatening pistol, and then, with a mighty snort of indignation, he shot out a fat fist.

Biff!

The blow had all Mr. Greely's weight—which was terrific—behind it. It smacked home in Hansom's left eye, and the pistol, utterly disregarded by Greely, went flying away. Then Mr. Greely planted his left on Hansom's nose, following this up with another right which caught Hansom a beautiful wallop in his right eye and knocked him spinning.

Hansom roared in pain and astonishment, and went flat on his back.

He blinked up dizzily at the sky. His nose felt numbed, and red was streaming from it, and he clapped a hand up to it as if he doubted it was still there. His eyes felt strangely puffed and were closing.

Mr. Greely pranced above him, very pleased with his handiwork. Secretly, Mr. Greely had often wondered whether, if really faced with a dangerous situation, he would acquit himself like a man. Now he knew, and the knowledge brought great satisfaction.

"There, you scoundrel!" he panted. "You will find me a

far, far different proposition from your other victims, sir! Get up—get up at once! I will give you a sound thrashing, and then I will hand you over to the police. Get up, sir!"

Hansom stayed down. "Get up!" thundered Greely ferociously. "I intend to thrash you to within an inch of your life, sir!"

Hansom didn't want to be thrashed to within an inch of his life—or a mile, for that matter. Three punches from Mr. Greely were already too much for Edward Hansom. Never in his life had Hansom received such a stunning shock as this. Greely—that pompous fat ass—was not, after all, a funk! Even in that dizzy, whirling moment Hansom of the Fifth felt a sudden and a new respect for old Greely. He certainly felt a respect for old Greely's podgy fists. And as Mr. Greely bent down to drag him to his feet, Hansom woke to sudden life again.

Ho-leaped to his feet, dodged a pair of plump hands, and fairly hit the high spots. It was a complete reversal of programme. Instead of Greely fleeing for his life, Edward Hansom was fleeing for his.

Hansom did not think of the camera now. He did not want a snap of Greely chasing him. He bolted, forgetful of snaps, and of revenge. All he remembered—and feared—was the stunning smack of Greely's fat fists!

Mr. Greely roared after him. "Come back! Stop, you scoundrel! Upon my soul!"

Mr. Greely threw away his pompous dignity and went after Hansom.

Mr. Greely had done well, but he wanted to do better. Nobody had seen him knock down the footpad, and he did not want any doubts about the matter. The world might not believe him. In his mind's eye he had seen himself marching the cowed villain along Combe Lane to the village lock-up, followed by an admiring crowd. To be robbed now of this last triumph would be too much.

So Mr. Greely threw dignity to the winds and went full-tilt after Hansom, bellowing at the top of his voice.

Hansom didn't cross the bridge—he just took a flying leap across the stream instead. Then he tore up the hill beyond, flew across the meadow, pelted through a small wood, and sighted another stile leading on to Combe Lane.

Hansom would certainly have kept clear of Combe Lane had he thought about things. But he had completely forgotten the fact that he was in dark disguise. All he could think of was escape. He turned neither to the right nor the left, but made a desperate bee-line for the stile.

"Stop!" bawled Mr. Greely.

Mr. Greely was getting winded, and the perspiration was streaming from him. He panted and wheezed like a cab-horse. But he kept on keeping on. And really his pace was not at all what one might have expected from the podgy gentleman. In fact, Hansom felt sure Greely was gaining, and his terror increased. Far and wide rang Mr. Greely's deep, throaty voice.

"Stop! Stop, you—poof!—villain!"

Four juniors, just returning from the village, heard the panting voice, and halted.

"What the thump! That sounds like old Greely!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Greely, for a pension!" said Lovell, astonished. "What the dickens is up?"

Lovell led the way with a rush to the stile, not being able to see over the thick hedge. They stared blankly as they sighted the ragged, dishevelled, and battered figure tearing towards them, with Mr. Greely pumping up behind in pursuit.

Mr. Greely evidently sighted the juniors at the stile.

"Stop that—poof!—rascal, boys! Stop the villain! Stop him at all costs!"

Really, old Greely was expecting a lot from juniors. But Jimmy Silver & Co. were just the fellows for such a job. Jimmy Silver himself whipped over the stile and rushed to meet the fugitive, and his chums whipped after him on the instant.

Hansom tried to pull up—to swerve—but he was too late. He rushed into Jimmy, and Jimmy tackled him low, and brought him crashing down.

"Got him!" yelled Jimmy. "Pile in, you men! Hold him!"

There was a furious struggle on the ground. And then came a frantic, desperate voice from the fugitive—a voice they knew only too well.

"Lemme go, you young idiots!" he panted. "Silver, I'll smash you for this! Lemme go, for Heaven's sake! Oh crikey! Quick!"

"What the thump—"

"Hansom!" almost shrieked Lovell.

Jimmy sighted the face then, daubed thick with running grease and perspiration. The heavy moustache had dropped off in the struggle, and at once they recognised the face.

"Hansom!" gasped Jimmy. "That benighted ass, Hansom! Let him go, chaps—quick!"

They released Hansom.

"Here he comes! Slip up a tree or something, Hansom!" gasped Jimmy urgently. "We'll hold him back if we can!"

Hansom leaped up and scudded on again. He tumbled over the stile and vanished. Mr. Greely, panting like old bellows now, came clumping up to the juniors, who instantly turned and ran in front of him, as if in chase of Hansom.

"Out of the way!" gasped Mr. Greely. "Quick! Hasten!"

Mr. Greely dodged and manoeuvred desperately to get past Jimmy Silver & Co., who trotted quite leisurely, though keeping up a show of speed. It was maddening, and Mr. Greely almost foamed at the mouth as he trod on Lovell's heel and nearly came a cropper. But he staggered on, regained his balance, and plugged on again. Each time he attempted to get ahead of the juniors they seemed to line out and close ranks.

"Let me pass, you young idiots!" almost shrieked the master. "Upon my—poof!—soul! Hasten! Let me pass! The villain will escape me!"

"We're doing our best, sir!" panted Jimmy Silver.

And they were—their very best to keep Mr. Greely back!

But Greely did not dream that. Nor did he suspect when the juniors reached the stile and started to scramble over it. And somehow they jammed on it in a struggling mass, with the raving Greely behind.

"Let me p-pup-pass!" choked Mr. Greely. "What in Heaven's name— Upon my soul! Idiots! Imbeciles! The scoundrel is escaping! Quick!"

The struggling mass broke, and the juniors tumbled out into the lane. Mr. Greely scrambled after them, raging.

Jimmy had sighted a pair of legs just vanishing into the thick foliage of an oak fifty yards along the lane—towards Rookwood. He led the way with a rush in the opposite direction, towards Combe village.

Fifty yards farther on the grinning juniors allowed the panting master to pull ahead of them, and then, as Mr. Greely rounded the bend in the lane ahead, Jimmy and his pals pulled up and turned back.

"Now we'll let dear old Greely go on chasing his giddy tail if he wants to," chuckled Jimmy "Wonder what on earth that born idiot, Hansom, has been up to? Hallo, there he goes!"

They suddenly sighted the disvelled form of the hapless Hansom come sliding down the oak-tree. He dropped in a heap at the foot, leaped up again, and rushed to the stile. He vanished over it.

"All clear now," grinned Jimmy. "I expect Hansom's got his own-clobber hidden in the wood somewhere, so he's safe enough now. I suppose old Greely's like Charley's Aunt—still running! Let's get to Rookwood. Perhaps Hansom will tell us the tale."

But Jimmy was an optimist there. Hansom turned up at Rookwood twenty minutes later, red-faced, black-eyed, and badly damaged generally. But he refused to tell the story—in fact, he rushed blindly at Jimmy when he asked. But later the Fistical Four heard the plot from Lumsden, and they yelled with laughter when they understood. So did the rest of Rookwood, for Lumsden and Talboys did not keep it to themselves—nor did Jimmy Silver & Co.

Luckily Mr. Greely never heard the truth—luckily for Hansom of the Fifth. Mr. Greely turned up an hour later, exhausted and decidedly cross. He told his story to Mr. Dalton and his other fellow masters—and he gritted his teeth with wrath as they smiled at it. He told his story also to the Fifth the next morning, and his wrath was terrific when it was met by half-suppressed giggles and splutters by the Fifth.

Only Hansom did not smile. With two black eyes and a swollen nose, Hansom did not feel in the least like smiling. But even Hansom couldn't help smiling when Mr. Greely lectured him severely on his damaged appearance, pointing out that fighting was only justified when attacked by foot-pads, or in suchlike dangerous positions!

Obviously Mr. Greely did not suspect—the only bit of luck for Edward Hansom!

THE END.

(Poor Old Hansom! He never gets away with anything! There's a great laugh in store for you next week when you read "TUBBY'S UNCLE CHARLIE!")

The GEM 2^D



IT'S WORTH WAITING FOR!

Next Week's GEM!

Something seems to have gone a bit wrong with the scene shown in the small cover reproduction alongside! But such things happen in next week's ripping school yarn, entitled:

"ST. JIM'S ON THE STAGE!"

Out Next Wednesday.

Owen Conquest is at his best in a really ripping Rookwood yarn, entitled:

"TUBBY'S UNCLE CHARLIE!"

And there will be a further gripping yarn of that super-thriller gangster

"The Winger!"

Potts, the Office-boy, will again be present, and your Editor will have more news for you!

THE WINGER!



CHAPTER 1.

The Consignment of Sardines!

ZZZZ-ZZ-ZZZ— Snap Fane suddenly sat up from star-gazing, and listened intently.

In his home-made paddle-boat he was slowly drifting down on the ebb tide past the Albert Docks. It was after midnight, and the night was still and warm.

Snap snatched out a pencil and an old notebook. On the bottom of the boat was a small pocket radio set, which he always kept tuned-in to the short wave-length used by the Winger.

For ten minutes the buzzing signals came through; then silence.

"The Winger's at it again," muttered Snap. "Gosh! And I've managed to solve the buzzer code we found on the two charms of his gang we bagged over the Hatton Garden diamond robbery."

He turned the leaves of his book, and with the aid of a small lamp decoded the buzzer signals which had awakened him.

"Gosh! The Winger must be hungry!" he grinned, when the short message lay before him in plain English. "Sardines—sardines—"

With crinkled brow, he re-read the message.

"Rendezvous Number Five. Consignment sardines. Lighter. Docks. Speedboat and official dress. Stop."

Snap sucked his pencil. What did it mean?

Then he bent forward. From the transmitter of his radio set came a cool, aristocratic voice. It was the Winger talking, en clair.

"Hallo, Sergeant—I beg your pardon, I mean Inspector Thomas!" purred the taunting voice. "I shall be giving a dinner of fish shortly. Perhaps, as you are fond of meddling with my affairs, you might like to come. Bring your brother idiot, Sergeant Hull, too, will you? Good-bye-e!"

Snap roared with laughter, slipped his feet into the pedals, and paddled back upstream. In half an hour he landed at the riverside police station at Limehouse Reach, and barged into the office of Sergeant Hull.

"Sergeant—I say, Mr. Hull, I've picked up a message from the Winger!" he cried, grinning at the sleepy-eyed officer.

"Oh, blow the Winger!" snarled Hull. "I've been getting sarcastic messages from him over the telephone for the last two days. He's mad with you because you foiled

his attempt to get ten thousand from Cohen, Fliss, and Cohen last week."

"Yes, but this is a buzzer message!" cried Snap. "And he also sent out a teaser to Inspector Thomas, at Scotland Yard."

Sergeant Hull yawned and poked the bogey-stove. "Forget it!" he growled. "The Winger's theatrical. If we took notice of everything he says over the wireless we'd have to double the waterside police."

"You're not going to take any notice of this?" asked Snap, thrusting his decoded message under the officer's nose. "Read it! I've solved the secret of the Winger's private code. I've taken four days to do it; but, by gum, I've succeeded!"

"What the—!" Hull stifled a yawn and jumped up.

"Sardines!" grinned Snap. "And he's invited, en clair, you and Mr. Thomas to go and have a fish dinner with him."

"A fish— Here, get out!" snorted Sergeant Hull. "This is a blind. What the dickens would the Winger want with a consignment of sardines?"

The direct telephone with Scotland Yard buzzed, and Sergeant Hull unhooked the receiver.

"I say, Hull, that infernal scoundrel the Winger's been broadcasting an invitation for you and me to dine with him!" rasped Inspector Thomas' voice. "We'll be the laughing-stock of London! The papers'll be full of it in the morning. What's his game, anyway?"

"Looks as if he's hungry, Mr. Thomas," Snap answered back. "Are you going to his dinner?"

A snort came over the wires. "I want to speak to Hull, not to you, Snap Fane!" barked Inspector Thomas from his office at Scotland Yard. Snap handed the instrument to Sergeant Hull and listened-in.

"What d'you make of it, Hull?" asked Thomas angrily. "It's another blind, like him mentioning about old Cohen dropping dead in Cheapside, sir," answered Sergeant Hull. "He's up to something, but I'd gamble he's not going to pinch sardines!"

"But I am, I assure you," came the Winger's cool voice from the radio transmitter. "I just love sardines!"

"Did you hear that, Mr. Thomas?" exploded Sergeant Hull.

An explosion the other end of the wires was sufficient answer.

"Patrol the river, Hull! I'll call up the other river stations, and we'll have every launch out for forty-eight hours!" roared Inspector Thomas. "That crook's up to something pretty big—"

"Sardines, Sergeant—er—I mean Inspector Thomas," purred the Winger's smooth voice. "Just sardines. And I shall look forward to you having dinner with me. Chicorio! I've got to get busy now."

Sergeant Hull cut the radio out, then sent telephone messages humming down the wires to the riverside stations from Westminster to Tilbury.

Sleepy waterside policemen growled, rubbed their eyes, and darted from their bunks to board their launches. Pier-head officers became more alert. Uniformed policemen strolling around the deserted docks saw the Winger in every belated seaman returning to his ship.

Snap departed from Sergeant Hull's office and jumped aboard his paddle-boat, sending it speeding down the Thames.

"Jingo! What's he up to now?" he asked himself a hundred times. "What's he want to pinch a consignment of sardines for?"

Many times he read and re-read the mysterious message he had decoded. In his usual careless, debonair way, the Winger had even given Scotland Yard a clue that he was about to get busy.

But where? Who? And what was he going to do this time?

Snap landed at the Customs House near Albert Docks and went inside.

Ten minutes later he came out, his keen grey eyes agleam. "If it's sardines the Winger's after, the only ship with any aboard is the Antonio Guiz," he muttered. "She's got fifty tons of canned sardines in her main hold. She arrived on last night's tide, and is lying in the Tidal Basin dock, according to the list of arrivals."

Fifty tons of sardines! What could any crook want with such a consignment?

"Corks! Is the Winger goin' to open a grocer's shop?" grinned Snap, as he paddled towards the Tidal Basin lock-gates. "Anyway, I'm going to hang around the Antonio Guiz until those sardines are landed."

With the dawn he passed through the open lock-gates and paddled to a buoy in Tidal Basin, where he made his little boat fast; then, before any of the dockers arrived, Snap swam ashore and crawled into the warehouse alongside which lay the Portuguese steamer with fifty tons of canned sardines in her main hatch.

Was it a blind? Had the Winger sent out that radio message, guessing that either Snap or the police had solved his cipher code?

Restlessly police launches patrolled the river from Westminster to Tilbury. Uniformed and plain-clothes officers scanned with eagle eyes every incomer into the docks.

The very air seemed tense as with a brooding storm. The Winger was awake. Where would he strike this time?

Scotland Yard was keeping guard on incoming liners who carried bullion and other portable valuables, feeling sure the Winger had broadcast sardines to draw them off the trail.

Snap Fane, with a general insight of London's underworld, and with a particular interest in the Winger, watched the Antonio Guiz.

Soon the docks would hum with life. Winches would rattle; cargo would go swaying out of and into the ships lying against the wharves.

Already crowds of dockers were clamouring for work at the dock gates, hands aloft trying to catch the eyes of the foremen engaging hands to work aboard the ships.

But sardines! Snap's brain buzzed with the word.

CHAPTER 2.

The Winger in Action!

SEVENTEEN men were seated at breakfast in a comfortable breakfast-room; yet they fitted badly with the luxurious furniture of that room.

Dressed as dockers, unshaven many of them, and with unkempt hair, they handled knives and forks like gentlemen. Only two of them were dressed neatly, and they sat at the head of the table.

In silence breakfast was eaten; then, at a sign from the suave young man in a grey tweed suit seated at the head, they rose and stood silently waiting.

"Gentlemen, it is sardines this time!" cried the Winger. "You will go to Tidal Basin and be engaged to unload the Portuguese steamer, Antonio Guiz. I have arranged with Jim Bright, the foreman stevedore, that you will give this signal when you congregate outside the docks."

He raised his right hand and doubled the two middle fingers down, leaving the little finger, thumb, and index finger pointing straight up.

"To every man who gives this sign Jim Bright will give a job aboard the Antonio Guiz," he went on sharply. "Number Three, you will take charge. Have your radio set tuned-in all the time. Dismiss!"

The men left, slouching from the country house in twos.

"Now, Blake, you and I go to the Victoria Docks to interview Captain Hunter, of the tugboat Sea Erne,"

smiled the Winger. "And we'll keep a smart look-out for Snap Fane. Thomas, Hull, and all the riverside police are watching the river. Thomas is quite sure I broadcast sardines to blind him to something else. There's fifteen thousand pounds in this little coup."

"Sardines are valuable, chief!" chuckled Blake.

In a luxurious saloon car the Winger and his first lieutenant went to Commercial Road East. At the corner of the West India Dock Road the Winger stopped the car against the kerb and picked up his pocket radio set.

Lizz-zzz-zzz-zzz—

Snap Fane, leaning over the rails of the Antonio Guiz, gave a start. From his pocket came a series of buzzes. Carefully he listened, jotting down the signals which his radio set was pouring forth.

They stopped. An interval of ten seconds; then there came another series of buzzes, this time so loud that he was afraid the stevedores working around him would hear them.

"Jingo! That sounds close enough to be aboard this ship," he muttered, as the sounds stopped. "The first signal came from some distance away, but the last one—Hi! What's the game?" he snapped, as a man lurched against him.

"Blimey, I thought you was a dago!" grinned the dockerman. "Get outter the way of them slings, or you'll git yer chump knocked orf!"

Snap moved away. A sling of cases of sardines swept across the deck and rattled down into the waiting lighter below.

In a quiet corner Snap decoded the signals, a frown on his cheery face as he noticed that the dockerman who had barged into him frequently looked his way.

"What time discharging completed?" read the first signal he had received.

"Four o'clock this afternoon!" was the answer which had buzzed out from close quarters.

Snap tore the decoded message up and threw it overboard. The first signal was from the Winger, some distance away; but not far, by the volume of sound. The answer had come from quite close.

"From aboard this ship, by gum!" muttered Snap. He pondered what to do. Useless for him to try to get police help. Inspector Thomas would not look at the idea of the Winger stealing a consignment of sardines.

Yet that radio message! The dockerman bumping into him! "Wonder if he heard the radio buzzing in me pocket?" Snap asked himself.

During the dinner-hour Snap got his chance. Slipping down a rope, he got aboard the lighter P.L.A. 99 unseen and slipped down into the hold, hiding behind a stack of sardine cases.

The work was resumed. Soon Snap was hopelessly covered in by boxes and boxes of sardines.

"If it's sardines the Winger's after, he'll have to pinch me, too!" grinned the London lad. "Coo! What if it's a frost?"

The last of the sardines cargo was loaded into the lighter. The hatches were put on and covered with a tarpaulin.

One by one the ships finished their day's work, and quietness settled over the docks again.

Snap managed to force a way out from behind the cases which hemmed him in. With his pocket-knife he prised open one case and took out a tin of sardines.

This he opened by puncturing a hole in it. Rich olive oil spurted out, and he dug out a bit of sardine and ate it. "Gosh, I'm on the wrong track, after all!" he muttered disgustedly. "I thought perhaps the Winger was smuggling something into England disguised as sardines."

He took another dig and ate more sardine.

"Done brown this time!" he growled. "Thomas and Hull were right. The Winger's after something bigger than a few cans of sardines."

He tried to raise the hatches. They were battened down. He listened. All was silent outside.

He raised his knife to hammer on the hatch above his head, then froze to a statue.

Footsteps were coming down the wharf. They halted abreast the loaded lighter.

He would attract attention by hammering on the hatch. He could easily explain to the night-watchman that he had fallen asleep aboard the lighter.

Again he hesitated. The man, whoever he was, had jumped aboard the sardine lighter, and was seated on the hatch almost directly overhead.

The radio set in Snap's pocket started to buzz. Frantically Snap cut it off, then strained his ears.

From above there came another buzzing noise. Desperately he tried to jot down the individual short and long buzzes.

His eyes narrowed and gleamed eagerly in the darkness.

"Jingo! I'm right, after all," he mused. "That chap up there's one of the Winger's gang."

In vain he tried to pick up the muffled signals. The hatch was too thick, and the buzzes confused and broken by the scratching of hobnailed boots on the iron deck.

Stealthily Snap crept behind some cases and crouched down. He was a prisoner aboard the lighter, with the sardines and one of the Winger's men aboard her.

Sardines! Sardines!

He dug out a bit more fish and ate it.

Why on earth did the Winger bother to steal a paltry consignment of tinned fish in oil?

It was a mystery Snap could not fathom. At first he had wondered if the tins contained contraband of some sort. But they were genuine sardines—and nice ones, too!

Time wore on. Steamers moved around the loaded lighter as the tide-time came; tugboats fussed about, rocking the lighter with their churning screws.

The man aboard moved about occasionally. Towards midnight another man joined him, and they spoke together in some language Snap could not understand.

Suddenly there was a bump. The lighter rocked heavily; and a clear, merry laugh rang above the swish of water.

"Tugs are clumsy things to handle!" cried a suave voice. "The Winger!"

Snap tensed to that laugh and voice. The Winger was somewhere above.

What was happening?

Ropes thudded about on the lighter's decks; men tramped overhead.

Then a churning of a screw; the lighter began slowly to move.

Snap frowned. The Winger was towing her away somewhere.

He recalled the words of the first signal:

"Rendezvous Number Five. Consignment sardines. Lighter. Dockers. Speedboat and official dress—"

Did speedboat mean tug in the Winger's code?

"Might do!" Snap decided. "But, gosh, how would he pinch a London tug?"

Yet that was the Winger's voice. Snap would know it anywhere. And it was a tugboat, not a speedboat, that was towing them away!

A thrill ran down his spine. Men were banging the wedges from the tarpaulins which held the hatches down. Like a rat, Snap scooted behind some cases and crouched low.

"Hurry, there! We've got to empty those cases before dawn and get away in the speedboat!" said a smooth voice.

The hatches were lifted and stacked at the fore end of the lighter. In the gloom Snap could see their figures. There were sixteen of them.

Suddenly the sonorous tones of Big Ben echoed through the night. Snap looked out and saw the towers of Westminster gliding astern.

Where were they going? When battened down below he had thought the Winger must be making down the river towards the more desolate parts.

But the lighter was being towed under Westminster Bridge. He peeped out. The shadowy men were gathered in a group aft, receiving orders from a burly figure who seemed to be in command.

Here was Snap's chance—and he took it. Pressed hard against the black end of the lighter, he slid over on to the fore deck and lay flat.

The blackness under Lambeth Bridge gave him his chance. Like a streak, he wriggled farther aft and dropped down into the tiny cabin.

Keeping his head level with the deck, he was able to watch the men without being seen. What were they going to do?

He saw them leap down on top of the sardine cases and begin to rip them open.

CHAPTER 3.

Snap's Great Flare-Up!

"WHAT the blazes are they doing?"

The shadow gang were simply ripping the tops off the cases, but were not removing the contents in any way.

Vauxhall Bridge passed overhead, with the tugboat puffing fussily at the end of the tow-line.

Still the shadow gang worked, ripping the tops off the cases and stacking the wood to one side.

Still Lighter P.L.A. 99 towed on until Chelsea Bridge drifted astern.

London was sleeping. Chelsea Embankment was in darkness, except for the lonesome glow of the standard

lights. Snap saw the shoulders and helmet of a patrolling policeman stop and watch them pass.

If only that policeman knew who was in command of the tug! If only he knew that the Winger's gang was ripping open cases of sardines aboard that lighter!

Another tug passed them bound for the sea. A cheery hail came across the dark waters, and was answered by the Winger from the bridge of the tug towing the lighter.

Albert Bridge swept past overhead; and Snap was beginning to wonder where they were going, when of a sudden the tugboat sheered to port and headed straight into a creek between Albert Bridge and Battersca Bridge.

Snap dropped right down. They had reached their destination at last.

The tugboat's engines stopped. A few silent moments, and then the lighter bumped gently against a wharf.

"Quick—carry the open cases ashore, half of you; the rest snap off the heads of the remaining cases!"

The Winger was giving orders. Snap would know that smooth, velvety voice among a thousand, with its University accent and drawl.

Eight shadowy men aboard the lighter pranced up a gangway plank to an inky-black wharf beside which lay the tugboat, quite unlighted; others worked silently as possible prising open case after case of sardines aboard the lighter.

What was happening? Snap crept out of the cabin and lay flat on the tiny iron after-deck of the lighter. Then he crept aft, lowered himself silently into the water, and swam with a few strokes to the tug.

"The Sea Eric. That's Skipper King's boat," he mused, clinging to the rubber strake. "Lumme! Old King ain't in with the Winger, is he?"

He drifted aft, hauled himself slowly up, and rolled over the bulwark. Flat in the scupper he lay, listening, and squeezing the water from his clothes.

"All right down below, Blake?"

He gave a start and peeped over a skylight. Unknown to him, the slim figure of the Winger himself stood on the other side of the deck.

Someone came stamping up the companion-way from below.

"All right below, chief!" answered Blake.

"I'll get the speedboat, and we'll get the stuff aboard her at once," said the Winger calmly. "I want to be at Twickenham before dawn."

Snap watched the two men go ashore on the inky-black wharf; then he followed and tracked Blake into an open shed.

There he saw the strangest sight of his life. Men were working with can-openers, attacking the sardines with a will; oil and fish lay all over the place.

Two men stood by holding sacks, into which the rest were throwing things.

Snap crept closer and hid behind a pillar.

Like furies the men were working, some carrying opened cases from the lighter, others opening the tins and taking something out and throwing it into the sacks.

An hour passed, then came a soft purr. A sleek shadow glided from the darkness, materialising into a speedboat, which glided alongside some steps within six yards of Snap.

Instantly the men holding the sacks darted aboard, emptied their sacks into the cockpit, and darted back for more.

The crew of the tugboat joined the rest until Snap counted twenty-six men working like trojans.

Three o'clock boomed from Big Ben.

"All ashore, chief," said a quiet, refined voice.

"Be finished opening the tins in half an hour, chief!" cried Blake's voice.

The Winger's soft laugh answered from the wharf edge.

"I expect Inspector Thomas here at any moment now, Blake," he said merrily. "I sent him a radio and pretended I was Snap Fane. I told him I had located the Winger at this spot—and asked him to come quickly."

"My word, chief, that's asking for trouble, isn't it?" gasped Blake.

"Not a bit, old man!" chuckled the master-crook of London. "Hull, Thomas, and all the rest of that precious gang are somewhere between Tilbury and the Albert Docks, guarding the Minnetonka, which is carrying a big bullion cargo from New York. They won't be here before four or half-past. And by that time we'll have the cocaine landed at Twickenham and in the air."

Snap pricked up his ears. So this was the mystery of the sardines.

Cocaine was hidden in each tin! The Winger had accepted employment as a drug-runner!

"Hurry up with that stuff, you chaps!" laughed the Winger.

Desperately the gang worked. And as half-past three chimed, the last sack was carried aboard the speedboat for

transport to Twickenham, where it was, apparently, to be loaded into an aeroplane.

Snap stole towards the edge of the wharf and dropped into the water. His radio set was still aboard the lighter, where he had left it when he swam to the tug.

Like a water-rat he swam to the lighter and got aboard the deserted craft.

"Snap Fane to Inspector Thomas," he radioed. "The Winger landing cargo of dope at creek between Albert Bridge and Battersea Bridge. Going to Twickenham in speedboat to reload into aeroplane—"

"Blake! Snap Fane's sending radio messages to Thomas!" came a curt cry from the Winger. "He's somewhere near—"

Snap heard no more; for he slipped over into the water again, and, keeping beneath the surface, swam to the speedboat and gripped her rudder-post.

"Quick—he must be aboard the lighter!" cried the Winger.

In a swarm the gang raced aboard the lighter, flashing torches into every corner.

Snap grinned and hoisted himself aboard the speedboat. "He's been here, chief!" cried Blake's voice. "There are fresh wet marks on deck and—"

"Cheerio, Winger! I'm here now!" shouted Snap from the speedboat.

The whole gang froze to statues and stared in his direction.

Snap stood on the after part of the speedboat, a can of petrol in his hands, looking down at a whole heap of tiny tin tubes which lay in the cockpit.

"Those tubes were hidden under the top layer of sardines," he grinned. "Well, Winger, I reckon I've captured your cargo again!"

He saw the Winger's right hand flash up. Like an india-rubber boy he ducked, emptied the petrol down on the drug, and sprang for the wharf.

"Get him, boys; he can't get away!" cried the Winger, the shot from his silenced pistol splashing harmlessly into the water.

Snap darted aside. The whole gang made a rush at him.

Then he struck a match and hurled it into the petrol-soaked cockpit of the speedboat.

"That'll bring the local cops, Winger!" he cried. "Gee! Pity it ain't the Fifth of November!"

A flash of fire came from the speedboat.

In a second the cockpit was a raging mass of flames.

"You rat, I'll get you for this!" cried the Winger, making a rush at the grinning boy.

"Say 'perhaps!'" laughed Snap, backing warily.

The Winger's arm rose again, but before he could press the trigger and wing Snap the lad had taken a backwards somersault and splashed into the Thames.

Right under the tugboat he swam, coming up on the outside.

"See him? Overboard and catch the blighter!" came the Winger's acid voice.

Snap climbed aboard the tug and darted down below. Deep groans greeted his ears; and as he felt into the bunks around the sides of the saloon he touched the bound and gagged bodies of her crew lying there.

The red glare of the roaring flames cast a light inside. Swiftly Snap released the men, and whispered what had happened and who he was.

"Look aboard the tug!" he heard the Winger shout. "That kid's like a fish in the water! He'll be aboard there, I expect."

Snap signed the released crew to be silent.

"They'll come down here, and we'll bag 'em!" he whispered, darting to the head of the companion-way. "When they come down I'll shut 'em in, and we'll have 'em on toast!"

The Winger's gang was storming over the bulwarks and rushing aft.

Snap saw their shadows pass across the skylight, thrown into relief by the blazing speedboat.

"Down into the cabin, Number Four, and search the place!" ordered the gruff voice of Blake, the Winger's first lieutenant.

Snap tautened to action. Number Four placed his feet on the top step; he began to descend; then stopped, as a shrill whistle rang out.

"The alarm! Beat it, boys!" shouted Blake from aft.

Number Four made to turn and dash back to the deck. Too late. Snap wound both arms around him, heaved forward, and with the man in his arms thudded down the companion-way to the saloon below.

"Grab him, Skipper King!" he shouted, leaping up and darting back to the deck. "I'm going after the Winger!"

He flew up the companion-way and out on the deck. The flames from the burning speedboat made it as light as day.

Ping, ping!

Something bit into Snap's right arm, and it fell useless to his side.

He flashed around, stifling a cry of pain, just in time to



Number Four made to turn and dash back to the deck. Too late! Snap wound his arms round the man, heaved forward, and the pair of them thudded down the companion-way into the saloon!

see the face of the Winger smiling at him from a corner of the shed.

"Right-ho, Snap! See you later!" called the suave crook.

"You'll see me now, you beggar!" roared Snap, flying after him.

He reached a gate which led into the road and flung it open.

"Now then, what's the game here?" growled a harsh voice; and someone seized Snap and held him in the grip of a grizzly bear.

It was a policeman; and hastily Snap explained.

"The Winger! He was landing a cargo of dope here, and he came this way!" he gasped. "Which way did he go?"

The constable gaped and tilted his helmet back on his head.

"The Winger! Wot—that young gent as ran out and told me the wharf were on fire?" he gurgled.

"Yes!" Where is he?" asked Snap eagerly.

The policeman stared down the road. Snap heard the purr of a first-class motor-car growing fainter in the distance.

"It was a biggish car, and seemed full of chaps," growled the officer. "Coo! Are you sure that was the Wing—"
"Look at me arm!" snapped Snap Fane, reeling from loss of blood.

The constable caught him as he stumbled and fainted.

"Curse that boy, Blake!" snapped the Winger, looking from the windows of his Rolls-Royce, as it glided swiftly across Battersea Bridge. "Bang goes another night's work!"

The flickering flames of the burning speedboat still cast red shadows on the black waters of the Thames.

"He would have had us if you hadn't taken the precaution to have the Rolls-Royce waiting just in case of accidents, chief," observed Blake.

"Did all the gang get away?" asked the Winger gloomily.
"All except Number Four." Snap caught him in the saloon of the tugboat.

For once, the Winger's face lost its careless smile. His green eyes shone like balls of fire as the car speeded down the King's Road, heading west.

But by the time he reached Putney his old careless smile hovered around his lips.

"No good gambling if you can't be a good loser, Blake," he said cheerily. "I'll just send another message to that idiot Thomas."

Snap opened his eyes, lying on the wharf under the shed where the sardines had been landed. A group of policemen stood around him.

"Hallo, Mr. Thomas!" he grinned weakly. "I got the Winger's Number Four, and destroyed his cargo of cocaine. But— Hark!"

From Inspector Thomas' pocket came a soft, smooth voice:

"Hallo, Sergeant—sorry, I mean Inspector Thomas!" it purred. "I regret to say that our fish dinner is off, mainly owing to the activities of that unofficial sleuth, Snap Fane. I hope I did not hurt him much when I winged him—"

Snap seized the radio set and grinned into the transmitter.

"Okay, Winger!" he called merrily. "You sure winged me, big boy; but not so hard as I'll wing you some day."

A soft laugh answered him.

"Well, we never know, Snap," came the Winger's voice.

"Until we meet again!"

"And may it be soon!" retorted Snap.

(Snap has spoiled the Winger's game again, but that won't stop the Winger from having another shot. More thrills next week!)

THE ST. JIM'S SPEED COPS!

(Continued from page 17.)

car and commenced a series of variations on the electric horn to awaken Taggles and bring him to the gates. Blake homered on the plate with a spanner at the same time, Taggles had been awakened a good many times by belated parties coming in, for Founder's Day at St. Jim's was an occasion when the boys were allowed many unaccustomed freedoms. The school porter came grumbling to the gate once more.

"Nice goings hon!" said Taggles grumpily. "Ere's the 'Ead a-saying I oughtn't never to have allowed you to take the car out of the gates, as if I'd got heyes in the back of me 'ead. Nice goings on, I must say! Hey, what's that?"
"Sorry to wake you up, Taggy, old dear," said Tom Merry, slipping half-a-crown into his hand. "Come and help me put the car up along with the Head's."

The tip mollified Taggles. He lent a hand in putting up the car, and then the juniors entered the School House. They found the Head waiting for them.

"Where have you been?"

"A little run to Huckleberry Heath, sir!" said Tom cheerfully. "Been to see my old governess, sir. Couldn't take the chauffeur, as he disappeared before we started. All serene, sir! I've driven a motor before!"

The doctor's face relaxed.

"I am glad to learn that you have all returned safely," he said. "As it is Founder's Day, I will say nothing more about the matter."

"Oh, thank you, sir! Good-night, sir!" chorused the juniors.

"Good-night!" said the Head, smiling.

And they went upstairs.

"Well, it's been a ripping time!" said Blake. "Pleasant dreams! I wonder when old Figgins will get in?"

He knew about an hour later, when he was awakened by a pip-pipping in the quadrangle. But at Figgins & Co.'s escapade, too, the Head winked an eye, as it was Founder's Day.

It had been a most enjoyable time, and for many days the juniors retained pleasant recollections of that wonderful day out!

THE END.

(Figgins & Co. held their own that time, and next week they join up with Tom Merry in "St. JIM'S ON THE STAGE!")

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