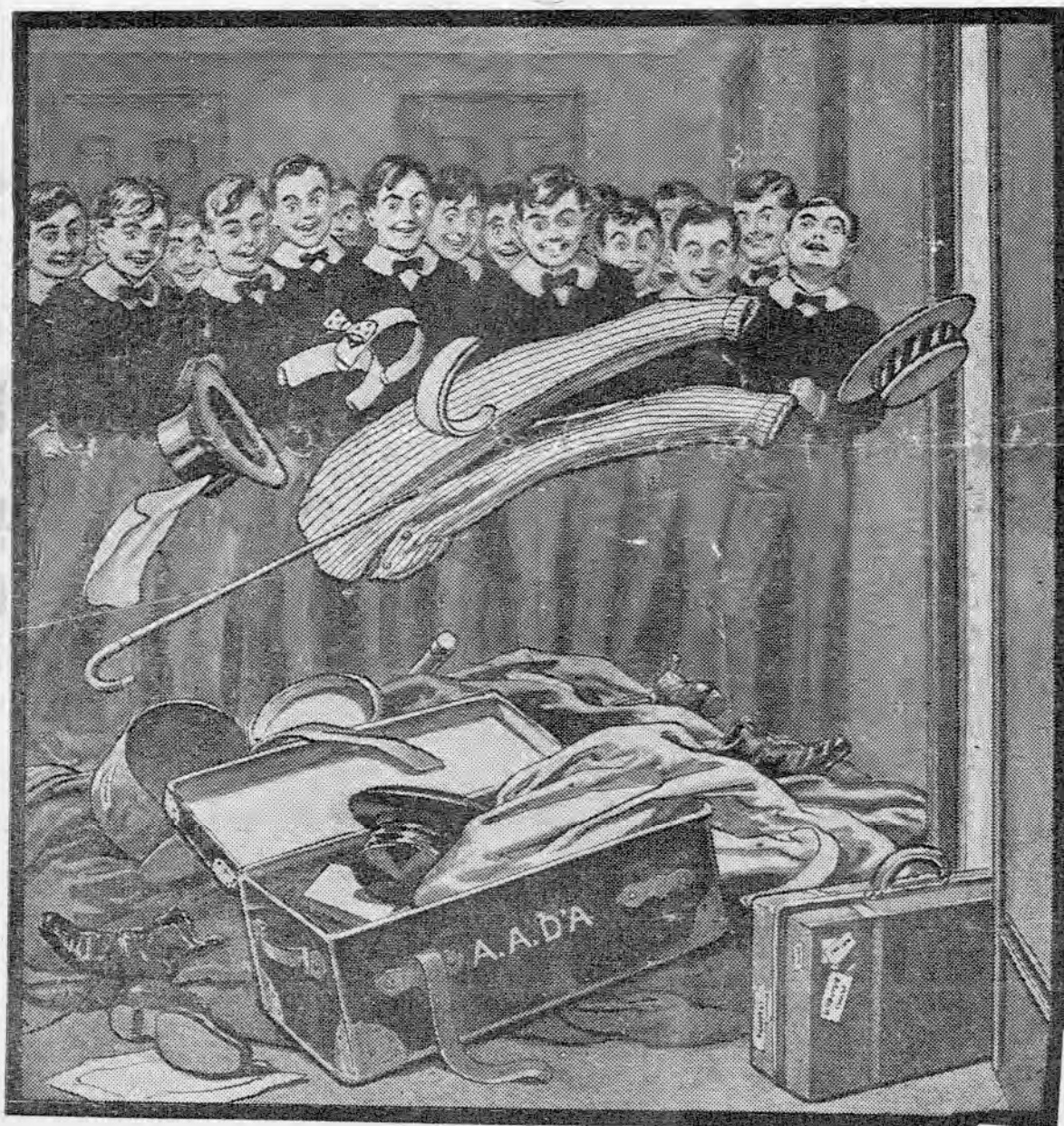


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THE SCHOOLBOY CARAVANNERS!



CLEANING UP GUSSY'S STUDY!

(A Screamingly Funny Scene in the Splendid Long Complete School Tale in this Issue)



The School-Boy Caravanners

A Magnificent Long Complete

Story of

TOM MERRY & CO at St. Jim's

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Horsy!

TOM MERRY came along the Fourth Form passage in the School House at St. Jim's, and looked into Study No. 6.

"Gussy here?" he asked.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked round. "Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus, as it happened, was alone in Study No. 6. There was not much room for his study-mates, Blake and Herries and Digby, if they had been there. Two large trunks stood on the study carpet, and two hatboxes on the table, and every chair was occupied with coats, jackets, or trousers, or some article belonging to Arthur Augustus' very extensive wardrobe. Tom Merry stared at the collection in astonishment.

"What on earth's this game?" he asked.

"I am packin', deah boy."

"Oh! Not starting a second-hand clothes shop in the study?" asked Tom humorously.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Are you taking that lot home with you for the vac?"

"I am takin' a few things—"

"Oh, my hat! A few? Special train, I suppose?"

"Nothin' of the sort, Tom Mewwy. In fact, I am not goin' by twain."

Tom Merry shook his head seriously.

"There isn't a car built big enough for all your clobber, Gussy. I suppose you'll be havin' a lorry?"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus was carefully polishing a silk hat preparatory to stacking it in the hatbox. He went on polishing.

"You're wanted downstairs, Gussy!" said the captain of the Shell. "Kildare told me to call you."

"Bai Jove! Pway tell Kildare that I cannot come at pwsent. I am wathah busay."

"It's a call on the telephone in the prefects' room," explained Tom Merry. "Somebody is hanging on."

"Oh, deah! I suppose I had bettah come."

"I suppo, you had," grinned Tom Merry. "Kildare took the call, and told them to 'ang on, whoever they are. Like your heek to tell people to ring you up on the telephone."

"I weequish Kildare's permish first, deah boy. It's a wathah important mattah. I trust those boundahs will not

come in while I am away. They will disturb my clobber, and if the things get mixed up it will take a feahful time to sort them out again."

Monty Lowther came along the passage and looked in.

"That chump here?" he asked.

"If you are 'alludin' to me, Lowthah—"

"Kildare says you're to come if you want to take that call, fathhead," said Lowther.

"I am just comin'. Would you fellows mind stayin' heah while I am gone, and seein' that my things are not disturbed?"

"Would—we?"—grinned Lowther. "Yes, just a little, old chap. Come on, Tommy! Manners is yellin' for us."

"I'm waiting for you two duffers!" came the voice of Manners of the Shell from the landing.

Tom Merry and Lowther left the study. Arthur Augustus laid down the silk hat and the pad, and looked round the study with a rather worried expression. He did not like leaving his precious "clobber" strewn round the room unguarded and uncared for. He had well-founded apprehensions as to what might happen to it if his study-mates came in to tea while he was gone.

"Bai Jove! This is wathah wotten," he murmured. "I weally think that Spwiggs might have 'phoned at a more convenient time. Howevah, I suppose I had bettah go."

And he went.

Arthur Augustus closed the door of Study No. 6 carefully behind him, and hurried to the stairs. Baggy Trimble of the Fourth met him on the landing.

"Gussy, old chap—" he began.

"Pway do not detain me, Twimble. I am in wathah a huwwy."

"Getting ready for the vac—what?" asked Trimble, accompanying the swell of St. Jim's down the stairs.

"Yaas."

"I asked you the other day to come home to Trimble Hall with me for the vac, Gussy."

"I am sowwy, Twimble, that I am obliged to decline your vewy kind invitation," said Arthur Augustus.

"Can't come—what?"

"I am sowwy—no."

"I really wanted your company for the vac, D'Arcy," said Trimble sorrowfully. "I am weally vewy sowwy."

"But it's all right. If you won't come to Trimble Hall, I'll come home

with you, if you like," said Baggy generously. "It will come to practically the same thing, won't it?"

"Bai Jove!"

"We'll consider it settled, old chap."

"The fact is, Twimble, I am not goin' home for the vac. So I shall be unable to enjoy your society durin' the holidays, deah boy."

And with that Arthur Augustus quickened his steps, and went into the prefects' room.

Kildare of the Sixth was in the passage, and he called out to the swell of St. Jim's.

"Better take your call, D'Arcy, or you'll be cut off."

"Thank you vewy much, Kildare."

Baggy Trimble followed Arthur Augustus into the room. It was unoccupied just then. Arthur Augustus hurried across to the telephone and took up the receiver, which was off the hooks.

"I say, is Kildare letting you use the telephone?" said Trimble. "He snapped at me the other day when I wanted to use it. Favouritism, I call it."

"This is a wathah special mattah, Twimble."

"I'd like to 'phone home to Trimble Hall about the car coming down to fetch me home," said Trimble. "I think—"

"Pway give me a west, Trimble. I cannot speak on the telephone while you are talkin', you know."

Grunt, from Trimble.

"Are you there?" asked Arthur Augustus, into the transmitter. "Mr. Spwiggs? Oh, vewy good. Yaas, I am D'Arcy! About the horse—oh, yaas! Pway go on. I am wathah particulah about the horse, of course. A vewy gweat deal depends on the horse."

Baggy Trimble blinked at him.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "You backin' horses, D'Arcy! My hat!"

"Pway dwy up, Twimble; you are intewwuptin' me."

"Fancy using the prefects' telephone to talk to a bookie about horses!" said Trimble, with wide-open eyes. "That takes the cake, that does! Kildare doesn't guess—"

"Dwy up, you fat duffah! I cannot heah what Mr. Spwiggs is sayin' while you are chattewin'."

"Backing horses!" repeated Trimble.

"I'm surprised at you, Gussy!"

"Pway wepeat that wemark, Mr. Spwiggs," said D'Arcy, into the tele-

phone. "I did not heah you, owin' to a sillay ass chatewin' at my elbow."

"What race is it for, Gussy?" asked Trimble eagerly. "Look here, you put a sov on for me, and I'll keep it dark."

"Will you wing off, Twimble?" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I am not backin' horses, you howwid young wewpohate! Wun away!"

"You can't take me in, you know!" grinned Trimble. "I distinctly heard you asking about the horse. Now, look here, it means a licking if you're found out. I'll keep it dark, of course, as we're pals. But I really think—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy laid down the receiver, and made a rush at Baggy Trimble. That fat youth found himself taken by the collar, and was then aware of an elegant but forcible boot that was planted behind him. Baggy Trimble departed from the prefects' room with a loud yell, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy returned to the telephone to resume his talk with Mr. Spriggs—whatever Mr. Spriggs was—on the subject of the horse.

CHAPTER 2.

A Moving Job!

"TEA ready?"

Jack Blake of the Fourth asked that question as he came into Study No. 6 with Dig and Herries at his heels. He asked it before he was aware that the study was empty; expecting to find Arthur Augustus D'Arcy there.

Then he stopped—and stared.

D'Arcy was not in the study; but there were many signs that he had been there lately.

"Well, my only hat!" ejaculated Blake, staring round the study in surprise and wrath.

"My word!" said Dig.

Herries gave a snort. Herries was hungry, and he wanted his tea. As Arthur Augustus had not been at cricket with his chums, his chums naturally expected that he would get tea in the study. There was no sign of tea; no sign of anything but clothes and trunks and hat-boxes. There were plenty of those, certainly.

"The howling ass!" said Blake. "What on earth has he lumbered up the study with all this rubbish for?"

"Packing for the vac I suppose," granted Digby. "What the thump does he want with all that clobber? Where are we going to have tea?"

"The ass!"

"The fathead!"

"The chump!"

Having expressed their feelings with those complimentary remarks, Blake & Co. proceeded to clear the study for tea.

"Lend me a hand with these dashed trunks!" growled Blake. "Trunks in the study, by Jove! We'll jolly soon shift them!"

Three pairs of hands grasped the larger of the two trunks. It was a huge trunk, and it was weighty. Fortunately, it was on castors, and it was run out of the study without difficulty. It whizzed out into the Fourth Form passage, propelled by three energetic juniors, and there was a loud yell as it crashed on the knees of a passing junior. Levison of the Fourth sprawled over the trunk, and roared.

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh crumbs! I didn't see you coming, Levison!" gasped Blake.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Levison scrambled off the trunk, and gave the chums of Study No. 6 a Hungry look.

"You silly asses!" he roared.

"Sorry, old chap!"

"You howling chumps! You've barked my knees with that silly trunk!" howled

Levison. "Wharrer you mean by wheeling a contraption like that about the passage?"

"Ask Gussy! It's Gussy's trunk. Lend a hand with the other, you chaps!"

"What ho!"

Blake & Co. grasped the other trunk. The second trunk had no castors, and it was up-ended out of the study. It came down with a terrific crash on one side, and collars and neckties and shirts and mufflers and other articles streamed out of it.

"Now the rest of the rubbish," said Blake.

Two hatboxes joined the trunks in the passage.

Then coats and waistcoats, jackets and trousers, came whizzing out of the study in showers.

By that time a dozen fellows had gathered round in surprise and merriment. Loud shouts of laughter greeted Arthur Augustus' property as it came pelting out of Study No. 6. Five or six pairs of boots and shoes followed the clothes. Then a big travelling-rug and a sheepskin sleeping-bag and a waterproof sheet whirled into the passage.

By that time the Fourth Form passage outside Study No. 6 was pretty well barricaded. Fellows who wanted to get along the passage had to scramble over Arthur Augustus' property—and it was unfortunate, but inevitable, that some of the property should be damaged in the process.

Blake & Co. were still hurling valuable property through the study doorway when the Terrible Three of the Shell came in to tea. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther stopped to stare.

"Hallo! Breaking up the happy home?" asked Lowther.

A couple of camp-stools whirled out, and the Terrible Three dodged just in time.

"What's the name of this game?" demanded Tom Merry.

Blake looked out with a rather flushed face.

"Blessed if I know!" he answered. "Ask Gussy! We found the study stacked with this lumber, and we want our tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you leaving it all in the passage?" gasped Tom Merry.

Blake snorted.

"Where can we leave it?" he demanded. "There's no room for it in the study, and we can't shove it up the chimney. Gussy wouldn't like us to drop it out of the window, either."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three scrambled over the barricade, and went on to their quarters, chuckling.

A surprise awaited Arthur Augustus D'Arcy when he returned to his study.

Blake & Co., having made a clearance, started getting tea. They got tea for Gussy as well as themselves; perhaps as a compensation for having cleared out his valued possessions so drastically.

But Arthur Augustus did not come in to tea. The three juniors had nearly finished when the study-door opened, and they looked round expecting to see Arthur Augustus. But it was Baggy Trimble who looked into the room. There was a grin on Baggy's fat face.

"Cut off!" was Jack Blake's polite greeting.

"I haven't come to tea!" snorted Trimble. "I don't want any of your measly kippers! At Trimble Hall!"

"Give Trimble Hall a rest, and us, too!" said Blake. "And take your face away and bury it. It worries me."

"You don't know where D'Arcy is!" giggled Trimble.

"Well, where is he, porpoise?"

"Gone to see a bookmaker."

"What!" yelled Blake.

Trimble nodded at the astonished chums of the Fourth.

"It's a fact!" he answered. "I heard him on the telephone—talking to a man about a horse—"

"About a horse?" repeated Herries blankly.

"Yes—he asked him specially whether the horse was to be relied upon," said Trimble, with a nod, "and when he was finished on the 'phone he buzzed out of the House and cleared off at once. He's gone to see the man, of course—about the horse."

"My hat!" said Dig.

Trimble chortled, evidently pleased at having made such an impression on Study No. 6.

"Fancy Gussy," he said, "backing horses, you know—dabbling in gee-gees, like Racke and Crooke, or Cutts of the Fifth! I'm shocked at him! Ain't you, Blake?"

"You fat idiot!" roared Blake.

"Eh?"

"Collar him!"

"Here, I say—Yaroooh!"

Blake & Co. rushed at Trimble, and collared the fat junior before he could bolt out of the study.

They were looking rather excited.

"Now, you fat rotter!" growled Herries.

"Leggo!"

"Bump him!" said Blake. "One for listening to Gussy spouting on the 'phone—"

Bump!

"Yooop!"

"One for spinning us a yarn about Gussy—"

Bump!

"Help!"

"And one for himself!"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-wooop! Help! Fire! Yaroooh!"

"Now kick him out!"

Three boots were planted behind Trimble. The fat Fourth-Former went out with a yell, and sprawled over Arthur Augustus' property in the passage.

Another shove from Jack Blake's boot helped him across it, and he fled. Three flushed and indignant faces looked after him as he turned in the passage and shook a podgy fist at Study No. 6.

"Yah! Rotter!" he howled. "It's true, all the same—D'Arcy's backing horses, and he's gone to see a bookie! Yah!"

And with that Partien shot Trimble fled for his life.

CHAPTER 3.

Assistance Rendered!

"BAI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy halted outside Study No. 6 about an hour later, and surveyed the trunks, hatboxes, clobber, and other articles stacked in the passage.

There were two stacks, one on either side of the passage. Fellows coming along had found it too much trouble to clamber over the lumber, and they had shoved it aside—not very gently. There was a right of way, so to speak, between the two stacks.

Arthur Augustus screwed his celebrated eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed the stacks in horrified indignation.

"Bai Jove! Some feafuhl wottah has been waggin' the studay!" he ejaculated. "The New House boundahs, vewy likly. Bai Jove!"

The swell of St. Jim's threw open the study door and entered. Blake and Herries and Digby were sitting round the table beginning their prep.

"You fellows—" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Hallo, image!" grunted Blake.
"I am surprised at you!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.
"What is there to be surprised at, fathead?"

"Some feahful wottahs have been waggin' the studay, and my clobber has been thrown into the cowwidah!"

"Go hon!"

"And you fellows are sittin' heah peaceably as if nothin' had happened!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.
"I am surprised at you! I do not wegard this as fwiendly. I pwesume you know who the wottahs were that pitched my pwopahy into the passag?"

"Yes, rather!"
"Who was it, pway?"

"Us!"
"Wha-a-at!"

"We had to have tea, you know," explained Blake. "You shouldn't turn the study into a second-hand clothes store, Gussy. There isn't room."

Arthur Augustus gasped.

"You—you have tweeked my clobber in this wuffianly way?"

"Little us!" agreed Blake.
"You feahful wottahs!"

"Go it!"
"You howwid wuffians!"

"Hear, hear!"
"You—you fwiendful Huns!"

"Hurrah!"
"I have a gweat mind to give you all a feahful thwasin' all wound!"

roared Arthur Augustus.

"Pile in!"

"I wegard you as thwee feahful bwutes! My shirts and neckties are all oval the passag. Some of them have been twodden on."

"You should be more careful with your clothes, Gussy. You shouldn't leave them recklessly about the study. They're liable to get damaged."

"You—you—"

Words failed Arthur Augustus.

"I—I suppose you uttah wuffians wegard this as a joke!" he gasped at length. "I wegard it, personally, as an act of uttah barbwahy! I shall wefuse, now, to twust my pwopahy with you howwid wuffians, and I shall wescind the awwagements I have been makin' for the vac."

"Oh, you've been making arrangements for the vac, have you?" yawned Blake.

"Yaas; wathah! I had a gweat surprise pwepared for you fellows—"

"Well, we've stood you a great surprise, too," remarked Dig. "You must have been surprised to see your props in the passag!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—"

"When you've blown off steam, Gussy, I've got something to say to you," remarked Blake. "I want you to answer a question."

"I wefuse to answah any questions! I wefuse to uttah a word to you, Blake!"

"Trimble heard you jawing on the telephone—"

"Bothah Twimble!"

"He says you were talking to a man about a horse—"

"That is quite twue!"

"True?" yelled Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Blake, aghast. "The fat rotter says, too, that you went out after phoning to see a man about a horse."

"That is quite cawwect."

"Well, my word!"

Blake and Herries and Digby were on their feet now, staring at their noble chum. Arthur Augustus' candid confession had quite taken their breath away.

"You—you went to see a man about a horse?" stammered Blake.

"Yaas!"

"And you've got the nerve to own up to it?"

"I weally fail to see, Blake, that it wequires any nerve to own up to the twuth."

"Are you potty?" shrieked Herries.

"I wefuse to weply to such a widiculous question, Hewwies!"

"I thought Twimble was gassing, as usual!" gasped Blake. "But he's right, then, and you've been backing horses like that cad Racke of the Shell!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Is it so, you silly ass?"

"I wefuse to answah such a question, Blake. I wegard you as an uttah ass!"

"Where have you been?"

"Wats!"

"Tell us where you've been, Gussy," said Dig.

"I wefuse to tell you anythin', since you have tweeked my pwopahy in such a wuffianly mannah! I do not wegard you as fwiends any longer!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

With that reply, Arthur Augustus strode out of the study. Blake & Co. looked at one another quite dazedly.

"The—the silly chump!" stammered Blake. "Gussy—of all people—getting mixed up with bookies, and backing horses! I can't believe it!"

"He's as good as admitted it!" growled Herries. "Let's give him a joll good bumping as a warning."

"Let's get on with our prep!" suggested Dig.

Blake looked out of the doorway. Arthur Augustus, with a red and wrathful face, was gathering up silk socks and neckties and collars. Half a dozen grinning juniors were looking on.

"Gussy—" began Blake.

"Pway do not address me, Blake!"

"Won't you tell us where you've been, Gussy?" asked Blake, with great patience.

"I wefuse to say a word to you, Blake! I wegard you as a wuffian, and I wefuse to speak to you!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

"I know where he's been!" giggled the fat voice of Baggy Trimble. "He's been to see a bookie about a horse!"

"Dry up, you fat idiot!" said Clive of the Fourth.

"It's true!" giggled Trimble. "He can't deny it! Ask him whether he has been to see a man about a horse!"

"You uttah wottah, Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I have certainly been to see a man about a horse—but—"

"Oh!" ejaculated Clive.

"But the man was certainly not a bookmakah. If you wepeat your wotten wemarks, Twimble, I shall give you a feahful thwasin'!"

"What the thump have you been to see a man about a horse for?" shouted Blake.

"I wefuse to weply!"

"What man was it?"

"Wats!"

"What horse was it?" asked Cardew of the Fourth, with a grin.

"What were the odds?" chuckled Racke of the Shell.

"Fancy D'Arcy punting on the races!" chortled Trimble. "He, he, he!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus spun round on Trimble, who scuttled away to the stairs, still chortling. This was an item of news that Baggy Trimble enjoyed, and he hastened to spread it far and wide.

Heedless of all considerations but his valued clobber, Arthur Augustus laboured at gathering up his scattered

property. Jack Blake went back to his prep with a wrinkled and worried brow. It seemed impossible to suspect the noble swell of the Fourth of such shady practices as those indulged in by Racke and Crooke and their set; but his confession that he had been to see a man about a horse was staggering. Arthur Augustus sometimes hired a steed from the livery-stables at Rylcombe; but it could scarcely be a riding-horse that was in question now. Evidently someone had telephoned to the swell of St. Jim's about a horse, and D'Arcy had been to see the man on the subject; and really it seemed that the only possible conclusion was the one Baggy Trimble had drawn.

Unconscious of the worry he was causing to his old pals in Study No. 6, Arthur Augustus continued to pack his valuable possessions.

The Terrible Three came along after prep, and found him still busy, and kindly lent a hand.

When the task was finished, Arthur Augustus condescended to look into Study No. 6.

"Blake!"

"Well?" grunted Blake.

"Although we are no longer fwiends, I—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Although we are no longer fwiends," repeated Arthur Augustus, with frigid dignity, "I am obliged to continue to share this studay with you. Befoah we placin' my pwopahy in this studay, I wequiah to be assured that it will be wespacted."

"My dear chap, go ahead and bring it in!" said Blake. "I assure you that we will pitch it out again!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I give you my word, in fact."

Slam!

There was a chuckle in the study as Arthur Augustus closed the door with unnecessary emphasis.

The swell of St. Jim's surveyed the trunks, hatboxes, and other paraphernalia. Evidently he could not leave them permanently in the passag, and it was equally certain that they would not be safe in Study No. 6.

"It's rather a big order for a junior study, you know, Gussy!" murmured Tom Merry, in the role of peacemaker.

"There really wouldn't be much room to move."

"Wats! I am bound to make pwopah pweparations for the expedit!"

"Eh? Are you making an expedition?"

"Yaas."

"Going-round the world during the vac?" asked Lowther.

"Certainly not!"

"Then what do you want with all this clobber?"

"I wegard that question as fwiolous, Lowthah. I was pweparin' a vewy agreeable suppwise for my fwiends—I mean my formah fwiends—and I was goin' to tell them when I came in. Now I shall wefuse to tell them anythin'! I—I weally don't know where to put my twunks now I have packed them."

"Shove 'em into Nobody's Study!" said Tom.

"Bai Jove! That's a good ideah."

And the extensive property of Arthur Augustus was trundled along to the empty room in the Shell passage, and safely disposed of there. Arthur Augustus thanked the Terrible Three graciously for their assistance, and returned to Study No. 6.

Blake & Co. eyed him as he came in.

"Now, Gussy—" began Blake.

"Pway do not speak to me, Blake!"

"Look here—"

"I am already vewy late with my



Baggy Trimble found himself taken by the collar, and was then aware of an elegant but forcible boot that was planted behind him. Baggy departed from the prefects' room with a loud yell.

pwep, owin' to your wuffianly tweekment of my pwopahty."

"Do you think you can stack the study to the ceiling with boxes of rubbish?" roared Blake.

"Wats?"
"Now, we want you to explain where you've been, and what you've been up to!" said Blake, more calmly.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Why?" asked Blake patiently.

"Because I no longah wegard you as a fwiend."

"Ass!" roared Blake.

"I wefuse to be called as ass, Blake, especially by a fellow I do not know!" said Arthur Augustus coldly.

"Fathead!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat down to his prep, and refused to utter another word. Blake & Co. eyed him for some minutes, but he did not turn his head, and they quitted the study at last in a state of great doubt and uncertainty.

CHAPTER 4.

Under a Cloud!

THE next day Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth found himself the object of a great deal of curiosity. By that time nearly every fellow in the Lower School

had heard Baggy Trimble's interesting tale, and it was generally supposed that Arthur Augustus had been "spotted" in following the way of the transgressor.

Blake and Herries and Digby were much worried about it, but their attempts to obtain an explanation from the swell of the Fourth were quite unavailing. Arthur Augustus persisted in giving his old pals the "marble eye."

Arthur Augustus was easy-going, but there was a limit, and the drastic treatment of his clobber was beyond the limit. It was impossible to pardon disrespectful handling of a silk hat; human patience had its limits. Gussy's best silk topper had been rubbed the wrong way during its sojourn in the Fourth Form passage, and Arthur Augustus' indignation, in consequence, was not to be easily appeased.

In class that morning he seemed blissfully oblivious of the existence of his chums. After morning lessons Blake joined him in the passage, and he walked quickly away.

"Gussy!" roared Blake, in great exasperation.

"Pway do not address me as Gussy, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus coldly.

"Why not, you ass?"

"I am Gussy only to my fwiends!" explained the swell of St. Jim's loftily.

"Oh, you image!"

"I wefuse to be called an image, Blake!"

"Look here, Gussy——"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

Arthur Augustus walked away, leaving Blake undecided whether to collar him and knock his head against the wall. Fortunately, Gussy was out of sight before Blake could make up his mind.

He ran into the Terrible Three in the quadrangle. Tom Merry & Co. stopped him.

"Just looking for you, Gussy!" said Tom cheerily.

"Well, heah I am, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus did not give the Terrible Three the marble eye. He was gratefully mindful of the assistance they had rendered in packing up his scattered clobber the previous evening.

"Do you know what the fellows are saying?" asked Tom, eyeing the swell of St. Jim's very curiously.

"Not at all."

"You're suspected of playing the giddy goat, like Cutts of the Fifth!" said Manners.

"Wubbish!"

"What does this talk mean, then, about your going to see a man about a horse?" demanded Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus grinned.

"That is all wight!" he replied.

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"Well, it doesn't sound all right."
"If you suspect me of playin' shady twicks, Lowthah, like Wacke and Cwooke, I can only wemark that you are an ass!"

"Well, of all the cheeky chumps——"
"I stwongly object to bein' called a cheeky chump, Lowthah!"

"Why don't you explain where you went yesterday, and what all this rot means about going to see a man about a horse?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You're worrying Blake no end."

"There is no need for Blake to wowwy, as he is no loungh a friend of mine!"

"Ass!" said Tom.
"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"
"Don't play the goat!" said Tom impatiently. "It looks as if you've been playing the fool like Racke. You ought to explain."

"I wufuse to explain to anyone who suspects me of playin' the fool like Wacke!" answered Arthur Augustus stiffly.

And he walked on.
The Terrible Three looked at one another rather queerly.

"It can't be true!" said Manners.
Tom Merry shook his head.

"It can't!" he agreed. "But what does it mean, anyway? He certainly went to see a man about a horse. What man, and what horse?"

"Give it up!" yawned Lowthah. "It really looks as if Gussy is trying to get the sack on the last day but one of the term. Hallo! There's Racke tackling him now. The cad looks quite friendly."

Aubrey Racke, the black sheep of the Shell, joined Arthur Augustus in the quad, with quite an agreeable expression on his ill-favoured countenance. Trimble's story about Arthur Augustus had been pleasant news to Racke's ears, and he was more than willing to welcome the aristocratic Gussy into the select circle of "merry blades," of which he was the leader.

Arthur Augustus did not reciprocate his friendliness, however. He gave Racke a look of cold inquiry.

"I've heard about it, old chap," said Racke.

"About what, Wacke?"
"The gee-gee," grinned Racke. "But really, my dear chap, as a friend, I should advise you to be a bit more careful. You don't want it to become the talk of the school."

"I fail to comprehend you, Wacke."
"I mean, it may lead to trouble," explained Aubrey. "No harm in goin' the pace a little; but the Head or the Housemaster wouldn't look at it like that, if they heard."

"If they heard what?"
"About your going to see a man about a horse."

"Is there any harm, Wacke, in my goin' to see a man about a horse?"
Racke stared.

"Not at all," he answered. "Not the least bit in the world; but it's safer to keep such things dark. You must see that."

"I do not see it, Wacke."

"Well, please yourself," said Racke, in surprise. "But it looks to me like asking for trouble. By the way, would you care to drop into my study this evening after tea, D'Arcy? We're going to have banker, and some smokes, to wind up the term in rather a festive style, you know."

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and surveyed the black sheep of the Shell with great contempt.

"I should not care to drop into your study this evenin', Wacke!" he said, very distinctly. And he turned on his heel.

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"Well, by gad!" ejaculated the astonished and discomfited Aubrey.

Figgins & Co., of the New House, met Arthur Augustus as he walked away with an indignant brow. The three juniors lined up before him.

"Halt!" said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgys——"

"Going the pace, I hear!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"Weally, Wynn——"

"What do you mean by it?" demanded Kerr severely. "Backing gee-gees at your time of life!"

"Weally, Kerr——"

"It's up to us to keep School House kids in the strait and narrow path," remarked George Figgins. "Never shall it be said that we neglected to bump a fellow who needed it. Collar him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jumped back.

"You uthah asses! Keep off! I wufuse——"

"D'Arcy!"

"Oh, my hat! Kildare!" murmured Figgins; and the New House trio melted away.

Arthur Augustus turned to the captain of St. Jim's.

"Yaas, Kildare?"

"You're wanted in Mr. Railton's study," said Kildare, with a sharp look at the junior. "I dare say you know what it's for."

"Weally, Kildare, I do not know. Mr. Wailton cannot want to say good-bye to me, as we do not break up till to-morrow."

"Well, cut along and see," said Kildare abruptly.

"Very well."

Arthur Augustus headed for the School House, followed by many curious glances. He was called before the Housemaster, and the juniors who had heard Kildare speak to him did not need telling that the School House master had heard the story of the man and the horse, and was going to inquire into it, as was his duty.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

"What's going to happen now?"

"Poor old Gussy!" murmured Manners.

Arthur Augustus, apparently unconscious of the concern he was inspiring in many breasts, walked cheerily into the School House, and headed for the Housemaster's study. It did not look as if the coming interview had any terrors for the swell of St. Jim's.

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"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

"What's going to happen now?"

"Poor old Gussy!" murmured Manners.

Railton rose from his table as they came in, with a very stern brow.

"You sent for us, sir?" said Blake meekly.

"Certainly, Blake! A very extraordinary story has come to my ears," said Mr. Railton. "It appears to be the talk of the whole school, and a prefect has reported it to me. D'Arcy is the person principally concerned; but, as you three boys are his study-mates, you probably know something about the matter."

"Oh!" murmured Blake.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir?" said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"You used the telephone in the prefects' room yesterday?"

"With Kildare's permission, sir."

"Quite so. But, according to what I have heard, some man telephoned to you on the subject of horses."

"Not horses, sir; a horse."

"It makes little difference. Kildare had the impression, he has told me, that you were making some arrangements with regard to the vacation."

"I told him so, sir. That is quite correct."

"Who was it telephoned to you?"

"Mr. Spriggs, of Wayland, sir."

"I have never heard the name. Are you acquainted with this man Spriggs, Blake?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"The man telephoned to you about a horse, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir."

"You went out immediately afterwards?"

"Quite correct, sir."

"To see this man Spriggs?"

"Yaas."

"On what affair?"

"About the horse, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Herries.

Mr. Railton's face was a study. He seemed to be unable to believe his ears for the moment.

"You—you went to see the man about a horse?" he ejaculated at last.

"Yaas, sir."

"And why?"

"It was necessary for me to make sure that the horse was all wight, sir, before I parted with my money."

"Wh-a-at!"

"I twust I make my meanin' clear, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "Ow! Who's tweadin' on my foot? Blake, you ass——"

"You need not make signals to D'Arcy, Blake!" said Mr. Railton sternly.

"Oh no! Nunno, sir!" gasped Blake.

"It will be advisable for D'Arcy to make a full confession," said the Housemaster. "This is a most surprising and shocking discovery to me. I have never suspected you, D'Arcy, of foolish or reckless conduct before."

"I twust, sir, that you do not suspect me of anythin' of the kind now?" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"What? You have confessed that you went to interview this man Spriggs about a horse before parting with your money!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"Your words bear only one possible construction. This Spriggs, I presume, is a bookmaker?"

"Not that I am awah of, sir. I should be vewy surprised to hear that he was anythin' of the sort," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "Weally, sir, I do not see any weason for inquiren' into the mattah. It is not a mattah of any consequence."

"Our opinions differ on that point, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Railton drily. "I

regard the matter as being of very great consequence indeed. I am surprised and shocked. The best that can be said for you is that you do not appear to realise the seriousness of what you have done."

"He—he's rather an ass, sir!" stammered Blake. "We—we always make allowances for him in the study, sir, on that account."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Herries and Digby together eagerly. "Always, sir!"

"Bai Jove! I wopudiate the suggestion!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly. "I twust I am not a fellow to swank, but I certainly considah that I am the only fellow w' th any bwains in the studay!"

"D'Arcy! If you cannot see that you have done wrong—"

"Not at all, sir!"

"Not in visiting this Spriggs about a horse—"

"I fail to see anythin' w'ong at all, sir, in interviewin' Mr. Spwiggs on the subject of engagin' a cawavan horse for the vacation!" said Arthur Augustus in surprise. "It was vewy necessary, sir, to make sure of havin' a good horse, or the cawavannin' would be a wank failure!"

"The—the what?"

"Cawavannin', s'r."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Railton blankly.

Blake & Co. stared at Arthur Augustus as if his aristocratic visage mesmerised them. The swell of St. Jim's looked at them, and then at the Housemaster.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake.

CHAPTER 6.

Taken Over!

MR. RAILTON looked searchingly at the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus met his eyes with perfect calmness and composure.

"You—you—you visited this Mr. Spriggs to engage a caravan horse?" the Housemaster exclaimed at last.

"Yaas, sir!"

"And—and that is the only horse you have been interested in?"

"Natawally, sir! I twust," said Arthur Augustus loftily, "that you did not suspect me of takin' an interest in wacehorases, sir!"

"You laid yourself open to that suspicion!" said Mr. Railton tartly. "If your business with Mr. Spriggs was so harmless, why did you not explain the matter to your friends? I understand that you avoided doing so."

"I did not avoid doin' so, sir. I wewused to do so."

"And why?"

"Because these boundahs—ahem!—I mean, these fellows, sir, are no longah my friwends. I have felt compelled to drop their acquaintance, sir, because they have tweated my clobbah with gwoss diswespoot!"

"Bless my soul! I shall telephone to Mr. Spriggs, D'Arcy, to ascertain that you have stated the facts. His number is in the directory, I presume?"

"Certainly, sir! But—"

"But I will say now that I believe your explanation."

"Of course, sir, I expected you to take my word!" said Arthur Augustus placidly.

Mr. Railton coughed.

"Well, I do take your word, at all events, D'Arcy," he said. "I should recommend you, however, not to be so secretive on another occasion!"

"Weally, sir, I have not been secwretive!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I was pwepawin' a surprise for my friwends, sir, that is all, and I should have told them all about it on my wew-

turn; but I was compelled to drop their acquaintance owin'—"

"Absurd!" said Mr. Railton.

"Weally, sir—"

"I am glad the matter has been so satisfactorily explained!" said the Housemaster. "I advise you to make friends again at once. You may leave my study!"

"Vewy well, sir!"

The four juniors quitted the study. In the passage, after the door had closed, Blake and Herries and Digby looked eloquently at the swell of the Fourth.

"So that was all!" said Blake with a deep breath. "It was a caravan horse you were telephoning about, you crass idiot!"

"I wewuse to be called a cwass idiot, Blake! And I decline to wewply to your wewmarks, as I no longah know you!"

"So we're going caravanning this vac, are we?"

"I have made all the awwangements with Mr. Spwiggs to supply a weally wippin' cawavan and a first-class horse. Owin' to your wuffianly conduct, however, I feah that I cannot twust my clobbah with you, and the awwangements will be cancelled!"

"It was going to be a surprise to us, was it?" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, it's not a bad idea!" said Blake. "You ought to have let us know sooner, you duffer—"

"The ideah flashed into my bwain yestahday mornin'!" said Arthur Augustus. "As a fellow of tact and judgment, I felt that it was up to me to make the awwangements. I am vewy sowwy that it has all fallen thwough!"

"That's all right!" said Blake. "It hasn't fallen thwough. Caravanning for the vac is a jolly good-idea, though we ought to have had more time for getting ready and lettin' our people know!"

"It has fallen thwough!" said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I cannot twust my clobbah with you fellows! I am sowwy, but the awwangement is called off, and I am goin' to wing up Mr. Spwiggs and tell him so!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus walked away. The Terrible Three were waiting at the end of the passage, and they met him with a threefold inquiry:

"Licked?"

"Flogged?"

"Sacked?"

"Wubb' sh!" answered Arthur Augustus. And he walked on.

The chums of the Shell joined Blake & Co., considerably puzzled.

"What on earth's happened?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake explained.

The Terrible Three chuckled when they had heard the explanation.

"Isn't it just like Gussy?" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Only a mountain out of a molehill, after all! Of course, we knew that he couldn't have been playing the goat like Racke!"

"I'll jolly well look for Trimble, and give him a hiding!" growled Herries.

"It's all that tattling rotter's fault!"

"Jolly good idea, caravanning, though, for the holidays!" said Monty Lowther.

"I wonder I never thought of it! We've been caravanning before, and it was ripping!"

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Manners.

"I could take my camera, too! We'll bag a caravan ourselves, you fellows! Our people would be able to bear it if we d'ndn't spend our vacation at home!"

"My uncle would, I know!" grinned Lowther.

Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully.

"It's not a bad idea!" he said. "We'll think it over, anyhow! When are you kids starting?"

"Not so much of your kids!" grunted Blake. "According to Gussy, we're not starting at all! He says he's going to cancel the arrangements because we hoofed his clobber out of the study yesterday!"

"The ass!" said Dig.

Blake burst into a chuckle.

"It's all serene!" he said. "Gussy was going to hire the caravan and take us along as guests. Well, if he cancels the order we'll hire the same giddy van, and take him as a guest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're not rolling in wealth like Gussy; but we can whack it out!" continued Blake. "If you fellows like to join in we'll make it a caravanning party, and take a tent and things. What do you say?"

"Good!" said the Terrible Three together.

"We'll fix it up!" said Lowther. "Let's go and see what Gussy's doing now!"

"He's gone to the telephone, I expect. Come on!" said Blake.

The six juniors hurried to the prefects' room. That select apartment was tenanted at present by only one person, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was standing at the telephone. Tom Merry & Co. heard his concluding remarks as they came in.

"I am sowwy—very sowwy—but I shall not wequiah the cawavan and the horse, aftah all! Vewy sowwy indeed! Good-bye, Mr. Spwiggs!"

Arthur Augustus was about to replace the receiver on the hooks when Tom Merry calmly jerked it from his hand.

"All serene, Gussy!" he said. "We've got to speak to your cheery Spriggs!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Here you are, Blake—you can do the talking!" said the captain of the Shell.

Blake took the receiver.

"Are you there, Mr. Spriggs?"

"Yes! Is that Master D'Arcy?"

"No; it's Blake—Blake of St. Jim's! I understand that D'Arcy has cancelled the arrangement about the caravan."

"Yessir."

"We shall want it, all the same. Put my name down for it—Jack Blake. I'll bike over and see you about it this afternoon, Mr. Spriggs."

"Oh, very well, sir! You can't do better than that caravan, sir—and as for the 'orse, e's a beauty, Master Blake!"

"Right-ho! We'll see you about it this afternoon, after lessons."

"Right you are, sir; I'll expect you."

Blake rang off, and turned away from the telephone with a grin. Arthur Augustus' face was a study.

"You—you—you are baggin' that cawavan!" he ejaculated.

"Why not?" smiled Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"We're all going," said Blake, "and you shall come as a distinguished guest, Gussy, on condition that you don't take more than a dozen silk hats and six overcoats and three dozen pairs of socks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus walked out of the prefects' room with his noble nose high in the air. Tom Merry & Co. grinned as they followed him out. Arthur Augustus was still giving his old pals the "marble eye"; but the cheery Co. did not doubt that he would "come round" before St. Jim's broke up for the holidays.

CHAPTER 7.

Figgins Has An Idea!

"**W**HEREFORE that ruffled brow, oh Adolphus?" George Figgins of the Fourth asked that question humorously. Figgins was looking very cheerful that afternoon. So were Kerr and Wynn. The approach of the summer holidays had that effect upon the New House Co. But the brow of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was, to use Shakespearean language, "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." Hence Figg's question.

Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows reprovingly.

"Weally, Figgay, you are vewy well awah that my name is not Adolphus!" he answered.

"My mistake—I meant Aubrey, Gustavus," said Figgins affably. "But what are you scowling about, old top?"

"I was not awah that I was scowlin'." "You're aware now I've told you, then. What's the trouble? Confide it to your Uncle George!" said Figgins. "Can't you get a special train to carry your silk hats home for the holidays? Allow me to make a suggestion. Sell 'em off to the ragman at a penny a time. You will raise hundreds of pounds!"

Fatty Wynn and Kerr chortled. "Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "I weally do not see the point of all these feeble jokes about my wardrobe. As for silk toppahs, I intended to take only two in the caravan, as well as a straw hat and a Panama and a few caps."

"In the caravan?" repeated Kerr. "Are you going caravanning in the vac?"

"That was my intention, deah boy; but it is now wescinded."

Figgins nodded sympathetically. "Question of cash?" he asked. "It comes expensive, of course. Lots of things a fellow would like to do if the tin would run to it."

"It is not a question of cash, Figgay. My governor agweed to stand the exes—I telephoned and asked him."

"What a stunning governor!" said Fatty Wynn admiringly. "Then what's the trouble, old chap? You ought to be feeling ripping!"

"You see, the whole thing has been mucked up," explained Arthur Augustus. "I am no long on speakin' terms with my formah friends—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Don't let the sun go down on your wrath, Gussy!" said Figgins.

"I feah, Figgay, that it is too late to considah that. It is impos for me to ovahlook the diswepctful way my clobbah was tweated. I was awwangin' the cawavan biznai as a happy surprise to my friends, and now—now I have cancelled the ordah!"

"Well!" said Figgins. "My word!"

"But that is not all," said Arthur Augustus, apparently finding some comfort in unbosoming himself to the New House trio. "I had awwanged for the cawavan to turn up heah to-morrow to leave the school in. I thought that was wathah a wippin' ideah, to begin the vac, you know, in a cawavan. Havin' cancelled the ordah, I concluded that it was all ovah, but that awful boundah Blake had the feahful cheek to telephone to Mr. Spwiggs and engage the vewy same cawavan, and now all six of them have gone to see Spwiggs and awwange the mattah. So the cawavan will be comin' just the same, but it will not be my cawavan, but theirs!"

"My hat!" said Kerr.

Figgins & Co. could not help grinning.

Arthur Augustus was very much ex-

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cised in his mind by Blake's cool proceeding in bagging the caravan over his head, as it were.

"I have been thinkin' it out," pursued Arthur Augustus. "Of course, as I had cancelled the ordah for the cawavan, Mr. Spwiggs was quite within his wights in lettin' it to anothah partay."

"Quite!" said Figgins.

"And as I had given it up, I suppose Blake and Tom Mewwy and the west had a wight to engage it."

"Yes, rather!"

"But I do not approve of it, all the same," said Arthur Augustus. "I do not quite wegard it as playin' the game, somehow. Moreovah, I am wathah anxious about those youngsters goin' cawavanning without me to look aftah them. They are bound to land themselves in some feahful scwape!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"When is the caravan coming?" asked Figgins.

"The awwangement was for eleven-thirtay to-morrow!"

"And you're not going with the party?"

"Impos, as I'm not on speakin' terms with them."

"Why not make it up?" suggested Kerr.

"Impos!"

"It's too bad!" said Figgins, with a grin. "But if you'll take the advice of your Uncle George, you'll make it up with your old pals before you part for the holidays."

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"I am vewy much obliged to you, Figgay; but it is not poss to act on your suggestion."

And Arthur Augustus, with a stately nod to the New House trio, walked on across the quad.

Figgins & Co. exchanged a grin.

"Another rift in the lute!" sighed Figgins. "They'll make it up all right, of course. But I've got an idea. How do you fellows like caravanning?"

"It's all right!" said Kerr.

"Ripping, if you're careful to take plenty of grub," remarked Fatty Wynn. "That's the important point—never to risk running out of grub. With plenty of grub—"

"Never mind the grub," said Figgins.

"We'll chance the grub."

His chums stared.

"We're not going caravanning, are we?" asked Kerr. "I thought we were going to Wales with Fatty."

"No harm in beginning the vac in a caravan, as Gussy's arranged for one to call for us at half-past eleven to-morrow," chuckled Figgins. "We can leave our boxes with Taggles, to be sent off—that only means a tip. And we can wind up the term by dishing the School House bouders fairly in the eye. We meet the caravan outside the gates—"

"Oh!"

"And bag it," said Figgins coolly. "It appears doubtful whether it belongs to Blake or Gussy. We'll settle the point for them. It's going to belong to us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll leave it somewhere for them to pick up after a day or two!" said Figgins generously.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn yelled. They could imagine the feelings of the School House juniors when their caravan was bagged by the New House.

"Hallo! Here they come!" murmured Figgins.

Tom Merry & Co. came in at the gates—six cheery juniors with very satisfied looks. Evidently they had made a satisfactory arrangement with Mr. Spriggs, of Wayland, about the caravan.

"Hallo! You kids are looking very chirpy!" remarked Figgins, as the School House crowd came along.

"We're nicely fixed up for the vac," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "Caravanning, you know! It was Gussy's idea, and we've adopted it!"

"What a coincidence!" said Figgins. "We're going caravanning, too!"

"My hat! Is caravanning catching, like measles?" ejaculated Blake. "If we meet you on the road, Figgay, we'll show you how to do it!"

"Bow-wow!" was Figgay's reply to that.

And the New House trio chortled as Tom Merry & Co. went on to the School House. There were two parties at St. Jim's who intended to begin the vacation caravanning; but as there was to be only one caravan, it was evident that one party would be "left." It remained to be seen which.

CHAPTER 8.

The Cold Shoulder!

"**G**USSY!"

"I have already wequested you, Blake, not to address me as Gussy!"

"Aren't you going to have tea?"

"I am goin' to have tea in Hall."

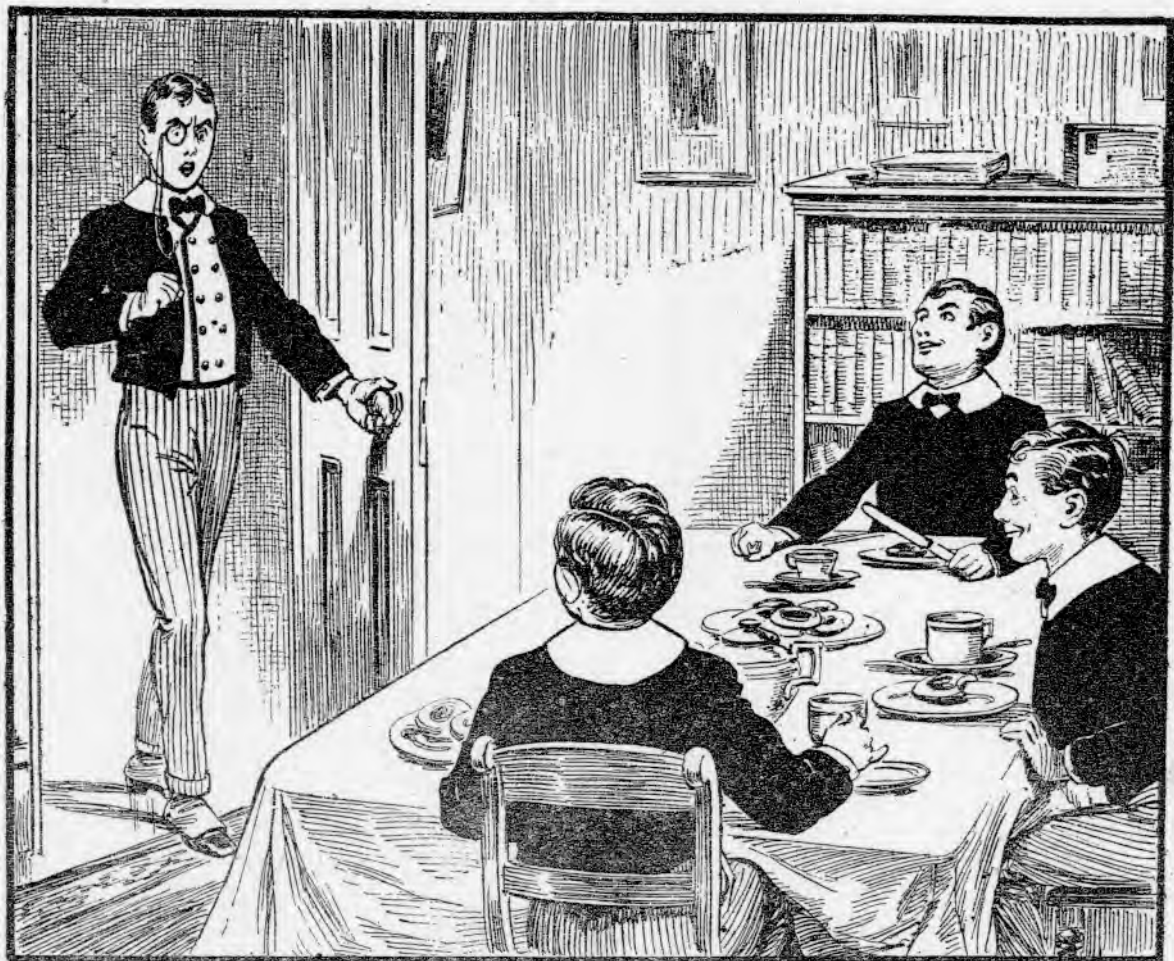
"We've brought in a kipper for you, Gussy."

"I do not care for kippahs, thank you!"

"Now, look here, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

"It's all nicely arranged about the caravan," said Blake. "Spriggs is a good chap. It's a really gorgeous caravan,



The swell of St. Jim's threw open the door of the study and entered. "Some fearful wotahs have been waggin' the studay, and my clobber has been thwown into the cowwidah!" he roared. (See page 4.)

and a splendid horse—the one you selected, Gussy."

"Jolly good!" said Dig. "I must say that Gussy showed his usual tact and judgment in selecting that horse."

"Lots of room in the caravan, too," said Blake. "There will be plenty of space for Herries' feet—"

"Fathend!" said Herries.

"Of course you're coming, Gussy?"

"I have already remarked, Blake, that I am not comin'."

"It won't be like a holiday without you, Gussy."

"I am sowwy for that, Blake."

And Arthur Augustus walked out of Study No. 6. Blake & Co. had found him there when they came in; but the swell of St. Jim's was not staying in to tea. Apparently he could not have tea with fellows he was not on speaking terms with. The wrath of the great Gussy did not seem to be appeased yet. Many things could be forgiven; but a necktie that had been trodden on, and a silk topper that had been rubbed the wrong way, could not easily be forgotten. The sun had gone down upon the wrath of Arthur Augustus.

"Well, my hat!" said Blake, as the swell of the Fourth disappeared. "Gussy's got his back up, and no mistake. What have we done?"

"Only pitched his blessed clobber out of the study!" said Herries, in an aggrieved tone. "What the thump did he expect us to do with it, I'd like to know?"

"We should have had to pitch it out of the caravan, anyhow, if he'd got it in," remarked Dig.

"Of course we should. Let's have tea," remarked Blake. "Here comes the Shell bounders!"

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came into No. 6. They brought their own supplies of tea with them. It was the last study tea of the term, and they were making a "spread" of it.

"Gussy not here?" asked Tom, glancing round.

"He's still got his back up!" grunted Blake.

"You did handle his clobber rather drastically, you know," said the captain of the Shell, laughing.

"He had it stacked all over the study. Besides, he seems to have been stacking it ready for the caravan, as it turns out. The caravan's a big one, but it wouldn't hold Gussy's clobber. We should have had to strew it along the road."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy's got to be brought round somehow," said Tom thoughtfully. "It's really his caravan, and he can't be left out."

Blake nodded.

"Of course Gussy's got to come!" he said. "I shouldn't care for it without Gussy, though he does worry a chap at times. We shall have to pull his leg somehow and bring him round. Let's have tea first, though; I'm hungry."

And the six juniors sat down cheerily to tea.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had tea in Hall, nursing his dignity. His noble brow was still overcast.

As a matter of fact, though Arthur Augustus had felt that he had no resource, consistent with his lofty dignity, but to "drop" his old pals, he was feeling rather "dropped" himself. The pleasures of solitude did not charm him. He was inclined to ask, with the poet, "O Solitude, where are the charms that sages have seen in thy face?"

It had been understood all along that the chums of Study No. 6 were to spend the vacation together; and St. Jim's was breaking up on the morrow. The summer holiday did not seem quite so attractive now.

Certainly Arthur Augustus had no lack of friends. A dozen fellows would have been glad to take him home for the holidays—fellows he liked, like Julian, and Kerruish and Durrance and Glyn and Dane, and others. But at the bottom of his heart the noble Gussy was aware that what he wanted was the company of his own pals. But, like the prophet of old, he felt that he did well to be angry.

After tea in Hall, Trimble joined him as he came out. Arthur Augustus being on his "lonely own," Baggy Trimble felt that this was a good opportunity. The fat and fatuous Baggy was quite prepared to be friendly, in spite of the lickings he had received from Study No. 6 over the "horse" incident—now happily explained away. Trimble did not appear

to observe the frown of repugnance on D'Arcy's brow as he joined him.

"So it's caravanning for the vac, is it?" said Trimble affably.

"Nothin' of the sort, Twimble."

"Ain't you going with the others?"

"I am not."

"Still raggin' with them—what?" smiled Trimble. "You're quite right, Gussy, old chap; I wouldn't speak to them. They're a rotten lot!"

The fatuous Baggy expected to gratify Arthur Augustus with this remark. To his surprise, Arthur Augustus turned on him, his eye gleaming through his eyeglass.

"To whom are you alludin', Twimble?" he demanded.

"Blake and that gang," said Trimble.

"Drop 'em, Gussy; that's my advice. They don't treat you well. 'Drop 'em.'"

"You are a fat wascal, Twimble."

"Eh?"

"I wegard you with wepugnance, and if you make anothah dispawagin' we mark concernin' Blake I shall punch your silly head!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Arthur Augustus walked away, leaving Baggy staring. Evidently he had taken the wrong track. But the fat Baggy was not to be shaken off so easily, and he scudded after Arthur Augustus, and joined him again.

"I say, Gussy—"

"Pway do not bothah me, Twimble!" snapped Arthur Augustus. "I have already remarked that I wegard you with wepugnance."

"Ahem! If you're not going with Blake, I'd be glad if you'd come down to Trimble Hall with me," said Baggy, unabashed.

"Wats!"

"If that's what you call being civil, D'Arcy—"

"I will not beat about the bush with you, Twimble. I do not credit your statement that there is such a place as Twimble Hall in existence," said Arthur Augustus severely. "You are talkin' out of the back of your neck, and you are a feathful bore, Twimble!"

"Look here—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus walked into the Common-room, and Baggy Trimble gave it up. In the Common-room Levison and Clive and Cardew were discussing the coming holiday in very cheery tones. The sight of the chums of St. dy No. 9 did not have a cheering effect upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, cheery as they looked. It made him feel rather lonely.

He sat down and took up a book, with a clouded brow. He glanced up, how-

ever, as half a dozen juniors came into the room. He glanced down again immediately as he saw that they were his chums. Jack Blake came across to him, with a cheery grin, as if nothing had happened.

"Haden't you better see about your packing, Gussy?" he asked.

"My packin' is done, Blake."

"I mean for the caravan. It will be here to-morrow at eleven-thirty, you know."

"I am not intewested in the cawavan, Blake."

"We've all been writing letters," said Dig. "Our people will want to know what we are up to, you know. Haden't you better write to your pater?"

"I shall see my pater to-morrow, Digby."

"Not if you come in the caravan."

"I am not comin' in the cawavan."

"Look here, you ass—" began Herries warmly.

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Hewwies!"

"Well, you are an ass—a thumping ass!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus put his book under his arm and walked out of the Common-room. Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another. It did not seem so easy a task as they had anticipated to bring Gussy round.

"He he, he!" came from Baggy Trimble. Baggy seemed to derive some entertainment from the scene.

"Oh, bump that fat rotter!" growled Herries.

"Here, I say—leggo— Yooop!"

Bump!

Having found a little harmless and necessary solace in bumping Baggy Trimble, Tom Merry & Co. held a consultation on the subject of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Leaving Gussy behind was not to be thought of; they could not entertain that idea for a moment. Arthur Augustus was bound to be a member of the schoolboy caravan party. But with his noble back so extremely up it was evident that diplomacy was required; and the six juniors held a council of war. And by their smiling faces when it was over, it might have been guessed that they had come to a satisfactory conclusion.

CHAPTER 9.

Front Round!

CLANG, clang! All St. Jim's turned out cheerily at the clang of the rising-bell on that bright summer morning.

It was the last day of term; always a happy day.

True, most of the fellows loved the old school; but, much as St. Jim's meant to them, they greeted the opening of the summer holidays with happy anticipations.

"No lessons to-day!" said Blake.

"Hurrah!"

"No more blessed Form-room for weeks and weeks!" said Cardew. "No more blessed prefects callin' a chap to order!"

"Hurrah!"

Only Arthur Augustus did not seem very chippy that sunny morning. He was in a thoughtful mood. He glanced at Blake and Herries and Digby, and saw them bright and cheerful, apparently in anticipation of a happy holiday. He left the dormitory by himself.

In the quad he found his hopeful young brother, Wally of the Third, with Frayne and Manners minor and Frank Levison. The four fags looked joyous. Wally gave his major a cheery nod.

"Caravanning, I hear," he remarked. "I'll tell you what, Gussy—if you like, we'll come. The four of us, of course, and—"

"Of course!" grinned Manners minor.

"We'll manage for you, and, in fact, run the whole show!" said Wally brightly. "You'll simply have to do as you're told, Gussy."

"Bai Jove!"

"Gussy could cook for us!" remarked Levison minor.

"I don't know whether he's got sense enough," observed Wally doubtfully.

"Weally, Wally—"

"We could stand over him with a stump!" said Reggie Manners. "Every time he burned the spuds we could give him a lick—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheekay young wascals!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

And he walked on, leaving the heroes of the Third chortling.

After breakfast Arthur Augustus walked in the quad by himself. He was beginning to feel that he had made a mistake in allowing the sun to go down on his wrath. But not for worlds—not for any consideration whatever—would he have departed from the lofty attitude he had taken up. It was a question of "dig"; and dignity came first.

Tom Merry & Co. came out of the School House, looking for him. They ran Arthur Augustus down under the elms.

"Good-morning, Gussy!" said Tom cheerily.

"Good-mornin', deah boy!"

"Still feeling grumpy?" asked Herries. "Bai Jove! If you describe my attitude as gwumpay, Hewwies—"

"What do you call it, then?"

"I have been tweated with gwoss disrespect!" said Arthur Augustus with chilling dignity. "My clobber has been handled wuffy and wudely. My silk toppah has been damaged. Undah the cires I feel bound to dwp the acquaintance of fellows who are capable of tweatin' a chap's clobber in such a mannah. I shall be obliged if you will wefwain fwom addwessin' me!"

Blake closed one eye at his comrades. "The fact is, Gussy—" he began.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We've been thinking it over," said Blake, with deep seriousness. "Having bagged the caravan, we're bound to go. Now we're in an awful fix. We look to you to get us out of it."

"Bai Jove!"

"It's a case for your tact and judgment, Gussy!" said Dig softly.

"That's it!" agreed Herries.

Arthur Augustus thawed a little. Six

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juniors were regarding him with the solemnity of owls. Evidently Tom Merry & Co. realised that it was a very serious matter indeed.

"If you are weally in a fix, of course, deah boys—" began Arthur Augustus, with some hesitation.

"Simply landed in a scrape!" said Blake.

"Look which way we will, there seems no way out, unless you come to our help!" said Tom Merry gravely.

"In that case, deah boy, you can certainly wely on me to point out the wopwah thing to do. What is the mattah?"

"You see, we're going caravanning for the vac—"

"Yaas?"

"We are young and inexperienced," said Tom Merry, with a gravity worthy of a judge on the Bench. "What we need is a fellow of tact and judgment—ahem!—a fellow like you, Gussy, to look after us—"

"To show us what to do!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"To lead us on the right path, and so on!" said Manners blandly.

"To see that we don't land ourselves in scrapes!" said Dig.

"To take the lead generally, and see us through!" said Blake. "If you desert us, Gussy, what's going to become of us?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Can you do it?" asked Tom Merry, with the same owl-like seriousness.

"After practically bringing us up to rely on your judgment, old chap, can you desert us in an emergency like this? Is it playing the game?"

"Is it cricket?" said Herries sorrowfully. "I ask you, Gussy, do you think it's cricket to go back on your old pals just when they need you?"

"Put it to yourself, Gussy!" said Blake sadly. "Mind, we know it will be an awful responsibility for you—six fellows to look after, as well as a caravan, a horse, and a tent. But what are we to do without you?"

"That's the question!" said Monty Lowther. "What's going to become of us?"

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass firmly into his eye, and scanned the faces of the six juniors. He read only owlish gravity there. Tom Merry & Co. were looking distressed—as was natural under the circumstances.

"Deprived of our guide, philosopher, and friend, what is going to happen to us?" asked Monty Lowther. "I don't want to slang you, Gussy! But it's unfeeling. I must say it's unfeeling!"

"Bai Jove! I should be vewy sowwy to act in an unfeelin' way, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus, relenting still further. "I quite undahstand the posish, deah boys; and I will admit that I have been feelin' vewy anxious about you, goin' off in a cawavan without me to look aftah you."

"Oh, my hat!"

Arthur Augustus' statement very nearly broke down the gravity of his chums. Herries turned a chortle into a cough just in time.

"Under the circs, I feel that it is up to me to overlook the uttally disrespectful way in which my clobbah was tweated," said Arthur Augustus generously. "I twust I shall nevah be found wantin' at the call of dutay!"

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

"Exactly!"

"Pway say no more about it, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Undah the circs, I am willin' to let bygones be bygones, and to westore these chaps to my friendship. I will look aftah you,

and see that the cawavannin' is a success. Wely on me!"

"Thank you, Gussy!" gasped Blake.

"Not at all, deah boy!"

Monty Lowther wiped away a tear.

Arthur Augustus viewed that proceeding with some suspicion.

"Now we are all fiwends again, I do not mind admittin' that I am vewy glad it is all wight," said Arthur Augustus.

"The cawavan will be heah at eleven-thirty—"

"You bet!"

"We will all start togethah, deah boys, just as I awanged at first," said the swell of St. Jim's, beaming. "Wely on me to see you thwough. I will go and tell Taggles to get my baggage down weady for the cawavan."

"Your—your what?"

"I am takin' only a couple of twunks 'and some hatboxes and things. I have cut down the baggage to the vewy lowest point. Simply the things that were in the studey, you know."

"Oh!" gasped Blake. "Only that lot—not more than that?"

"Well, I might take an extwa silk toppah, in case of accidents—nothin' more, deah boy."

"Good idea. Accidents are very likely to happen to your silk toppers in the caravan," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Cut off and see Taggles!" said Blake hastily.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus, with a very cheery face, hurried away to give the porter the necessary instructions with regard to his baggage. Six juniors grinned at one another. The rift in the lute was mended at last. Gussy's noble leg had been pulled in the process; but that could not be helped.

"All serene now!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"The serenefullness is terrific, as that Inky chap at Greyfriars would remark," said Monty Lowther. "But about Gussy's baggage—"

"Ha, ha! His baggage—"

"Mum's the word," said Blake with a grin. "Gussy can take one bag, like the rest of us. But mum's the word. I dare say his things will be all right if they're left at the school over the vac. I hope so, at least, for they're certainly going to be left here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But mum's the word."

And mum was the word. Arthur Augustus had been brought round at last; but the delicate question of baggage required more diplomacy.

CHAPTER 10.

The Captured Caravan!

WAITING for the 'bus—what?" asked Figgins, with a cheery grin, as he came down to the gates soon after eleven o'clock.

Tom Merry was standing in the gateway, glancing down the road. He nodded, with a smile, to the New House trio.

"We're expecting our caravan along soon," he said.

"We're going to see about ours," said Fatty Wynn.

And the chums of the New House walked cheerily out of the gates, and Tom Merry turned back into the quad.

Figgins & Co. grinned as they disappeared from the School House junior's sight.

"Dear little innocent!" murmured Figgins. "We've actually told them we're going caravanning. But they don't guess it's the same caravan."

"They will soon!" chuckled Kerr.

"They will! Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. proceeded down the lane

as far as the turning that led off in the direction of Wayland. That was the route by which the caravan was bound to come. Under a clump of green willows by the corner the chums of the New House waited and watched.

They were off for the holidays—or nearly. They had said good-bye to their friends in the New House, and were supposed to be off to catch a rather early train home. Their designs on the caravan had been kept strictly a secret in their own select circle. The three juniors rejoiced at the prospect of winding up the term with a House "rag" of unusual magnitude.

"I don't know what they'll do without their 'bus," Figgins remarked; "but I shouldn't wonder if they start hunting for us."

"Let 'em hunt!" grinned Fatty Wynn, "there's only one thing I'm anxious about, Figgy."

"What's that?"

"Whether there's any grub ready in the van."

"Br-r-r!"

"Well, that's an important point, you know," urged Fatty Wynn. "I believe in laying a solid foundation, Figgy. No good starting a holiday on an empty tummy. It's bound to spoil the holiday. Do you think there will be any grub in the van?"

"Blessed if I know—or care!" grunted Figgins.

"But if there isn't," said Fatty Wynn, with a cloud of deep anxiety on his plump brow—"if there isn't, old chap—"

"Here she comes!" said Kerr.

"Look out!"

It was the caravan. Figgins & Co. eyed it with great admiration as it came along. It looked quite roomy for a caravan, and was nicely done up with fresh paint, and looked as neat and clean as a new pin. A man with a straw in his mouth was driving, a powerful horse, and the van came along at quite a smart pace.

George Figgins ran into the road.

"Halt!"

Figgins held up his hand as he shouted, and the driver stared at him, and pulled in the horse.

"What's the row?" he inquired.

"Is that the caravan for St. Jim's?" asked Figgins.

"That's it."

"For Jack Blake—"

"Master Blake is the name!" said the driver. "Wot about it?"

"Nothing—only we've come to meet you, and save you the trouble of driving to the school," smiled Figgins.

"Jump down!"

The man with the straw eyed him.

"You Master Blake?" he asked.

"Ahem, no!"

"We know Blake," explained Kerr.

"I dessay you do!" answered the driver, shifting the straw to the other side of his mouth, and gathering up the reins. "But this 'ere van has got to be delivered at the school. Them's my orders!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Get aside, young gentleman. I ain't any time to waste!"

Figgins gave his comrades a quick look.

He had hoped to "bag" the caravan by methods of persuasion; but in any case, he meant to bag the caravan. If methods of persuasion were of no use, it was necessary to resort to methods of barbarism.

The three juniors jumped at the driver together.

Before that hapless individual knew what was happening, he was sitting in the road coughing up the straw, which

had nearly gone down his throat with the shock.

"Gurrrg!" was his remark.
"Sorry, old top!" said Figgins, jumping into the driver's seat. "Trot on to the school, and tell Blake that we've borrowed his caravan. Mention my name—Figgins—and say I'm much obliged!"
"Groooh!"

"Sorry you've got to walk—there's a two-bob bit for your trouble, old scout!" said Figgins considerably.

"Gug-gug-groooh!"
Figgins had the reins now, and Kerr had dragged open the door of the caravan and bundled in with Fatty Wynn. Figgins set the horse in motion, the driver sitting in the road and staring after him dazedly. As the caravan rumbled on, the man seemed to realise what was happening, and he scrambled up—the "two-bob" bit in his hand.

"Ere, you old on!" he roared.
"Good-bye, little yellow bird!" sang Fatty Wynn.

"Stop, I tell you!"
"Ta-ta!"
"I'll limb yer!" shrieked the driver in great wrath.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I'll call in the perlice!"
The driver's voice died away behind. Figgins was urging on the horse to a speed not usually adopted by a caravan horse. He was anxious to get away. The driver broke into a run in pursuit. He could guess that he had been the victim of a schoolboy joke, and that it was not a case of highway robbery; but he was naturally alarmed for the safety of the van.

Figgins turned from the road into a lane.

Behind the rumbling van the driver panted on, his face streaming with perspiration in the hot sun.

But at the turning he gave it up. He shook his fist after the clattering van and bawled, answered with merry laughter by the schoolboy raiders.

Then he tramped on towards St. Jim's to carry Piggy's message to Jack Blake, and to ascertain whether the police were to be called in to deal with the matter.
"He's chuckled it, Figgy!" called out Kerr.

"Good egg!" answered Figgins.
"I say, Figgy—"!
"Hallo, Fatty!"
"I can't find any grub in the van."
"Go hon!"

"They haven't had any supplies put in," said Fatty Wynn. "Where are we going to stop for some grub, Figgy?"

"We've had our bags sent on to Lexham. We'll stop there."

"Eh? That's twenty miles!"
"Right!"

"But what about lunch?"
"Nothing about lunch, old top. Sit down and be quiet!" chuckled Figgins.

"Oh dear!"

Fatty Wynn sat down; but he was not quiet. His remarks were incessant, and they were all on the subject of "grub." But Figgins was too busy with the horse to heed him; and Kerr was busy, too, examining their new quarters. The caravan rumbled on the road towards Lexham, and was well on its way towards that town when the dusty driver arrived at St. Jim's with his startling news.

CHAPTER 11.

"Left!"

"TOM Mewwy!"
"Hallo, old pippin!"
"I suppose you have the key?"

"What key, my son?" asked Tom Merry.

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"The key of Nobody's Study!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy warmly. "My baggage is there, and I find that the door is locked, and the key is gone."

"My hat!"

"Have you the key, Tom Mewwy?"

"Haven't seen it for dogs' ages!" said Tom.

"Bai Jove! What is goin' to be done, then?"

"Ask me another."

Arthur Augustus breathed hard through his noble nose. His extensive property was in the empty room in the Shell passage—quite safe there! It was too safe, in fact. For the door was locked, and the key was gone; and it was just on half-past eleven. The caravan was due.

"Of course, I cannot start without my baggage," said Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry nodded in a very thoughtful way. He could guess that Blake or Herries or Dig had locked up D'Arcy's baggage, which really was too much for any caravan, however large. Space was likely to be limited enough in the van, without two trunks and two hatboxes and the rest.

"Do you think you will really want toppers in the van?" asked Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!"

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"People don't go vanning, as a rule, in toppers, you know."

"An occasion may arise when a toppah will be essential, Tom Mewwy. I am only takin' two."

"A caravanner wearing two toppers will look rather odd, won't he?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I am not goin' to wear them both at once, you ass! As a mattah of fact," said Arthur Augustus sternly, "I suspect one of you chaps of havin' locked up my baggage and collared the key."

"Not guilty, my lord!" said the Terrible Three, with one voice.

"I have inquired of Blake and Hewies and Dig, and they declare that they have not locked up the studay," said D'Arcy. "It is vewy odd. Some uttah ass is playin' a twick on me."

"Hunt him down, and strew the quad-rangle with his bones!" advised Monty Lowther.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus quitted the Terrible Three with a wrinkled brow.

"Who the dickens can have the key, if it isn't Blake?" murmured Tom.

"I give that one up!" remarked Manners. "If it's some merry joker on the job, it's a stroke of luck for us, anyhow. We couldn't take Gussy's cargo."

"Ha, ha! No fear!"

"Good-bye, you chaps!" called out Levison of the Fourth, coming along with Clive and Cardew.

"Good-bye, kids! Remember us to Doris!"

"You bet! Has Gussy been inquiring after a key?" asked Levison, with a grin.

"Eh? Yes. Do you know anything about it?"

"It's in my study. Don't tell Gussy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose Blake asked you—"

Levison chuckled.

"Blake mentioned that if a fellow locked up the study and took away the key, it would save no end of trouble," he replied. "I'm always doing people these good turns. Ta-ta!"

Levison & Co. walked on, grinning, and the Terrible Three chuckled. The difficulty of Gussy's tremendous baggage had been solved quite easily—with the help of Levison of the Fourth; and all Gussy's devoted chums were able to state with perfect truth that they had not locked up the study or removed the key.

"Half-past eleven!" said Manners.

"Time the 'bus was here."

"We're all ready, and the bags downstairs," said Tom. "Let's go and look for it."

The Terrible Three walked down to the gates, where they found Study No. 6 gathered, looking for the caravan. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in a state of considerable excitement. He was demanding what was to be done, and Blake and Herries and Digby professed a complete ignorance of what was to be done. They left that problem to Arthur Augustus for solution.

"You see, we cannot start without my baggage," said Arthur Augustus. "Do you think the Housemaster would mind if the door of that beastly studay was bwocken in, Blake?"

"I rather think so."

"Why not take a bag, like the rest of us?" asked Tom Merry.

"It is necessary to be wathah well-dressed, Tom Mewwy, even on a caravan tour. What is goin' to be done?"

"Looks to me as if you are going to be done, old scout," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Hallo, who's this merchant?" asked Tom Merry, as a dusty man, with a straw in his mouth, stopped at the gates.

"Man from Spriggs," said Blake. "I saw him at the place yesterday. Hallo, my man, what about the caravan?"

"You Master Blake?"

"Yes."

"Know a bloke named Figgins?" asked the driver, blinking at him.

"Yes, rather — a New House chap. What about him?"

"He's borrowed the caravan."

"What?" yelled Blake.

"Borrowed it, sir," said the driver, "and told me to tell you as how he was much obliged."

"The—the rotter!" roared Blake.

"Borrowed our caravan! Why, I—I—I'll—"

"Bai Jove! The feahful boundah!"

"They've bagged the van!" gasped Tom Merry. "How many were there of them, driver?"

"Three, sir; one a very fat cove."

"Figgins & Co., of course," said Tom.

"The cheeky villains! They said they were going caravanning! Our caravan—"

"We'll scalp them!" roared Herries.

"Which I thought I'd mention it to

you, sir, afore going to the police-station," said the driver.

Blake jumped.

"Going where?" he ejaculated.

"The police-station. If the van's been stole—"

"Nothing of the sort!" said Blake hastily. "It's all right—only a joke of some of our schoolfellows. Leave it to us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I was intended to deliver that there van to you, sir, personal. If you'll give me a paper to see me all right with Mr. Spriggs, I don't mind."

"All right—I'll do that."

Jack Blake was in a state of towering rage; but he was not forgetful of the rules of the game. He handed the driver the acknowledgment required, and the man took his departure. Then the chums of the School House looked at one another grimly.

"They've got our van!" said Blake.

"The feahfully cheeky boundahs!"

"They can't mean to keep it for the vac!" ejaculated Manners.

"Figgins would have nerve enough."

"It's all in the game," said Tom Merry, with a laugh. "We've got to get it back, that's all. The question is, which direction have they taken?"

"The driver might know—"

Tom shook his head.

"They wouldn't start in the direction they intended to take till he was out of sight. It's not so easy as that. But—" Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in thought. "I saw the bounders going out, and they hadn't any baggage with them. They can't be going on the vac without any baggage. They must have left it to be sent on—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And they must have left it with Taggles," said Tom Merry. "I'll jolly well ask Taggles."

"Good!"

Tom Merry cut off to the porter's lodge. But he came back in a few minutes looking crestfallen.

"Well?" exclaimed Blake.

"They left bags with Taggles, and he sent them on," said Tom. "He's told me that. But he won't tell me where."

"Why not, the old hanks?"

"Because Figgins has tipped him not to, of course," said Tom ruefully.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! We shall have to get that cawavan back, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "And the first step—"

"Well, what's the first step?" grunted Blake.

"The first step, deah boy, is to find that missin' key—"

"Eh?"

"And get out my baggage—"

"What?"

"And then we shall be weady to start—Yawooch—"

To his great astonishment and wrath, Arthur Augustus found himself collared by his chums and bumped on the gate. Blake & Co. were not in a humour just then to hear any more about Gussy's celebrated baggage, though Gussy did not guess as much.

"Gwoogh! You uttah asses! Welcase me! Yooop!"

Arthur Augustus sat down. His comrades left him sitting, and hurried away to the bike-shed.

CHAPTER 12.

Taking the Trail!

"WELL, we've got to go!"

"No doubt about that!"

"What a sell!"

"Rotten!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

It certainly was time to go. Tom Merry & Co. had spent some hours in

scouring the country on their bicycles, in various directions looking for a newly-painted caravan. They had not been successful.

Tired and wrathful, they had gathered again at the school; but it was clear that they could not remain there.

All the fellows but themselves were gone by that time.

Taggles was eyeing them surlily, waiting to clear off so that he could lock up.

The chums of the School House were in a state of great exasperation. Arthur Augustus had almost forgotten the precious baggage locked up in Nobody's Study.

What was to be done was a deep question.

Figgins & Co. had bagged the caravan—there was no doubt on that point. It was the last House rag of the term, and it left the School House party in what Gussy justly described as an "awkward posish."

They had obtained permission from home to undertake the caravan tour. Therefore, expected home. Certainly they could not remain at the deserted school, even if they wanted to—which they did not. It was probable that their caravan was not many miles away—caravans did not travel quickly. But looking for it over the wide country-side was like looking for a needle in a haystack. They might have chanced upon it at any minute, and they might not have chanced on it in three months.

"We've got to go!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"We're not going home," said Blake. "In fact, we can't! It's too late for a train to my place up North. Besides, we're not going to let those New House bounders score over us. They'd yell us to death next term if we did."

"Imoss!"

"We've got to find the caravan," said Tom Merry determinedly. "We'll track it down if it takes half the vac, and make an example of those New House Huns when we find them."

"Yaas, wathah! Put yourselves under my guidance, deah boys, and I will lead you on the track—"

"Rat!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"There's Taggles goggling at us!" growled Herries. "He's wondering why we don't clear. We'd better get out before the Head notices that we're still here."

"But what the thump are we going to do?" exclaimed Digby.

"There's the blessed bags!" remarked Manners.

"Yaas, and my baggage—"

"Oh, bother your baggage!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

Tom Merry knitted his brows in thought. "There was no doubt that it was a very awkward position, and Figgins & Co. had scored completely. But the chums of the School House did not intend to accept defeat, especially such a crushing defeat as this. Figgins & Co. had to be found, and brought to book; and the caravan had to be recovered.

"After all, we can run them down in time," said Tom Merry resolutely. "We can leave our baggage at the Railway Arms in Rylcombe, to be sent after us when we get the caravan back. That's simple enough. And we can stick to the bikes, and start after those New House bounders."

"In what direction?" asked Manners.

"We've got to find that out, that's all. Let's get the baggage put up in the

village, and start. We can't hang on here any longer; we shall have the Head inquiring wha's up. We want to scalp Figgins & Co.; but we don't want to get them into a row with the Head."

"W thah not!"

"Come on, then!" said Blake.

Fortunately, the baggage was light, having been planned for a caravan tour. Six bags were wheeled along on six bikes easily enough. But the great burning question of Gussy's baggage was still unsolved. Much to the indignation of the swell of St. Jim's, Tom Merry & Co. made their preparations for starting without even an attempt to solve that burning question.

"Are you fellows startin'?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Do you want to stay here to-night?" grunted Blake.

"But—"

"Then come on!"

"My baggage is locked up in Nobody's Study!" howled Arthur Augustus.

"Then you'll have to take root here, that's all," said Blake. "Sorry to lose it."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on, you fellows—"

Six juniors wheeled their machines out of gates, with six bags resting on the saddles. Arthur Augustus stood holding his handsome jigger, with wrath and dismay in his aristocratic face.

"Bai Jove! This is a feahful posish!" he murmured. "If those young asses go aftah Figgins & Co. without me, they will lose themselves, or land into some dreadful swapes. But I cannot—"

"I'm waitin' to lock the gates, Master O'—"

"Bai Jove! Tom Mewwy!"

No answer.

"Blake!"

Jack Blake seemed to be deaf.

Taggles jingled his keys.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had to make up his mind to it at last. He wheeled his machine out—baggage-less.

The gates closed with a clang.

"Weally, you fellows—" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as he overtook the six juniors in the lane.

"Hallo! Coming?" asked Blake.

"It is impos for me to remain at the school, Blake, and I should be vewy sowwy to allow you youngstahs to run into swapes by yourselves!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' to cause wibald mewwiment in that remark."

"Go hon!"

"I have had to leave my baggage behind," said Arthur Augustus. "Fortunately, the governah has come down wathah handsomely for the holidays, and I am not short of cash. I shall be able to do some shoppin' en woute."

"Buy anything you like, old top," said Blake heartily. "If there's not room for it in the caravan, we can always chuck it out."

"I wegard that remark as uttably assine, Blake! Are you awah that I have not even a change of clobber?"

"I can lend you a pocket-handkerchief, if that would do," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Wats!"

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors halted at the Railway Arms in Rylcombe. There the bags were disposed of—for the present. After that the seven juniors mounted their bikes—to take up the trail of Figgins & Co. and the captured caravan. The New House raiders were a good many miles away by that time—but they were destined to see Tom Merry & Co. before long.

THE END.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 595.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS.

A Special New Serial by the Editor of the Companion Papers.

CHAPTER 2.

Introducing Martin Clifford.

PARENTS and schoolmasters, when they came to read the stories, had no hesitation in commending them to their sons and pupils. These good people realised that the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. were far preferable to the exploits of Jack the Ripper.

The circulation of the "Gem" rapidly put on flesh.

The number of copies sold each week would have staggered a good many people.

The circulation is even higher to-day; but, as was pointed out in a recent Chat, there is no reason why it should not soar higher still!

I saw a good deal of Martin Clifford these days.

He did not work in the Editor's sanctum—as a good many of my readers seem to suppose—but he rented a bungalow on the South Coast, and came up to see me several times a week.

When time permitted—which was not very often—I visited him, in turn, at his bungalow, and we worked out a good many plots in his garden—I don't mean garden plots!—and also in his sailing-boat, breasting the waves of the English Channel.

And here I will venture a few remarks concerning Martin Clifford's appearance.

Some readers picture the popular "Gem" author to be a man of advanced years. One correspondent rudely referred to him as an old woman!

Other readers suppose him to be a man just past the prime of life—a quiet, retiring individual with side-whiskers and, perchance, a beard.

Both sets of readers are wrong.

It would be a breach of confidence to give Martin Clifford's correct age, but if you think of the number of pence in half-a-crown you won't be very far out.

Still active and energetic, Martin Clifford takes a keen interest in all branches of sport.

I have played cricket with him; I have been licked by him many a time at tennis and golf; and we have had friendly bouts together with the boxing-gloves.

But swimming is Martin Clifford's strong point.

He is, in a sense, a son of the sea; and I verily believe that if he attempted the Channel swim he would put up no mean performance.

As to appearance, Martin Clifford is not so slim as he was when I first met him. He is clean-shaven, as a rule, though he sometimes—to the amusement of the editorial staff—cultivates a modest moustache. He invariably shaves it off again shortly after it appears.

Is Martin Clifford married?

This is a question which has been fired at me so often that I am nearly tired of it.

The answer, as the photographer said, is in the negative.

The originator of Tom Merry is single, and is likely to remain so. As he once confided to me, "I am wedded to my work."

I can quite believe him.

No man takes a keener and more lively interest in his profession than Martin Clifford.

It may be argued that a bachelor's life is shallow and empty; but Martin Clifford's is neither.

The "Gem" author's programme for the day—Saturdays and Sundays excepted—is something like this.

He works from seven in the morning until nine-twenty, when his maid serves breakfast. This is a moderate meal, and Martin Clifford spends very little time over it.

He is back again at his typewriter shortly after half-past nine, and he works on his "Gem" stories all the morning.

Lunch is served at one, and the afternoon is devoted to outdoor recreation.

In the interval between tea and dinner Martin Clifford constructs plots for forthcoming stories.

From this my readers will gather that Martin Clifford is no haphazard writer. He does not commence a "Gem" story until he has all his situations and incidents mapped out beforehand.

Some of you who are aspiring authors would do well to take a leaf out of Martin Clifford's book.

Do not hurry your work. Always think out a strong plot in advance, and revise your story—not once, but several times, if necessary—before submitting it for an editor's consideration.

Martin Clifford retires to rest at nine.

An early hour, you will say. But he has had a long day; and "early to bed and early to rise" is one of the surest means of keeping fit.

Sometimes Martin Clifford works on a Saturday. But as likely as not he is to be found at the head of his troop of Scouts. For there are few Scoutmasters so keen and enterprising as the author of the "Gem" stories.

I could write much more concerning Martin Clifford's life and work; but I do not wish to turn this feature into a biography, so I will say nothing more concerning the man whose stories are so widely read and admired, save that few writers possess such a charming personality, and fewer still hold such a high place in the esteem of the British boy.

CHAPTER 3.

Enter Frank Richards.

TIME flies; it has a habit of so doing.

When the "Gem" was a healthy infant of six months or so, its success stood firm as a rock.

Other papers fought it in strenuous competition, only to retire into the oblivion from which they emerged.

One sunny day in August, 1907, I arranged to accompany a brother of mine down to Kent, to witness a cricket-match in which he was taking part.

Little did I dream that this excursion was to be crowned with one of the finest pieces of good fortune which had ever befallen me.

My brother was playing for his old school.

It was a Past versus Present match—the present generation of boys were meeting those who had already gone out into the world, and were beginning to make their way in various walks of life.

My brother was captain of the Old Boys side; but he was very dubious about the result.

"Metinks we shall lose," he said to me, as the train sped through the pleasant pasture-land of Kent. "It's an annual match, and the present boys nearly always prove to be too good for us. They have better opportunities for practice."

"But you have a few good bats, surely?"

"A few, certainly," said my brother. "But it's necessary for every fellow to be at the very top of his form if we're to win."

When we reached the school ground I saw that my brother had spoken truly.

The boys' eleven were at the nets.

Very fit and capable they looked in their flannels; and even a stranger could see that the Old Boys had all their work cut out.

It was to be a single-innings match.

My brother won the toss, and sent the school in first.

For two solid hours the boys monopolised the wickets. And in that time they scored 170.

"You're up against it, Bob, and no mistake!" I said to my brother, as he came off, panting and perspiring.

"Don't rub it in!" he said. "I have a feeling in my bones that we shall be licked. We generally are. They'll soon put us out of our agony."

I regarded my brother as a splendid

prophet when, a few moments later, he walked back to the pavilion—clean bowled, and with one single, solitary run to his credit.

The game began to lose its interest. The bottom seemed to have been knocked out of it.

How could the Old Boys possibly hope to win?

They had 170 runs to make, and a good wicket was down.

Other wickets followed.

There was a constant procession of batsmen to and from the pavilion.

My brother mooned about like a man who has lost a fiver and found a waistcoat-button.

"It's all up!" he said.

I nodded.

"You'll be lucky if they lick you by less than a hundred runs," I observed.

And then a change came over the game—a sudden and startling change, which held the spectators spellbound.

A tall, broad-shouldered man was batting for the Old Boys.

Perhaps it would be more correct to say that he was giving an exhibition of fireworks for the Old Boys.

Jove, how he hit!

His batting was a revelation. I have never seen anything quite like it, even at a county match.

Once he hit the pavilion roof, and dislodged a tile.

I wagered my brother two to one in strawberry-ices that he wouldn't do it again—and I lost!

The next moment another tile came clattering down from the roof.

"Who is this man?" I murmured.

My brother beamed. Fresh hope had sprung up within him.

"Why, that's Frank Richards!" he exclaimed. "He was my study-mate at school, and he's one of the best! His early school-days were spent abroad—out in the Wild West, I believe—and he finished his education here."

"He's a topping cricketer!" I said. "If only he can get someone to stay with him he'll pull the game out of the fire."

"There he goes again!" said my brother now thoroughly excited. "Well hit, Frank!"

The ball, scaring over the heads of the spectators, went clean out of the ground.

The School Eleven were fully awake now to the gravity of their position.

They had hoped to lick the Old Boys hollow.

Everything had gone swimmingly until this athletic giant came along with his mighty hits.

Boundaries were as plentiful as blackberries.

The score rose, and so did the hopes of the Old Boys.

One or two more wickets fell, but Frank Richards remained.

His batting was a sight for the gods.

I could not repress my admiration for his brilliant display.

"Introduce me to that fellow afterwards, Bob," I said. "I should like to shake hands with him. I've seen a good many batting performances in my time, but this caps the lot!"

The bowlers and fieldsmen rallied desperately.

They used every art and artifice at their disposal to shift Frank Richards.

And did they succeed?

Rather not!

Frank Richards continued to go great guns.

He smote like a Trojan; and the Old Boys astonished the natives by winning a magnificent game.

When it was all over, and the last burst of cheering had died away, my brother introduced me to Frank Richards.

I found him a most charming fellow.

He was full of anecdotes of the old school.

His young life had been so packed with adventure that, although in the early twenties, he ranked with the men of fifty, so crowded had been his career.

It was not until the time of departure came that a sudden idea occurred to me—one of those ideas that come instantaneously, like a lightning flash across a summer sky.

I turned to Frank Richards.
"Can you write?" I asked, rather breathlessly.

He smiled.
"I could write at the tender age of four," he said.

"Yes. But what I mean is, can you write stories?"

"Of a sort."

"School stories?"

He nodded.

"Have you ever read the 'Gem'?" I asked.

"I have. Martin Clifford is a rattling good writer. I've only one fault to find with his stories."

"Namely?"

"They're not long enough."

I told Frank Richards that I edited the 'Gem.' I told him of its wonderful success; and I wound up by saying that there was room for another paper, run on similar lines.

Of course, a new school and a new set of characters would have to be invented.

Would Frank Richards care to take on the job?

"Look here," said Frank, "you're taking a great deal for granted. How do you know that I shall be able to turn out a story each week to your satisfaction?"

"Because you can tell such good yarns about your own schooldays. And because you've got the atmosphere of school life. You're just the man for us. Will you undertake the work for this new paper?"

"This is too sudden!" said Frank Richards, laughing. "However, I'll think it over, and write and let you know."

"Good!"

I returned to London; and in a few days the following letter—which is of great historical value, so far as the 'Companion Papers' are concerned—arrived at my sanctum:

"Dear Mr. Hinton.—Your suggestion—which rather took my breath away at first—has been

"I shall be both proud and pleased to undertake the task of contributing the school stories to a paper similar to the 'Gem.'"

"Enclosed you will find details of a scheme I have outlined in connection with the stories."

"I propose to call the school Greyfriars, and the principal character will be Harry Wharton. I shall not make a hero of him at first. He will be described as a passionate and wayward boy, and he will have several big battles to fight before he wins for himself the esteem of his schoollfellows."

"Before I make any further progress, I should like to attend a round-table conference with you and Mr. Martin Clifford. I shall thus get to know exactly what is wanted, and be able to make my plans accordingly."

"Nothing would please me better than to be the author of a regular series of school stories. I take a keen interest in boys; and if, by my humble efforts, I can add to their pleasures in any way, I shall be most happy to do so."

"Would you be good enough to let me know your views on this subject, at the same time stating when it will be convenient for me to come up and see you."

"With kind regards,

"Sincerely yours,

"FRANK RICHARDS."

The upshot of this letter was that Frank Richards came to the little office in Carmelite Street, and, aided by helpful suggestions from Martin Clifford, we mapped out the production of what has proved to be one of the most popular boys' papers in the world—the 'Magnet' Library.

This title was decided upon because we felt that such a story-paper would be attractive to all.

Frank Richards was very keen on setting to work. So I told him to go ahead with the Harry Wharton stories, so that in the course of a few months the new paper might be launched.

The 'Magnet' commenced its long and unbroken run on February 12th, 1908.

The first school story was entitled 'The Making of Harry Wharton.'

When I read the manuscript I was hard put to it to decide who was the better author, Martin Clifford or Frank Richards.

(Continued on page 16.)

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET. THE BOYS' FRIEND. THE GEM. THE PENNY POPULAR. CHUCKLES.
Every Monday. Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

For Next Wednesday:

"RIVALS OF THE ROAD!"

By Martin Clifford.

Those who have read this week's story will expect to hear something more about the chums of St. Jim's who have set out on their novel holiday tour. They will not be disappointed, for next week's story describes in the most exciting manner how Tom Merry & Co. get level with Figgins & Co.—their rivals of the Fourth Form.

It is without doubt the best holiday story it has ever been my pleasure to read—and to offer to my girl and boy friends.

You must order your copy in advance to make certain of getting it!

A BATCH OF LETTERS.

They came in sacks—those letters from countless readers of the GEM who had read what I said the other day concerning a certain detail of circulation. There were bright letters, gay as the morning, letters from writers who were not going to believe, thank you very kindly, that the GEM could be otherwise than at the tip-top of circulation standard. They told me they were going to make the paper even better known. Those were the letters it was a pleasure to read. The GEM has been giving unstinted pleasure for years and years, and it would be something more than passing strange if it were to lose an inch of its popularity now. But it isn't going to do anything of the kind.

When you drop into a shop to buy the "Penny Pop,"
remember the GEM as well, for the stories it can tell.

QUOTATIONS.

A correspondent takes serious umbrage because certain words in the Bible were quoted in one of the tales. I shall not quote again. I am with him up to a certain point, but do not let us be too straitlaced. There are certain phrases which exist in the Bible it is true, but they have by this time passed into ordinary use.

The same correspondent takes grave exception to the little wooden cross over Baggy Trimble and the cabbages. Well, well! I can assure him the artist was merely trying to add point to a scene which was comic. I would say again, do not let us be straining after such things. There is a way in which such subjects can be touched upon, and another way which should be left alone. The same correspondent suggests that a story might be made out of the circumstance of prayer. No, I do not think so. The answer is down in the negative. When Hughes described such a scene in 'Tom Brown's Schooldays,' he did it for a definite reason.

"ONLY A GIRL!"

That's how some of my girl readers refer to themselves. The "only" somehow seems all wrong, and never more so than in the case of a note I have just received from an enthusiastic girl reader at Brondesbury, who says:

"My dad, who is a 'sport' in the best sense of the word, is a great believer in the 'Gem' and 'Magnet.' He says that the yarns are the most clean and wholesome things for the youngsters to read, because they instil a sense of honour into them which they will never quite forget in after years."

Not only will they never forget what they have thus learned, but I dare venture to say that the teaching will be the basis of much of their lives. Fellows do not forget what they have learned when they were lads.

My girl chum further tells me that one day she told a friend of hers, a boy of twelve, that he was not acting as Tom Merry would have done. He flushed up, and admitted his fault. So far so good. If Tom Merry is

taken as a model—and the brave, fair-minded young chap is in thousands of cases—if things are to be quite "T. M.," as it were, then we must see to it that Merry carries on as per, and does not run amuck as some headless friends of mine suggested he might do. Tom Merry has big responsibilities on his shoulders—remember that!

LOWTHER THE JOKER!

One of the best written letters that has come my way for a whole pocketful of years—all neat in blue ink, and a model of elegance—puts forward the notion that the redoubtable Monty should come forward as central figure in a story. But would the jokes hold out? Monty Lowther requires a good pun every time he speaks. Jokes with him have to be as of frequent occurrence as the toads were to be as the young lady in the fairy tale opened her mouth. (N.B.—That yarn is incredible.) Besides, Lowther might offend some folks if he had free rein. Think of what the old merchant who lived in Gough Square and made a dictionary said on the subject:

"The man who'd make a pun," quoth he,
"Would perpetrate a larceny,
And punished equally should be."
'Twas thus spoke Dr. Johnson.

NOTICES.

Correspondence, etc., Wanted.

A Reader, 47, Kimberley Terrace, Parliament Street, Port Elizabeth, South Africa—with readers anywhere from twenty upwards.

F. Bottomley, 48, Downhills Park Road, Philip Lane, Tottenham, N. 15, will send particulars of correspondence clubs; stamped, addressed envelope.

Charles McKenzie, 26, Cottage Row, St. James Street, Hull, will contribute a series of articles on rabbit-keeping to amateur magazines in exchange for copies.

A. Smith, 17, Plumbridge Street, Greenwich, S.E.—with readers in the United Kingdom.

I. Pamensky, 51, South Union Street, Port Elizabeth, South Africa—with readers in the British Dominions.

Members wanted for Wide World Correspondence Club in Canada, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, N. and S. Africa, Egypt, India, China, Australia, and in Europe, especially France; no fee. Secretary, 76, Brynland Avenue, Bishopston, Bristol.

Miss Doris Solder, 50, Macclesfield Road, South Norwood, S.E. 25—with readers, 16 and over.

Members wanted for the London United Service Club—Carlton Sharman, 14, Jarvis Road, Fulham, S.W. 6.

Tom Back, 14, Barrett Road, Walthamstow, Essex, E. 17—with readers anywhere.

Miss C. E. Harding wishes to thank all those who replied to her notice. She is sorry it is impossible to answer all letters.

Willie Beaman, 80, Greendale Road, Port Sunlight, Cheshire, wishes to communicate with someone on the training-ship Conway.

Wanted members for the Up-to-Date Sale and Exchange Club. Stamped, addressed envelope. W. S. Kirk, White Lion Inn, Bulwell, Nottingham.

Frank Pyc, 38, Ridge Street, Callowland, Watford, Herts—with readers, 10-12, in Canada, Australia, the States, or New Zealand.

Cecil White, 107, East Row, California, Eton S.O., Yorks—"Gem" and "Magnet" early numbers.

J. Jaggs, 80, Parade, Birmingham, has a hundred copies of No. 1 "Penny Popular," "Billy Bunter's Postal Order," with Plate. He will dispose of these at twopenny each, paper and postage.

H. A. H. (YOUR EDITOR).

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

(Continued from Page 15.)

Certainly the latter has proved himself capable of turning out sterling yarns.

There was no mistaking the popularity of the "Magnet."

It was hailed with delight by thousands of boys and girls who read the "Gem," and who wanted something else on the same lines.

Frank Richards won high praise, and I sent him copies of the many letters from readers extolling his fine work.

What is Frank Richards like?

After my description of Martin Clifford, a good many readers will expect to learn that his friend and colleague is an older and a less athletic man.

Not a bit of it!

Strangely enough, there is no difference in the ages of the two authors; and very little difference in any other respect, for that matter.

If ever two men had everything in common—identical tastes, and equal powers in the world of sport and literature—those two men are Frank Richards and Martin Clifford.

There is a difference in their style of work, certainly; but it is so slight as to be barely noticeable.

I will go so far as to say that, if Frank Richards wrote a "Gem" story, and Martin Clifford a "Magnet," very few readers would twig that anything unusual had taken place. It is only we in the editorial sanctum who could really define the difference.

There have been endless discussions as to which is the better author.

I regard such discussions as sheer waste of time.

Occasionally Frank Richards may write a better yarn than his colleague; and at times the reverse is the case.

But, in the main, their abilities are equal. It would be unfair to exalt one above the other.

Some of you will feel inclined to impress upon me that Frank Richards wrote "The Boy Without a Name," "School and Sport," and "Rivals and Chums"; and you will say that these three stories are masterpieces—that they are unsurpassed in boys' fiction.

In reply to this, I would remind you of that fine series of stories which appeared in the "Gem" dealing with the adventures of Reginald Talbot.

If Martin Clifford had written nothing else in his lifetime, that powerful and fascinating series of stories would have endeared him to the boys of to-day and to the boys of the generations to be.

The happiest summing-up of the matter is to say that Frank Richards and Martin Clifford are both brilliant writers.

They may strike a bad patch occasionally, and produce a story which is a shade inferior to the majority; but on the whole their work is wonderfully consistent; and if by any mischance they were taken from us, they would leave a gap which would not easily be filled.

CHAPTER 4.

Concerning Our Artists.

THE pictorial side of the Companion Papers is a most important one.

A description of our art and artists will prove less romantic, perhaps, than the record of our stories and authors.

At the same time, these Recollections would

not be complete without a brief summary concerning our artists and their work.

Sketches are essential to the success of a paper.

A periodical without pictures is like a house without windows.

Imagine the "Gem" Library, for instance, as a book of solid prose, unrelieved by sketches! I am afraid its circulation would become "small by degrees and beautifully less!"

The average reader knows very little about our artists, for the simple reason that they seldom affix their names to their work.

Frank Richards and Martin Clifford are more in the limelight than C. H. Chapman and R. J. Macdonald; and yet the two latter gentlemen have played just as important a part as the authors whose stories they illustrate.

Mr. C. H. Chapman has done the bulk of the "Magnet" sketches; and Mr. R. J. Macdonald the bulk of the "Gem."

But these two are by no means solely responsible for the pictorial output of the Companion Papers.

Other artists who have played a big part are Warwick Reynolds, Arthur Clarke, E. E. Briscoe, Hutton Mitchell, and Philip Hayward.

It was Hutton Mitchell who first illustrated the "Magnet" stories.

He was succeeded by Arthur Clarke—a man whose charming personality endeared him to all.

Arthur Clarke's schoolboys were universally recognised and admired.

We find his work in the back numbers of the "Magnet" Library, the "Boys' Friend," the "Boys' Realm," the "Boys' Herald," and other periodicals.

We were deprived of Arthur Clarke's services under tragic circumstances.

Whilst executing a sketch for the "Magnet" Library the artist fell dead, leaving a host of friends to mourn his loss.

The unfinished sketch is still in my possession.

Following Arthur Clarke's untimely death, a successor was found in Mr. C. H. Chapman, who was instructed to produce sketches of the same style as those of his predecessor.

Some rather unkind things have been said from time to time concerning Mr. Chapman's work.

It has been implied that he is not a master of his craft.

But, before they throw stones at Mr. Chapman's reputation, let the critics remember this—that he came to the rescue of the "Magnet" Library at a very critical time, and that he was faced with the very difficult task of carrying on the illustrations in the style of Arthur Clarke.

Not even the severest critic can deny that Mr. Chapman has succeeded in the latter respect. Indeed, so cleverly has he carried out his work that many of his drawings have been attributed to Mr. Arthur Clarke.

Mr. Chapman himself is in residence at a delightful spot near Reading. His chief hobbies are, I believe, riding and farming.

Mr. R. J. Macdonald is, as his name suggests, a Scot.

He has illustrated hundreds of "Gem" stories, and his healthy, happy-looking schoolboys are familiar to all.

"Mac"—as he is affectionately termed by his colleagues—has a studio at Chelsea and a room at the Fleetway House.

(To be continued next Wednesday.)

Greyfriars Epitaphs.

No. 9. By BOB CHERRY.

LEFT HERE TO ROT

BENEATH THIS SPOT

are the gigantic bones of

BEASTLY BULLY BOLSOVER,

The Terror of the Remove,

who was publicly lynched for causing the manslaughter of fifteen fags.

He was the possessor of

A NINE-POINT-SEVEN PUNCH.

which he never brought into action unless his opponent was under twelve years of age. If he was crippled or disabled, so much the better.

BULLY, DRAGGART, AND BEAST.

he wrought great havoc at Greyfriars; but he met his masters in Bob Cherry and Dick Russell.

His lower jaw was so tremendous in size that it was impossible to bury it here. It has therefore been cremated.

He took for his model the Village Blacksmith, for the muscles of his brawny arms were strong as iron bands; and week in, week out from morn till night, you could hear his hammering something or somebody.

In one respect he differed from the Village Blacksmith, of whom it is written:

"He looked the whole world in the face,
For he owed not any man!"

The same could not be said of the dear departed Bolsover.

He had a minor—a gallant and gentle youth—on whose account he was sometimes given to remorse. But as soon as the remorse had spent itself he looked round for some small fag whom he might transform into a table-jelly.

His manners, like his boots, were unpollished; and when, at the finish, he fell a victim to the mob, no tears were shed, no hearts were broken, no groans were groaned, but

THE SWEETEST SMILES WERE SMOLE!



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