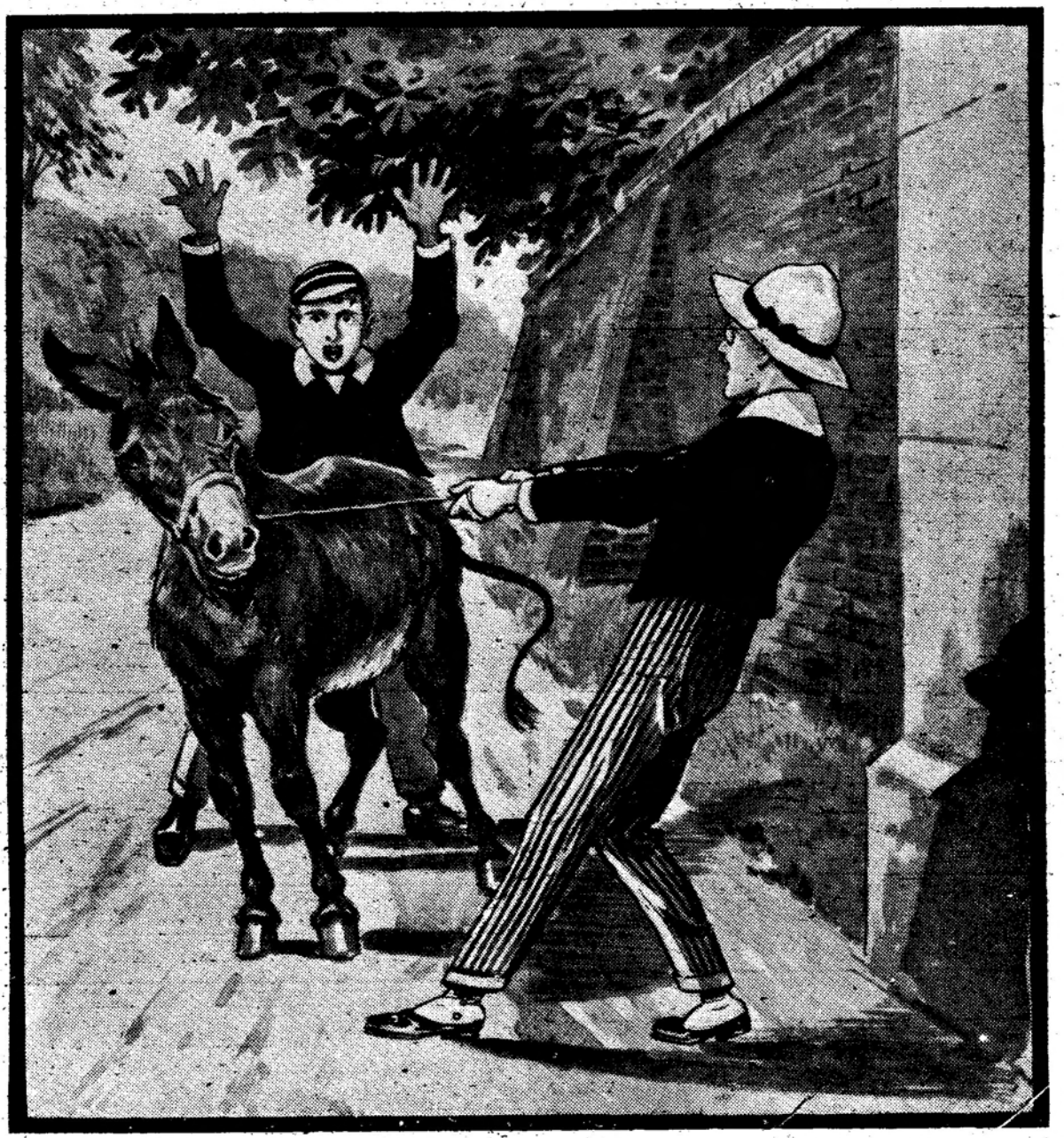
ANOTHER ROLLICKING SCHOOL STORY INSIDE!

The GEM LIBRARY 1½D

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D'ARCY'S DONKEY THAT WOULDN'T GO!

An Amusing Incident from the Magnificent Long Complete School Story Inside.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

Half-a-crown is paid for all contributions printed on this page.

THE POLICEMAN.

The first regular policemen were introduced into this country during the early Hanoverian period. They were called "Charleys," and used to call out the hours. These were the old watchmen. It was not till 1829 that Sir Robert Peel created the Metropolitan Police Force. It was the terror of evil-doers. They were called "Bobbies" or "Peelers," after Sir Robert Peel. Top-hats, white trousers, and blue coats made up the first uniform. The work done by the police is difficult and highly responsible. They are a grand set of fellows, always good-tempered, and ready for any danger at any time.—Ray Kempster, 33, Cleveland Park Avenue, Walthamstow, Essex.

COMPLIMENTARY.

"Miss Lane, do let me help you to some more pudding!"

"Well, thanks," said the young woman; "but only a mouthful, please!"

"Jane," said the hostess to the parlour-maid, "fill Miss Lane's plate."—Miss C. Turnbull, 5, Stephen Drive, South Govan, Glasgow.

EDISON'S VERSE.

The following reminder is kept by the great inventor in his laboratory:

"It's all very well to be happy and bright
When life goes along like a song.
But the man who's worth while,
Is the man who can smile
When every dashed thing goes all wrong."

—George Mallalieu, 1156, Chester Road, Stretford, nr. Manchester.

NOT UNLESS.

"Conductor," asked the nervous old lady, as she prepared to alight from the electric-car, "will there be any danger if I put my foot on the rail?" "No, mum," was the brisk response, "not unless you put your other foot on the overhead wire."—Miss Sylvia H. Burwood, 25, Beversbrook Road, Tufnell Park, N.19.

A GOOD EDGE.

A noble knight took his sword to the armourer's to have it sharpened. The armourer returned the trusty blade to its owner, but the knight said the sword was not sharp, and brought it back. The armourer cut a fleece in two with one stroke, but, still, the knight was not content. The sword was sharpened again. The man of war even grumbled when the armourer, after another turn, laid a fleece across the sword. The fleece fell in two. "Not sharp enough yet," said the knight. Once again the armourer tried to please. He held the sword against the neck of the knight. "Did you feel anything, sir?" asked the smith. "Just a drop of water down my back," replied the knight. "Shake yourself," said the armourer. The knight shook, and his head fell off.—H. Monkman, 13, Dawlish Terrace, Osmondthorpe, Leeds.

SMART.

"Well, you posted the letters all right, I suppose?" "Yes," replied the office-boy, in answer to the manager's inquiry, "but you made a queer mistake." "What do you mean?" "You put the fivepenny stamp on the English letter, and the twopenny stamp on the foreign one, but I made it all right. I slipped in the post-office and altered the addresses."—Charles Branch, 9, Tennyson Street, Burnley.

WHY HE WAS GLAD.

It was evening. The boy stood on the bridge, clapping his hands vigorously. Beyond the brow of the hill a dull, red glow suffused the sky. A stranger passed. The newcomer was rather near-sighted. "It does my heart good, little boy," he said, "to see you appreciate you cloud effect. You seem to me to be a real poet. Do you often watch the sunsets, my little man?" "Sunsets!" cried the youngster. "That aren't no sunset, guv'nor. That's the village school burning down."—Ewen Patterson, Andrew Street, Wooroolin, Kingaroy Line, Queensland, Australia.

HIPPOPOTAMUS BIRDS.

These live in Africa, and often settle on the back of the hippo, and warn it when danger is near. The hippopotamus is extremely shortsighted, and if it is not lying with its nose to the wind, a native can get close up without the beast knowing. The bird on its back, however, knows all about what's happening, and rises swiftly into the air, thus apprising the big animal that peril is lurking.—George Webb, Royston, Cecil Park, Pinner, Middlesex.

BAD FOR THE CABBAGES.

Do you know that snails have teeth? These teeth are situated in their tongues, and a big snail has about fifteen thousand. These teeth are so small that they can only be seen with the aid of a powerful magnifying glass.—F. Hall, Octagon Farm, Copie, Bedfordshire.

THE THREE BUTTONS.

One day a school-teacher said to her class of boys:

"Now, I am going to give each of you three buttons. You must think of the first as representing Life, the second Liberty, and the third Happiness. You must produce these three buttons in three days' time, and tell me what they stand for."

On the appointed day the teacher asked one boy for his buttons.

"I ain't got 'em all," he sobbed. "Here's Life and Liberty, but me mother has gone and sewed Happiness on me trousers."—Miss R. Wishart, care of Mrs. Byford, 40, Gladstone Avenue, High Street, North, Manor Park, E. 12.

ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN.

The mathematical man—Algy Bra.
The kind man—Hugh Maine.
The moneymaking man—Luke Rative.
The helpful man—Will Ling.
The hard man—Adam Ant.
The cross man—Dick Tate.—Charles Graham, 24, Bowes Street, Newtown Road, Carlisle.



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A Magnificent Story of Life at Millford College. By IVOR HAYES.

NEW READERS START HERE.

TOM MACE, whose father is a professional cracksman, wins a scholarship for Millford College. His father is rather pleased, for

MR. BILL MACE has certain unlawful reasons for wanting to see the inside of the school, which his friend, Spikey Meadows, has described as a good "crib." Mrs. Mace darns up her son's clothes, and Tom sets off for school. In the train he overhears a conversation between a man in a sea-green suit and a muffled ruffian. The ruffian is addressed as

SPIKEY MEADOWS, and there is some suspicious talk that sets the lad thinking. At last he arrives at the school, only to be jeered at by the other juniors. He sees there a lad,

SIMON LUNDY, son of the man who is the squire of that part of the country in which Tom lives. Tom tries to be friendly, but Simon cuts him dead—for Tom was a grocer's errand-boy.

(Now read on.)

A Surprise for Tom.

"I—I——" stuttered Tom.

"Dashed cheek!" shouted Simon. "And you, an errand boy, have got the cheek to come to Millford? Get out!"

Tom started back a pace. His feelings were wounded deeply at this rebuff, and he could not understand Simon's attitude. The arrival of the grocery boy at Millford did not in the least suit Simon Lundy.

"He was the grocery boy!" almost shrieked Simon, pointing a finger at Tom, whose face was now strangely white. "Ask him!"

The crowd stood silent. And Tom, in the face of that steady gaze, knew not what to say.

"Tell them!" hooted Simon.

Tom cleared his throat. Several juniors began to snigger, and he waited till they had finished.

"I was a grocer's errand-boy," he said, in a clear voice. "I am not ashamed of it. But I have won a scholarship——"

There was a sudden burst of laughter.

Luke Bradshaw stepped forward.

"You don't mean to say you've the cheek to come here, do you?" he asked.

"I've won a scholarship," said Tom steadily. "And I shall stay here!"

There was a murmur from the crowd.

"You won't!" said the enraged Simon. "You'll get out! You're not the kind of chap we want here!" He pointed to the roadway. "Get out," he shouted, "or we'll throw you out!"

Tom did not move, but clutched his parcel tighter.

Simon stepped forward, and laid heavy hands upon the new boy. It was a signal. The others, scenting a jape, sprang forward, and soon poor Tom was in the centre of a wild, jostling crowd.

"Hurrah! Chuck him out!" roared the crowd.

They caught him by the shoulders, and flung him to the ground. His coat was torn from his back, and his parcel, containing the few things his mother had gathered together for him, was ripped open.

Luke Bradshaw, in high delight, grabbed up a thick nightshirt, that was thrown out with the other things on to the ground, and slipped it over his head.

As the overjoyed Bradshaw staggered about the quadrangle with the nightgown over his head, there were shrieks of laughter. For the nightshirt had been patched in sundry places.

Nightshirts were things spoken of only in whispers at Millford. No one would confess to having seen one. Luke Bradshaw and his merry cronies were addicted to pyjamas—silk ones.

"Oh, my hat, look at his nightie!" yelled Garnet. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at the darns!" shrieked another voice.

Tom Mace flushed a deep crimson at that gibe, and clenched his hands tighter. A lump came to his throat as he thought of the loving care with which his mother had mended that much-worn nightshirt.

"Give it to me!" he shouted angrily. "You shall not touch it!"

He rushed forward, and struck out angrily at the humorous Bradshaw. That young gentleman gasped and collapsed on the hard, unsympathetic quadrangle.

The laughter ceased suddenly. It was as the silence that precedes the storm.

"Get up!" said Tom thickly. "You cad!"

But Luke Bradshaw had other ideas. The noble blood that ran in his veins turned cold. Luke was not a fighting-man, and he did not like the fiery glitter in Tom Mace's eyes.

"Go for him, Luke!" urged Simon Lundy, from behind Garnet's back. "Lick the cad!"

But even as Luke Bradshaw rose there came an interruption.

"What does this mean?"

The stern voice caused Tom to wheel round. He could not see who had spoken, for he was hemmed in by the other juniors.



A man broke through the crowd—a man with clear cut features and small moustache. "I am the new master!" said the voice. Tom Mace stared blankly. What was this man doing at Millford?

(Copyright in the United States of America.)

"I am the new master," said the voice. "You, boy, in that ridiculous white garment, get up, and explain!"

A man broke through the crowd—a man with clear-cut features and small moustache.

Tom Mace gasped aloud. It was the man in the sea-green suit!

What could it mean?

An Interview with the Head.

TOM MACE stared blankly at the man in the sea-green suit, unable to believe his eyes. What was he doing at Millford? This man, whom he had seen in the train, conversing with Spikey Meadows, the crook!

The man with the sea-green suit gave Tom a quick look. There was no doubt that he recognised the lad, and Tom knew instinctively what was passing in the man's mind. He was wondering how much of the conversation in the train Tom had heard.

But, with an effort that only Tom saw, the man took his eyes off the lad, and gave his attention to the scene before him.

Lionel Garnet was looking from Tom to the man in amazement; and Luke Bradshaw, with sullen red face, was still sitting in the quadrangle with Tom's nightshirt over his Etons.

"Get up!" snapped the man. "What is all this tom-foolery? Tell me, boy!"

"Nothing," answered Bradshaw sullenly.

"Don't tell me lies! I have told you I am the new master. Answer my question! And what are all these socks and things lying on the ground?"

He indicated the darned socks that lay scattered on the ground. Several fellows grinned, and Simon Lundy sniggered behind his hand.

"They belong to that chap," said Bradshaw, indicating Tom with a well-manicured hand. "That scholarship brat!"

The man glanced at Tom quickly, and noted his red face.

"I see," he said slowly. "It is what you would call ragging. I suppose you do not consider this lad your social equal?"

"That's it, sir!" answered Luke. "He's a low-down fellow!"

"He once delivered groceries," put in Simon Lundy, under the impression that the master would side with him.

The man nodded.

"Well, pack up his things again in that parcel, and let's have no more of it. You had better come with me, boy, and see your Form-master."

With that he strode off, and Tom, as soon as he had gathered together his pitiful parcel of clothing, followed. One or two fellows hissed, and the nuts muttered indignantly amongst themselves.



Peel grabbed the scholarship lad's arm. "Don't be a silly ass! Of course you've got to come." Tom shook his head. "I'm not going to sponge on you!" he said firmly. "I shall have some money myself soon!"

"Interfering rotter!" said the lofty Bradshaw. "Fancy siding with that brat!"

Simon Lundy gritted his teeth.

"He can think what he likes!" he grunted. "I'm not going to stand any of that cad Mace's cheek, though!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll make the place to hot to hold him!"

"Ra-ther!" chuckled Bradshaw. "Make the blessed old school too jolly hot to hold the blighter!"

Now that all danger of a fight was over, Bradshaw's noble blood coursed more fiercely in his veins, and adopted the blue hue of the aristocrat.

And Tom, all unconscious of the plans that were being made for his future, followed the man with the sea-green suit into the School House. It was the first time he had ever been to a large school, and he looked about him wonderingly. The fine old building, with its stone, ivy-clad walls, impressed him, and he drew a deep breath. This was to be his new abode. Here he could, perhaps, forget his home, his drunken father, and all the sordid poverty which so far had been his lot.

Yet the welcome he had received seemed not to bode well for the castles he had built himself in the fickle air.

"Come in." The man indicated Tom the waiting-room, and the boy stepped in.

"I shall not be long," said the man with the sea-green suit. "I am going to see the headmaster. He will want to see you, too."

Tom, left alone in the large room, stared round. In the centre was a huge table, and against the wall on one side a large, comfortable red-leather chesterfield; on the other side were armchairs.

Could this really be his future home? He asked himself the question as he stared blankly round the room. Would he be allowed to sit in those chairs? Hitherto the only chairs he had ever known had been the cheap wooden ones in his mother's kitchen.

On the mantelshelf ticked a huge clock with solemnity in keeping with the general tone of the room. It was so utterly unlike the cheap alarm that had always roused him from his bed that it rather scared him.

A tap on the door rudely interrupted his meditations. He turned round, and the door opened.

The bullet head of the pageboy peered in. There was a grin on the pageboy's pimply face, a cheeky grin that stretched from ear to ear.

"Master Tom Mace?" he asked, then sniggered.

"Yes," stammered Tom. "What is it?"

"The 'eadmaster wants you—sir. He, he!"

Very red in the face, but head erect, Tom followed the pageboy along the corridors and up the wide stairway.

The pageboy, no longer grinning, halted outside an impressive oak door labelled "Headmaster," and tapped respectfully.

"Come in!" sounded a deep voice.

The pageboy flung open the door, and, with a deep, solemn bow, stepped aside for Tom to pass.

Tom entered the room, and the door closed behind him. He looked quickly round the room, then at the white-haired man sitting in an armchair before a desk. Tom stared at him, and the white-haired headmaster peered at Tom over the tops of his large horn-rimmed spectacles.

The headmaster rose, and stretched out his hand.

"Very pleased to meet you, my lad," he said kindly, gripping Tom's hand firmly. "I am glad that you've arrived safely. Mr. Gale has just told me of your reception at the gates." The little gentleman coughed, and took off his spectacles nervously. "Now, don't be disheartened, Mace," he said, wagging his spectacles at Tom. "All will come right in the end. It will seem a little strange at first, and perhaps the other boys will not be friendly to begin with. But that will blow over, you'll find. Learn all you can, and be a credit to the school. I can see that you're the right sort of chap."

He paused, and Tom muttered a nervous "Thank you, sir!"

"Well, that's all," said the headmaster reflectively, wagging his spectacles. "You'll be in the Fourth Form, under Mr. Mullins. The pageboy will take you to his study."

He walked to the table and pressed the bell-button; then, as though forgetful of Tom's presence, returned to his desk. A few moments elapsed, and the pageboy poked in his head. His wide mouth was shut now.

"Biggs, take Master Mace to Mr. Mullins, please."

Once again Tom followed the page, wondering if his journeyings would ever cease.

His interview with the kindly headmaster had given him fresh heart. There was, then, at least one person in the school who wanted him to get on. And there was Mr. Gale, the man with the sea-green suit. He had seemed more of a friend than an enemy. But Tom did not somehow want that man for a friend. He could not help suspecting that Mr. Gale was at the school with an ulterior motive.

Otherwise, why should he have anything to do with Spikey Meadows?

And had not Bill Mace, Tom's father, said that Spikey Meadows had suggested Millford College as an excellent "crib" to "crack"? It did seem strange.

And Tom determined to keep his eyes open, to watch the man with the sea-green suit, in case there should be underhand work.

Not Wanted!

"COME in!"

The voice that made that summons was distinctly unpleasant, and Tom Mace entered Mr. Mullins' study with great misgivings.

The pageboy shut the door with a slight slam and beat a hasty retreat.

A red-faced man with small, close-set, ratty eyes rose as Tom entered. He glanced at the boy critically, and Tom could not help noting the sneer on the man's face.

"Well," snapped Mr. Mullins, "so you're the new boy—eh?"

"Yes, sir," answered Tom.

"Oh, I thought you might have been the pageboy's brother!" the master sneered, and there was a cynical curl to his lip.

Tom flushed and shifted uncomfortably.

"The headmaster sent me to you, sir," he said. "I—I—What am I to do now?"

"What are you to do now? Speaks like a pageboy, too!" muttered the master to himself.

But Tom caught the words, and his ears burned.

"Do?" went on the master aloud. "I don't know that I can give you anything to do at present!"

"I am ready to do whatever work there is for me," answered Tom, trying to keep from his voice the contempt he felt for this man.

"'Sir—sir,' to you, you snipe!" snapped the master. "Don't you know that I'm your Form-master? Haven't you had any breeding? Were you dragged up, or brought up like a human being? Bah! You're in Study B."

He resumed his seat by the open window, and Tom made a motion as though to open the door. But he did not know where Study B was, and he stopped.

Mr. Mullins looked round angrily.

"What is it? What is it?" he snapped petulantly. "Haven't I told you? Study B—B, boy! Are you deaf?"

"No, sir," answered Tom as politely as he could. "But where is the study?"

"Heavens! On the Fourth Form passage!" shouted the master. He sank back into his chair and glowered at the book he had been reading.

Tom, with a heavy heart, opened the door and walked out into the passage.

What a change was this from the headmaster! And this was his own Form-master—the man at Millford with whom he would have most to do. What with Mr. Mullins and Bradshaw, Garnet and Lundy, the future did not seem over rosy.

Would there be no one to say a kind word to him sometimes?

The boy stood still in the passage and asked himself that question.

As though in answer to this question, a red-haired youth with a cheery, freckled face stepped in front of Tom.

"Penny for 'em!" he said, with a chuckle.

Tom stopped and stared at him.

"I don't understand," he said, glancing questioningly at the boy. Was this a joke? he wondered.

"Penny for 'em—penny for your thoughts, fathead!"

The words were said so genially that Tom could not help smiling.

"I was thinking," he answered bluntly, "that this place does not abound with good-humoured people. There seem to be a great many snobs here."

The red-haired lad became temporarily serious.

"Yes," he agreed, "that's so. I suppose you've just seen old Mullins? I thought you would be there, so I came to meet you."

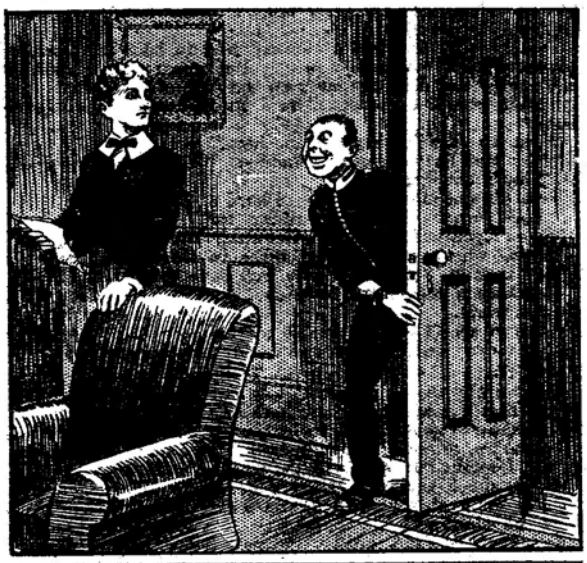
"It's very good of you!" said Tom. He gave the red-haired youth another look. He no longer had suspicions of a "rag." This lad seemed too genuine.

"Don't worry about old Mullins, or about that ass Lundy and his fellow-fools," answered the freckled-faced one. "They can't help it. They were the same with me when I came. You see, my pater's a poor vicar. Of course, they looked down on me at first. But I've got used to them."

He took Tom's arm and led him along the passage.

"Forget them!" he said cheerily. "Where has old Mullins put you—what study, I mean?"

"Study B," answered Tom, almost in a dream. This sudden friendship had taken him by surprise, and he was almost happy now.



The bullet head of the pageboy peered into the waiting-room. "Master Tom Mace?" he asked, sniggering. "Yes," stammered Tom. "What is it?" "The 'ead-master wants you—sir! He, he!"

"Oh, my aunt!" said the freckled-faced youth, stopping short. "That's Lundy's study. He's in there with Bradshaw. I wouldn't mind betting old Mullins did that on purpose."

Tom started. Lundy's study! So he was to share a study with Lundy and Bradshaw, the two snobs who had made his first few moments in the school a misery!

"I'll show you the way," said the red-haired youth, not noting Tom's expression. "My name's Peel—Robert Peel. Don't start making puns about it. I've made it a rule to give punsters a thick ear. I'm in Study D."

He commenced to whistle shrilly. It was not good whistling and agonisingly discordant, but to Tom at that moment it seemed almost musical.

He had at least one friend, then. Robert Peel, despite his whistle, seemed a very good sort, and obviously he had tasted the spite of Lundy before.

"Here we are!"

Peel stopped whistling and indicated the closed door to which was affixed a small brass number-plate "B."

"This is your home. So-long! See you later, perhaps!"

With that he strolled off, leaving Tom alone in the passage outside the door of Study B.

For some seconds Tom hesitated. He heard Bradshaw's drawling voice within, and he had no desire to renew the acquaintance with the estimable Luke. But it was no use waiting. He had to enter some time. So why not now? With doubt in his heart, he tapped at the door, pushed it open, and entered.

Two youths, who had been seated at the table, sprang to their feet. Bradshaw gave a gasp of alarm, but when he saw Tom, laughed.

"My hat!" he breathed. "I thought it was a master!"

"It's that scholarship brat!" sneered Lundy, taking his cigarette from his lips.

The air was thick with tobacco-smoke, and some cards lay on the table. Scattered about on the cloth were some coins and some notes. Tom's eyes widened in surprise.

He was not well acquainted with public school regulations, but he certainly thought that smoking amongst the boys was prohibited. And he was quite right.

Strictly speaking, Lundy and his elegant companion should have been doing their prep, and thoughts of cigarettes should have filled them with horror.

But in their own estimation Lundy and Bradshaw were merry nuts, and card-playing and smoking were their usual recreation.

"What do you want here?" asked Bradshaw rather nervously. He was rather afraid that the new boy might sneak. For if their recreation came to the ears of the headmaster there would be serious trouble.

"This is my study," said Tom Mace steadily. "Mr. Mullins has put me in here."

"Mullins has?" echoed Simon Lundy. "Like the little rotter's cheek! Cheeky little brat!"

"Fancy!" murmured Bradshaw, puffing at his cigarette. "After all we've done for the little rotter, too! Too bad!

Sha'n't ask him to my place again!" And Bradshaw shook his head regretfully.

Tom gasped. He had never expected to hear such careful disregard of a master's dignity. But apparently Bradshaw and Lundy had different ideas on the subject.

"Well, you can get out!" said Lundy surlily, turning to Tom.

"But Mr. Mullins has sent me here."

"Mr. Mullins!" mimicked Lundy. "You can go and tell Mullins to eat coke!"

Tom did not move. He stared hard at Lundy.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" asked Bradshaw. "Haven't you heard Simon? Get out! We don't want you!"

"And, what's a good deal more to the point," shouted Lundy angrily, "we won't jolly well have you! Get out!"

He made a movement towards the scholarship lad. Tom did not move.

"If you aren't the other side of this door in two minutes I'll throw you out!" threatened Lundy blusteringly.

Still Tom made no movement. The snob's blustering could not move him from the room. He had made up his mind to stay. This was his study, and here he would remain.

Bradshaw clutched his friend's arm.

"Shut up, Simon!" he whispered. "We don't want a row here! Look at the cards and the smoke!"

Lundy shook him off. His face was white with anger.

"Put the cards away, then, you fool!" he snapped. "And open the **window!"**

Attracted by the voices, several fellows were already gathered in the passage and were staring with great curiosity at the three juniors in Study B.

"Hallo, dear boys! More trouble with the errand-boy?" laughed Garnet.

Tom turned to him, but said nothing.

"Come and help us turn the rotter out!" said the valiant Bradshaw, as he flicked a newspaper about to waft away the smoke.

Garnet pushed past Tom and stood beside Lundy and his heroic companion.

"Chuck him out!" yelled the crowd. "Come on, Lundy! Down with the grocer-boy!"

Tom Mace moved across the study with studied indifference, and seated himself on a chair.

"That's my chair!" shouted Lundy. "Get off it!" He pointed tremblingly to the door. "Get out!"

As Tom made no move, the three youths stepped forward towards him. Tom clenched his hands and waited for them. But he had no chance. Someone in the crowd behind him encircled his neck with an arm and brought him heavily to the floor. In a trice the three valiant nuts were upon him, pinning him down.

Tom struggled wildly.

"Let me get up, you cads!" he shouted.

He struck out wildly, and Luke Bradshaw staggered away with a pained gasp, mopping his nose. Bradshaw was only too relieved to get that blow; he was now hors-de-combat.

But Lundy and Garnet stuck to Tom like leeches. Every now and then Lundy banged his fist home on Tom's face, and the one-time errand-boy gasped. But he was made of stern stuff, and he determined not to go under—at least, not without a fight that the nuts would not soon forget.

He gasped, punched hard, and used his elbows, even, in his endeavours to free himself; but all to no avail.

"Chuck him out!" shouted Bradshaw, from the other side of the room. "Give the low cad gyp, by Jove!"

Seeing that Tom's blows were growing feebler every minute, some of the fellows in the doorway took a hand in the unequal contest. Tom Mace stood no chance. He was lifted bodily from the floor and flung into the passage.

"Hurrah!" yelled the crowd. "That's the stuff! Now sling him downstairs!"

The scholarship lad's struggles grew feeble and more feeble, and he soon became almost limp in the arms of his captors. They carried him, protesting, to the head of the stairs.

"You cowards!" he panted. "Let me alone! Let me alone!"

But the snobs of Millford only laughed the more.

"Now let him go!" hissed Lundy.

Tom was released, and he fell with a bump on the top stair, lying there dazed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Simon Lundy let out his foot in a venomous kick, and Tom, with a painful gasp, went rolling down the stairs.

Bump, bump, bump!

At every stair he bumped heavily, unable to stop himself. Down he went, down, till he reached the bottom, only to lie there, bruised, and aching in every bone, unable to rise.

Lundy gazed down at him and shook his fist.

"That's what you'll get!" he snarled. "Perhaps you'll learn soon! We—don't—want—errand-boys—here!"

The words rang in the scholarship lad's ears as he tried feebly to rise to his feet.

Then the fellows at the head of the stairs wandered away chuckling, heedless now of Tom and of the harm they may have done him.

And Tom, when he had recovered from his giddiness, rose to his feet. His shabby coat was split down the back. His head ached as though it would burst.

He leant his aching head against the cooling banisters.

"I don't care!" he muttered. "I don't care! They won't make me leave! They sha'n't! I shall stick here whatever happens!"

A Friend at Last!

"YOU poor old chap!"

A hand was laid on Tom's shoulder—laid kindly. It was the hand of a friend, and the voice had been kind.

Tom Mace looked up into the now serious freckled face of Robert Peel.

"Is this Lundy's work? Have they been knocking you about?" asked Peel, looking into the other's face.

Tom nodded.

"Yes," he answered heavily. "They threw me downstairs. But I shall be all right soon."

"The rotten cads!" said Peel. "I'll give that ass Lundy a thick ear!"

"No, don't," said Tom. "Let me fight my own battles. I'd fight him, but they all set on me."

"They do, the rotters!" said Peel. "That's the only way they fight. You want to get old Simon alone, and pummel him. He can't understand words, but a thick ear or a black eye now and then does him good. I always reckon that a thick ear a month sets him up nicely!"

Tom tried to smile. He knew that Peel, to cheer him up, was trying to be frivolous. But he felt at that moment that he could not be cheered up.

It was all very well to talk of giving Lundy a "thick ear"—but when they all set about him at once, how could he? He had fought hard, but they had been too many for him.

"Come and sit down out in the quad for a bit," said Peel kindly. "The fresh air will do you good, you know."

Tom nodded, and followed his new-found friend into the open air.

"Poor old chap!" repeated the bluff Peel compassionately. "You must be bumped and bruised all over!"

Peel's eyes were glittering with anger. Peel was a sportsman, and he hated the treatment that had been meted out to Tom.

With one hand Robert Peel could easily have managed the whole gang of weedy nuts; but Peel had nothing but withering contempt for the self-complacent occupants of Study B and their toadying cronies.

"I'm all right," muttered Tom again, as he sank on to a seat beneath the elms.

He rested his elbow on his knee and sank his head into his hands. Peel watched him, saying nothing, but keeping his hand on Tom's shoulder, knowing full well the comfort that his friendly grip brought the scholarship lad.

"Come along to the tuckshop," he said pressingly. "You must be jolly hungry."

Tom flushed.

"I can't," he said.

"Can't?" Bob Peel frowned. "Don't be a silly chump! It'll be all right. They're up in their study."

"I don't mean that," answered poor Tom, with a gulp. "But, you see, I—I—I haven't any money."

"No money?" Robert Peel was staggered. It was so unusual that on his first day at school a boy should arrive penniless that it was not surprising that Peel gasped with dismay. "No money!" he echoed. "But that's all right! It's my treat!"

Tom shook his head, smiling.

"It's very good of you, Peel," he replied gratefully, "but I really can't cadge on you."

Peel grabbed the scholarship lad's arm, with a slight laugh.

"Don't be a silly ass! Of course you've got to come!"

Tom shook his head emphatically.

"I'm not going to sponge on you," he said firmly. "I shall have some money soon."

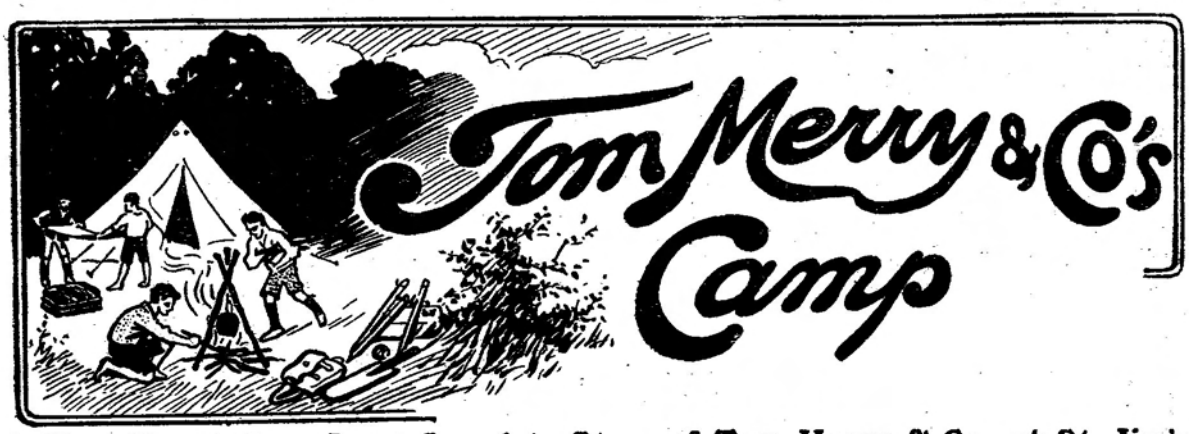
Bob Peel scratched his head in bewilderment.

"Well," he said, at length, with bright inspiration, "won't you accept a loan? You surely can't refuse a pal's offer?"

Tom smiled.

"Well, if you put it like that, I must accept!" he laughed. "Right-ho! I'll come! But it's only a loan."

(This splendid story of Millford College will be continued in next Wednesday's GEM. Get it early!)



A Magnificent New, Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.
Arthur Augustus Knows!

"I'M goin' to pwopose——"

"What?"

"I'm goin' to pwopose——"

"Great Scott!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke in quite a casual manner; but the six juniors who heard his remark uttered six astonished ejaculations.

It was tea-time at St. Jim's, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had dropped into Study No. 6, in the Fourth, to tea. They were discussing poached eggs, toast, and the approaching holidays.

Poached eggs and toast were disposed of easily enough; but the holidays were rather a problem. Exactly what they were going to do with the midsummer vacation the heroes of the School House had not decided. Jack Blake declared that it would have to be something cheap; while Herries declared that whatever it was, it would have to include his bulldog Towser; and Digby was of opinion that it didn't matter much what it was so long as it didn't include Towser.

Tom Merry & Co. listened politely while Herries and Dig argued that point with considerable emphasis. Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was polishing his eyeglass with a thoughtful air.

Taking advantage of a pause, Arthur Augustus "butted in" with the remark that caused so much astonishment.

Six separate stares were fixed on the swell of St. Jim's, who seemed surprised by the surprise his remark had caused.

"Weally, deah boys——" he recommenced.

"You're going to propose——" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas; I——"

"To whom?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"If it's the girl in the bunshop," said Lowther, "I shall forbid the banns. The disparity of age, my young friend——"

"You uttah ass!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus warmly. "You are perfectly well awah that I did not mean——"

"If it's Mary the housemaid——"

"Weally, you ass——"

"There's nothing doing. Mary is engaged to a soldier——"

"I wefuse to listen to these wibald jokes, Lowthah! You are perfectly well awah——"

"It can't be Mrs. Mimms," said Lowther, shaking his head. "Remember Mr. Weller's warning, and beware of widders——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his celebrated eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed Monty Lowther with withering scorn.

"If you wegard these wemarks as humowous, Lowthah——"

"Well, who is the happy party, then?" asked Lowther seriously. "If it's a suitable match, your old pals will see you through. I don't mind playing up as best man, so long as I'm not expected to get engaged to the chief bridesmaid. I bar that. Anything else——"

"I was goin' to pwopose——" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"But do you really think you're old enough, old chap?" asked Manners, with owl-like gravity. "Hadn't you better wait till you're in the Fifth?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful ass——"

"We shall have to keep an eye on Gussy!" remarked Blake. "The way he goes around distributing glad eyes is simply dangerous——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"I know he'll be nabbed sooner or later," continued Blake. "Miss Bunn has a business eye on him already——"

"I wefuse to listen——"

"Do be careful, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "I know you don't mean any harm. But the way you leave a trail of broken hearts behind you wherever you go——"

"It's rather shocking!" said Digby.

"I'm always expecting to see Gussy landed for breach of promise," said Herries thoughtfully.

"The question is," said Lowther, "whether a proposal is binding on a chap in the Fourth Form. Gussy could plead that he was under age——"

"Or he could plead insanity!" suggested Digby.

"Bai Jove!"

"He could get out of it," said Lowther decidedly; "but think of the remarks of the judge, Gussy——"

"Weally, you know——"

"I can just see the old boy on the bench, with steely eye on Gussy," said Lowther. "He would say——"

"Look heah——"

"He would say, 'The accused is evidently not responsible for his actions, but the heartlessness of his conduct is only equalled by his cynical indifference to all the finer feelings of our nature. His——"

"I wegard you as a wibald ass, Lowthah!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I am suah that you are only pwetendin' to misundahstand me. When I say pwopose I do not mean pwopose——"

"Lucid, at all events!" commented Lowther.

"I mean, I am goin' to pwopose——"

"You're not!" said Blake decidedly. "We're going to keep an eye on you. We shall stop you in time."

"For your own sake!" said Tom Merry.

"It's up to fellows to stand by a pal in the moment of peril," said Lowther. "Rely on us, Gussy! Next time you go to the bun-shop we'll all come——"

"Bai Jove! I am convinced that you are misundahstandin' me on purpose!" howled Arthur Augustus. "I wegard these jokes as bein' in the most wotten taste. I was goin' to pwopose a stunt for the holidays——"

"Oh!"

"I'm goin' to pwopose a weally nobby ideah for the vac," said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Is that all?"

"That's all, you ass!"

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled. They found a little harmless and necessary entertainment in pulling Gussy's noble leg. Arthur Augustus glanced round at six grinning faces and frowned.

"I weally wish you fellows would twy to be sewious sometimes," he said severely. "There is too much fwivolity in this studay. If you have done cacklin', pway listen to me! I'm goin' to pwopose a weally nobbay stunt for the vac—somethin' you fellows haven't thought of. Money is goin' to be wathah tight, and we want somethin' cheap——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weal economy is the word," said Arthur Augustus impressively. "We can have a wippin' holiday on next to

nothin', if you fellows follow my lead. What pwice campin' out?"

"Eh?"

"Walkin' awound, you know, and seein' scenewy and things, and enjoyin' the beauties of Nature, you know, bathin' in wivahs, and settin' up our tent wherevah we like, and movin' on whenevah the spiwit moves us," said Arthur Augustus enthusiastically. "We've only got to get the necessawy outfit——"

"Only!" remarked Blake.

"We shall wequiah a tent, and a cookin' stove, and some gwub," said Arthur Augustus. "A change of clobbah, and a bathin' suit each, and so on. Aftah twampin' all day, we set up our tent——"

"And get run in for trespassing?" asked Lowther.

"Certainly not. We buy new-laid eggs and milk at the farms on our way, and live the simple life, and all that. We may meet with some adventures en woute——"

"We shall, if you have a hand in the arrangements," said Lowther, with conviction. "We shall run out of grub, and the tent will fall down, and the stove will blow up——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! All you fellows have to do is to follow my lead, and leave everything in my hands," said Arthur Augustus. "You can wegard me as your commandin' officah——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And the whole thing will wun as smoothly as anythin'," said the swell of St. Jim's. "All you fellows will have to do is to obey ordahs."

There were six winks round the tea-table in the study. Apparently Tom Merry & Co. could not "see" themselves obeying the orders of the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

"Well, it's not a bad idea," said Blake, in a thoughtful way. "We shall only want a bag each and a tent and a cooking-stove, and a supply of grub——"

"Yaas."

"And we're going to walk it?"

"Yaas."

"And you're going to carry the tent and the cooking-stove and the grub and the bags——"

"Bai Jove! I hadn't thought of that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A walking tour, with a stove under one arm and a tent under the other, would be really hefty exercise," remarked Lowther. "Might it turn out a little too hefty for the chap carrying the tent and the stove and the——"

"Wats! Those are only details!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "Details have to be thought out, of course."

"We might put up at inns," said Dig.

"Then there would be bills to pay," said Arthur Augustus. My ideah is a cheap holiday. We can get a donkay to cawwy the baggage."

"But could you stand the weight——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you silly asses——"

"He means another donkey," said Manners. "Some relation of yours, Gussy?"

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"Well, if Gussy's cousin carries the traps it might work," said Blake thoughtfully. "If we get good weather——"

"If——"

"Plenty of 'if' about that," said Manners. "Still, I could take my camera——"

"And Towser," said Herries. "Towser could come on a camping expedition. He would be jolly useful. Keeping off tramps, and things."

"I don't know about Towsah, Hewwies. I have mentioned to you befoah that that beast has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs——"

Herries snorted. With George Herries it was a case of "Love me, love my dog." And Towser was an eminently lovable animal, in the opinion of his happy owner.

Tom Merry & Co. considered.

Unlike many suggestions made by the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the "stunt" rather recommended itself to their minds.

"It would be fun!" remarked Lowther.

"I could get some pictures," observed Manners. "The only drawback is that films are so jolly expensive."

"But bring your camera, old fellow," said Blake.

"You'd really like me to?" asked Manners, looking pleased. As a rule, Manners was the only enthusiast on the subject of his camera.

"Yes, rather! If we run out of cash we could sell it for a pound or so," said Blake affably.

"You silly owl!"

"Well, what do you chaps think of the ideah?" demanded Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as weally wippin' myself, and I am willin' to make all the awwangements, and take evewythin' in hand, and issue instwuctions, which you fellows will have to cawwy out——"

"You'll want carrying out yourself if you do!" grunted Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Lots of time to think it over, anyhow," said Herries. "We're not breaking up for the holidays yet."

"Nevah put off till to-mowwow what you can do to-day, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I shall take the mattah as decided, and shall go ahead with the awwangements. I am goin' to look for a donkay to-mowwow. If you fellows would like to come——"

"We can leave that to you," said Lowther. "You know more about donkeys than we do. Family ties——"

"Wats!"

And so it was settled—by Arthur Augustus, at least.

CHAPTER 2.

Trimble, Too?

"TOMMY, old fellow!"

Tom Merry gave a slight but audible grunt.

Tom was famous for his good-nature, and he never liked to be stand-offish with anybody. But he did not like being addressed as "Tommy, old fellow" by Trimble of the Fourth. There was a limit to everything, and Baggy Trimble was the limit.

But Master Trimble was quite unconscious of being the limit. He beamed affably on the captain of the Shell.

"I've heard all about it," he said cheerily.

"Is there anything you don't hear about?" asked Tom.

"It's a jolly good wheeze," continued Trimble. "Thinking over what I'd do for the vac, I was a bit puzzled to make up my mind. When a chap gets so many invitations, it's rather a problem which one to accept. Don't you think so?"

"It must be," said Tom. "It must be rather disconcerting, in fact, to be sought after by half the nobility of three kingdoms."

Trimble blinked at him doubtfully, and went on rather hastily:

"Cutts of the Fifth wants me to go home with him for the vac. But I don't know. Chumming with Fifth-Formers is all very well; but I'm not sure I should care about going home with Cutts."

"Would Cutts?"

"And Kildare. I dare say you know Kildare has given me a hint that he'd like me to trot over to Ireland with him."

"I wasn't aware of it."

"Of course, I should like the excitement," said Trimble. "But I've made up my mind to give England a chance, as it were. I'm going to refuse the pressing invitation I've had from Lord Mauleverer at Greyfriars, though."

"Poor Mauleverer!" said Tom.

"The fact is," said Trimble, coming down to business, so to speak, "I think I'd like to go camping."

"Quite a good idea," assented Tom Merry. "It would help to bring down your fat, Trimble."

"So if you fellows want a really useful chap in the party——"

"We don't."

"A chap who can make himself handy in arranging the camp, and managing the commissariat, and all that, you've only to say the word," said Trimble. "I'll come!"

"My dear chap——"

"Call it done!" said Trimble. "I'll arrange it with my people. They will be able to spare me for a few weeks, at least; though, of course, I must turn up at Trimble Hall for a big social gathering there later. My pater is having the Prime Minister and some well-known generals and admirals, and though it's a bit of a bore, I feel that I ought to be there. But up to that date I'm quite at your service."

"You're awfully kind," said Tom. "But——"

"Never mind the buts," said Trimble affably. "I'll come."

"But——"

"It's settled, what?"

"No," said Tom Merry, shaking his head; "it's not settled. This camping party is going to be seven chaps and a donkey. The donkey will carry the baggage. The seven chaps are settled, but the donkey isn't yet. If you care to go as the donkey——"

"Look here——"

"Upon the whole," said Tom thoughtfully, "you'd better stick to Trimble Hall and the admirals and generals and Prime Ministers. Coming along with commonplace fellows like us, you might miss seeing the duke. Better get off to Trimble Hall, and extend your acquaintance among the nobility and gentry, you know."

And Tom Merry went down the steps of the School House with that, leaving Baggy Trimble blinking after him. He joined Manners and Lowther in the quadrangle. Lowther held up an admonitory finger.

"I had my eye on you," he said. "If you've let that fat bounder Trimble wedge in there's going to be a row."

"You're too soft, Tommy," said Manners. "But we'll rescue you from Trimble. I remember how the fat worm stuck on us when we were caravanning once. History isn't going to repeat itself."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I've shooed him off!" he explained. "He won't come."

"We'll jolly well see that he doesn't!" said Monty Lowther. "I know him. But there's one chap in the Fourth I'd like to take along. Young Wildrake. He knows lots about camping and things that he learned on the giddy Boot Leg Ranch in Canada."

"We'll ask him," assented Tom Merry. "It ought to be just in his line. I wish Talbot could come. But he's booked with his uncle. Hallo, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bore down on the Terrible Three, resplendent in a Panama hat and an eyeglass.

"You fellows comin' ovah to Wayland this aftahnoon?" he asked.

"We're going to play cricket."

"Wats! It is a fair at Wayland to-day, and market-day, you know, and it is a good opportunity to buy a donkey. There are always some for sale at Wayland on market-days."

"But the cricket——"

"Bothah the cwicket for once! Wildwake is comin' to help buy the donkey," said Arthur Augustus. "He knows no end about horses and things, and he will be able to see whether it is a good donkey. Howevah, you fellows can leave it to us. I dare say you don't know much about donkeys."

"We've known you for years——"

"If you persist in wepeatin' that wotten joke, Lowthah, you will gwow into a feahful bore!" said Arthur Augustus. "Wun away and play cwicket, and leave this mattah to me. By the way, how much do you think we ought to give for a donkey?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Tom Merry. "I suppose the price of a donkey has gone up, like everything else?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose a fellow will have to pay what the ownah asks. Aftah all, the ownah ought to know what an animal is worth, oughtn't he?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"You ought to be buyer for a big commercial house, Gussy," said Monty Lowther admiringly. "You'd make a fortune for somebody."

"As a mattah of fact, deah boy, I have often thought that I should be vewy successful in business if I turned my attention in that diwection," said Arthur Augustus modestly. "By the way, I've asked Wildwake to come with us campin'——"

"Good!"

"I think he would be vewy useful about the camp——"

"Yes, rather!"

"He knows no end of dodges——"

"Bound to."

"So it's wathah a pity he can't come."

"Eh?"

"He's goin' on a bike tour this vac, so we can't have him," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, he is going to help me buy the donkey. Au wevoir, you fellows!"

"Hold on!" said Tom. "I don't know much about buying donkeys, and I'm not a big business man like you, Gussy, but I believe that when you buy a donkey there's certain formalities to be gone through—such as paying for him. Have you got any tin?"

Arthur Augustus nodded cheerily.

"Yaas, wathah! You see, I w'ote to my patah that I was goin' to have a vewy cheap holiday this vac. I knew that would please him, because he has a queeah ideah that I am wathah careless with money. I asked him to send me twentay pounds to see me thwough."

"Oh, my hat!"

"He has sent it, like a weal bwick," said Arthur Augustus. "There is a tone in his lettah that I do not quite catch on to, as if the old boy is bein' wathah sarcastic. I'm suah I don't know why. But the important fact is that I have two tennahs."

"O day worthy to be marked with a white stone!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "Why can't we all have paters who are peers of the realm, and who exude tenners to help a chap to be economical?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Coming, D'Arcy?" bawled Kit Wildrake from the distance.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus trotted away cheerfully to join the Canadian junior. The Terrible Three turned their steps in the direction of the cricket-ground. Baggy Trimble intercepted them.

"You fellows taking much baggage?" he asked.

"No."

"Would you advise me to pack a bag or a trunk?"

"Eh?"

"You see, a fellow will want a change or two," said Trimble. "We may get invitations to dinners and dances in country houses, and all that, and we shall have to look fairly respectable. I think I'd better take some dress-clothes. What do you think, Tom?"

Tom Merry stared.

"My dear chap," he said, "you can take your dress-clothes wherever you like. I'm sure I don't mind."

"But about carrying the trunk?" said Trimble. "I want to make everything convenient for everybody, of course. If you fellows would rather I packed only a bag, I'll do it. There!"

"I see," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "You're coming with us?"

"Yes, old chap."

"You feel that you can really tear yourself away from the gathering of the nobility at Trimble Hall?"

"Ye-e-es," murmured Trimble, with a feeble grin. "I'm going to stick to my old pals, you know."

"Well," said Lowther, "I'm going to put on an extra-heavy pair of boots for tramping. One of them will be quite at your service, Trimble. And I promise you that you'll get it as soon as you join up."

"I—I say, you know——"

"Hard!" said Lowther.

The Terrible Three went on their way, heedless of Baggy Trimble's further remarks. But when they came in from the cricket, they chanced to pass Trimble in the hall, and heard him speaking to Julian of the Fourth. And his remark was:

"I suppose you don't mind lending me that nobby bag of yours, Julian? It's just what I want for my camping-trip this vac."

Evidently Master Trimble was impervious to argument on the subject, and was determined to stick.

CHAPTER 3.

Honest Joe!

"BAI Jove! Just the thing!"

Kit Wildrake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were progressing along the country lane towards Wayland, when the swell of St. Jim's halted, and uttered that sudden ejaculation.

A man appeared in the road leading a donkey.



The man leading the donkey watched the face of D'Arcy keenly. "Not that I care about the money," he said. "Twenty-five pounds is his price, but to get 'im a good master I'd take 'arf." "Bai Jove! Would you, weally?" gasped D'Arcy. (*See page* 10.)

Evidently he also was bound for Wayland, doubtless with the intention of selling the donkey at the fair.

On market days it was a common enough sight to see wayfarers bound for Wayland leading animals of all sorts and sizes for sale. Such very ordinary sights had not drawn a second glance from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hitherto. But now that the swell of St. Jim's was en route for the market to buy a donkey, he was naturally interested.

Kit Wildrake glanced at the donkey with a keen eye.

The youth from the Boot Leg Ranch knew a great deal about most animals, though he knew more about horses and mules than about asses.

"I guess that's a good animal," he remarked. "He's got rather a wicked look in his eye, but he's hefty all through. But how do you know he's to be sold?"

"I don't, deah boy, but I'm going to ask the man."

The man leading the donkey glanced at the two juniors as they approached him.

He was not a handsome man, or a prepossessing one. He did not look like a countryman, though he wore gaiters and had a horsey look. He looked more like one of the disreputable loafers who are sometimes seen hanging about fairs. There was a three days' stubble of beard on his chin, a brilliant red in hue, and he wore a neckerchief of many colours that had once been brilliant, but was now dimmed by long use and want of washing. His glance was rather suspicious and hostile as it rested on the handsome, elegantly-clad swell of St. Jim's.

"Good-afternoon!" said Arthur Augustus agreeably.

"Arternoon!" was the gruff reply.

"You are goin' to Wayland Market?"

"P'r'aps I am, and p'r'aps I ain't!" was the non-committal reply.

"Pewwaps you are goin' to sell that donkay?"

"P'r'aps."

"The fact is, I am goin' to Wayland to buy a donkay," explained the swell of St. Jim's. "If this donkay is for sale, my fwiend, pewwaps we could come to terms."

The hostile suspicion in the loafer's look vanished at once, and he smiled encouragingly. Evidently he had not recognised a possible purchaser at first in Arthur Augustus.

"Now, you're talkin', sir," he said cheerfully and cordially. "This 'ere hanimal is going to be sold, though it breaks my 'eart to part with 'im, I'm that fond of 'im. But in these 'ere 'ard times——"

"Bai Jove! That is vewy hard cheese," said Arthur Augustus sympathetically.

Kit Wildrake gave a grunt.

The keen Canadian junior was not quite so easily imposed upon as the unsuspicious Gussy.

"What do you want for him?" asked Wildrake abruptly.

The man glanced at him.

"Who's buying this donkey?" he asked. "You or the other gent?"

"Oh, the other gent, I guess!" answered Wildrake. "I'm come along to give advice."

Whereupon the red-whiskered gentleman devoted his whole attention to Arthur Augustus.

"Look at 'im, sir!" he said. "'E's a good hanimal, though I say it. I've 'ad that there donkey, Solomon, from birth upwards, and it's 'it me cruel 'ard to part with 'im. What I want is to find him a good master. I don't care much about the price, so long as I find 'im a good master. That's the thing I'm particklar about."

"I wegard that as vewy wight and pwopah," said Arthur Augustus. "You can twust him to me, deah boy. Is his name Solomon?"

"I named him Solomon, he's that deep," said the ginger-whiskered gentleman. "Knows everything, that there donkey does. Foller you like a dorg, he will. Feed out of your 'and. I can see in your face, sir, as you'll be kind to 'im, and I'm simply giving 'im to you for twenty-five pounds."

Arthur Augustus' face fell.

He had only the very vaguest idea of the value of a donkey, even one that was as wise as Solomon; but he knew that he had only two tenners in his pocket-book—and that two tenners added together did not make up the sum of twenty-five pounds.

The man was watching his face keenly.

If he had known of the two tenners, certainly his price would have fixed at exactly twenty pounds. But he did not know of them; and probably it did not occur to him that a schoolboy, even an expensively-dressed one, might have so much about him. Twenty-five pounds was evidently too much for D'Arcy, and the ginger gentleman came down with a jump, as it were.

"Not that I care about the money," he said. "Twenty-five pounds is his price, but to get 'im a good master I'd take 'arf."

"Bai Jove! Would you weally?"

"That I would, sir," said the donkey's owner heartily. "You 'and me twelve-pun-ten, and the donkey's yours."

Arthur Augustus considered.

His noble pater had stood him twenty pounds for his expenses on that cheap holiday. Twelve-pounds-ten for the donkey would leave him seven-pounds-ten in hand. It did not take Gussy long to decide.

"I weally do not know the value of donkays," he confessed. "I have never purchased a donkay befoah. But if you are willin' to sell him for twelve-pounds-ten-shillin's, I shall be glad to take him."

"Done, sir!"

"You think that is all wight, Wildwake, deah boy?"

Kit Wildrake nodded.

"Cheap, I guess," he answered. "He would fetch more than that in Wayland market."

"Then it will be wathah a bargain," said Arthur Augustus. "I assuah you, my dear sir, that I shall be a vewy kind mastah to Solomon."

"That's all I want, sir. Jest that!"

"You are a vewy kind-hearted man," said Arthur Augustus, taking out his pocket-book. "I wegard myself as vewy fortunate in havin' met you. Don't you, Wildwake?"

"Oh, very!" said Wildrake rather drily. "But I guess it's usual to have some evidence of ownership before buying an animal from a stranger, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that."

An ugly look came over the red-whiskered man's face, and his glance at Wildrake was not pleasant.

"Pewwaps we had bettah pwoceed on a business footin'," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Would you mind tellin' me your name, my deah sir?"

"Harris," said the red-whiskered gentleman readily. "Joe Harris—generally known as Honest Joe."

"You hear that, Wildwake?" murmured Arthur Augustus. "A chap would hardly be nicknamed Honest Joe unless he was pwetty stwaight—what?"

Wildrake grinned.

It did not seem to occur to Arthur Augustus that anything more than Honest Joe's word was required.

"Well, are you having 'im, sir?" inquired Mr. Harris. "I'd like you to have 'im because I like your face, sir."

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy! Certainly I am goin' to have him, now that we have gone into the mattah in a businesslike way. You came along to advise me, Wildwake?"

"Sure!"

"You advise me to buy Solomon, don't you?"

Wildrake shook his head.

"Bai Jove! But he's a good animal?"

"Yep!"

"And cheap!"

"I guess so. But I'd rather go a bit farther into the bona fides of the owner before buying a donkey."

Mr. Harris scowled.

"That's enough!" he said. "If a feller can't take Honest Joe's word, I ain't doing business with 'im. I'm taking that there donkey to the market; and I only 'ope 'e won't get a master what will lay into 'im with a 'eavy stick. Come on, Solomon!"

Mr. Harris moved on with his donkey.

"Bai Jove! You have hurt the poor fellah's feelin's, Wildwake," said Arthur Augustus, in distress.

"Fathead!" answered Wildrake. "How do you know he hasn't stolen the donkey? He looks as if he might have."

"Imposs, deah boy! He's told us that he's had the donkay evah since it was a kid."

"Doesn't it occur to you that he may have been lying?" inquired Wildrake sarcastically.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

It hadn't occurred to him; and now that it did occur to him, he dismissed the idea at once.

"I have a vewy high opinion of Mr. Hawwis," he replied. "A man who is willin' to sell a donkay cheap in ordah to get him a good mastah must be all wight. Thank you vewy much for your advice, deah boy—but I wathah think I'm goin' to buy that donkay."

And Arthur Augustus hurried after the indignant Mr. Harris—who was going on very slowly, as if to give him the chance.

A few minutes later the swell of St. Jim's led the donkey back to where Kit Wildrake was standing, and there was a satisfied smile on his face.

There was another satisfied smile on the face of Mr. Joseph Harris, doubtless caused by the twelve-pounds-ten-shillings that reposed in the dingy pocket of Honest Joe.

CHAPTER 4.

The Donkey that Went!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY smoothed the rough muzzle of Solomon, and Solomon blinked at him out of thoughtful eyes. There was no doubt that Solomon was a most intelligent-looking donkey. He was more than intelligent—the expression in his eyes might almost have been called artful.

"So you've bought him?" asked Wildrake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, he's a bargain for twelve-pound-ten," said the Canadian junior. "If he really belonged to Honest Joe it's all right. If he led him out of the last field he passed it's all wrong!"

"Bai Jove!"

"If we get run in on our way home for stealing that donkey we shall know how the matter stands," added Wildrake humorously.

Arthur Augustus shook his head seriously.

"I cannot help thinkin' that you are wathah hard on Mr. Hawwis, Wildwake," he said. "I have a vewy high opinion of him. Come on, deah boy. I am wathah anxious to show the donkey to the fellahs. I believe Tom Mewwy thinks I do not weally know how to buy a donkay. He will be wathah surpwised to see this wippin' animal that I've bagged for twelve-pound-ten."

And Arthur Augustus led the donkey on in triumph.

Once or twice Solomon pulled and jerked at the cord, as if anxious to obtain his freedom. But Arthur Augustus was very patient.

"He misses his mastah, you know," he explained to Wildrake. "It's wathah wuff on an animal to change mastahs without his consent bein' asked. It will take him some time to get used to me. Come on, old boy!"

Solomon consented to come on.

The two juniors walked back towards the school, Solomon following them at the end of the cord.

It was about a quarter of an hour later that Arthur Augustus observed that the cord hung very lightly, and he glanced round.

The end of the cord, no longer embracing Solomon's neck, was trailing on the ground.

Solomon was backing away.

"Bai Jove! What——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wildrake. "He's bitten through the cord!"

"Bai Jove! What a wotten twick!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "We shall have to wound him up now. It is wathah luckay that he is such a vewy quiet and well-behaved animal, or we might have a lot of twouble."

D'Arcy started towards Solomon, putting on his most winning smile to reassure the donkey.

Solomon backed farther away.

Well-behaved donkey as he seemed, he also seemed quite impervious to the smile of the charmer.

"Come on, old boy!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly, as he followed up the backing donkey. "It's all wight, you know! Good old boy! Nice old donkay! You iwwitatin' beast, come heah! Come on, old scout!"

Instead of coming on Solomon turned, and threw up his heels and ran. Arthur Augustus broke into a sprint in pursuit.

"Stop!" he roared. "You howwid beast, stop at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to cackle at, Wildwake, you ass! Come and help me catch this beastly donkay!" panted Arthur Augustus.

"Sure!" grinned Wildrake.

The two juniors ran their hardest in pursuit of the donkey. But Solomon had a good turn of speed, and evidently he had the strongest possible objection to being caught. He turned into a side lane, and then into another, and then whisked over a low fence, and careered cheerily away across a field. Breathless and perspiring, the two Fourth-Formers charged after him.

"Oh, hokey!" gasped Wildrake. "What an afternoon!"

"The howwid beast!"

"I guess we're up against it! I wish I had my lasso here! Next time you go buying a donkey I'll bring my lasso!"

"Oh deah!"

The heels of Solomon vanished into a bushy hollow, and the valuable animal disappeared from sight.

D'Arcy and Wildrake tramped through the bushes after him, and they caught a glimpse of him again as he vanished into a fir plantation.

But the fir plantation was searched for him in vain.

On the farther side it was bounded by a lane, and it looked as if Solomon had emerged into that lane and travelled on.

On the sun-baked ground even Wildrake's keen eyes could not pick up a trail among the many hoof-marks of animals.

The two juniors paused and looked at one another.

Arthur Augustus fanned himself with his Panama hat, and wiped away the streams of perspiration from his noble brow.

"Bai Jove! He's lost!" he said, at last.

"He's sure gone!" assented Wildrake. "I wonder whether he's back along with Honest Joe by this time?"

"Eh?"

"I guess Honest Joe knew what he was about when he sold that donkey cheap," grunted Wildrake. "I didn't catch on to his game then, but I guess I catch on now—some! I shouldn't wonder if he's sold that donkey a dozen times to innocent greenhorns!"

"Weally, Wildwake——"

"Well, it's no good looking for a needle in a bundle of hay!" said the Canadian junior. "Let's hoof it for home."

"I suppose there is nothin' else to be done," said Arthur Augustus doubtfully.

"Nothing, I guess."

"I'll dwop in at the local papah-office, and put in an advertisement for a lost donkay, as we go back."

Wildrake chuckled.

"Do!" he chuckled. "If Honest Joe ever sees it he may bring the donkey back—perhaps!"

"Wats!"

The two Fourth-Formers tramped wearily homeward. The advertisement for the lost donkey was duly left at the office of the "Rylcombe Gazette" as they passed through the village. Arthur Augustus offered a reward of a pound. And when Wildrake suggested making it twelve-pounds-ten, in which case Honest Joe might bring the donkey back, Gussy only sniffed. His faith in Honest Joe was not to be shaken.

Two dusty and tired juniors tramped into St. Jim's just before lock-up. The Terrible Three and Blake & Co. gathered round at once to learn the result of the expedition.

"Where's the donkey?" inquired Blake.

"The other donkey," murmured Lowther.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"I have bought a donkay," he announced.

"Good!"

"A vewy good animal—isn't he, Wildwake?"

"Topping!" assented Wildrake.

"And cheap, deah boys."

"Sure cheap!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Well, wonders will never cease! But where is the giddy paragon?"

"His name is Solomon——"

"Never mind his name. What have you done with him?" asked Herries.

"He is a vewy intelligent animal——"

"Let's take the report as read, as they say at the



Teddy's hind legs threw high. The natural result was that Tom Merry, taken utterly by surprise, shot over his head and landed in the road with a bump, on his hands and knees. Bump! "Yoroop!" yelled Tom.

(*See page* 13.)

company meetings," remarked Lowther. "Produce the animal, Gussy."

"You—you see——"

"Did he die on the way home?" asked Lowther sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothin' of the sort, you ass! He was in splendid condish!"

"Well, where is he, then?"

"Unfortunately——"

"Now it's coming!" grinned Manners. "We all know how Gussy does things! Go it, Gussy! Confess!"

"There is nothin' to confess, Mannahs! It was merely an unfortunate incident that the beastly donkay should have wun away while I was leadin' it home——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And disappeahed——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"I have put in an advertisement for him, and have not the slightest doubt that he will turn up——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I see nothin' whatevah to cackle at in this vewy ordinaway incident!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!"

And Arthur Augustus stalked away into the School House, leaving Tom Merry & Co. yelling.

CHAPTER 5.

Good Business!

THE adventure of Arthur Augustus with Solomon, the donkey, was not soon forgotten. For several subsequent days Gussy heard frequent and pungent allusions to the transaction, till he almost wished that he had never thought of the brilliant idea of a camping vacation with a donkey. The advertisement in the "Rylcombe Gazette" duly appeared, but it brought no answers. Nobody, apparently, had seen Solomon wandering, or taken the trouble to rope him in if he had seen him. Everybody but Arthur Augustus was of Kit Wildrake's opinion—that Honest Joe had recovered his donkey, and had taken him to parts unknown to sell again. Arthur Augustus declined to believe anything of the sort; but one fact was certain, and that was that Solomon had vanished, and showed no sign whatever of reappearance.

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled considerably over the episode; but as the date of breaking-up at St. Jim's drew nearer they considered the matter more seriously. Solomon having performed the vanishing trick, it was necessary to obtain another quadruped if the schoolboys were to start travelling with a donkey, and that they had already decided upon unanimously. D'Arcy's offer to undertake the discovery and purchase of a new donkey was declined without thanks by his comrades. The Terrible Three decided to take the matter in hand without the assistance of the noble Gussy. They had no doubt that they could successfully purchase a donkey, though that donkey might not turn out, as Lowther remarked, as wise as Solomon. Arthur Augustus declared that if they bought a donkey it would be a donkey that wouldn't go; whereupon Lowther remarked that that fault, at least, could not be charged upon Gussy's purchase, for his donkey certainly had gone. On a half-holiday Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther set forth on their quest, taking out their bikes on the road to Abbotsford, where somebody had heard that somebody had donkeys to sell.

"We might have known what would happen when Gussy went!" Manners remarked, as the chums of the Shell pedalled along the sunny road. "In fact, we did know. But I fancy we can work the oracle."

"Easily!" said Lowther. "We simply want a young, strong donkey, and I—I suppose we can tell his age by looking at him."

"You look at his teeth, I think," said Tom Merry, rather doubtfully. "Same as a horse, you know."

"I know," said Manners. "Look at his teeth, and—and—— But what is there special to notice about his teeth when you look at them?"

"Well, there's something," said Lowther; "something or other, you know. Anyhow, I'm sure you have to look at his teeth."

"Some of his teeth have come, or haven't come, or have gone, or something," said Tom Merry, rather vaguely. "Something of the sort, I know. Anyhow, we'll take jolly good care to lead him home all right if we get him."

"Hallo! What's going on there?"

Whack, whack, whack!

The three cyclists were passing a strip of grassland by the roadside, and on that grass a man had stopped to rest by the wayside. He looked like a rather disreputable tramp, with gingery whiskers and a dirty-coloured neckerchief, and a sharp, cunning face. A donkey was tethered to a stump near him, and the rough-looking fellow was coolly and methodically beating it with a big stick. Tom Merry slowed down on his machine.

"Brute!" he muttered.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Dash it all, he's got to stop that!" exclaimed Tom. "No reason to beat the poor beast when he's tied up."

"Go it, Tommy!" said Manners, with a grin. "Don't let him handle your brother like that!"

"Fathead!"

Tom jumped from his bike, and his comrades followed his example. The rough-looking fellow ceased hammering the donkey as they came up, and gave them a surly stare.

"Well, what might you 'appen to want?" he snapped.

"What are you thrashing that donkey for?" demanded Tom Merry.

"I fancy that's my business!" was the surly answer. "But if you want to know, mister, he's sneaked my lunch, blow 'im! There ain't a thing that there donkey won't steal, and I'm going to lather him, thorough. Not that he minds—blow 'im! You can't 'urt that brute!"

Whack!

Tom Merry hesitated.

Certainly, the donkey seemed to have a hide of leather, and he did not seem very much disconcerted by the stick that hammered on his back and flanks. But it went against the grain with Tom to stand idly by while any animal was beaten.

"Look here——" he began.

"I'm goin' to cut the mischief out of him," said the vagrant surlily. "He's my donkey, ain't he?"

"Would you like to sell him?" asked Tom.

"I'm taking him to Abbotsford to sell him," answered the man more civilly. "He's a good hanimal, he is, and strong as a 'orse, only full of mischief as a blowed monkey! I'll sell 'im to you if you can pay for him!"

Tom Merry glanced at his chums. They were "out" to buy a donkey; and if this poor animal could be rescued from a cruel master by the same transaction, that would be killing two birds with one stone. Manners and Lowther nodded approval. They rather liked the look of the donkey, which was a sturdy and well-built animal.

"How much?" asked Tom, after a pause.

The man cocked his eye thoughtfully at Tom Merry, as if calculating how much the schoolboy could pay.

"Ten pun!" he said, at last.

Tom Merry was agreeably surprised. How much he would have to pay for a donkey he did not know; but he was aware that any donkey that would "go" was cheap at ten pounds.

"It's a go!" he said.

"I'm fair giving him away," said the gentleman with the whiskers. "He's a good hanimal, is Teddy—ain't you, Teddy?"

"Shovel out the cash, you fellows," said Tom. "We can pay for the donkey among us, and the other fellows can stand some of the other exes. You fellows trot out three pounds each, and I'll put four."

"Right-ho!"

The transaction was soon completed; and the gentleman with the whiskers, after a momentary hesitation, signed a receipt for the ten pounds, to which Tom affixed a twopenny stamp he found in his pocket.

The receipt ran: "Receeved the summ of ten pun for my donkey Teddy.—Sined GEORGE ORROCKS."

Mr. Orrocks, having received the ten pounds, and Tom Merry having received the receipt, the tramp picked up a bundle and moved away, leaving the Terrible Three with their new purchase.

They surveyed him with satisfaction.

"He's a good donkey!" said Tom.

"Looks hefty," agreed Manners.

"I say, we haven't looked at his teeth!" ejaculated Lowther, remembering that important detail rather late.

"Never mind his teeth," said Tom. "He's our donkey now, and we jolly well won't lose him on the way home as Gussy did."

"No fear!"

"Bit difficult to lead him from a bike," said Tom thoughtfully. "One of you fellows wheel my bike, and I'll ride him."

"There's no bridle——"

"I think I can manage him with the rope. He looks quiet enough; in fact, half asleep."

"Right-ho, then!"

YOU REALLY MUST BUY
Next Week's Specially Enlarged Number
of the
"BOYS' HERALD."
On Sale Everywhere. Price 2d.

Manners and Lowther started on the bikes, Lowther wheeling Tom's machine. The captain of the Shell unfastened the donkey, and mounted on Teddy's back easily enough.

Teddy seemed a very intelligent animal. A touch of the hand was sufficient to bring him up in the way he should go, so to speak. He trotted after the cyclists briskly, with Tom Merry on his back. Lowther glanced round.

"Going all right?" he asked.

"First-rate!" answered Tom Merry cheerily. "I say, this giddy donkey will be an acquisition when we go camping. We can take turns to ride him when we get tired. I'm jolly glad we bagged him!"

"Good! Mind he doesn't bolt with you!"

Tom Merry laughed. Teddy was ambling along so quietly and amiably that nothing seemed farther from his mind than bolting. Tom Merry settled down comfortably for a gentle jog-trot home.

But a change came o'er the spirit of his dream, to put it poetically, all of a sudden.

Without the slightest warning, Teddy suddenly lifted his forefeet into the air, and came down on them again with a crash, with his head lowered to the ground, and his hind legs throwing high.

The natural result was that Tom Merry, taken utterly by surprise, shot over his head and landed in the road, with a bump, on his hands and knees.

Bump!

"Yaroooob!"

Clatter! Clatter! Clatter!

The two cyclists ahead stopped and stared round. Tom Merry sat up in the dust dazedly, and blinked. The donkey's hoofs were beating the hard high road with a rapid staccato beat. Under Tom's astonished eyes, he disappeared in the distance in a cloud of dust.

"Stop him!" yelled Lowther.

"After him!" roared Manners.

"Oh, my hat!"

"You ass, Tom——"

"I—I——" stuttered Tom Merry.

"After him!"

The cyclists spun round, Lowther whirling Tom's machine to him. Tom caught it and jumped into the saddle; and three breathless cyclists swept on the road in pursuit of the elusive Teddy.

Probably they would have run Teddy down if he had kept to the road. But after one glimpse of him across a wide field, they lost sight of him among trees and hedges.

It was an hour later that three dusty and exasperated cyclists wheeled home to St. Jim's, in a state of mind that could not have been expressed in words.

CHAPTER 6.

Facing the Music!

"WELL?"

Blake called out through the open doorway of Study No. 6 in the Fourth, as three dusty juniors passed along the passage.

The Terrible Three did not seem to hear. They hurried on to their own quarters.

Probably they were not in a hurry to explain matters in Study No. 6.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "They might have dwopped in to tell us how they got on!"

"Oh, they've made some bungle of it, same as you did, old chap," said Blake disparagingly.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Trust them!" said Digby cheerfully. "Most likely they've had some old crock palmed off on them, and it's got to be carried home in a cart."

"Shouldn't wonder," grinned Herries. "They looked jolly sheepish, anyhow. We'll go along and ask them after tea."

"It ought weally to have been left to me," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "As a fellow of tact and judgment——"

"My dear ass," said Blake, "if you blewed another twelve-pounds-ten on a donkey that disappeared, we shouldn't have another left for the vac."

"Weally, you know——"

"Before you go buying donkeys again, Gussy, you'd better write to your pater for some more tenners," chuckled Digby.

"I have done so, Dig, and I wegwet to say that he has wefused to send me any," said Arthur Augustus. "I pointed out to him again that I was goin' in for a vewy cheap holiday this vac, which ought to have pleased him, but he has wefused to shell out. It weally is not encouwagin' to a chap who is twyin' to be economical."

The chums of Study No. 6 finished their tea rather quickly, and moved along to No. 10 in the Shell to inquire progress. They were curious to know what luck the Shell fellows had had.

They found Tom Merry & Co. at tea, and apparently not in the most cheery mood.

Blake surveyed them inquiringly.

"Well, what luck?" he demanded. "Have you found the beast?"

"In a way!" said Tom Merry.

"How much did you give for him?" asked Herries.

"Ten pounds."

"That's jolly cheap. Was it a useless old crock?"

"It was a splendid donkey."

"Well, we'll give an opinion on that when we see it," said Blake. "We can arrange with Taggles to keep it in the paddock until we want it. Where is it now?"

"H'm!"

"Have you brought it home with you?"

"H'm!"

"You haven't lost it on the way home, like Gussy!" yelled Blake.

Tom Merry coloured, and Manners and Lowther grunted. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy smiled—broadly.

"Bai Jove! You've lost it, deah boys?" he inquired.

"Not exactly lost it," said Tom Merry cautiously. "I—I decided to ride it home. I wasn't going to risk it getting away like your donkey did, Gussy——"

"Well, if you rode it home, where is it?" asked Blake.

"It—it—it chucked me off——"

"Well, you must be a duffer!"

"I—I was taken by surprise——"

"You would be!" agreed Blake.

"And—and it bolted——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"There's nothing to cackle at!" exclaimed Tom Merry



A man leading a donkey stopped and looked at the camp. He was a man with ginger whiskers and sharp eyes. "Bai Jove! What a lucky meeting!" exclaimed D'Arcy in delight. "Honest Joe has found my donkey!" "Your donkey!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That's mine!"
(*See page* 15.)

crossly. "We've had no end of a hunt after the brute, but it got away."

"You seemed to think there was somethin' to cackle at when Solomon got away, deah boy," chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're getting on," said Blake sarcastically. "That's twenty-two-pounds-ten gone, so far, and no donkey. We shall have an awful lot of money left for exes., at this rate."

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!"

"You'd better put in an advertisement, like Gussy!" continued Blake, in the same vein of sarcasm. "Perhaps you'll get an answer—when he does. Anyhow, it will be a chance to waste a little more cash, which seems to be what you fellows want."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I rather think we'd better try to manage without buying a donkey," said Blake. "There will be enough asses in the party, goodness knows!"

"Oh, rats!"

"There is still some money left," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "If you fellows like, I will go out to-morrow and look for anothah donkay——".

"Bosh!"

"Rot!"

"Cut it out!"

"Weally, you fellows——"

"I won't tell this study what I think of it," said Blake generously. "It would take too long, and I dare say you know the kind of prize idiots you are without my telling you. If there was enough money left I'd go out myself and buy a donkey. I shouldn't have to go farther than the Shell passage to look for a lot to choose from."

And with that Parthian shot, Jack Blake walked out, followed by his grinning chums.

The Terrible Three looked at one another in rather a sickly way.

"We shall never hear the end of this!" growled Manners.

"Well, we chipped Gussy!" remarked Tom.

"He was just as big an ass as you were, old fellow," said Monty Lowther consolingly.

"Look here——"

Tom Merry broke off, as the study door reopened, to admit the fat face and fatter figure of Baggy Trimble of the Fourth. Trimble gave the Shell fellows a cheery nod, apparently unaware of the signs of storm in the study.

"You fellows getting ready for the start?" he asked. "I suppose you haven't forgotten that we break up the day after to-morrow?"

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!"

"I've decided simply to take a bag," said Trimble, beaming. "As for money, you can rely on me to bring plenty; I've asked my pater specially to let me have fifty pounds down for the vac. That will see me through, and you fellows, too, if you run short."

"Can it!" snapped Lowther.

Apparently Trimble did not understand the Americanism; or perhaps he did not think his observations worthy of being canned. He blinked at Monty Lowther, and rattled on:

"I was thinking of asking the pater to send the big car for us to start in, if we go direct from the school——"

"Oh, do!" grunted Manners sarcastically.

"But he's lent it to Lord Derby, as it happens, so we can't have it," said Trimble calmly. "After all, we may as well start as we're going on—on Shanks' pony—what!"

Tom Merry pointed to the door.

"Any time we get fagged, I can telephone home for a car to run across and give us a lift," said Trimble. "That will come in handy, won't it?"

The Terrible Three exchanged glances. They were exasperated by the affair of Teddy, the donkey, and still more exasperated by the comments of Study No. 6 thereon. At such a moment, Baggy Trimble was not to be borne. He was the Thing-too-Much. And the Terrible Three rose up to deal with Trimble. They seized him by his fat neck, and ran him out of the study and bumped him in the passage, with a heavy bump, and slammed the door on him. Then they returned to their interrupted tea, feeling considerably solaced.

CHAPTER 7.

Baggy "Butts In"!

"THE best of it," said Monty Lowther reflectively, as he pushed back a straw hat from a perspiring forehead, "is this—that we sha'n't see Trimble again till next term."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That will help us bear our afflictions," agreed Manners. "Even if Gussy does the cooking——"

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"Even if he weighs out the remaining funds in purchasing donkeys that go!" remarked Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Even if he sings us tenor solos round the camp-fire!" said Tom Merry. "Still, we can reflect that we sha'n't see Trimble again till next term, and be happy."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"But the question of the baggage isn't answered yet," observed Blake. "What are we going to do about it?"

"Leave it to me, deah boy. I am keepin' my eyes open——"

"Worse still, you're keeping your mouth open," chided Blake. "Close it, old fellow. The baggage is waiting for us at Lexham, but we can't pick it up until we've got something with four legs to carry it. We can't stick it on Towser."

"Let me catch you sticking anything on Towser!" said Herries.

"Dogs pull little carts in Belgium," said Digby. "But I suppose that blessed bulldog wouldn't have sense enough!"

"Too much sense, you mean!" snorted Herries.

"It's got to be settled," said Lowther. "Perhaps we'd better hire a horse. I'm fed up on donkeys—present company excepted, of course!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Shanks' pony is all right for the present," said Tom Merry. "And, anyhow, we're clear of Trimble!"

"Hurrah!"

Seven juniors of St. Jim's were plodding quite cheerily along a sunny lane in Sussex. The sun was hot, and the lane was a little dusty, and there were plenty of flies. But the walking party were cheerful. St. Jim's had broken up for the summer holidays, and Tom Merry & Co. had already started their walking tour. Owing to the disastrous experiences of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Tom Merry in purchasing donkeys that vanished after purchase, the walkers were without any means of transport for heavy baggage. That detail remained still to be arranged. They carried rucksacks, so far; but the heavier baggage was waiting to be picked up at Lexham—when the question of transport had been solved. But in the hot weather it was quite possible, they agreed, to camp out without a tent, or a stove, or blankets, or any of the other paraphernalia that waited for transport. And it was always agreeable to reflect that, after all, Baggy Trimble had not succeeded in fastening himself on the party. There was pleasure in the mere reflection that they wouldn't see Trimble again till the following term at St. Jim's.

"Campin'," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully, "is perfectly simple. You only have to find a suitable spot, and make suitable awwangements, and there you are! A fellow has only to use his head——"

"Coal," said Monty Lowther, "is still short; and we are told to save wood. Ought Gussy, in these circumstances, to use his head?"

"Weally, you uttah ass——"

"What about camping?" asked Herries. "It's about time I fed Towser!"

"Than which there couldn't be a better reason for calling a halt!" remarked Manners, with sarcasm.

"Well, we've halted several times for you to use that dashed camera of yours," said Herries. "What a fellow wants to take photographs for is a mystery to me. But a dog——"

"What a fellow wants to keep a bulldog for——" began Manners.

"Shush!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "Don't argue, old fellows. A camera isn't a bigger worry than a bulldog, and vice versa—and both together aren't so bad as Trimble."

"Ass!" said Manners.

"Fathead!" said Herries.

"I wathah think it is time to think of campin,'" said Arthur Augustus. "My boots are gettin' wathah dustay. Did any of you fellows wemembah to bwing any boot-polish?"

"Alas!" sighed Blake.

"Bai Jove! What evah shall I do in the mornin' about my boots?"

"We'll hold a council of war on that subject, round the camp-fire," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Now, about a camp! My only hat! Trimble!"

The walkers halted.

From a turning in the lane ahead, a fat figure appeared in sight; it was the figure of Trimble, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry and Co. stared at him.

The ghost of Banquo did not startle Macbeth so much as the ample figure of Baggy Trimble startled Tom Merry & Co.

How on earth Trimble had "nosed" out the walking-party they simply could not imagine.

But evidently he had done it—for there he was!

"Trimble!" ejaculated Blake.

"Twimble, bai Jove!"

"Baggy! My hat!"

It was too late to flee. Trimble was only a dozen yards away, and he had already sighted the Co. He came rolling

towards them with a beaming smile on his fat, perspiring visage.

"Fancy meeting you fellows here!" he exclaimed brightly. "Hadn't the faintest idea you were about these parts, of course."

"Bai jove!"

"Quite a happy chance meeting," said Trimble. "Which way are you walking?"

"On our feet," said Lowther.

"He, he, he! I mean, where are you going?"

"Lexham!" grunted Tom Merry.

"What a coincidence—so am I!" said Trimble. "I thought I might fall in with you fellows—I mean, I never thought anything of the kind, you know. Camping out to-night?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good; I'll camp along with you!" said Trimble. "I generally put up at the very best hotels when I'm on a walking tour; but, bless you, I'm not proud! I don't mind roughing it with my old pals. There's a rather nice spot for camping quite close to here——"

"We're going on for a bit," said Tom. "If you're tired, you'd better drop off."

"Not a bit tired!" said Trimble. "Haven't you got a donkey yet?"

"Not till you turned up!"

"He, he, he! But how are you carrying your stuff?" Trimble surveyed the walkers. "You don't seem to have much with you. I suppose you've got a supply of grub?"

"Just enough for seven!" said Manners.

"Hem!"

Trimble was not easily discouraged; but he seemed very thoughtful as he turned and tramped along with Tom Merry and Co.

The sun was sinking behind the woods, and Trimble several times gave a broad hint that he was ready to camp. Baggy never was much of a walker, and a couple of miles were enough for him. But Tom Merry and Co. were deaf to his hints.

"By the way," Blake remarked suddenly, "did you pack the tin of sardines, Tom?"

"Lemme see, did I?" said Tom Merry reflectively.

"I hope you did. Still, there's the loaf."

"Yes, there's the loaf," assented Tom.

"I've got some biscuits for Towser," said Herries. "At the worst, we can fall back on them. They're not bad."

"Bai Jove, if you think I can make a suppah on dog-biscuits, Hewwies——"

"Why grouse?" said Tom Merry cheerily. "We're out to rough it, you know. We may often have to go to bed without any supper."

"And start in the morning without any brekker, if it comes to that!" remarked Lowther.

"It makes a fellow hardy, roughing it!" said Digby, with a nod.

"No doubt about that."

Trimble blinked at the juniors with startled eyes. Somehow, he seemed more discouraged than ever.

"I—I say, have you fellows only got a loaf and some sardines for supper?" he stammered.

"What's the matter with bread and sardines?" asked Blake. "After another dozen miles we shall feel hungry enough to eat anything."

"A—a—a dozen miles!"

"Say fifteen," said Lowther.

"But—but you can't do fifteen miles in a day!"

"My dear chap, you never know what you can do till you try," said Tom Merry kindly.

"Look here, I'm not going to try to walk a dozen miles!" hooted Trimble.

"We shall be awfully sorry to leave you behind," said Monty Lowther sweetly; "but we're not stopping for any lame ducks. Put it on a bit, you fellows—we're lagging!"

And the juniors put on a little speed, and Baggy Trimble's fat little legs had to go like clockwork to keep pace until they reached their camp for the night.

CHAPTER 8.

Solomon Again!

"BAI Jove, I feel wathah wumpled and dustay!"

Tom Merry & Co. were in camp.

The morning sun was shining down cheerily, and seven juniors turned out cheerily enough.

The night had been warm, and the walking-party had slept in their coats round a camp-fire on the edge of a heath, by the white high-road. They felt rather stiff when they turned out in the morning, but a brief course of "physical jerks" set them right again. Only Arthur Augustus was rather dismayed by the undoubted fact that his clobber was rumpled, his boots dusty, and his whole look a little untidy. There was plenty of dry wood for a camp-fire, and a fire was quickly built, and a tin-can of water suspended over it to boil for tea.

"But this weally will not do, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus declared. "We must twy to keep up wespectable appeawances, even if we are on twamp for a cheap holiday. I haven't even a clean collah."

"Awful!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake, it is a wathah sewious mattah. I insist that our vewy first pwoceedin' must be to buy a donkey to cawwy the baggage, and collect the baggage, and——"

"Hallo, there's a merchant with a donkey!" remarked Blake, as there were steps on the road.

A man leading a donkey stopped and looked at the camp. He was a man with ginger whiskers, and sharp eyes, and a discoloured neckerchief. And the donkey was a very sturdy and intelligent-looking animal.

"Bai Jove! What a lucky meetin'!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in delight. "Honest Joe has found my donkey!"

"Your donkey!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That's my donkey!"

"Wats! It's Solomon——"

"It's Teddy!"

"It's Teddy right enough!" said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake. "It's Teddy and Solomon, too! And that chap is Honest Joe, and Mr. Harris, and Mr. Horrocks, and I dare say a dozen more! I fancy he's sold that donkey to a dozen duffers in his time!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"He's taught the giddy ass to come back to him after being sold!" he said. "Jolly intelligent donkey that! Got more sense than the donkeys who buy him from Harris-Horrocks!"

The man with the donkey was looking curiously towards the schoolboy camp. The Terrible Three recognised him easily enough as the George Horrocks who had sold them Teddy; and, with equal certainty, Arthur Augustus recognised him as the Honest Joe who had sold him Solomon. And, apparently, Honest Joe was taking his donkey somewhere for another sale.

But while the juniors recognised both Solomon and his master, it was clear that Honest Joe did not recognise them. In their shirt-sleeves, and considerably dusty and smoky, Tom Merry & Co. presented an appearance that was not quite as usual, and Honest Joe did not dream that he was looking at the schoolboys whom he had swindled. After regarding them for some minutes attentively, from the road, he led the donkey on the grass, and approached Tom Merry & Co.'s camp, evidently with the intention of speaking.

"Morning, young gents!" he said affably.

"Good-morning!" smiled Blake.

"If you'd care to buy a donkey——"

"A—a—a donkey!" gasped Tom Merry.

"What I reely want," continued Honest Joe, "is to get 'im a kind master. I'd sell him cheap to get 'im a good master!"

"Not because you've taught him to wander off and come back to you to be sold to some other mug over again?" asked Blake gently.

Honest Joe started.

"You swindling rogue!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You sold me that donkey last week, and called him Teddy——"

"You sold him to me the week befoah, and called him Solomon!"

"Oh, my heye!" ejaculated Honest Joe. "I—I reckoned there was something familiar about the cut of your jib. You're the young hass with the eyeglass!"

Honest Joe jerked the donkey round to lead him back to the road rather hurriedly.

With one accord Tom Merry & Co. rushed on him. Tom secured the donkey, while six pairs of hands secured Mr. Harris and rolled him over in the road with a crash.

"Yaroooop!" roared Honest Joe, as he came down.

"Now cut!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "This donkey is ours, as we've bought him twice over!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gimme my donkey!" roared Mr. Harris, sitting up in the dust. "I ain't going without my donkey!"

"Won't you!" said Tom. "Let Towser loose, Herries, and we'll see whether the rotter will go!"

Towser made a rush, and Mr. Harris made a desperate leap and fled. Down the dusty road he went at top speed without his donkey, but with Towser on his track. They vanished round a bend of the road, both going strong.

Solomon had joined the St. Jim's party—for keeps this time. It was a quarter of an hour later that Towser came back to camp—with a large piece of rag in his mouth which had once formed a portion of Mr. Harris' trousers. Whether he had also seized any portion of Honest Joe himself, the juniors did not know—but they hoped he had! And Tom Merry & Co. were very careful to make sure that Solomon had no opportunity of eluding them, as they broke camp and took the road again in the cheery summer morning.

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of the chums of St. Jim's next week. Be sure you order your copy early.)

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The INVISIBLE HAND



JOHN SHARPE.



Vitagraph

IRON HAND.

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John Sharpe, the great analytical detective, is engaged by Chief Burnett, of the Secret Service, to track down the band of organised and dangerous criminals operating under the guidance of Iron Hand, a fearless, clever man of dominating personality. Marna Black, one of the band of crooks, is captured, and Burnett induces Anne Crawford, a woman agent of the Secret Service, to assume Marna's identity and get into the confidences of Iron Hand.

She is instructed to keep her real identity a secret even to Sharpe; but she often assists him and sends him information concerning the movements of the gang, and he is puzzled to know just where it comes from.

Iron Hand has a number of hiding-places in different parts of the country, which are referred to as "Nests," the most important of which is Eagle's Nest, situated on a deserted cliff. The leader's chief assistants are Potsdam and Black Flag. John Sharpe has had many big tussles with the gang, and has foiled many of their deepest schemes. Iron Hand has robbed Colonel Bledson, the Cattle King, of a casket of valuable jewels; and he takes them to his assistant in Chinatown, Wong Li, to take care of.

After a great struggle Sharpe succeeds in getting them back, and he deposits them in a safe in Colonel Bledson's room.

Iron Hand makes a determined effort to secure them again, but he is foiled repeatedly by Sharpe. The gang next turn their attention to a collection of valuable Russian furs. In order to evade Sharpe the gang board a steamer, but the detective follows them. On board an attempt is made to kill Sharpe.

Anne's Message.

JOHN SHARPE had no further interruptions that night. At early morning, when the ship which was bearing on board the leaders of the gang neared the harbour of San Pedro, there were few people astir.

Iron Hand, followed by Potsdam and Black Flag, stealthily left their cabins and went up to the deck, and after making quite sure that there was nobody watching their movements, they started to tie a rope from the deck and let it fall over down the side of the ship into the water. Then speedily descending, they immediately swam off towards the land.

Anne Crawford stayed behind, having received instructions to join the gang later on at an address which was given to her.

The steamer continued to plough its way through the water, and presently was moored to a dock. The gangway was put across by members of the crew, and John Sharpe hurriedly went ashore. He was the first of the passengers to leave the ship, and he was, of course, unaware that the people he was most interested in had departed.

The others hurried off by twos and threes, all unaware of the untoward incident which had taken place on the ship while they were still asleep.

Sharpe hastily took up a position of concealment behind some trunks and baggage on the landing-stage.

He wanted to see whether the men he was on the look-out for left the boat with the other passengers. Soon a woman, wearing a heavy veil which partially hid her countenance, crossed the gangway, but the detective saw enough of her to recognise that it was the woman member of the gang. He let her walk a little way, and then, unknown to her, he followed. The non-appearance of Iron Hand and his confederates caused him some alarm.

Anne walked on for a considerable way until presently she came to a lonely road with bushes and hedges on each side, and at a respectable distance behind her John Sharpe followed, keeping out of sight as much as possible by the aid of the bushes.

But the detective was so intent upon the girl he was following that he failed to notice a slight movement in the bushes some distance ahead of him. Presently he drew alongside, and at that moment he was startled to see Black Flag, Potsdam, and Iron Hand leap out upon him. Sharpe was totally taken by surprise.

One of the men delivered a hard blow which overpowered him, and they then dragged him in a dazed condition across the road.

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TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY 1d

Out on Friday, June 24th

Anne, who was a short distance ahead of the place where this incident was happening, turned round and, to her amazement, she recognised the prisoner as Sharpe. Once more he was in the clutches of the villains.

She watched for a moment or two aghast, and saw the three men drag the detective, who was powerless to resist, along the road to where a motor-car was standing in concealment.

Black Flag hurried on the car and took his place at the wheel, while the other two men thrust Sharpe into the back of the vehicle. Black Flag started the motor, and Iron Hand and Potsdam commenced to tie the detective up.

The motor-car was being driven in a direction away from where Anne stood, and as the girl watched this scene, she bemoaned her helplessness to assist the unfortunate detective.

In the distance she noticed a boy riding a bicycle in her direction, and the sight of him gave her an idea.

Anne held up her hand indicating the boy to stop, and when he complied, she offered to buy the bicycle. The boy refused her request at first, but when Anne took out a generous bundle of notes, which she handed to him, he speedily fell in with her offer.

The next moment she had mounted the bicycle and rode away as rapidly as she could in pursuit of Iron Hand's motor.

The boy gazed after her in astonishment, looking first in her direction, and then at the bundle of notes in his hand. It seemed like a rather pleasant dream to him.

The motor-car driven by Black Flag continued to speed on with its prisoner, John Sharpe, bound in the tonneau.

Presently Iron Hand shouted some instructions to Black Flag, and the car stopped.

Iron Hand pointed a little distance over to the right where there was some work going on. There could be seen a pile-driver, a donkey-engine, and other equipment. The scene was quite deserted. The leader took out his watch and consulted it.

"Eight o'clock," he said to his fellow-conspirators. "The night shift there has gone off, and it'll be ten minutes before the next one comes on. We have just time to dispose of Sharpe."

Then he quickly outlined his scheme to the two men. The next moment they had lifted Sharpe out of the car and were carrying him towards the pile-driver. It was the work of a few minutes for them to tie the detective on to the engine. This part would not be easily visible by the engineer, and the gang hoped that he would fail to see Sharpe. They took the precaution to gag him so that he could not shout out for assistance.

Meanwhile, every moment Anne Crawford was riding on her bicycle nearer towards the scene.

When the outlaws had finished their work of lashing Sharpe, bound and gagged, to the pile-driver, they hurried back to their motor and raced off.

Some time later the first of the new shift arrived on the scene for work. The man threw open the door of the engine and fed the fire with some shovelfuls of coal. He next examined the steam-gauge, and noted to his satisfaction that it had sufficient pressure.

"The boys'll be here in a few moments," he muttered to himself. "I'll just try the engine and make sure all is ready for them."

His hand moved towards the lever.

Anne had now arrived quite near the scene where this impending horror was about to take place. There was terror in her eyes as she caught sight of Sharpe tied to the pile, and the engineer ready to start the engine.

She realised at once the horrible death which had been planned for Sharpe, and pedalled harder than ever with the intention of hastening to the spot. Would she be in time?

The detective had now begun to regain consciousness, and he stared with horror at his predicament. He realised that in a moment he would be crushed to death.

The engineer pressed the lever that would set the machinery in motion, then, as he did so, he glanced backward in the direction of Anne, who was shouting at the top of her voice.

The engineer was not yet aware of the presence of John Sharpe, and he wondered what all the shouting was about.

Sharpe was unable to speak, and he prepared himself bravely for the death which seemed to be unavoidable.

Anne's cries became wilder now as she approached the engineer, and she waved her arms violently. The workman was so alarmed at her frenzied appearance that he pulled back the lever, and at once stopped the engine in order to hear better what she had to say.

The detective had been saved from a terrible death by barely an inch.

As Anne staggered from her bicycle, exhausted by her efforts, she pointed to Sharpe, and the horrified engineer speedily cut his bonds and released him.

Now that her work was done, the poor girl quite collapsed and fell back into the arms of one of the other workmen, who had now arrived on the scene.

Potsdam, who had been left behind, hidden in a wooded road, to report Sharpe's death, was an eye-witness from a distance of the dramatic scene which had just been enacted.

He saw the person who had arrived on the bicycle, and saved Sharpe in the nick of time, but he failed to recognise her as the girl he knew as Marna Black. Potsdam peered through the field-glasses which he held, and bit his lip in anger at the way their plot had been frustrated. He also saw Sharpe hasten to the side of the girl who had saved him, and then a suspicion of her identity dawned on him. But the distance was so great that he was quite unable to recognise positively whom Sharpe's helper had been. Potsdam put away his glasses and hurried through the woods away from the scene, in order to inform Iron Hand.

Anne soon revived again under the attention of Sharpe.

"Thank goodness I got here in time!" she muttered, when she saw that the detective was safe and sound.

It had been a terrible moment of anguish for her.

The detective looked at the girl curiously, but not without admiration also. He thanked her for saving his life, and then said:

"I wonder how many times I have been indebted to you for my life? And how I am going to repay you?"

Anne smiled. She was not even yet ready to disclose her real identity to the detective.

"You're not going to arrest me again, are you?" she asked Sharpe, with a twinkle in her eyes.

The detective looked thoughtful for a moment, then shook his head. He was beginning to see things more clearly now.

"No," he said, with a great deal of meaning; "you are of far greater value to me in the camp of the enemy. Don't tell them I escaped, will you?"

"No," replied the girl, in answer to his question. "That would be as much as my life was worth!"

Then, bidding the detective good-bye, she picked up her bicycle and rode rapidly away, before he had time to prevent her.

Sharpe turned to the workmen, who were looking on with wide-eyed astonishment. They were unable to make head or tail of this strange affair.

The detective offered them some sort of explanation in order to satisfy their curiosity, and then made his departure.

By the aid of her bicycle, Anne managed to reach the new hiding-place of Iron Hand before Potsdam. This time it was the back-room above an old curiosity-shop, which was kept by one of the gang. He did not pretend to do much business there.

Iron Hand and Black Flag were engaged in conversation. Presently the caretaker opened the door and admitted Anne. She had no news of much importance to report, she informed her chief. Very soon after her arrival Potsdam entered. He was very excited and enraged.

"He got away again, curse him!" he mumbled out.

Iron Hand growled out something in reply, and Black Flag also gave vent to his rage in a suitable manner. On Anne's face there was a well-simulated expression of disgust.

Iron Hand demanded to know who rescued Sharpe.

The face of the second-in-command clouded.

"I don't know for sure!" he muttered surlily. "But—I have my suspicions!"

Potsdam looked vindictively towards Anne, and she returned his glance defiantly.

Iron Hand's New Plot.

IRON HAND had other things to discuss, and for a moment he dismissed Sharpe from the conversation and his thoughts, and gave his assistant his outline of future plans.

"Well, Sharpe or no Sharpe," announced the leader, "we've got to pull off something big in a hurry! We need the money! Then we'll hurry over the border into Mexico, where we shall be safe, and Marna Black and I can be married!"

Iron Hand glanced over devotedly to Anne, and she smiled back at him, pretending to look forward to the event.

Potsdam saw this interchange of glances.

"Perhaps I can contribute a wedding-present," he muttered, beneath his breath.

"Well, what's the next scheme?" Black Flag inquired anxiously.

He was always anxious to render assistance to his master.

Iron Hand picked up a newspaper from the table, and pointed something out.

The others pressed round eagerly, in order to read it, but the leader saved them the trouble by reading it out.

It was a small item of news in an important daily paper, but there was sufficient of it to impress this master-criminal.

"Kentwell & Hardesty," he read, "the leading printers in the country, have just completed the largest order ever undertaken by an engraving firm. They secured a commission to design and make a billion dollars'-worth of notes for the Confederated Republics of South America. The first five million are completed."

The others looked up inquiringly when Iron Hand had finished reading. They at once saw what his idea was.

The ever-suspicious Potsdam, however, already had a doubt in his mind.

"But, even if we manage to lift the notes, they're not signed nor sealed! We could never pass them!"

Iron Hand was ready to meet this objection.

"Don't let that worry you!" he said. "I can dispose of them all right."

And he rubbed his hands with glee, in expectation of a big success.

Potsdam and Black Flag were also inclined to be enthusiastic over their new prospect. Iron Hand then put a few questions to Black Flag, who had had considerable experience of engraving.

The officer was delighted, and he instructed one of the rangers to lead off the detective's horse and take away his baggage.

Captain West immediately inquired about their old enemy, Iron Hand, and not with any great feeling of sympathy for the old villain. It was one of mere curiosity.

"Is he in Los Angeles again?"

"Yes," answered the detective; "and we've got him in a very tight corner. He's got to pull off something mighty quick, or starve! The minute he strikes I think we'll be able to nab the whole collection!"

Captain West congratulated the detective on his splendid work, and then escorted Sharpe to his tent, telling him to make himself thoroughly at home, and then he rode away.

At the appointed time, Black Flag made his way to an important engraving company, and presented a sample of his work to the manager. This was the first move in the new game.

The manager examined it carefully, and nodded with approval, stating that he was highly pleased with the workmanship. He consented to allow him to become an employee of the company at once, and Black Flag was taken to the factory, where he appeared to be highly industrious and businesslike. The whole time, however, he had been taking in a mental picture of the office, paying particular attention to the position of the door of the large room, and of the vault beneath it.

Directly above the engraving-office were some rooms occupied by an estate agent. The name, "George Welsh," was lettered on one door, but his rooms showed no particular signs of prosperity.

Mr. George Welsh was at the moment sitting at his desk, and he gave an eager glance towards the door as it opened and admitted Iron Hand and Potsdam. These two worthies were successfully disguised, and looked for all the world like prosperous and respectable business men. Both carried large cases with them.

Mr. Welsh greeted them, and asked them to sit down. They were not long in getting to business.

"Mr. Welsh," said Iron Hand, "I want an option on a certain tract of land in Tulare County. Have you a map, please?"

The man turned towards the wall, and pointed to where a map of California was hanging. Iron Hand and Potsdam walked over towards it, accompanied by Mr. Welsh, and the leader of the gang traced his finger along it until he came to a place marked "Tulare County."

Mr. Welsh looked at it for a moment or two, and then returned to his desk, while Iron Hand went into details of the particular property he wanted.

(To be continued.)

Captain West Again!

CAPTAIN WEST and some members of his patrol were talking in the camp when their attention was attracted by a man on horseback riding towards them.

Captain West rushed forward and greeted the visitor enthusiastically.

It was John Sharpe, and a considerable time had elapsed since the previous meeting of the two friends, who had taken part in many an exciting incident together.

"I'm going to enjoy the hospitality of your camp for a short time, until Iron Hand makes his next move!" said Sharpe to Captain West.

CHAT ABOUT ST. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS.

I should think that William George Bunter must have been born borrowing. I hear now that he has even had the effrontery to ask Mrs. Mimble for a loan. Sure enough, he'll be asking the good old dame to lend him her heart before many summers.

I hear that Tom Merry is having an "At-home" one day this week, in celebration of his birthday. Monty Lowther has been kind enough to offer his company, also Harry Man—but, there, it's Manners to be asked.

The latest roll call at St. Jim's shows Ernest Levison still an absentee. Whatever the motive for this strange disappearance, or wherever he can be, remains a mystery. We still have great hopes, as a postcard containing a joke, bearing the name of Ernest Levison as the sender, has been sent in for a trial in the "Boys' Herald" Tuck Hamper Competition. Further investigations are now being made. You will hear more about it later.

I hear that Harry Manners, having returned home late from a photographic expedition, is to report himself to Dr. Holmes for necessary action. It seems a great shame that the unfortunate Manners, who has a mania for photography, should be placed in this unhappy position. It is just possible that whilst taking a photograph he may have got shut in the lens!

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Our postal staff are now working overtime owing to the large number of mail-bags pouring in for the Editor containing congratulatory letters relating to our new serials. Allow me the opportunity of thanking my many readers. I feel as fully satisfied as they. There is yet another new serial in preparation, entitled: "Don't Go To London, Lad!" I cannot say anything more about it now, other than a real treat is in store for all readers of the "Boys' Herald."

"When can we expect Tom Merry's portrait on the back cover of the GEM LIBRARY?" many readers are asking me. Our Press photographer tells me that he has been on Tom Merry's track several times now, but on each occasion has found our hero too shy. Perhaps Harry Manners will be good enough to obtain us a snap in the near future?

I hope my many readers will agree with me in thinking that the GEM LIBRARY looks heaps better now it is set up in double-column measure. I might mention that it was the idea of David Llewellyn Wynn. As you know, he's always suffered from the "double-measure" fever.

ANSWERS

EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2:

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EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—

I am glad to hear that you are all so pleased with the GEM just now. Our new serial has undoubtedly caught on, and I can promise you that it will be even better as it proceeds. "What Have You Against Me?" is undoubtedly a very fine story, written in an entertaining style that will appeal to every boy. The author, who is an old public schoolboy himself, knows his subject very well, and much of what he writes is actually founded on fact. There will be another splendid instalment in our next issue, and I am sure you must all be very anxious to read the following chapters. Our next St. Jim's story is quite one of the finest which has ever appeared in our pages, and you must make quite sure to get your GEM early, before all the copies are sold out. All who are not readers of the "Boys' Herald" should make a point of getting next week's issue. This fine paper has been greatly enlarged, and it is now quite one of the finest boys' papers to be bought anywhere. A remarkable new serial, entitled, "Don't Go to London, Lad!" starts in that number, and I want all readers of the GEM to secure a copy, and read the opening chapters of this most enthralling story. There are many other fine features in this specially enlarged number, and the price is only 2d. You will know the "Boys' Herald" by its splendid coloured cover.

YOUR EDITOR.

ANSWERS TO READERS.

PETER B. GRAINGER (New York).—Over a dozen of the boys you mention were at St. Jim's when the GEM started. For the others: Levison came in "The New Boy's Secret"; Cardew came in "Cardew of the Fourth"; Clive arrived in "Kildare's Enemy"; Dick Julian came in "The Jew of St. Jim's"; Harry Hammond literally "blew in" in "The Schoolboy Cockney"; Baggy Trimble came in "The Bounder of St. Jim's"; Reggie Manners came in "Manners Minor"; Talbot came in "The Toff"; Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence all arrived in "The New Firm at St. Jim's"; Grundy came in "Grundy of the Shell"; and Buck Finn arrived in "A Lad of the League." I think that answers all your requests.

"'BOYS' HERALD' ADMIRER" (Leeds).—There has been a considerable amount of study shifting since the GEM started. The old copy you managed to get hold of gave Hammond sharing Study No. 5 with Bates and Smith minor. Study No. 7 was then occupied by Kerruish, Roland Ray, and Pat Reilly. As they are now, Hammond shares Study No. 5 with Dick Julian, Reilly and Kerruish. Study No. 7 is occupied by Dick Roylance, Contarini, and Smith minor. Bates now belongs to Study No. 3, with Macdonald.

"GINGER-BEER AND ICE-CREAM" (Teignmouth). — Hay-fighting is a favourite game with Third and Second Form fags. They seldom have more than two or three days of it in one year, though. The fights commence quietly enough, but eventually the high-spirited fags "loose their wool," and prefects have to come and stop the ensuing scenes. Koumi Rao came to St. Jim's in "A Disgrace to His House."



Make a point of ordering next week's enlarged number of "The Boys' Herald."

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(Towser's Master.)

(There will be another fine Portrait Study next week.)