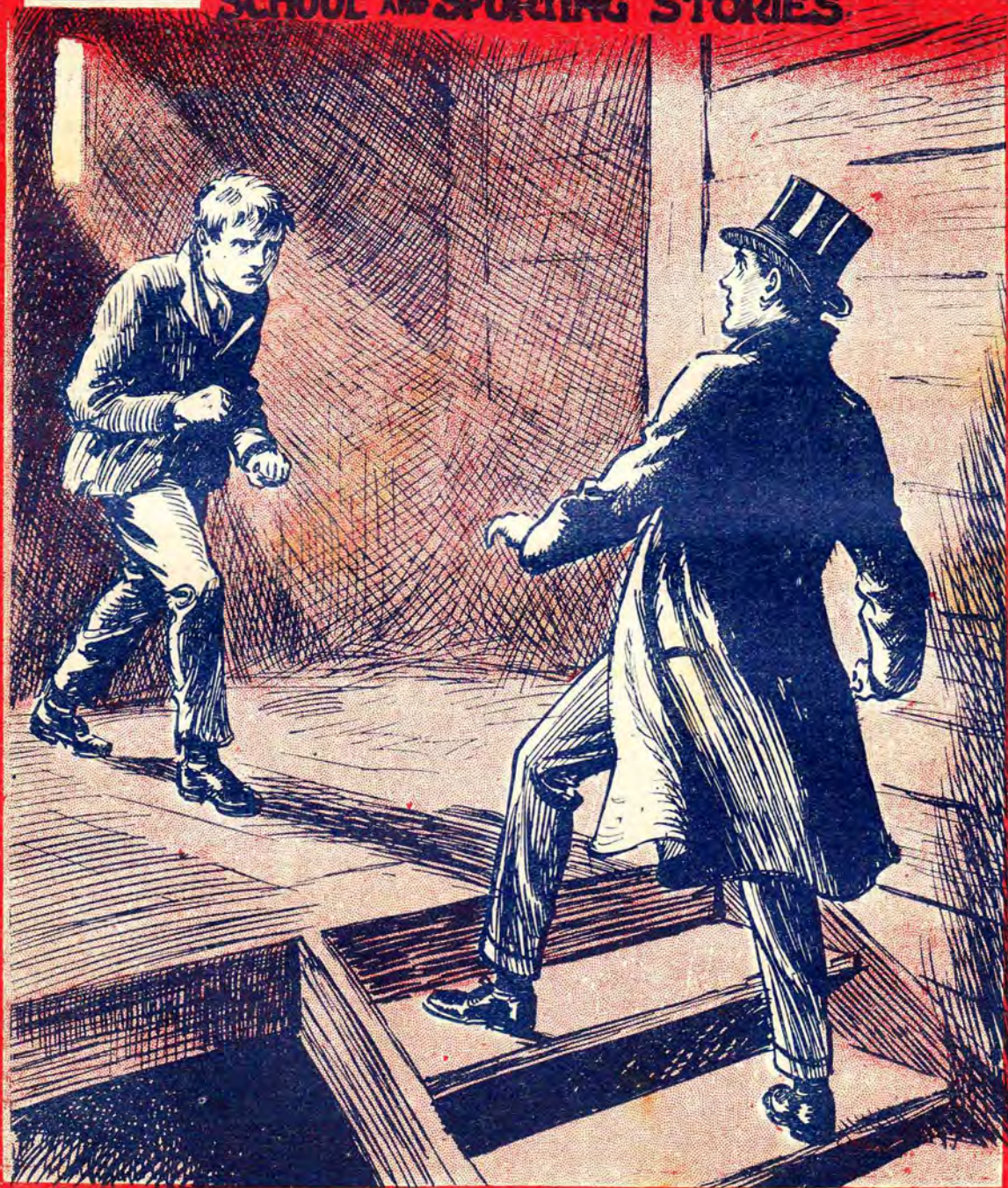


HAVE YOU WON ONE OF OUR DELICIOUS TUCK HAMPERS YET ? (See Page 17.)

The GEM 2ND

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SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

No. 802.
Vol. XXIII.
June 23rd, 1923.



FACE TO FACE WITH HIS DOUBLE !

(A strange meeting in the old mill on Wayland Moor. An incident from the Grand, Long Complete School Story
"IN ANOTHER'S NAME!" contained in this issue.)



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

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" Every Monday
 "THE MAGNET" Every Monday
 "THE POPULAR" Every Tuesday
 "CRUCKLES" Every Thursday
 "THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly

My dear Chums,—More surprises in store! Look out for the very strangest developments in connection with the new mystery at St. Jim's. This great series is wound up in next week's issue of the GEM, and I am dead certain the brilliant culmination will delight you all. The title stands for a good deal, and indicates just a bit of the rattling fine plot of a yarn which will rank high even amidst Martin Clifford's successes.

"IMPOSTOR AND HERO!" By Martin Clifford.

Here we have a really topping mystification with false scents in plenty, and the wrong people getting accused. You will be still more interested in the character of the fellow who comes to the school in such extraordinary circumstances, and whatever else you do keep your eye on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who cuts a fine figure. You know Gussy's way when difficulties crop up. He talks slowly, but he is a perfect whale at jumping to conclusions—generally speaking quite the wrong ones. He is one of those fellows who get hold of half a secret, and thinks it is the whole, whereas a properly constituted secret has as many sections almost as a cheery jigsaw puzzle. There are heaps of weird details and strange undercurrents in this latest sensation at St. Jim's, and dear old D'Arcy, with his wonderful penchant for doing the right thing in a hurry regardless of consequences, puts his foot in it as usual. But through the whole network of mystery you glimpse the outstanding figure of the boy who is one of the instigators of the upset at St. Jim's. You cannot help but like the chap. His action conveys a lesson. He may be sailing under the wrong colours. He may have been forced to do things which will not bear investigation, or at least admit of excuse, but just note how matters work out under the skillful steersmanship of that prince of authors, Martin Clifford. There is not an erring note in next week's fine yarn. You get carried on from incident to incident, and your interest will increase with each dramatic chapter. It is not a thing to miss. Get the GEM next Wednesday, and so make sure of an enjoyable time.

"THE ST. JIM'S NEWS."

Next week comes the Special Circus Edition. It is a red-letter day, as Tom Merry points out. The Early Romans
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were much addicted to bread and circuses. St. Jim's thinks the same. With a good circus and a well-stocked tuckshop, Baggy would ask for no more. In the new supplement most of the great men of St. Jim's air their views concerning the savdust arena. Look out for Baggy's stupendous pronouncement on the "ellephant." Grundy weighs in with a telling experience with the boxing kangaroo; plenty of punch in this. The new number is full of plums. A striking feature is George Kerr's dramatic story, "Ratty in the Ring!" Mr. Ratcliff's features were also most noteworthy. You will laugh long over this contribution. Baggy recounts what happened to him on one occasion at the circus when he met Sampsonio, the strong man. You will have to sort out the lugubrious details from the dense jungle of Baggy's spelling. It is a regular orthographical beano, most suitable these summer days. I have not told you anything like all about the treats concealed in next week's prize supplement. Tom Merry has given a fair field, and no special favour to his brainy staff. As already indicated, George Alfred Grundy comes out of his shell—ahem! I fully expect to find that the Circus Supplement will inaugurate a new era for the "St. Jim's News." It has always scored tremendously, but the cheery little paper is out to add considerably to its well-earned laurels. The Circus Edition enters with colours flying, drums beating, and mighty blasts on the big trombone.

"THE SPORTING SEVEN!" By Gordon Wallace.

Those magnificent fellows, the noble Sportsmen of Thunder Creek, appear again next week, and their exploits are more exciting than ever. The comrades of the western wilds jumped into

celebrity thanks to their unfailing grit. You got to like them, and their generosity and pluck. The way they undertook to be responsible for the welfare of young Sid Paterson, the boy who was left on his own when his father was convicted on what everybody felt was flimsy evidence, stirred the heart. It was real British, that! The little nipper was deprived of his rightful protector, but he had instead the sympathy and interest of a gallant company of sportsmen. Well, these grand chaps are found busy as usual at bridge-building up at Rolling River, and they are making good. Life is crammed full of frisky episodes in the wilderness. The new story recounts an amazing hold-up of a pay-car, full of treasure belonging to the contracting company which has the bridge work in hand. It is up to the Sportsmen of Thunder Creek to do what they can to outwit the scheming marauders. Do they manage this? You will see on Wednesday. They are faced by a strong and well-armed gang of crooks, and incident after incident of the most sensational description will keep all readers on the tiptoes of expectation.

"THE SPIDER OF THE NORTH!"

Tom Compton is still confronted with the ruthless enemy of the mills. We have had heaps of grand serials in the GEM, but the story now running, and scoring so well each week, need stand in fear of no rivals. I am receiving letters from far and wide about this stirring Lancashire yarn. It is reckoned to be "the goods." Only an hour before I sat down to pen these lines, a supporter of the GEM of eight years standing wrote to let me know that he thought "The Spider of the North!" was the finest serial he had ever struck. "I used not to like serial stories," says this correspondent, "but my opinion has entirely changed since I started reading about the Spider and the mills." I am extremely obliged to my chum for his letter. It is this sort of frank acknowledgment of merit which carries so much weight. And in addition it is a splendid encouragement to the author. He likes a cheery slap on the back as well as everybody else.

A SPECIAL NOTE!

This concerns our two always popular competitions—namely, the Cricket Puzzle, and the Tuck Hamper Page. Both these features are rolling on with immense success. Cricket is specially for summer. Keep on the alert for further attractions in this department. The Tuck Hamper is one of those genial features acceptable all the year round. Send postcards for choice. The smart jokelet or the most whimsical storyette can be tucked up comfortably on a card, and much trouble is thereby saved.

ANOTHER POINT!

While on the subject of postcards, let me express my hearty thanks to the many readers who send me word in this way as to what they wish most to see in the GEM. I welcome each missive of the kind—and they are legion. Let me know which of the St. Jim's characters you want to see step forward. Mr. Martin Clifford is out to please, and he will do his best. Sometimes a stray character drops out the running, but when there is a demand for his re-introduction I will see what can be done.

Your Editor.

A FREE CAMERA FOR YOU

See this week's

BOYS' CINEMA 2d

The great weekly cinema adventure paper. On sale every Wednesday. Make sure of this week's fine issue NOW.

IN ANOTHER'S NAME!



A Grand, Long Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co., telling how a daring impostor comes to St. Jim's in the guise of Mr. Lathom's nephew.

BY

Martin Clifford

CHAPTER 1. D'Arcy's Adventure!

"**B**LOW it!"

That expressive exclamation was uttered by Jack Blake of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's as he joined his study-mates, D'Arcy, Digby, and Herries on the School House steps. It was obvious that something had happened to upset the leader of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

"Been licked?" asked George Herries, with an unsympathetic grin.

"No."

"Lined?"

"No."

"Invited to tea?"

"Ass!"

"Then what's happened?" demanded Digby.

"Yaas, bai Jove! Pway what did Lathom want you for, deah boy?" inquired Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, fixing his monocle curiously upon Blake.

Blake grunted.

"To muck up our half-holiday—that's all," he said in disgust. "Cricket's off for to-day, you chaps. We've got to meet a blessed new kid."

"What?"

Blake nodded glumly.

"Blessed if I know why new kids always seem to drop on a blessed half to come to school!" he grumbled somewhat unreasonably. "They might consider us chaps a bit."

"Too bad!" agreed Digby. "But couldn't you wangle out of the job?"

"Not the way Lathom put it," said Blake. "You see, for one thing the new chap happens to be Lathom's nephew."

"Oh!"

"And for another he seems to be a queer sort of chap—never been to school and never been to England before. Comes from Texas, or Timbuctoo, or somewhere. He's being sent here for a short time, while his pater's in England on business, I believe. Anyway, according to Lathom, he's been brought up on a ranch—among cowboys, I bet. That's why nunky Lathom thinks some responsible chap—me, you know—should pilot the merchant along here."

"Great pip!"

There was a buzz of interest at once.

"My hat!" said Herries. "Then if he's from the wild and woolly West he ought to be worth meeting! I expect he'll be a queer sort of animal who reckons and calculates, and says 'I swow.' Look here, we're coming, too, Jack."

"You're coming in any case!" exclaimed Blake warmly. "Hanged if I'm going to trudge it to Wayland alone!"

"Wayland, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus. "Why doesn't the fellow come on to Wylcombe?"

"Because he's coming on the London express, due in Wayland at 3.15. That means he'll just miss the 3.10 for Wylcombe. And as there isn't another train before six o'clock, it'll have to be a case of shank's pony—for us, at any rate. Anyway, a good walk across Wayland Moor won't hurt us—"

"I'm wathah doubtful about that, deah boy," observed Arthur Augustus, shaking his head as he glanced reflectively at the overcast sky. "I'm wathah inclined to fancy it's goin' to wain, bai Jove!"

"Blow the rain!" snorted Blake. "You're not afraid of a drop of rain—"

"No; but I was thinkin' of my toppah—"

"Blow your toppler! What's the matter with a cap? We don't want this new chap to think this is a blessed school for tailors' dummies—but there's no time for gassing. If you aren't ready in five minutes, Gussy, we'll go without you."

And Blake strode indoors, followed by the grinning Digby and Herries. Arthur Augustus, with a last doubtful glance at the sky, followed them. Rain or no rain, he was as curious to meet this unusual kind of new boy as his chums were.

When he joined his study-mates on the School House steps five minutes later, he was the picture of elegance, from his shiny, patent-leather boots and nobby spats, to his natty overcoat and glossy silk hat.

"How do I look, deah boys?" he inquired anxiously. "I'm vewy desiruous of makin' a good impression on this new boy."

"Like a walking draughts-board," said Blake candidly, evidently referring to the delicate check pattern of D'Arcy's natty coat. "But bother your looks. Come along—"

"Pway, one moment, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, again glancing anxiously at the sky. "I weally think I'd better not wisk it, aftah all. I'll wun back an' get my bwolly—"

"But we'll miss that thumping train—"

"I cannot wisk wuinin' my toppah, even at the wisk of losin' the twain, Jack Blake," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I must request you to wait one moment, deah boys."

"Very well, then!" said Blake, in a resigned tone, and winking at the others. "We'll wait one moment. But buck up!"

"Thank you, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy disappeared indoors in search of his umbrella.

"And now we'll be getting on!" exclaimed Blake immediately the swell of the Fourth had gone. "We promised to

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wait one moment for old Gussy, and the moment's up. Come along!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And, chortling at Blake's somewhat severe interpretation of D'Arcy's request, Blake, Herries, and Digby started out to meet the new boy—without Gussy.

Five minutes later Arthur Augustus made his reappearance. Even the swell of St. Jim's rarely had use for an umbrella, and it had taken him some time to find it. But he had found it at last, and he was smiling triumphantly as he came down the School House steps. But when his eyes swept the empty quad he gave a jump.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he murmured, glancing round in considerable astonishment. "The—the feahful wottahs have gone without me! I must wun like anythin'!"

And, holding his silk-hat on with one hand, and gripping his "brolly" in the other, Arthur Augustus sped at top speed towards the gates. As he glanced along the lane he gave an aristocratic snort of wrath. The lane was empty.

Still hopeful of catching his faithless chums up, D'Arcy hurried on until he reached the outskirts of Wayland Moor. Here again he was disappointed. Blake, Herries, and Digby were not in sight.

"The wottahs!" breathed Arthur Augustus, with a frown. "Howevah, I will administrah a feahful thwashin' all wound when I ovahtake them!"

And, heartened a little by the prospect of this, he started across the moor. He had barely been trudging along ten minutes when what he had feared came to pass. A thin, drizzly rain began to fall.

In great alarm Arthur Augustus opened his umbrella to shield his precious topper, and continued his journey.

For another ten minutes D'Arcy struggled on, when, quite suddenly, he gave a startled jump as a loud shout echoed eerily across the silent moorland.

"Hey! Stop that young himp, guv'nor!"

D'Arcy came to a halt, and looked up in astonishment. Running towards him, and dimly seen through the misty rain, was a youth about his own age, clad in tattered clothes. He was panting hoarsely as he ran, and, hot-foot on his track were the figures of two rough-looking men.

"Stop 'im, guv'nor!"

Again came the hoarse shout, and D'Arcy was still hesitating whether to obey or not, when the question was settled for him. The fugitive tripped suddenly over a hidden tuft of gorse, and sprawled headlong. Next second his pursuers were upon him.

"Got you, you young himp!" roared the foremost man, hauling the panting youngster roughly to his feet. "You'd run away, would you? I'll teach you to run away from me, hang you! Take that—and that—"

"Bai Jove! The bwute!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble eye gleamed as the ruffian brought down the whip he carried again and again upon the lad's ill-covered shoulders. And this time the swell of the Fourth did not hesitate in doubt.

As the brutal fellow raised his arm to strike again, he dropped his brolly and gripped the uplifted arm fiercely.

"You—you cowardly wottah!" he shouted indignantly.

"Stop ill-tweatin' that youngstah, you wuffian!"

"Ere, what—Leggo my arm, you interfering young welp!" yelled the rascal furiously. "Here, 'elp me—Stop 'im!"

This last was fairly bellowed out as, with an eel-like wriggle, the ragged fugitive wrenched himself free. He neatly eluded the frantic grasp of the other man, and even as the ruffian sprang after him shot out a nimble foot and tripped him up. Crash!

With a savage imprecation, the fellow sprawled at the feet of his companion, just as that worthy shook off D'Arcy's detaining grip, and, making a rush to recapture the fugitive, he stumbled headlong over his comrade.

"Hook it, guv'nor!" gasped the ragged youth, darting away.

But D'Arcy needed no bidding to do that.

Leaving his umbrella where it lay, he dashed away. He soon overtook the ragged urchin, and side by side they raced over the rough ground. Behind them came the sound of thudding footsteps and angry shouts.

"Pick 'em up!" panted the ragged youngster. "Them blokes will 'arf kill yer if they catches yer!"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy.

For fully five minutes the two drove on through the rain. The athletic D'Arcy was still fresh, but his companion was stumbling, while his breath came in sobbing pants. As the sounds of pursuit died away, Arthur Augustus called a halt, and glanced round.

"We're safe enough now, deah boy," he observed, a trifle breathlessly. "The wuffians have given up the chase, I fancy. And— Oh, bai Jove! I've left my bwolly behind!"

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"You be thankful you got away safely, mister, an' blow your old gamp!" panted the strange urchin grimly. "You 'urry off 'ome while you've got the chance!"

"But what about you, deah boy? Why, you are shivewin', and must be dwenched through!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in great distress. "I advise you to shelter somewhere—the old mill yonder—until you can return to your people."

"I ain't got no people—'cept them blokes, and I ain't goin' back to them," said the youngster, with a faint grin. "I've run away for good this time. They've knocked me about enough, and I ain't standin' any more. I suppose you ain't got a smoke, mister?"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus shuddered, and glanced compassionately at the tattered waif. The forlorn condition of the wretched youngster touched D'Arcy's generous heart. His clothes were drenched, and he was shivering. From beneath his rag of a cap showed a wet, tousled mop of fiery red hair. His thin, grimy face was pinched and strained, and his lips bore stains that even to D'Arcy's inexperienced eyes told of excessive cigarette-smoking. But it was not a bad face, for all that, and the eyes were sharp and intelligent.

"Nunno; I have no cigawettes," gasped D'Arcy at last. "But—but if you would care to accept this, deah boy—"

And Arthur Augustus took out his pocket-wallet and held out a pound Treasury-note. For a brief moment the youngster's sharp eyes glittered greedily as they noted the well-filled wallet. Then just as quickly a shamed look came over his face, and his eyes fell.

"Thanks, mister!" he said huskily, taking the note slowly. "You're a good 'un, you are! If you 'adn't chipped in like you did jest now, old Bolton would 'a' 'arf killed me!"

"That's all wight, deah boy!" said D'Arcy hurriedly. "You'll be able to get somethin' to eat an' dwink in Wylcombe with that. And—and if you are evah in need or twouble, deah boy, ask for D'Arcy at St. Jim's, and I'll be vewy pleased to help you. And now I must wush away. Good-bye, deah boy!"

Leaving the youth standing blinking after him with a curious look of mingled surprise and gratitude on his face, Arthur Augustus resumed his interrupted tramp after Blake & Co. to meet the new boy.

But though he did not know it, Arthur Augustus had already met the only new boy who was fated to arrive at St. Jim's that day.

CHAPTER 2.

The New Boy!

A THIN, misty rain was falling, and the little station of Wayland Junction looked anything but a cheerful place to the single passenger who dismounted from the three-fifteen train from London.

He was a boy of fifteen or thereabouts, well set up and muscular, with a healthy, sun-tanned skin and pleasant, clear blue eyes. The outstanding feature of the stranger, however, was his hair. It was red hair—a glaring red—and was surmounted by a shiny, new silk-hat, set at an awkward angle, and which the stranger wore with obvious discomfort.

For a moment the stranger stood staring about him as he buttoned up his overcoat. As he spotted the ancient porter unloading luggage from the luggage-van, he grinned, and advanced towards him.

"I say, porter!"

"Yessir?" grunted the old porter, without looking up.

"What's the next train to Rycombe?"

"There ain't none afore six, sir."

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated the red-haired one. "Do you mean to say I've got to hang about this show until six?"

"Yus," said the porter stolidly, dropping the last trunk on to the platform and slamming the doors. "Leastways, unless you likes to walk it—which, seein' as you're a stranger, I shouldn't—"

"How far is it, old scout?" interrupted the stranger, with a grin.

"Bout four miles across Wayland Moor. But—"

"Then I guess I'll hoof it," said the youth promptly.

The porter stopped and looked round at that.

"If you'll take my tip, young sir, you won't do nothin' of the sort," he said, with a knowing look at the sky. "It's misty, and rainin' 'ard enough now; but it's goin' to be wuss, and you being a stranger—"

"I reckon a drop of rain won't hurt this chicken; and as for losin' myself—"

"If you'll take my tip, young gentleman—"

"Can't be did. But I guess you'll take a tip from me!" grinned the cheerful youth, pressing a florin into the horny palm of the porter. "You'll find some baggage there booked for St. Jim's College—name of Lathom. Just see it into the Rycombe train, old nut. And now p'haps you'll put me wise for this Wayland Moor?"

The old porter shook his head doubtfully, but, realising

the ginger-haired youth had made up his mind, he gave the required information. And next moment Mark Lathom—for, of course, it was he—turned up his coat-collar and left the station.

With brisk steps he strode along the rain-swept High Street, and had almost reached the end, when he heard sounds of strife, mingled with merry laughter and cheers. The commotion came from an opening off the High Street, where a good-humoured scrap was waging between four youths wearing the green-and-black caps of Rylcombe Grammar School and three juniors wearing the red-and-white caps of St. Jim's.

Though the three St. Jim's fellows were putting up a stout resistance, they were outnumbered, and inch by inch they were driven down the opening. Unfortunately, Mark Lathom did not know the St. Jim's colours, or he would doubtless have gone to the rescue. And this lack of knowledge, as we shall see, was to have unfortunate results for the boy from America.

For the St. Jim's juniors were none other than Blake, Herries, and Digby, who had been waylaid by Gordon Gay & Co. of the Grammar School, when on their way to meet the new boy.

But Mark Lathom did not know that, and after watching the merry scene for a few moments, he went on his way chuckling.

He found no difficulty in striking the outskirts of Wayland Moor, and in a few minutes he was trudging across the rough ground. The porter had given him various landmarks to guide him, and he anticipated no trouble in finding his way.

It was only when he had been steadily plodding along for over half an hour without seeing signs of these, that he began to wish he had taken the old porter's "tip" after all.

The mist was thick upon the moor, and he could scarcely see twenty yards ahead of him. Already the afternoon was drawing in, and a curious, eerie silence hung over the desolate stretch of moorland.

"Jumping crackers!" ejaculated the new boy, in disgust. "I believe I'm lost! That porter Johnny said something about a castle, and—yes, an old mill. But where the thump are they?"

For another fifteen minutes he plodded on, until just when he was losing hope, he caught sight of a tall, gaunt structure rising up to the left of him. It was the old mill without a doubt.

"Good egg!" muttered Mark Lathom. "Unless I want to be wandering about this blessed wilderness all night, I'd better explore it. Ought to be able to take my bearings from an upper window."

With renewed energy the boy from America hurried on, and was soon stumbling up the little slope whereon the old mill stood. The door of the building was unlocked, and he was soon standing within the gloomy interior.

Opposite to him was a crazy flight of wooden stairs, and he mounted these quickly and eagerly.

But barely had he reached the first floor, when he gave a start as the figure of a boy jumped up in alarm from the corner of the dusty apartment.

A ragged, tattered-looking boy he was, his sodden rags clinging to him, his features pinched with cold. It was the youth whom Arthur Augustus had met that afternoon.

As they stared at each other, Mark Lathom gave a sudden jump of astonishment.

The boy from America was, of course, quite familiar with his own features, and the astonishing resemblance between himself and this wretched youngster struck him at once. Both had fiery red hair, and bright, clear blue eyes. Despite his ill-clad and half-starved appearance, this boy might have been his own twin-brother.

The ragged youth was the first to speak.

"Lumme!" he gasped, with obvious relief. "I—I thought you was—was—"

"Well, who did you think I was, Ginger?" asked the new boy, with a grin.

"Ginger yourself," said the ragged youth sullenly, evidently resenting the grinning allusion to his hair. "What about your own 'air, guv'nor? Lumme, it's a wonder it don't set yer top 'at on fire!"

Mark Lathom flushed, and his eyes gleamed. It was the



As Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made a dive for his topper there came a warning shout from Jack Blake. "Look out, Gussy!" The swell of St. Jim's heeded him not, and would have been run over had not a slight figure, active as a monkey, leaped forward and hurled himself bodily at Arthur Augustus.

(See page 9.)

first time in his life he had ever worn a silk hat—they didn't wear such uncomfortable headgear out West. He hated it, and felt miserable in it; and he deeply resented this cheeky urchin's remarks concerning it.

"You—you cheeky young rotter!" he stuttered. "I guess I'll wallop you for that—"

"I don't think," sniffed the other. "You 'op it while ye'r safe, guv'nor! Get off 'ome with the old man's 'at, afore 'e misses it!"

"Why, you—you cheeky kid! I'll—I'll—"

The wrathful new boy took a step forward with clenched fists raised. And then, just as quickly, he dropped them again. The urchin's teeth were chattering with cold, and he presented such a pitiable spectacle that Mark Lathom's heart smote him.

"Well, come on, guv'nor," sneered the youth aggressively, evidently under the impression that the other finked a scrap. "Come on, an' see me bash your 'at in."

Mark Lathom laughed good-naturedly at that; but before he could make a reply there sounded the heavy tramp of feet on the stairs, and a quick look of terror came into the eyes of the ragged youth. Next moment two rough-looking men burst into the chamber.

"Ere 'e is!" roared the foremost, making a spring and grasping the boy. "So you thought you'd given us the slip, Ginger, my lad?"

"And 'ere's the other young hound what helped 'im to get away!" shouted the second fellow, turning furiously upon Mark Lathom. "We'll settle with 'im, too!"

"Here, what's the game?" snapped Mark Lathom, jumping back, his eyes gleaming. "I don't know what you're talking about, but I guess you'll keep your hands off me!"

"Stop that, Slaney!" ordered the first man curtly, after a sharp glance at the new boy. "Can't you see that ain't the same young gent? The other chap had a winder-pane in his eye, and—well, I'm blowed!"

The speaker broke off and stared, apparently having noticed the strange resemblance between the two boys. But before he could voice his astonishment, the fellow he called Slaney answered.

"You're right, Jim," he grunted, peering in the gloom at Mark Lathom. "It ain't the same bloke; but what's he doing here with Ginger?"

"I guess that's no affair of yours—unless this old shebang belongs to you chaps," retorted the boy bluntly. "In that

case; I'll quit, as I'm not exactly dying for your company. But if you want to know the truth I'll tell you. I've lost myself, and I came up here hoping to spy out the land from the window."

"Then I suppose you don't know these parts?" asked Bolton, exchanging a meaning glance with his companion.

"No; seeing I only landed in England two days ago, that isn't likely, is it?" said the new boy, with a grin. "Fact is, I'm bound for St. Jim's College, and if you know the school and can put me on the right trail, I'd be obliged."

There was a pause. At mention of St. Jim's, both men had given a start. Then a sudden, cunning gleam entered Bolton's close-set eyes, as though an idea had crossed his mind. For a moment he glanced from the cheery face of the new boy to the cowed features of Ginger reflectively.

"So you're going to St. Jim's School?" he said at last. "New boy, I s'pose?"

"Yes," answered Mark Lathom curtly.

"Then I expect, being a new boy, you knows nobody there and nobody knows you?"

The question, though a curious one, was asked carelessly, and seemed harmless enough. But Mark Lathom hesitated, and eyed the man keenly. Why a stranger should evince such an interest in himself and his business he could not imagine, and he was becoming uneasy.

But the men were rough-looking characters, and should they turn nasty he would be in an exceedingly awkward position, alone with them in that lonely spot. It would be just as well to humour them, he reflected.

"Yes; you are right. I know no one at St. Jim's, and—or, at least, an uncle of mine's a master there, but we've never met. And now," said the boy, with a cheerfulness he by no means felt, "if you've finished asking about my family history, perhaps you'll put me wise for St. Jim's?"

"Certainly, young sir," said Bolton, quite genially. "Come here a minute."

The boy from America followed the man to the little dusty, unglazed window, and Bolton pointed out across the moor.

"You see that clump of trees yonder," he said, indicating a shadowy group of trees in the distance.

"Yes."

"Well, you keeps straight on till you reaches 'em, when you'll see some buildings, and them's the school. Got me?"

Mark Lathom nodded and thanked the man. Then, with assumed carelessness, he moved to the door, keeping his eyes open warily for possible treachery.

But, to his great relief, neither of the two men attempted to stop him, and next moment he was hastily descending the rickety staircase.

CHAPTER 3.

Kidnapped!

WHEN Mark Lathom had gone, Slaney turned to Bolton with a scowl of disappointment and disgust.

"What's the little game, Jim?" he muttered.

"What did you want to let the kid go for? He's a young toff, an' worth plucking."

Bolton, who was apparently the leader, gave a chuckle.

"Because I've a better thing on than cracking kids' money-boxes," he grinned. "This is a stroke of luck, and no mistake. Ginger, my lad, you've got to come along and be sensible. This is going to be your job."

"I ain't a-going to do no more jobs for you," muttered Ginger, his cowed expression momentarily changing to a look of sullen defiance. "You jest let me go!"

"Oh, ain't you?" growled the man, in a threatening tone. "You know what to expect, then. I'm your stepfather, an' if you won't obey me, then I'll 'and you over to the police, and 'ave you—"

"You knows better," muttered the youngster—though it was obvious that the threat had terrified him. "What if I tells the cops what I knows about you—"

"What you knows, and what you can prove," grinned the ruffian, "ain't the same. But if I, being your stepfather, goes to 'em and tells 'em about you—what a young thief you are, and how you're beyond parental control, they'll soon 'ave you in a reformatory, my lad. And unless you does what you're told, I'll tan your 'ide every day until you goes. Now what do you say?"

It was bluff—sheer bluff; but the unhappy youngster did not know that—nor did he see the prodigious wink that passed between the two. But he had good cause to know that when Bolton made a threat, it was usually carried out.

"All right, guv'nor!" he muttered in a low tone. "I'll do it. But what's the job this time?"

"You'll know soon enough," grinned Bolton. "But you're a sensible lad, Ginger. I knowed you'd come round. But we've wasted enough time. We've got to catch that young toff up before he reaches the camp."

Without further questioning, Slaney and Ginger clattered

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down the stairs in the wake of their leader. The next moment they were hurrying on the track of the boy from America. Ginger came last, but the two rascals did not even look round to make sure he was following. They knew he was thoroughly cowed, and that he would not attempt to escape again.

The conversation had only taken a few seconds, but Mark Lathom was already some hundred yards ahead. Not once did he glance round as he plodded on, or he would at once have been suspicious. He reached the belt of trees at last, and then he stopped, perplexed.

The buildings and towers of St. Jim's he had hoped and expected to see were not in view. But in front of him in a clearing in the tiny wood was a gipsy encampment. A couple of caravans were there, and from their tall chimneys there issued a thin veil of smoke. Tethered to the trees close by were two lean, shivering horses, while tied up to the wheel of one van was a huge wolfhound—a savage-looking brute that snarled and strained to reach him.

"Great jumping crackers!" gasped the boy from America. "I'd better quit. If that rope gives—"

He broke off as the quick thud of feet sounded. But before he could even turn, he felt his arms gripped fiercely from behind. With a gasp of alarm, he began to struggle furiously; it was only when the harsh voice of Bolton rang out that he realised the truth.

"No good struggling, me lad!" he said. "If yer did get away, my mate'd jest let the dog loose—see? Chuck it!"

Mark Lathom's face paled and his heart sank. The other rascal was standing by the dog, ready to let him loose if necessary. The boy realised he was trapped—that it was hopeless to struggle. Even if he could hope to overpower the rascals, he could not hope to escape from the dog.

"That's better!" chuckled the man, as the boy's struggles ceased. "And now, my young bantam, if you don't want to be hurt, you'd best keep quiet!"

As he spoke, Bolton released Lathom's arms, and began to run his fingers swiftly and deftly through the boy's pockets. From an inside pocket he took a pocket-wallet and a couple of letters. The boy's watch and other valuables he did not touch—then.

"That's good enough!" chuckled the ruffian, placing the wallet and letters in his pocket. "Into that van you goes, young feller!"

"You'll suffer for this, you rustling galoots!" muttered the new boy thickly. "What's your little game? What does this business mean?"

"Get into that van an' don't ask no questions," snapped the man. "Do as you're told, and you'll come to no 'arm."

For a brief moment Mark Lathom hesitated. But there was no help for it—a glance at the rascals' unrelenting faces told him that. With clenched fists and blazing eyes, the red-haired boy slowly mounted the van steps and entered.

Bolton followed him and stood in the doorway.

"One last tip, youngster," he said. "We lets that there dog loose every night to guard the camp. If you attempts to escape, 'Eaven 'elp you!"

With that last threat Bolton closed the van door and locked it. The three then entered the larger caravan, and Slaney turned a bewildered face to his rascally leader.

"I'll be hanged if I know what you're doin' this for, Jim!" he growled sullenly. "But it's too dangerous, I'm thinkin'. That kid'll be missed to-night, and then—"

"No, he won't. They're expecting a new kid up at the school yonder, an' they ain't goin' to be disappointed," chuckled Bolton. "But that new kid is goin' to be our old pal Ginger, dressed in the real kid's togs. Ginger's a smart kid, and ought to work it a treat."

"But—but what for? What's the game?" ejaculated Slaney.

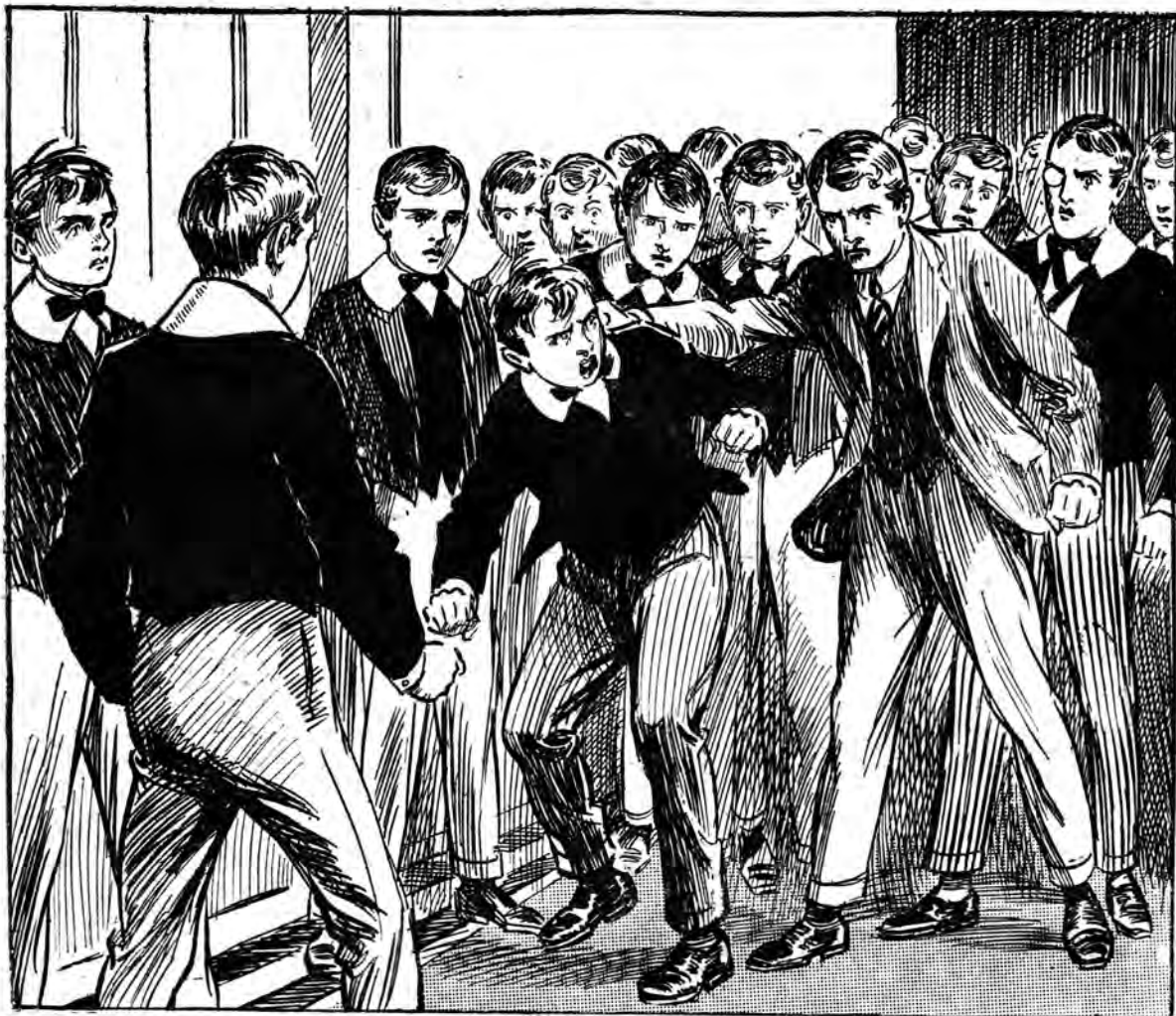
"If you'd the brains of a rabbit you'd see that!" sneered Bolton. "You knows what we're in these parts for, don't you? We wants to relieve the school of some o' them silver challenge cups and things they've got. But our biggest trouble is to find out where the stuff is kept, and then to get into the shop. But now it'll be as easy as fallin' off a form. Ginger here goes there as the new kid, spies out the land, and then lets us in one dark night. What do you say to that?"

"Sounds all right," muttered the other doubtfully. "But we don't even know this kid's name—"

"Soon find a way of gettin' that out of him," grinned Bolton, "that is, providing what we wants to know ain't in this letter. Just shut up a minute!"

Striking a match the man lit the swinging oil-lamp—for it was already growing dusk—and, seating himself on an upturned box, he took the letters and wallet from his pocket. He opened the letters, and, as he read them, he slapped his thigh triumphantly.

"Gosh, what luck!" he chuckled. "Just the thing we want. Here's a letter of introduction from the kid's father to the 'eadmaster, and another to the kid's uncle what's a master there. According to this his name's Lathom—Mark



As Ginger was about to make a lunge at Durrance's unprotected face, an iron grip fastened on his collar. "Here, none of that!" snapped Kildare angrily. "Didn't I tell you to stop?" "Leggo!" shouted the new boy. "You shove off an' mind your own business, or I'll 'ack yer ehins for yer!" "Wha-a-at?" gasped the captain of St. Jim's. (See page 11.)

Lathom—and 'is dad owns a big ranch in America. Are you listening, Ginger? You'd better be gettin' these letters off by 'eart—"

"What about me if I gets copped?" muttered Ginger, who had been too bewildered to protest until now. "I ain't doin' it! If I gets copped—"

"You won't be copped, you young idiot!" was the scornful answer. "Nobody knows the kid, and if they did, they wouldn't tell the difference between you. That's what gave me the idea—you bein' as much alike as two peas. Now you be sensible, Ginger. You carried through bigger jobs than this before now."

"But not so risky," said the youngster, in alarm. "'Ow can I do what them young toffs does—"

"You'll soon pick that up, of course. Besides, it's only for a matter of two or three days, at most. And think of the time you'll have—well fed and housed, and waited on 'and and foot. Why, you'll be a regular toff. And, look here, Ginger," went on the rascal coaxingly, "there's lots of wealthy young gents there. Just think what you'll be able to pick up on your own. Them you keeps for yourself, as long as you 'elps us with the bigger job. Now, what about it?"

The youngster hesitated sullenly—but not for long. The job was risky, but it had its good points, as Bolton had said. And even the prospect of a few days away from his brutal taskmasters was worth the risk, he reflected. And then, if he refused—he knew what to expect if he did refuse.

"I'm on!" he muttered sullenly, at length.

"Then there's no time to be lost," said Bolton, his eyes gleaming. "Slaney, just you go an' get that young gent's togs off him, then while Ginger's changin', I'll be puttin' him up to the ropes. He'll have to be careful 'ow he talks and what he says; but I'll soon put him right there!"

Slaney grinned and left the van, and next moment the rascally cracksmen and his unwilling pupil were deep in the details of the plot.

CHAPTER 4. Ginger Arrives.

"IT'S all your fault, Gussy, you ass!"

Thus Jack Blake, as he stood with his chums, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a dismal group on the platform of Wayland Junction. They had just heard from the porter that the new boy from America had left the station ten minutes ago; and the thought that they had had their long tramp for nothing did not please them, to say the least of it.

True, it had not been their fault that they had missed the new boy. It was just hard luck that Gordon Gay & Co. had forced a battle upon them when within a stone's throw of the station. Fortunately, D'Arcy's belated arrival had turned the tide of battle; but it was too late then. The train had gone, likewise the new boy.

As Jack Blake spoke, Arthur Augustus, who was mopping his heated brow with a delicate cambric handkerchief, turned frigidly upon Blake.

"And pway," he asked, with crushing politeness—"pway state your weasons, Jack Blake, for so wudely assertin' that it is my fault we have missed the new boy."

"Like a shot!" said Blake, quite uncrushed. "If you hadn't been such a feeble-minded dummy as to go back for your blessed broolly, those thumping Grammarians would never have held us up. We'd have broken through 'em easily."

"Wot—uttah wot!" replied Arthur Augustus hotly. "You

should not have gone without me, Blake, you wottab! Your remarks are not only in vewy bad taste, but extwemely ungwateful. If I had not awwived in the nick of time, you would have been uttably wouted. But I wushed to the wescue without even thinkin' about my clobber, which has suffahed tewwibly! Look at my toppah—it is uttably wuined, bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus took off what had once been his beautiful silk hat, and gazed at it almost with tears in his eyes. His study-mates also gazed at it and roared. The topper that only an hour before had been a thing of beauty now closely resembled a superannuated concertina.

"Never mind, Gussy!" chorled Herries heartlessly. "If you want it flattened out again, you've only got to shove it under the next goods train that passes."

"You—you ungwateful, gwinnin' wottahs!" shouted Arthur Augustus, pushing back his cuffs. "Unless you immediately apologise, Blake, I will administrah a feahful thwashin' all wound, heah and now, bai Jove!"

Blake immediately became grave, and at a wink from him the faces of Herries and Digby also underwent a sudden transformation.

"We're sorry, Gussy!" said Blake humbly.

"Fearfully sorry!" agreed Herries and Digby gravely.

D'Arcy eyed his study-mates suspiciously. As a matter of fact, his chums were not so sorry and alarmed as they appeared to be. But they knew Gussy was on his high horse, and that nothing but an apology would appease his terrible wrath.

Fortunately, D'Arcy, like them, was in a hurry to get home to tea, and he decided to take the apology at its face value, so to speak.

"Vewy good!" he said, a trifle coldly. "I will accept your apologies. And now, deah boy, may I suggest that we return to St. Jim's?"

"H'm, yes!" murmured Blake, hastily turning a chuckle into a cough. "We shall be like drowned rats when we get back as it is. Keep your eyes peeled for the new merchant. That porter Johnny said he'd got ginger hair, so we'll easily know him."

"Now I come to think of it," said Digby, "I fancy I spotted a red-haired chap pass the top of that opening when we were scrapping!"

"Then with a bit of luck we might catch him up," said Blake. "Let's hope he doesn't go and lose himself on the moor!"

The four juniors left the station, and within a few minutes were plodding across Wayland Moor. None of the four was feeling very cheerful. D'Arcy was bemoaning the loss of his topper, and the others were grumbling at having had the tramp for nothing.

But Blake, in addition, was worrying about the new boy. For a stranger to find his way across the moor at any time was no easy matter. But in a drizzly mist like this, the task would be doubly difficult.

During that long tramp the juniors kept a sharp look-out for the new fellow. But when the roofs and chimneys of St. Jim's came in sight at last, Blake shook his head glumly.

"There's still a chance, of course, that he's landed in safely," he said doubtfully. "But if he hasn't, it's jolly serious. I'm blessed if I know what Lathom will say if we turn up without his blessed nephew!"

A moment later the juniors climbed the stile leading into Rylcombe Lane, and as they did so Blake gave a shout of relief as he glanced along the lane in the deepening dusk.

Walking along a few yards ahead was a youth wearing a silk hat, from beneath which showed straggling tufts of ginger hair.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Blake. "If that isn't the new kid I'm a Dutchman. Only a traveller—or a brainless noodle like Gussy—would wear a topper in the ordinary way."

"Bai Jove, Blake, you—"

But Blake had not stopped to hear D'Arcy's indignant remarks. Anxious to catch up with the new boy before reaching the gates, he set off at a run, with Herries and Digby hard at his heels. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy swallowed his pride, and followed.

On hearing footsteps behind him, the stranger stopped and waited for them. As they ran up breathlessly, he treated them to a broad, familiar grin.

"Allo!" he said cheerfully. "You blokes belong to St. Jim's?"

"M-mum-my hat!"

The juniors nearly fell down with astonishment as they heard that. The voice was raucous, and the speech strange, to say the least of it. And the fellow was smoking!

Could this be Mr. Lathom's nephew? And yet it must be. The stranger's overcoat was open, disclosing to view Etons, and he wore a silk hat set rakishly at the back of his head. And if anything was needed to confirm his identity, it was the tousled mop of ginger hair that showed beneath it.

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"Ye-e-es," stammered Blake at last. "I—I suppose you are Mark Lathom—Mr. Lathom's nephew?"

The youth puffed out a cloud of smoke, and nodded carelessly.

"I'm 'im!" he said cheerfully. "I guess you fellers was expectin' me?"

"Bai Jove!"

It was Arthur Augustus. He had just arrived, and was staring at the stranger in blank astonishment.

"Bai Jove!" he repeated, in amazement. "What are you doin' in that wig-out, my fwend? Haven't I nfet you befoah?"

As the youth met D'Arcy's astonished look he gave a sudden start, but just as quickly recovered his self-possession again.

"Not that I knows of, old sport!" he said, with a grin. "Seen' I jest come from America, I reckon it ain't likely, is it? I 'opes you ain't tryin' the confidence-trick on me, eyeglass!"

"But—but suahly you're not Mr. Lathom's nephew!" gasped D'Arcy. "Aren't you the chap I met on Wayland Moor this afternoon?"

The stranger shook his head.

"I ain't never met you nor seen you afore!" he said coolly. "You're talkin' through that squashed 'at of yours, eyeglass!"

Arthur Augustus flushed and looked bewildered. He could have sworn that the face of this cheeky, self-possessed youth was the face of the waif he had rescued from the ruffians on the moor. Certainly the face of this youth was comparatively clean and cheerful, and his clothes above reproach, whilst the face of the waif had been grimy and wretched, and his clothes in rags and tatters.

But the features seemed the same, for all that.

"I—I beg your pardon!" murmured D'Arcy stiffly, after a pause. "Wewly, you know, you are remarkably like a youngstah I wesced from two wuffians this aftnnoon who were illtweatin' him. But—but I must have been mistaken, bai Jove!"

The strange new boy chuckled, and, tapping his forehead suggestively, he winked at Blake—a wink that was met by that junior with a frown.

"Of course you were mistaken, Gussy!" said Blake. "Hasn't this chap only just come from the station? But look here, Lathom; it strikes me you're a jolly sight too cheeky for a new kid! Cheeky new kids usually get it in the neck before they've been at St. Jim's long. Another thing. If you'll take my advice, you'll chuck that filthy cigarette away. Smoking's a footling game, and it's not allowed at St. Jim's!"

"Crumbs!"

The stranger flicked the burning ash from his cigarette, which he slipped deftly into his pocket. But he was grinning unabashed as he followed the juniors along the dusky lane.

Blake & Co., however, were not grinning. They had met Mr. Lathom's nephew—or thought they had—and they were not at all favourably impressed by him. They had heard that Mark Lathom had spent all his life, so far, in a remote State of America, and they had expected him to be a little rough and ready in his manners and speech.

But they had not expected him to be quite like this. And they felt certain that Mr. Lathom had not, either.

Could they have only guessed the truth, that the fellow they were escorting to St. Jim's was a daring impostor, and that the real Mark Lathom was at that moment a prisoner in the lonely encampment on the moor, they would have been more than surprised, to say the least of it.

CHAPTER 5. A Plucky Action!

AS the five juniors turned the corner of Rylcombe Lane they overtook three juniors who happened to be about to enter the gates at that moment. The three were Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners of the Shell, just returning from an afternoon spent at Rylcombe.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, with a curious glance at the new boy. "Where have you chaps been to?"

"Wayland, to meet this new chap," grunted Blake. "And we're jolly well drenched through!"

"You certainly look wrecks," observed Tom Merry critically. "You've been scrapping, too. Has Gussy been obstreperous?"

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus. "We have had a feahful stwuggle with those Gwammawian wottahs, deah boys. Just look what they've done to my toppah!"

"H'm—yes," remarked Monty Lowther, eyeing D'Arcy's silk hat reflectively. "It certainly does look a little creased, Gussy. Here let me straighten it out a bit!"

And the humorous member of the Shell raised his fist, intending to flatten the ill-used topper over Gussy's eyes.

But even as the blow fell, Arthur Augustus jerked his head away, and Monty Lowther's descending fist merely flicked the hat and sent it rolling in the mud of the lane.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Arthur Augustus fairly danced with wrath.
"You—you dweadful wuffian, Lowthah!" he shouted.
"Aftah I have wetwiewed my toppah, I will administah a feahful thwashin', you wottah!"

And, preparatory to carrying out this threat, the swell of the Fourth made a dive towards his precious headgear.

But he never reached it. As he stooped to grasp it a heavy motor-lorry swept round the corner in the gathering dusk.

"Look out, Gussy!" yelled Blake in terrified alarm.

But no shout of warning, no clapping on of brakes, could have saved D'Arcy just then.

He was saved, nevertheless.

The lumbering monster seemed to be upon the stooping junior, when a slight, figure, active as a monkey, leaped forward and hurled himself bodily at Arthur Augustus.

Next second the lorry thundered over the spot, to draw up, amid a harsh grinding of brakes and skidding of wheels, some yards ahead.

But Arthur Augustus and his rescuer were safe. Ginger—for it was he—had been travelling at a great pace, and the force of his impact with D'Arcy had sent both juniors well clear of the lorry, to fall, sprawling, headlong into the muddy ditch at the side of the lane.

With tense, white faces, Blake, Herries, and Digby, with Tom Merry & Co., rushed up to them and helped them out.

"Are—are you hurt, Gussy? And you, too, Lathom?" asked Jack Blake anxiously.

The swell of the Fourth staggered to his feet, breathless and panting, and fumbled for his eyeglass. He found it, and jammed it into his eye. Then he turned to the grinning new boy and held out his hand shakily.

"Pway do me the honour of shaking hands, deah boy," he requested quietly. "If you hadn't so bwarely spwung to my wescue, I should have been cwushed beneath that towible—"

"Chuck it!" urged the new boy, with a grin. "I was afraid that there eyeglass o' yours would get cracked, guv'nor—I mean, matey. I 'opes your top-'at ain't damaged. Hallo! 'Ere it is!"

The ginger-haired junior grovelled in the mud, and, picking up a flat, shapeless article. He handed it to Arthur Augustus.

"'Ere you are, matey," he went on, with a grin. "It's a bit damaged, p'raps—"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

The Swell of the Fourth gave a groan of despair as he looked at what had once been his best silk hat. Unfortunately, one of the motor-lorry's wheels had flattened it out like a pancake.

"My—my best toppah uttably destwoyed!" he wailed, waving aside the proffered wreck. "Thwow the w'etched thing away, deah boy."

"Don't you do nothing of the sort, matey," advised the new boy, shaking his head gravely. "You keep it till the ragman comes round. He'll give you a windmill or a balloon for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Despite the narrowly-averted tragedy, the juniors—with the exception of D'Arcy—could not help laughing at the horrified expression on D'Arcy's noble features at the suggestion.

"Well, you're a cool customer, and no mistake!" remarked Tom Merry at last, turning to stare curiously at the new boy. "I don't know who you are, but that was a jolly smart and plucky bit of work. But for you old Gussy would have shared the fate of his blessed topper."

"No mistake about that," agreed Blake, glancing quite genially at Ginger. "You're a bit cheeky for a new chap, Lathom, but you played up jolly well that time. And now, come along; and while you chaps are getting tea ready, I'll run along and take Lathom to his uncle."

The motor-driver, seeing that nobody was injured, drove off in great relief. And after Blake had introduced Lathom to Tom Merry & Co., the juniors trooped through the gates and across the dusky quad, chatting quite genially to the strange new fellow.

Blake & Co.'s first impression of the supposed Mark Lathom had, naturally, undergone a marked change. He might be a smoky bouncer, and talk like a bargee; but all agreed that a fellow who had risked life and limb for another could not be the rank outsider they had imagined him to be.

In the Hall of the School House, Blake and the bogus Mark Lathom left the others and proceeded to Mr. Lathom's study. Outwardly, the young impostor was cool and collected, and he was grinning cheerfully. But Blake little dreamed of the state of funk his companion was in.

The job his scoundrelly taskmaster had set the boy was a
(Continued on next page.)

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G.

difficult and dangerous one, and he knew it. He was by no means looking forward to the impending interview with his "uncle," and his heart was thumping as Blake knocked at the Fourth Form master's door.

"Come in!"

Mr. Lathom's kindly voice was heard, and Blake pushed open the door and entered, with Ginger at his heels.

Mr. Lathom looked up, and rose to his feet, his face beaming with a smile—a smile that faded abruptly, however, as his eyes took in the fact that Blake's companion had not troubled to remove his headgear on entering.

Evidently the fact that it was customary for "gents" to remove their headgear when entering a room was not one of the details which Bolton had made clear to his hopeful stepson when putting him "up to the ropes" that afternoon. Quite possibly Bolton was unaware of the custom himself, though.

"I've brought your nephew along, sir," said Blake. "There wasn't a train before six, so we walked across the moor—that's why we're late."

"Ah! H'm!" murmured Mr. Lathom, with a queer glance at his "nephew." "Thank you very much, Blake." Mr. Lathom's smile returned, and he held out his hand to Ginger. "And so you are my nephew, Mark? How are you, my dear boy?"

"In the pink, uncle," said the impostor, taking the proffered hand and shaking it heartily. "And 'ow's yer-self?"

Mr. Lathom jumped, and dropped Ginger's hand as if it had been red-hot. He stared fixedly at the new boy for a moment. But evidently concluding that the boy was not pulling his leg, he coughed hastily.

"Ahem! I—I am quite well, my boy!" he stammered. "And how did you leave your father?"

"Like myself—in the pink," was the cheerful answer. "But 'e sent you this letter, uncle—here it is—and one for the 'eadmaster, too."

The master took the letters, and opened the one to himself almost mechanically. He read it and glanced over his spectacles at his nephew.

"Ah! H'm! Yes. This explains a great deal," he murmured half to himself. "Education somewhat neglected. Exactly. I should imagine so. H'm! Extraordinary!"

It was obvious to Blake that the good-natured little Mr. Lathom was quite as much taken aback with the queer manners and vernacular of the new boy as he and his chums had been—if not more so.

In fact, Mr. Lathom was bewildered. That this uncouth and ill-mannered youth was his own brother's son he could scarcely credit. And yet—

"Er—I think that will do for the present," he managed to say at last. "I will take charge of this letter to Dr. Holmes. And now, as I expect you are tired, and ready for tea, I will not detain you, my dear boy. I have arranged for you to share a study temporarily with Durrance and Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth. Will you be good enough, Blake, to take my nephew along to Study No. 9?"

"Certainly, sir."

"And—and—er—Blake," added Mr. Lathom, as Blake was about to follow Ginger through the door, "I think I mentioned to you that my nephew has been brought up in a remote state of America, and that—er—hem!—his education and—er—other things have been somewhat neglected. It would be as well, perhaps, if you took it upon yourself to make these facts known to your Form-fellows. H'm! You understand?"

"Quite, sir," said Blake politely.

But out in the passage Jack Blake grinned broadly. He did understand; he understood that Mr. Lathom was not exactly proud of his nephew from the West—a fact that scarcely surprised him. And he was wondering grimly as he escorted Mark Lathom to his future quarters what the Fourth as a whole would think of Mr. Lathom's nephew. Certainly his manners, his speech, and his cigarette-smoking, and, above all, his cheek, were not calculated to make him popular.

On the whole Blake fancied the new junior was in for a warm time at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 6. A Bad Start.

PREPARATIONS for tea were well under way when Blake entered Study No. 6 after seeing the new boy safely installed in his quarters.

On the hob a kettle sang merrily, and the cheery sounds of frizzling and clatter of dishes filled the room, which looked bright and cosy and inviting.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "You chaps have been busy, then?"

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy, looking up with a beaming

smile. "Tea's neahly weady. But pway what did Mr. Lathom think of his nephew, deah boy?"

"Didn't confide in me—an oversight, I suppose," grinned Blake. "But I've a jolly good idea, for all that. My hat! The old sport nearly fell down when Ginger opened his mouth."

And Blake related what had taken place in Mr. Lathom's study.

"And where is the merchant now?" asked Herries, turning a ruddy and perspiring face from the fireplace.

"In Study No. 9 having tea, I expect."

"If he hasn't been booted out," added Digby. "I bet Lumley and Durrance won't exactly crow at having that queer specimen shoved on to them. What did they think about it?"

"Didn't stop to see—just shoved the beggar in the study and hopped it," said Blake. "But I'm hungry. How are the sosses, Herries?"

"Done to a turn, old man," said Herries, lifting the frying-pan from the fire. "Hand up those plates, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus lifted the plates from the fender where they had been warming, and Herries proceeded to dish out the crisp, browned sausages. And a moment later the juniors were seated round the festive board.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy suddenly. "It's just struck me! We ought to have invited that new fellow to tea. He saved my life, you know."

"Can't say I'm keen!" grunted Herries. "Mind you, I'm not suggesting your life ain't worth a tea, Gussy. What he did was jolly smart and plucky. But, all the same, he struck me as being a smoky rotter, and we don't want that sort here."

Blake frowned and shook his head. "I'm not so sure about that," he said. "He's a queer sort, I'll admit; but if he's taken in hand, I fancy he'd turn out quite a decent chap."

"Quite wight, Blake," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "But as that's a delicate mattah, I wathah fancy I'd better take him in hand. With my tact and judgment—"

"You'd put both feet in it, and get slaughtered," ended Blake. "Anyway, someone ought to talk to the chap about smoking. Lathom's a decent old bird, and he as good as asked me to keep an eye on him. I propose we look the merchant up after tea."

"Yaas, wathah! But, weally, you must leave the talking to me—"

"Rats! You'd only make a mess of it, you dummy!"

"Bai Jove, Blake! If you chawactewise me as a—"

A warm altercation might have taken place had not the door opened just then and Tom Merry & Co. looked in.

"You chaps not finished tea yet?" asked Tom Merry.

"Nearly," said Blake. "What's the trouble, Tommy?"

"Did you smell the sosses?"

"Nunno; we've not come to tea," grinned Tom Merry.

"Fact is, I'm getting up a cross-country run for to-morrow afternoon. Practically all the Shell are coming, and I was wondering if you Fourth kids would care to join us. There's no match on—"

"We'll come like a shot!" exclaimed Blake eagerly. "I'll round up some of our chaps after tea."

"Pewwaps that new chap, Lathom, would like to come, deah boys," suggested D'Arcy.

"Good idea," said Tom Merry heartily. "He seems nippy on his pins, and should be a runner. I've got an idea he can play cricket, too, and I'm going to tackle him—"

"Then now's your chance, Tommy," said Blake, rising from the table. "Matter of fact, we're just going to look the beggar up, so you can come along, too."

"Good!"

And as the others had also finished tea, the two Co.'s trooped out together. At the door of Study No. 1 Blake paused and kicked the door open inside, clearing away the tea-things were Durrance and Lumley-Lumley, the owners of the study, and for some reason or other their faces were wrathful and heated.

Blake nodded cheerfully to the two and glanced round.

"Is that new chap, Lathom, anywhere about?" he asked.

"If you want that chap, then you've got jolly queer tastes!" sniffed Durrance warmly. "He's just gone out—on his neck. You're welcome to him if you can find him!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake, exchanging glances with his chums. "Looks as if Ginger's soon made himself unpopular. What's he been up to, Durrance?"

"He's the blessed limit—a rank outsider!" growled George Durrance. "He not only talks like a bargee, but he eats sardines with his fingers and jam off a blessed knife—"

"And when he's finished gorging," went on Lumley-Lumley, in disgust, "he took out a rotten packet of cheap cigarettes, and started to smoke 'em. So we pitched him out—"

"Looks as if you had a rough time doing it, too!"

grinned Tom Merry, glancing at the damaged and heated faces of the two Fourth-Formers. "Did he give you that swollen lip, Durrance?"

"Yes; blow him! He's a holy terror!" growled Durrance. "But whether he's Lathom's nephew or not, we don't intend to stand him in here if—"

Durrance broke off and his eyes gleamed as, at that moment, a red-haired junior pushed his way through the group round the door.

"So you're back again, then?" he snapped, glaring at Ginger. "Out you go, you rotter!"

"I ain't goin' out!" scowled the new boy. "Me uncle told me I was to live 'ere, and I'm stoppin'! If you tries any games—"

"Come on, Lumley, pitch the little cad out!" yelled Durrance. "We're not—"

"Here, easy on; give the chap fair play!" remonstrated Tom Merry.

"Fair play!" shouted Lumley-Lumley. "I like that! The little brute's hacked about three inches of skin off my shin!"

"Well, you was two to one!" said the new fellow sullenly. "And I— Would yer!"

As he spoke, the ginger-haired new boy shot out a straight left, that caught Lumley-Lumley, who had made a sudden rush at him, clean under the chin, and deposited him on the study carpet.

He was up again the next second, however, and, snorting wrathfully, returned to the attack. Durrance had already come to grips with Ginger, and next moment a brisk three-handed mill was in progress.

"My hat!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Old Ginger can scrap, and no mistake!"

There was no mistake about that. Certainly the new boy was not particular where he struck—or kicked. But for a time he more than held his own against the two wrathful Fourth-Formers.

Struggling and fighting furiously, the trio waltzed through the doorway and out into the passage, where Blake & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. soon made a ring for them.

Hearing the commotion, other fellows came rushing up, and soon quite a crowd surrounded the combatants.

"Look out!" came the warning suddenly from Kit Wildrake. "Here's Kildare!"

Next moment the stalwart figure of Kildare pushed his way through the onlookers. Kildare carried an ashplant, and his brow was grim.

CHAPTER 7. Gussy Chips In!

"STOP that fighting!" snapped Kildare. "Do you hear?"

Durrance and Lumley-Lumley dropped their hands at once. But not so, Ginger. Just as he was about to make a lunge at Durrance's unprotected face, however, an iron grip fastened on to his collar.

"Here, none of that!" snapped Kildare angrily. "Didn't I tell you to stop?"

"Leggo, you!" shouted the new boy, squirming in the captain's strong grasp. "You shove off an' mind your own business, guv'nor?"

"What?"

There was a gasp, and Kildare stared fixedly at the red-haired junior.

"Do you know who you are speaking to?" he demanded angrily.

"I don't know, and I don't care!" was the sullen answer. "But if you don't lemme go, I'll 'ack your bloomin' shins!"

"Wha-a-at?"

Kildare almost fell down with astonishment, and there was a horrified gasp from the onlookers.

"You—you young rascal!" spluttered Kildare. "I suppose you're a new kid? Well, the sooner you learn how to treat the captain of the school, the better for you and everyone else. So perhaps that will teach you!"

And Kildare raised his ashplant, and brought it down with a whack on the new boy's shoulders. It was not a heavy blow, by any means. Kildare realised quickly that this strange new fellow was unused to the ways of public school life, and he merely intended a chastisement as a warning.

But the result astounded the onlookers and Kildare. With



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pushed open the door of Kildare's study. "One moment," he cried, "before you thwash Lathom." Kildare lowered his ashplant and glanced angrily at D'Arcy's flushed and excited face. "What?" he gasped. "Lathom isn't the wottah you think, Kildare," continued D'Arcy, "he saved my life this evening. Pway, thwash instead, deah boy!" (See page 12.) me

a quick back-heel, he sent his boot hard against the captain's shins, and Kildare released his captive with a muffled cry.

From the juniors came a murmur of anger.

"Well, the little cad!" gasped Tom Merry. "My hat! He'll get it in the neck now, and serve him jolly well right!"

"You—you young hooligan!" panted Kildare, gripping his shin convulsively. "I'll—I'll—"

The captain released his injured leg, and, grasping the new boy by the collar, twisted him round.

"You'll come to my study, and I'll give you a thundering good hiding for that! You need a lesson, and you'll get it!"

Ginger struggled furiously, but he was like a child in the captain of St. Jim's strong grip. Despite his struggles, he was hauled through the group of angry-faced juniors towards the captain's study.

Immediately the two vanished a buzz of indignant discussion broke out amongst the startled juniors. Had the venerable person of Dr. Holmes himself been thus attacked they could scarcely have been more angry and amazed.

"Well, my only aunt!" exclaimed Talbot of the Shell. "Where on earth did you dig that merchant up, Blake? Fancy hacking old Kildare like that! If the rotter was in our Form we'd scrag him and boil him in oil!"

Blake nodded gloomily.

"If Kildare hadn't hauled him off he would have been scragged!" he said, glancing at the wrathful faces around. "But I reckon he'll have a warm time after this!"

"It's wotten!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in great distress. "It was a feashfully wotten twick to kick anyone—especially old Kildare! But—but we know how the poor chap's been brought up, and I'm suah he knows no bettah. I must wun aftah Kildare, and explain, deah boys—"

"You'll do nothing of the sort, you silly ass!" cried Blake. "If you did— Here, come back!"

But D'Arcy had made his mind up, and he was already hurrying after Kildare and his captive. Like the rest, D'Arcy agreed that to kick another fellow was caddish—if not indecent. But that terrible moment when the motor-lorry had loomed above him was still fresh in D'Arcy's mind, and he felt bound to uphold and befriend the fellow who had risked life and limb to save him.

D'Arcy reached Kildare's study, and as he pushed open the door an interesting scene met his gaze.

Darrell of the Sixth, and Kildare's chum, was holding the squirming Ginger, while Kildare himself was just about to get to work with his ashplant.

"Bai Jove! One moment, Kildare!" exclaimed D'Arcy earnestly. "Befoah you thwash Lathom, pway listen to me, deah boy!"

"What the thump—" Kildare lowered his arm, and glanced angrily at D'Arcy's flushed and excited face. "What are you barging in for, D'Arcy?"

"Because Lathom's my fwiend, and he isn't such a wottah as you think, Kildare!" said Arthur Augustus eagerly. "Pway thwash me, instead, deah boy! He saved my life to-night, like a bwick—"

"You shut your face, eyeglass!" muttered the new boy sullenly. "I can stand all this bloke can give me—"

"I wufuse to shut up, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus stoutly. "Pway listen to me, Kildare!"

And before Kildare could interrupt, the swell of the Fourth hurriedly related how Ginger's prompt action had saved him from the wheels of the motor-lorry, following this up by explaining that Lathom was a stranger to England, and ignorant of public school laws and customs.

Kildare grunted and glanced keenly at Ginger when D'Arcy had finished.

"H'm! He certainly did a plucky thing, D'Arcy; but that doesn't excuse hacking a prefect's shins, youngster. Anyway—" Kildare hesitated, and then he flung his ashplant on to the table. "But if, as you say, the young idiot's never been to school before, there's some excuse for him. And—and I'll let him off this time."

"Bai Jove! Thank you vewy much, Kildare."

"But next time, you won't get off scot free, I can promise you," said Kildare, turning to the sullen new boy. "That sort of thing isn't done here, and the sooner you realise that fact the better for you. And now, clear off, the pair of you!"

The two quitted the study quickly. But out in the passage the new boy's face changed to a broad grin.

"My 'at!" he chuckled. "You worked that a treat, eyeglass."

Arthur Augustus frowned, and eyed his companion a trifle frigidly.

"I don't quite know what you mean by that wemark, Lathom," he said coldly. "Kildare is a vewy decent chap, and I am bound to say that, had he thwashed you, it would have been what you deserved."

"Crumbs!"

"However," went on D'Arcy, more kindly, as he noted the strange look on the new boy's face, "I do not wegard it as quite your fault, deah boy. And I weally think I ought to put you up to the wopes as weguards your conduct heah."

And possibly thinking this a splendid opportunity for the exercise of his celebrated tact and judgment, the kindly Arthur Augustus forthwith expounded to the new boy some of the things that were and were not done at St. Jim's. And, strangely enough, the red-haired youth listened quite humbly to the exposition.

"And now," ended the swell of the Fourth, "you may wegard yourself as my fwiend, deah boy. If you want to know anythin', come to me, and I will put you wight, and tell you the pwooper thing to do."

The new boy grinned faintly, and then his sharp eyes gleamed a little.

"Then p'raps you'll tell me what time you goes to bed at this show?" he said carelessly.

"Certainly, deah boy!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "We wetiah to our dormitowies at nine-fifteen, and lights-out is at nine-forty-five. The seniors, of course, wetiah latah—"

"What about the masters?"

"Bai Jove, weally! Any time up to eleven, and sometimes later," rejoined D'Arcy, with a stare. "But—but why do you wish to know that, Lathom, deah boy?"

"'Cause I want to be getting to bye-byes," said the new boy, easily.

"Oh, yaas; I undahstand! You must be tiashed aftah your long journey," murmured D'Arcy, his face clearing. "And now I weally must leave you, Lathom, and start my pwep."

And Arthur Augustus led the way along the passage, quite satisfied with the youth's answer. But, could he have only known the new boy's real reason for asking the questions, he would have been considerably surprised, and more than startled.

CHAPTER 8.

The Cross-Country Run!

"LATHOM, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was waiting for Ginger, alias Mark Lathom, the new boy, outside the Form-room after lessons the following morning.

The new boy's face was sullen and defiant, and he scowled.

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at the swell of the Fourth as he emerged from the Form-room.

As a matter of fact, Ginger was not finding St. Jim's exactly the bed of roses that Bolton, his rascally stepfather, had led him to suppose. Since his attack on Kildare the previous evening, scarcely a soul had spoken to him. Shin-kicking was not indulged in at St. Jim's. It was right off the rails—inexcusable. And the fact that the sacred person of Kildare had been the sufferer had made it doubly so.

Most of the juniors were openly hostile, while even fellows like Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. treated him with marked coolness. The only junior who went out of his way to be kind to Mr. Lathom's nephew—as they imagined him to be—was the good-natured Arthur Augustus.

At the moment, though, Ginger was looking more alarmed than sullen. In class that morning he had distinguished himself by proving that his knowledge of English history and the classics was less, if anything, than his knowledge of the King's English.

But, though Ginger's performance had been very funny to the juniors, it had been anything but funny to little Mr. Lathom, who had requested his hopeful nephew to stay behind after class.

This alone had alarmed Ginger. But when Mr. Lathom began to ask various awkward questions concerning his earlier life, he had become more alarmed still, thinking—quite wrongly, as it happened—that the master was becoming suspicious as to his real identity.

But Mr. Lathom had no such suspicions. That this ill-mannered, ill-educated young rascal was an impostor he never for one moment dreamed. Had he had the faintest suspicion of the truth, he would have been a very much-astounded gentleman indeed, to say the least of it.

As a matter of fact, the questions, though awkward enough for Ginger, were merely asked to find out the real extent of the new boy's scholastic attainments—if any.

But Ginger was quite unaware of that. And though—being a naturally sharp and intelligent youth—he had managed to scramble through the ordeal safely, he was feeling none the less alarmed and uneasy as he came out into the passage.

"Well, what yer want, eyeglass?" he demanded sullenly, as D'Arcy addressed him.

Arthur Augustus frowned slightly.

"It's about the c'ross-country wun this aftahnoon, deah boy," he said. "Has Tom Mewwy mentioned the mattah to you?"

"Nobody ain't said nothin' to me about no run," said Ginger sulkily.

"Then I twust you will accept my invitation to join the c'word," said Arthur Augustus kindly. "It will be a wippin' wun, and will be better for you than mopin' indoors. I fancy you can wun—"

"What-ho!" said Ginger, with a faint grin. "If I 'adn't bin able to run, the cops would 'ave run me in long afore—" He stopped suddenly.

"The—the cops—" stammered Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! What—"

"I was only jokin', mister," said Ginger hastily. "But it ain't no good arskin' me to come. Them other blokes don't want me with them. I know."

"Wot uttah wot! Pwactically all the fellahs in the Shell and Fourth will be there, and you'd hardly be noticed, my deah boy. And you'll be undah my pwotection, wemembah."

The red-haired junior shook his head.

"You means well, an' you're a good sort, eyeglass," he said in a low tone, "but I wants to stay in—"

He paused, and his sharp eyes gleamed, as if he had suddenly thought of something.

"Was you sayin' that all the other blokes are going?" he asked casually.

"Yaas. It's goin' to be a wecord turn-out, deah boy. The whole School House will be almost deserted, save for Wacko and his fwiends, and slackers like them. The woute is through Wylcombe Woods and back across Wayland Moor."

"Then I might as well come," said Ginger, after a pause.

"What time does the circus begin, eyeglass?"

"Two o'clock, deah boy. If you'll come up to the dorm aftah dinnah, I will wig you out with some clobber. So that's all wight."

And, quite failing to notice the queer look of satisfaction on the new boy's features, Arthur Augustus gave him a kindly nod and passed on.

"Well," inquired Blake, as D'Arcy entered Study No. 6, "is that new chap coming, Gussy?"

"Yaas. I'm glad to say I succeeded in persuadin' him," said Arthur Augustus beaming.

"Can't say I'm glad!" growled Manners, who was there with Tom Merry and Lowther. "I don't blame you, Gussy, for palling on with the chap under the circus. But after what happened to Kildare last night I'm jolly sure I'm not! He's not our sort."

"Wats! Wubbish!" said D'Arcy warmly. "I am



As Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was about to pass the caravan, a huge wolf-hound leapt from beneath it and hurled itself upon him, sending him toppling backwards. At the same time an urgent shout came from the window of the caravan, above the junior's head. "Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, utterly bewildered. "Who are you, my twiend?" (See page 16.)

convinced that Lathom is a vewy decent chap, weally, and I'm determined to take the poor chap undah my wing."

"If you're going to stick to him all the afternoon, Gussy," said Blake, "then I'll expect to see you both crawling in at about ten to-night. Chap who smokes ain't likely to stick a long run, and I bet neither of you complete the course!"

The ringing of the dinner-bell just then ended the discussion.

As events turned out, Blake was quite right. Neither D'Arcy nor Ginger did complete the run that afternoon, though none of them, much less D'Arcy, dreamed of the alarming way in which that memorable run was destined to end.

Promptly at two o'clock the juniors who were taking part in the run congregated at the gates. And a keen and businesslike crew they looked. Though it wasn't exactly a race, there was no little rivalry between the Shell and the Fourth, and both Forms were determined that one of their number should finish first.

The route had already been explained to them, and after

Tom Merry had given the signal to start, the runners sped away.

Well to the fore were Tom Merry, Kit Wildrake of the Fourth, Manners, and Talbot of the Shell, with Blake, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth running almost level with them. Behind these came a straggling mixture of Shell and Fourth, amongst whom were Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Ginger, running side by side.

"Keep it up, deah boy!" gasped D'Arcy, increasing his pace a little. "If you can keep this pace up, Lathom, I have every hope we shall finish among the first half-dozen at least, bai Jove!"

But, alas! for the swell of the Fourth's hope. Arthur Augustus himself was quite capable of keeping up the pace himself, but Ginger was not. As Blake had foretold, smoking had seriously impaired his wind, and he was very soon in difficulties. In ones and twos other fellows began to pass them, and then, just as the two emerged from the gloom of Rylcombe Woods, on the far side, disaster,

(Continued on page 16.)

OUR SPECIAL SHORT COMPLETE DETECTIVE STORY!



THE MYSTERIOUS BELLRINGER!

BY EDMUND BURTON.

Another of the Amazing Exploits of
ANTHONY SHARPE—Investigator.

CHAPTER 1. A Queer Affair!

IT was seldom that Anthony Sharpe had found his criminal investigations carry him within the hallowed precincts of a church, but the letter he had received from the rector of Eastminster promised a case with just that touch of the "erie" which the famous investigator always welcomed.

Like the majority of us, whether he believed in the supernatural or not, anything of a ghostly nature was apt to make Sharpe's nerves tingle, and aroused a keen desire within him to "lay the spook."

The cleric's letter had been brief, yet sufficiently descriptive to indicate that a rather uncommon mystery was occupying the attention of Eastminster folk; but from the Rev. John Molton in person, Anthony Sharpe and Tim O'Carroll obtained a much more detailed account of the matter when they arrived at the comfortable rectory adjoining the old Norman church.

Mr. Molton plunged into the story without any preamble. Plainly, from the look in his face, he was more than anxious to have the affair cleared up at the earliest possible moment.

"As you already know, Mr. Sharpe, I have asked you down here to investigate a mysterious bellringing which has been going on for the past three weeks," he said. "I told you in my letter that the big bell in the church tower has greatly disturbed us by sounding, apparently, of its own accord, and I want you to do your best to fathom the cause. My congregation is composed mainly of fisher-folk—a superstitious lot in the majority—and many have already left the church on account of this strange happening."

"Yes, I understand all that," Sharpe nodded. "And now tell me, please—at what time has this bellringing generally taken place?"

"At all times, and practically every day," answered the Rev. Molton. "On Sundays it is specially noticeable, because it interrupts both morning and evening services."

"Oh, it's heard in the morning, is it?"

"Yes; sometimes one solitary stroke, sometimes four or five."

Sharpe smiled.

"Quite an original ghost, evidently," he remarked, "and not confined to the witching hour of night—eh? But what steps have you already taken to clear this matter up, sir?"

"All we could," the rector replied. "I informed the police, and they investigated the thing; but, frankly, I thought they seemed inclined to treat it as a joke. In any case, they discovered nothing, and after sending one stupid-looking constable to look over the belfry, they gave the opinion that the ringing must be caused by some faulty hanging of the bell or a sinking of the masonry. Then I and a couple of my parishioners have examined the place exhaustively, without result, and the bellringer, who has been employed here for years, is just as mystified. Yet the sounds continue, in spite of all theories."

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"Are the bellringer's usual duties ever interfered with?" the investigator queried. "I mean—what happens when he tolls the bell for services?"

"Nothing," said the other, with a slight smile. "Nothing, that is, except what one would expect. The rope pulls the bell and rings it in quite the orthodox way. We cannot find anything amiss with the works there. It is when nobody is tugging the rope that the trouble takes place; otherwise there would be no mystery about it!"

"Has anyone ever been watching in the belfry during these strange ringings?"

"No; for the simple reason that we never know when to set a watch. One might remain up there all day and night without result, only to hear the bell toll immediately one withdrew. But on three occasions I hurried there shortly after the ringing was heard, and though the sounds had ceased the bell was still swinging slowly on its beam."

"Yet you saw nobody—met no one?"

"Not a soul! I had to unlock the porch door each time, for that's the only way in, and the whole place was deserted," said Molton. "I even went so far as to climb to the roof of the tower, but that also brought no result."

"And you say the bellringer is just as puzzled as you are?"

"That is so," the rector returned. "But perhaps you'd like to question him yourself?"

"I should. Also, I'd like to examine the belfry now, if convenient."

The man who filled the capacity of sexton and bellringer combined could, as Molton had said, offer no assistance. He stated that he had never found anything amiss with the working of the big bell when its use was required, and a survey of the apparatus itself confirmed this. It was a simple contrivance. A long rope, trailing downwards through a hole in the floor, swung the bell backwards and forwards from its suspending pivot attached to a stout cross-beam overhead. The ends of this beam were sunk into the wall at each side in the usual way.

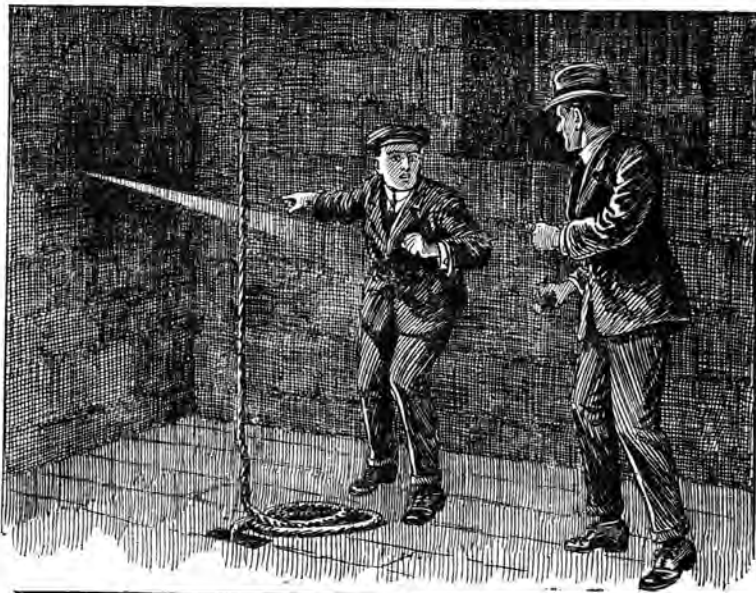
"Certainly!" Sharpe remarked, after he had finished his examination. "Certainly there is little to be learnt here, so the only thing for us to do is to watch diligently until a further mysterious tolling is heard. I presume my assistant and I may have a free run of the belfry at all times?"

The Rev. Molton handed over the keys. "Most decidedly, sir! By all means do as you think fit," he said.

CHAPTER 2.

An Old Friend—The Bell Tolls—Revelations!

THAT evening Anthony Sharpe, finding himself almost run out of tobacco, strolled down to the winding main street of Eastminster, in search of something wherewith to replenish his pouch. He was passing the local police-station on



Anthony Sharpe and his young assistant, Tim O'Carroll, gazed in amazement at the streak of light which came through the crack in the belfry wall.

his return journey, when he suddenly pulled up short. A grizzled, uniformed figure was sitting by the open office-window, and the recognition was almost mutual.

“Danvers, as I’m alive! What on earth are you doing in this secluded spot?”

The police-inspector smiled.

“Why, Mr. Sharpe, I might ask you precisely the same question!” he returned. “I never expected to meet you here, of all places. As for me, I’ve been a fixture in Eastminster for the past three months—transferred and promoted, though I’d prefer to have stayed where I was, even as a sergeant. There hasn’t been much stirring this way—that is, until lately.”

“Ah! And what’s been happening lately?” Sharpe asked, naturally expecting some reference to be made to the bellingring mystery. He was speedily undeceived.

“Burglaries,” said Danvers. “Burglaries, as well planned as any crook could wish. Nearly all the big houses round about have suffered during the past few weeks, and though there’s not many such, the hauls have been rich enough.”

“And you’ve failed, so far, to drop on the thieves?”

The officer nodded gloomily.

“So far, yes,” he admitted. “There hasn’t been the ghost of a clue, and—say, sir, I wonder, as you happen to be on the spot, if I might ask your assistance? You helped me thundering well over that other affair at—”

But Sharpe interrupted him with a wave of his hand.

“Not at the moment, Danvers,” he said. “Perhaps, before I leave, I’ll look into the matter; but I’m booked up just now on another kind of thing altogether.” He glanced at his watch. “So long, old chap! I’ll possibly see you later.”

The investigator returned to the Rectory, and some hours later he and Tim O’Carroll entered the church by the porch door, climbing the long ladder to the belfry. They had previously arranged that to-night would be their last vigil, and they came well prepared to remain until morning, if necessary.

Darkness had now fallen, and only the gleam of Sharpe’s electric torch dispelled the gloom, as they made themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit on a plank resting upon two boxes against the wall. Then began a weary wait for the mysterious tolling, which might not come at all that night.

But it did! Scarcely three hours after taking up their position Sharpe’s keen ears detected a slight sound overhead—a soft grating which grew more pronounced each second, until it developed into a moderately loud grinding. Then—boom! The hammer of the big bell clanged, almost deafening in that confined space. Just a single note, which slowly faded away into silence.

Sharpe’s first actions were to press the button of his torch, and feel the dangling bell-rope. He had previously taken the precaution of drawing the latter up slightly, so that anyone below would be obliged to climb upon something to grasp its free end. But the rope was slack, proving that nobody was holding it. Moreover, he had relocked the porch door after entering.

Then he shone the light over the big bell, still swinging slowly to and fro above their heads, a muttered exclamation leaving his lips as he also saw something else.

For not only was the bell swinging, as it should, on its pivot, but the supporting beam, which had seemed a firm fixture, was also turning this way and that—twisting in its socket in the masonry, to put it quite clearly.

Sharpe snapped out his torch and peered through the darkness, mystified. Then the huge iron clapper again struck a single booming note, and Tim O’Carroll suddenly clutched his master’s sleeve.

“Look, sir! Stand where I am, an’ look at the wall!” he whispered. “See that streak of light?”

Yes, Anthony Sharpe could see it distinctly now that he had shifted his position slightly—a thin thread of light coming through some crack in the masonry at one side of the belfry.

“By Jove!” The investigator gasped; then tiptoed softly across the floor and glued his eye to the crack.

The sight that rewarded him almost caused him to exclaim aloud—a less seasoned man would assuredly have done so—for he found himself looking into a tiny apartment, apparently built in the thickness of the



“Ah! There he goes!” whispered Anthony Sharpe. Down below, emerging from the semi-ruined building opposite, a dark figure was plainly visible moving away at a swift run.

belfry wall, and was just in time to see a figure disappear down a narrow stone staircase, by which the place was evidently reached. And as the figure vanished, so also did the illumination.

“Quick, Tim!” Sharpe hissed. “Up to the roof, as fast as you can! The moon will be out now, and we can get a good view from there!”

O’Carroll, vastly puzzled—for there had been no time for him to take a survey through the chink, as his master had done—quickly obeyed, and in a few minutes the pair were peering over the castellated parapet of the Norman tower. From here they were able to see for a considerable distance all round the church, for just then the moonlight broke through the fleecy clouds high overhead.

“What are we watchin’ for, sir, may I ask?” inquired Tim at length, his curiosity strung up to fever pitch.

“For a man,” Sharpe said, in a low voice—“a small-sized fellow, from the little I saw of him! Ah, there he is, the beggar! I’d great hopes of this being our best vantage point!”

Down below, emerging from a semi-ruined building which stood a few yards away from the church proper, a dark figure was plainly visible, presently moving away at a swift, loping run.

“He’s gone, sir—got clear!” muttered O’Carroll; but Sharpe merely laughed softly.

“Yes, for this occasion! But he’ll come back!” the detective replied confidently. “Oh, yes, he’ll come back and find a nice little surprise awaiting him! Now we’ll get below and do an extra bit of exploring!”

Reaching the ground level, they hurried towards the tumbledown building aforementioned, where a careful search soon revealed the entry to an underground passage. It was covered by a big slab, but the edges of this had been freed from their growth of moss, proving that the thing was in the habit of being raised and lowered frequently.

Navigating the passage, the pair soon found themselves confronted by a narrow stone staircase which wound round inside the four walls of the church tower—the latter was seemingly a kind of double shell—and terminated in the small apartment which Sharpe had previously viewed through the chink.

“Ah, what have we here?” the investigator chuckled suddenly, shining his torch about him. “Tim, my lad, I fancy we are going to kill two birds with the one stone! I told you of my surprise meeting with old Danvers to-day, and what he informed me of, didn’t I?”

O’Carroll nodded silently. There was no need for any comment from him, for the contents of that hidden room told their own story. Littered about the floor were articles of silver and gold plate, jewel-cases and trinkets, old-fashioned candlesticks, and so forth; whilst a tattered mattress lay in

one corner, with some parcels of food in a narrow niche just above.

“Bellringer, alias burglar, alias—whom?” Sharpe frowned; then, his face clearing: “However, Danvers will have to settle that point. Who ever the beggar is, he’s deucedly cunning and evidently has a most complete knowledge of Eastminster Church, or he wouldn’t have known of the passage and this secret chamber, which undoubtedly date back for hundreds of years. Anyhow, we must get along to Danvers without delay. Go slowly, and don’t break your neck, lad!”

CHAPTER 3.

A Surprise for the Bellringer—Trapped!

INSPECTOR DANVERS was much surprised at the story Sharpe had to tell him, but he was an astute officer, and wasted no time beating about the bush.

“Right, sir!” he said. “We’ll be with you in two ticks!”

The result of his preparations was that when the mysterious bellringer returned to the semi-ruined building where the passage commenced (bringing with him, by the way, another load of purloined property), he found himself enfolded in the loving embrace of a massive police-constable. The fellow fought like a wild cat, but Sharpe, Tim, and Danvers, who were also present, quickly lent a hand and subdued him, the policeman uttering a startled gasp as he saw this prisoner’s face properly for the first time.

“My sainted aunt!” he muttered. “If it ain’t Sam Privett!”

“You know him, then, Noakes?” Danvers asked.

“Know him! I should think I do, sir!” the constable said. “I’ve been stationed here longer nor you—eight year now—an’ anyone who’s lived in Eastminster for that length o’ time could tell you wot Sam Privett was—the biggest blackguard the place ever bred! Wot with his poachin’, thievin’, an’ general misdeameanour, everybody was glad when the local justices sent him for trial at the assizes an’ he was put away for a good spell! An’—an’ now he’s come back again, the cool critter!”

Privett glared at the speaker, but made no defence—realised no word at all, indeed. He plainly realised that he had been caught red-handed.

“Now come along, Danvers, and I’ll show you the rest of the stuff,” Anthony Sharpe said presently. “I’m glad I was able to help you, after all, though it’s funny how it happened. I was on another tack altogether—at least, that’s what I thought until a short while ago; but the two cases have turned out to be one.”

He led the inspector to the secret room behind the belfry wall, and here Danvers confirmed what had been described to him.

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overwhelming and complete, overtook Arthur Augustus himself.

He tripped over a trailing bramble, and fell headlong in the muddy field, and when he essayed to rise again he could scarcely stand on his feet.

"Urf, matey?" asked Ginger, in great concern. "Yaaa; sywained my beastlay ankle. bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "What wotten luck! I'm afwaid I can't cawwy on, Lathom. You'll have to go on by yourself, deah boy."

Ginger nodded, and hid a grin of satisfaction. As a matter of fact, the cunning young rascal had had no intention of finishing the run. He had other business on that afternoon. And he had been puzzling his brains for a way to shake off the good-natured D'Arcy, and give him the slip.

"And what about you, eyeglass?" he asked suddenly. "Nevah mind me. It isn't vewy painful, and I shall manage to hobble back quite all wight," muttered D'Arcy, trying to smile. "There is no weason why you should spoil your chances, deah boy. You'd better huwwy, and good luck, deah boy!"

The strange new boy was about to turn away, when he hesitated, a queer, tense look on his somewhat pinched face. It was a troubled, doubtful look that would have told a trained observer that the boy was fighting a battle with himself.

"I—I ain't goin'! I'tu comin' back with you, guv'nor!" he muttered impulsively at last. "You've been a good sort to me, eyeglass, and I ain't goin' to do you a dirty trick. And—and I wish I was a straight 'un like you, instead of—"

He broke off suddenly on seeing the amazed look on D'Arcy's face. He hesitated another moment, and in that moment the last two stragglers of the run emerged from the woods, and came trotting across the field.

Their arrival seemed to break the spell that was on the boy. It killed, for the moment, the sudden feeling of remorse, the desire for better things that D'Arcy's kindness had aroused in the young criminal's nature, and his face resumed its old hard, impudent look.

Without another glance at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, he turned and sped away, leaving the astounded swell of the Fourth staring blankly after him.

CHAPTER 9.

D'Arcy Finds Trouble:

TOM MERRY and the other fellows in front were by now several fields ahead. But Ginger did not keep on their trail for long. Crossing the stile at the end of the first field, he dived through the hedge, and trotted along until he came out into Rylcombe Lane. He nipped across this, and plunged into the woods beyond.

These were but an offshoot of Rylcombe Woods, and stretched on to Wayland Moor. And within five minutes of leaving D'Arcy the red-headed youth arrived, breathless and panting, at the caravan encampment on the moor.

He ran up the steps of the larger van, and pushed open the door. As he did so, Bolton and Slaney, who were seated round the little stove smoking, jumped up in alarm.

"Blow me if it ain't Ginger!" cried Bolton eagerly. "Well, 'ow did you go on, Ginger, me lad?"

Ginger scowled at his stepfather.

"All right, so far!" he said sulkily. "But it ain't such a soft job as you let on, guv'nor, and the sooner we gets the job over the better. How long 'ave I got to stop there?"

"Until you done your part of the job, of course!" said Bolton, with a chuckle. "How much 'ave you done already, Ginger?"

"Not much. It ain't easy as you thinks. I haven't found out where they keep the challenge cups an' things yet. But I managed to 'ave a good look round last night when the other blokes was asleep, and I had a good look inside the 'eadmaster's study. The safe ain't much, and you ought to manage it easy."

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And the young rascal related to his confederates his adventures and discoveries during his brief stay at St. Jim's.

"You done very well, Ginger," said Bolton at last genially. "And if you finishes your part of the job by to-morrow there's no reason why we shouldn't do it at night."

"Why not to-night?" said Ginger sullenly. "I'm fed up with the job! I could easily get—"

"When you've finished your job, I tell you!" snapped Bolton. "Besides, we got another little job on to-night."

"Where's that?"

"At a little place near here, 'ouse of a millionaire bloke," grinned the man. "I only wish you was on the job, Ginger, my lad! I owns up you're a useful kid to us, especially for gettin' in at little winders. But it can't be helped. Have you managed to get any pickings on your own yet—from the young gents, I mean?"

Ginger shook his head and grinned.

"I ain't had a safe chance yet," he chuckled, with a glance down at his running shorts. "Not till this afternoon, leastways."

"What do yer mean?" asked Slaney curiously.

"Only that nearly all the young gents are out chasin' their-selves this afternoon. But I've given 'em the slip, and I'm goin' back now to 'ave a look round while they're out of the way."

"Haw, haw, haw!"

The two scoundrels laughed raucously as they grasped the significant reply.

"You're a fair coughdrop, Ginger—a credit to us, an' no mistake!" chuckled Bolton.

For a couple of minutes longer Ginger stayed listening to advice and instructions from his stepfather, and then he took his departure.

But even as he slammed the van door and reached the bottom of the steps, he gave a sudden jump.

Limping towards him from the direction of the woods was a youthful figure, clad in running shorts, and wearing a monocle. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Crums!" muttered Ginger, with a gasp. "Old eyeglass must 'ave followed me. It's a fair cop if I'm spotted!"

For a brief instant Ginger hesitated, debating whether to bolt back into the van or not. And then, deciding not to take the risk, he scuttled round the far side of the van, and dashed for the shelter of the fringe of trees encircling the camp.

He reached this shelter, and, bursting through on the far side, was soon running at top speed over the moor towards St. Jim's.

But, as it happened, Arthur Augustus had already seen him, though he had not, as Ginger had supposed, been tracking him.

The explanation, indeed, was simple enough. Not relishing the prospect of the trail through Rylcombe Woods and the long tramp down the winding Rylcombe Lane in his crippled condition, D'Arcy had chosen to take the short cut across the corner of the moor, and had just reached the encampment in time to see the figure of Ginger emerge from the door of the caravan.

To say that Arthur Augustus was astonished would be putting it very mildly.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "That's the wummiest affair I evah struck. There's a wemarkable mystewy about that chap. I wondah—"

D'Arcy ceased wondering abruptly. He was just passing the smaller of the two vans, when there came a deep, blood-curdling growl, and a huge wolfhound leapt from beneath the van, and hurled itself upon him.

The junior turned, startled, as he heard the threatening growl. But, before he could move, the brute's heavy paws struck his chest, and bowled him over in the mud.

Happily that was all the savage brute was able to accomplish. The chain that tethered him to the van wheel was strong, and his savage charge had sent the junior rolling out of reach.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet, and eyed the brute straining savagely at the chain, in horror.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he panted. "What a fwightful bwute! What a feashfully lucky thing—"

"I say, stranger—"

D'Arcy jumped almost a foot in the air as those words came in an urgent shout from the window of the caravan above his head. Ignoring the savage leaps of the wolfhound, he jammed his eyeglass into place, and surveyed the face that appeared suddenly at the little window.

It was a pleasant, healthy face, though looking somewhat anxious now, and the face was surmounted by a mop of

tousled red hair. But the likeness it bore to the youth he had just seen flee from the camp was astonishing.

"Bai Jove! Who are you, my friend?" gasped D'Arcy, utterly bewildered.

"Listen!" shouted the youth urgently. "I've been kidnapped! I'm a prisoner here! Run and fetch the police! Half a mo', though. Are you from St. Jim's College?"

"Y-yaas!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Then, listen! My name's Latham. I was on my way to your school when a couple of rustling galoots collared me and shoved me in here. I don't know what their little game is, but I've a notion they've sent a pal of theirs in my place. Got me?"

"But—but—" stuttered Gussy.

"Then cut off to your school and fetch help!" snapped the stranger quickly. "Tell 'em— Look out!"

Unseen by D'Arcy, and the sound of their approach deadened by the snarls of the dog, Bolton and Slaney had come racing across from the other van. At the warning shout, however, the junior wheeled; but too late; and next instant the savage grasp of the scoundrels was upon him.

"You—you young spy!" yelled Bolton, glaring from D'Arcy's alarmed face to the prisoner at the tiny window. "What's your little game—eh?"

"Hands off, you wuffian!" shouted D'Arcy, his noble eye gleaming. "Let me go, you scoundrels!"

"Not much!" snarled Bolton viciously. "We want to know what you're doin' here. 'Ave you bin talkin' to that chap in there?"

"Yaas, you wascals!" replied D'Arcy, perhaps unwisely. "I have discovered youah secwet, and will—"

"Ho, 'ave you!" snorted the man, glancing meaningly at his accomplice. "Then we ain't lettin' you go—not likely! You've shoved your winder-pane into what doesn't concern you, and we ain't lettin' you go to queer our pitch. 'Old 'im, Slaney!"

And while the unfortunate Arthur Augustus was held helpless in the grip of the scoundrel, Slaney, his confederate took from his pocket a length of cord, and tied the junior's wrists behind him.

Next moment he was bundled up the steps of the van, the door was unlocked, and he was flung bodily at the feet of the stranger who had, only the moment before, solicited his aid to escape.

CHAPTER 10. Startling News!

TOM MERRY was the first home from the cross-country run, thus scoring a signal victory for the Shell. Immediately after him came Jack Blake, Kit Wildrake, and Digby of the Fourth, followed in swift succession by Talbot and Manners of the Shell.

Then came a few minutes' pause, until a long procession of

"also rans" appeared, trotting along in ones, twos, and threes in the gathering dusk.

For some moments Tom Merry and his chums stood by the gates watching the arrival of the stragglers, and discussing the run, and then a general move was made indoors.

All were tired, breathless, and muddy, but supremely happy, and were chatting and laughing merrily, as they trooped into the School House.

But an unpleasant surprise was in store for them.

As Tom Merry led the way across the hall, Kildare of the Sixth came towards them. The captain's face was grim, and he stopped on sight of the juniors.

"So you've got back, then, Merry," he said quietly. "I suppose you chaps haven't heard the news yet?"

"No; what news?" asked Tom Merry curiously.

"I fancy you'll know soon enough!" said Kildare grimly. "Some light-fingered person—or silly practical joker—has been lifting things wholesale in the studies and dormitories this afternoon!"

"M-mum-my hat!"

There was a gasp of astonishment from the juniors.

"When we returned from the practice match," said Kildare, "we found that practically all the Sixth Form studies had been raided, and various valuable articles are missing. I thought I'd warn you, so that you could go through your belongings. If you chaps have lost anything—and I shall be very much surprised if you haven't—you can report to me without delay."

"Great Scott!"

"Yes, rather, Kildare!"

The worried captain of St. Jim's passed on to Mr. Railton's study, and without further ado the startled Shell and Fourth fellows dashed up to their respective dormitories to investigate.

As Tom Merry pushed open the door of the Shell dormitory and looked in, an unusual sight met his gaze.

Instead of seeing their clothes neatly folded on the beds, as they had left them, the various articles of attire were spread in disordered confusion across the beds.

And a moment's brief examination of the pockets proved that Kildare's fears were only too true.

Money, watches, wallets, pencil-cases, sleeve-links—all sorts of things were missing. Scarcely a fellow who had taken part in the cross-country run, but had lost something of value.

"Well, if this doesn't beat the band!" gasped Tom Merry, staring aghast at the alarmed Shell fellows. "Why, a blessed gang of burglars must have been at work. I'll run along and see how the Fourth have got on."

And, quivering with excitement, Tom Merry left the room and hurried along to the Fourth dormitory.

And there, sure enough, he found practically the same scene being enacted. Fellows were hurriedly searching their pockets, and the room resounded with cries and lamentations as fresh discoveries—or, rather, losses—were discovered.

(Continued on page 27.)

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPER IS PRIME!

Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best storyette sent us each week—also half-a-crown is paid for each other contribution accepted. Cut out the coupon on this page, and send it, together with your joke, to me.

HIS MISTAKE!

"Look here, Minnie, how many more times have I to tell you about those cobwebs? I've just had to sweep one off the bedrails and put it in the fire myself!" "Good gracious, sir!" cried the maid. "That's the missus' fancy dress for to-night's ball!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Arnold Holdsworth, 62, Broadway Avenue, Bradford.

A HIT!

It was his first public speech as a candidate for Parliament, and before he was half-way through the trying ordeal he was presented with a turnip, which hit him fairly and squarely on the chest. In a moment, however, he recovered his composure, and with a smile remarked:

"I notice, gentlemen, that one of my political opponents appears to have lost his head!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Broadhead, 203, Bolton Road, Bradford, Yorkshire.

HIS ONLY PAL!

One Sunday morning in a Lancashire colliery village, a miner in his best clothes was seen going jauntily along pushing a wheelbarrow. "Wheer arta gooin', Bill?" asked a friend, engaged in propping up a post and puffing merrily away at his pipe. "I'm gooin' a walk," was the reply. "But," continued the friend, with an air of surprise, "what arta doin' wi' t' barrow?" "Well, tha sees," said the miner, "I've lost mi dog, an' a felly looks sich a fool gooin' a walk by hissel'!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to P. Eastwood, 41, Mountain Place, Mountain, Queensbury, near Bradford, Yorks.

ONE FOR THE C.O.!

C.O. (to delinquent brought up for having a dirty rifle): "Oh, a very old soldier! I suppose you made yourself out to be years younger than you are when you re-enlisted. Well, what were you charged with the last time you were brought up to the orderly-room?" Delinquent (stung to irony): "'Avin' a dirty bow an' arrow, sir!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to: R. Haworth, Breck-Side, Marlowe Road, Wallasey, Cheshire.

THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER.

ONE BETTER!

A Californian and an Englishman were arguing. Said the Californian: "We grow cabbages big enough for a whole army to camp under." "Bah!" said the Englishman. "We make saucepans so big that the men who rivet them are so far apart they can't hear each other hammering." "Come, come!" said the Californian. "What the dickens would anyone want a saucepan that size for?" "To boil your remarkable cabbages in," said the Englishman.—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to: Miss M. Kendrick, 6, Leamington Road, Edinburgh.

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REG, OF THE Road Patrol!

The Thrilling Adventures
of a
Plucky A.A. Road Scout.

Told By
Vincent Owen

CHAPTER 1.

The Stolen Valise!

NIGHT had fallen, and a cool sea breeze was blowing up from the Channel across the cliffs and the wide heath and through the forest beyond.

Patrolman Reg Travers, No. 549, of the A.A. Road Service, sniffed the summer night air appreciatively as he drove his motor-cycle outfit along the main Cliffhaven Road that wound through forest and hills to the coast.

His work so far that day had been quite uninteresting, except for routing out information of a police trap along the new switch road between Dalling and Melford.

Patrolman Reg was well-known to motorists in the county as one of the most lynx-eyed and efficient scouts in the employ of the A.A., as well as being a jolly good fellow and daring to the degree of recklessness. His duties were to give directions to A.A. members, do roadside repairs to cars and motor-cycles, render First Aid in motor accidents, and give motorists warning of bad roads, "up" roads, and police traps. Patrolman Reg had a reputation of being always on the spot when wanted and of doing his duty well.

His tools, spares, and First Aid kit were in the sidecar outfit attached to Jenny. "Jenny" was the name he had given to the motor-cycle the A.A. had issued him with and on which he patrolled the roads in the course of his duty. Jenny looked like any ordinary motor-cycle belonging to the association R.S.O.'s; but Reg Travers, by his skilful tuning, had brought the engine up to such a pitch of power that he could, on Jenny, indulge in road-burning with the best of them. And on many occasions in his career he had found the necessity of using Jenny's super-speed.

As Patrolman Reg drove steadily on his motor-cycle along the Cliffhaven Road a large grey car came speeding towards him. Reg saluted smartly, and then grinned at the man at the wheel.

Inspector Dobson, of the county constabulary, smiled back good-naturedly at the young road scout as his car sped by. There was a good deal of rivalry between the pair, for Reg Travers was a regular bloodhound at smelling out police traps and setting the wiles of the county police at naught; but Dobson had in the past found many an occasion to render thanks to Patrolman Reg for his smart work in helping him solve various mysteries that cropped up on the highway.

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"Dobson's beating it up," mused Reg, as he glanced his keen eyes back along the road and saw the inspector's car disappearing over a distant pimple in a cloud of dust. "I wonder if he's got anything on? Anyway, the road's clear, and here's for a speed burst!"

Whereupon he opened Jenny's throttle and sent the instantly responsive motor-cycle bounding down the road at a speed that soon touched sixty.

Reg, crouching over the handlebars, gloried in the feeling of sheer speed and the cool night wind that rushed past his ears.

He slowed at the main fork-road from Bannington, assured himself that he was alone on the road, and then let Jenny go again.

The road wound down into the forest and thence to the sea. The forest trees, towering high above the road, obscured the moon and rendered the way dark.

Suddenly, as he sped round a bend in the road, Patrolman Reg gave a quick intake of breath and rammed his throttle shut and his brakes on hard.

A handsome limousine car was lying on its side up the bank, its bonnet having crashed through the fence that bounded the forest beyond.

"Gee!" muttered Reg, as he brought his outfit to a halt alongside the overturned car. "This looks like a pretty serious spill. Big Daimler, too—and a member of the A.A. Wonder where the driver is?"

A low moan from the fore part of the car fetched Patrolman Reg up the bank. His pocket torchlight flashing amongst the smashed bodywork.

Over the twisted steering-wheel he saw the huddled figure of a man lying. Reg clambered to the man's side and raised him. He saw, with a thrill of horror, that the man had a jagged wound on his forehead, from which the blood was pouring profusely. The young road scout took the wounded man in his arms and carried him out of the overturned car, and laid him down on the grassy bank at the side of the road. He was quite unconscious.

Reg then took his First Aid outfit from the sidecar and tended swiftly and expertly to the wounded man.

Several minutes later the eyes opened and stared up and round wonderingly. A low moan escaped the man's lips, and then he struggled into a sitting posture.

He was an elderly man, refined looking and well dressed. He looked wildly at Reg, and then clutched his arm.

"The valise!" he hoarsed almost in a whisper. "See that the bag is safe! It's inside—"

He sank back with a moan. Reg propped his head up on one of the car cushions, and then looked inside the car. A leather handbag was lying on the woodwork near the door. Reg wrenched at the top door, but found it was locked. The glass window, however, was smashed, so he reached in, and, after a struggle, grasped the leather valise and took it back to where the old man was lying.

"Is this the bag, sir?" he asked respectfully.

The old man looked up and nodded eagerly.

"Yes, yes, that's it! Keep it safe! Guard it! I can trust you. If I lose the satchel—"

He broke off, for the roar of a fast approaching car became audible round the bend in the road beyond. Patrolman Reg stood at the side of the road, the valise in his hand, staring towards the sound.

Next minute a car hurtled round the bend, dashing along at a breakneck speed through the night darkness.

Reg stood where he was, holding his breath, staring in amazement at the dimly discernible car. A man was clambering out from the driving compartment. He hung on to the rail and crouched on the running-board.

The car, as it dashed up to where Reg was standing, swerved inwards suddenly towards him. The young A.A. scout fell back with an involuntary cry of alarm, thinking that the swiftly-moving thing was making straight for him.

But there was a man at the wheel besides the man crouching on the running-board, and the car swerved just sufficiently to miss Reg. As it tore past him the man crouching on the running-board reached out and snatched the leather valise from the astounded young road scout's hands.

Next minute the car was gone, swallowed up in a burble of noise in the darkness beyond.

It was the most amazing and daring piece of work Reg had ever encountered. The bag had been ripped out of his hands as he stood by the roadside by a man reaching out from a car travelling at anything between fifty and sixty miles an hour!

"The bag! Where is my bag?"

A hoarse cry came from the wounded man lying on the grass bank beside Reg.

Reg Travers turned swiftly, his eyes glinting and his jaws set grimly.

"I've been robbed of it, sir! A man on that car took it!" he rapped. "But I'll get it back! They're not far away." He vaulted into Jenny's saddle, kicked

the engine into life, turned her round, and opened the throttle wide. The motor-cycle bounded away like an arrow from the bow. Patrolman Reg crouched over the bars, his teeth clenched hard and his eyes strained on the road ahead. In the distance he could see the smoke trail and rear light of the car he was pursuing.

It was a race between car and motor-cycle. Who would win?

Reg's powerful outfit ate up the road, and as trees and hedges ripped past in swift succession he saw that he was gradually overhauling his quarry.

Would they suspect that they were being chased? As the thought occurred to him, Reg reached one hand down to his hip-pocket and drew out his handy little Colt. He had a licence for the gun, which had been a pal to him out in the East two years ago. Reg had had to use it often out there in defence of his life. And he'd use it here, too, if need be. He was determined to get that satchel back. He ground his teeth with chagrin when he thought of the audacious manner in which he had been robbed of it.

Jenny's speedometer was registering near the seventy mark, and the chase was leading him down a narrow, dark country road through the hills. The car was still ahead, but he was gaining rapidly on it. The beam of his own headlamp, piercing the gloom ahead, showed the rear of the car dimly discernible. He saw, too, a man look back; and then the spat, sput! of two revolver-shots sounded in the darkness.

"They mean to get me, the villains!" muttered the plucky young road scout.

He hung on tenaciously to his handlebars and kept up the tremendous pace. He was gaining rapidly on his quarry now!

Zing! Zing!

Two more shots spat viciously past him—terribly close. He realised that the gunman in front was probably firing above his head to warn him to give up the chase. But Patrolman Reg had no intention of giving up. He wanted that handbag.

Suddenly he stiffened, for the man leaning over the rear of the car in front had loosened a heavy trunk that had been strapped above the dickey seat. The large trunk bumped down into the road, right in Reg's path.

He had no chance, at that terrific speed, to avoid the obstacle, although he did his best. His sidecar wheel hit the trunk, and the whole outfit lurched sideways, to plunge next minute with a sickening crash into the hedge at the side of the road.

A mocking laugh sounded in the darkness ahead, and a few minutes later the car was gone.

CHAPTER 2.

An Amazing Development!

REG TRAVERS came to his senses to find himself lying amongst some bushes, several yards away from his overturned motor-cycle and sidecar. His head seemed to be bursting with pain, and when he tried to rise, a sharp twist in his ankle caused him to give an involuntary cry.

He fought with the swirling mist that seemed to be trying to rob him again of his senses, and his head gradually cleared. He then struggled to his feet and hobbled over to his motor-cycle.

He looked over the machine anxiously, but found, to his great relief, that it had suffered no damage beyond a twisted front mudguard, smashed foot-rests, buckled wheel and handlebars bent. The machine was rideable, that was all that

mattered. He found his revolver nearby, and thrust it back into his pocket.

In spite of the pain that racked his ankle, he righted the outfit and pushed it through a gate into the road again. The trunk was lying at the side of the road, one end of it caved in. Reg bent down and examined it eagerly. But the trunk was empty.

With a rueful look into the blackness of the road ahead, he realised the futility of continuing the chase after the man with the stolen valise. Taking the trunk aboard his machine, he drove back carefully to the scene of the amazing robbery.

The wrecked limousine was still there, lying on its side up the bank.

A perplexed look crossed Reg's face when he saw that the wounded driver had gone from the spot where he had left him, half-unconscious.

"Gad!" muttered the young road scout. "He must have crawled back to the car!"

But an examination of the car did not reveal the wounded man. Patrolman Reg looked about him in amazement, wondering whether his reason was playing him false.

The old man had disappeared utterly!

By this time Reg's brain was in a whirl of amazement at the night's strange happenings. Assuring himself at length that there was no hope of finding the wounded man, he took the badge number of the car and went to the nearest roadside telephone box.

He opened it with his special key, and a few minutes later was talking with Superintendent Brent, the A.A. executive for the county.

The superintendent was frankly amazed at the strange story told him over the wires by Patrolman Reg.

"Hold on, Travers!" he exclaimed. "I'll take down the badge number and have a look at my register. I may then be able to tell you who the old man is!"

After a lapse of several minutes, Brent again came to the phone.

"You there, Travers? According to the badge number in my register, the car belongs to Professor Carfew, of Donnington Hall, Bancombe. That's near where you are now. You say he was wounded and unconscious?"

"Badly wounded, and pretty nigh unconscious!" replied Patrolman Reg tersely. "Not only was there the wound in his head, but his left shoulder was dislocated, and there were other injuries to his arms and legs, from what I gathered from my hurried examination."

"Great snakes! Yet you say he got away—on his own?"

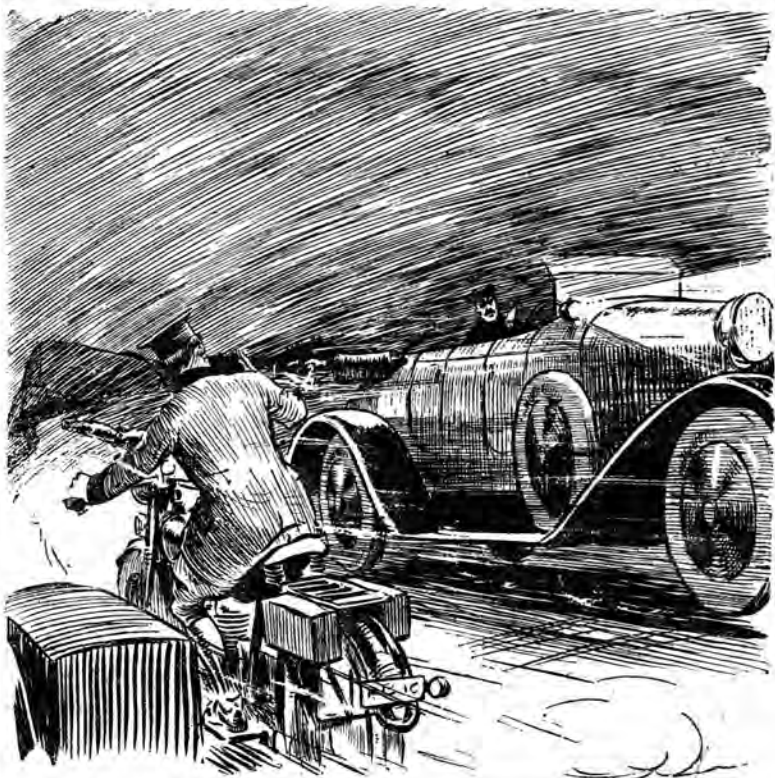
"Goodness knows how he got away, but he wasn't where I left him when I got back from chasing after his mysterious bag!" said Reg, in a grim tone. "Look here, Mr. Brent, this is a pretty mysterious business. There's more in it than meets the eye!"

"It sounds like it, young 'un! You've no idea of the identity of the car that played that low-down trick on you?"

"No, but I'd like to get on to it again, and find the chap who robbed me of the valise and then dropped the trunk across my front wheel when I was doing seventy in the dark!" said Patrolman Reg. "The chaps in that car have got to be traced, Mr. Brent. And Professor Carfew must be found—also that valise! I reckon we're up against a pretty big thing. I'm going to phone Inspector Dobson!"

"Right-ho, Travers—go ahead! I'll come right along, meanwhile."

Brent rang off. The young patrolman



As Patrolman Reg drove steadily along on his motor-cycle, a large grey car came speeding towards him. Reg saluted smartly and then grinned at the man at the wheel. Inspector Dobson smiled back good-naturedly at the young road scout.

then got through to the county police headquarters.

Inspector Dobson, he was told, had just come in. He held the line, and a few minutes later Dobson's brusque voice came over the wires—more brusque than usual, Reg thought.

He told the police inspector of what had happened on the highway that night. Inspector Dobson gave a low gasp.

"A rum business, young 'un! Do you know who the old chap in the wrecked car was?"

"Yes, Professor Carfew, of Donnington Hall, Bancombe!"

"What!" shouted the inspector.

Patrolman Reg repeated it. A whistle of amazement came from the other end.

"Holy smoke, Travers, that's just the man I'm trying to trace! You remember when I passed you on the main road earlier this evening— But I'll tell you when I get there. Wait at the telephone box for me?"

Inspector Dobson was not long in coming. His car, and Superintendent Brent's, arrived at the A.A. road call-box at about the same time.

Patrolman Reg was waiting for them. He showed them the way to the wrecked car. It was still lying on its side up the bank as he had left it. Reg wouldn't have been surprised to find the car missing, too. The old man's disappearance had completely flabbergasted him.

Inspector Dobson made a swift, expert survey of the car. There were no clues to be found. It was Patrolman Reg who, flashing his pocket torchlight to and fro in the road, made the momentous discovery that another car had drawn up alongside the overturned limousine. He deduced it from the strange tyre tracks in the road.

"You're right, Travers!" said Inspector Dobson, setting his cap at the back of his head, as was his habit when thinking hard. "But how can you be sure that the other car came here since Professor Carfew's car was wrecked?"

"Because the strange tyre marks cross the tyre marks left by my motor-cycle—that's why!" rapped back Patrolman Reg. "I'll tell you what happened, Mr. Dobson. While I was up the road there chasing the other car that had the stolen valise on board, this third car drove up, picked up the old chap I'd left here half-unconscious, and drove away with him. They were well away by the time I got back. See?"

Inspector Dobson scratched his head.

"Yes; I see, Travers. This is an utter mystery, and no mistake. Look here, I might as well tell you what I was going to tell you over the phone. While I was down at Southaven this evening I received a message asking me to go at once to Donnington Hall, the home of Professor Carfew. I drove there as quick as I could—you saw me beating it up the road, didn't you. When I got there I found the servants in a state of panic. Two of 'em had been knocked out and half-murdered by something they called an apparition. They couldn't describe it—it was too horrible, they said. Carfew's place was in a state of utmost disorder. Carfew himself, the servants said, they had discovered in the grounds of the house. They swore he was mad. He threatened them with a revolver and locked himself in the cellars. Then, a little while later, they heard his car leave the house and guessed the professor had driven himself away in it, for the cellar doors were found open, and the old man was gone.

"I couldn't make head or tail of the affair. That the apparition was pretty human was evident from the murderous way it had treated the servants. I also found footprints, but they haven't helped me much, so far. I went back to the office, leaving a number of men in charge, and you can understand my surprise, Travers, when you rang up and told me this yarn."

Patrolman Reg nodded thoughtfully. Inspector Dobson rummaged through the trunk that had been dropped in the roadway. But he was able to discover nothing more than Reg had done—and that was nothing. He kicked it aside and turned to Reg.

"Well, Travers, this is a mystery, and no mistake. You've no idea what was in that valise of the professor's, and why it should have been snatched from your hands by the man on the unknown car?"

"None whatever," said Reg. "I'd like to know, though. This affair gets my curiosity. I'll never rest till it's solved. I'll be on this patrol again to-morrow—I'll keep a sharp look-out, rely on that!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Trail to the Cliffs!

PATROLMAN REG was as good as his word.

He effected the necessary repairs to his motor-cycle outfit. When he came on duty next day he paid

special attention to that section of the road where the previous night's amazing affairs had taken place.

It was getting on in the afternoon before his untiring vigilance was rewarded. He was on a different section of the road, however.

He was driving leisurely along the forest-bounded road near where it reached the sea coast, some miles from the scene of last night's happenings, when suddenly his quick eyes caught the gleam of coachwork coming through the thickly massed foliage of the forest on his right.

"Jove!" he muttered, after a few minutes' scrutiny. "There's a car hidden among the trees!"

He stopped his outfit and crept cautiously to the spot. A blue sporting two-seater was hidden behind the trees. It was quite unattended. He looked keenly at it, and a low cry escaped his lips.

"It's the car I gave chase to last night!" he muttered tensely. "I'll swear it is the same car! Now, what game is its owner up to, hiding it in the forest here?"

The alert young road scout detected footprints in the soft soil, and from them he gathered that two men had recently stepped down from the car and gone off together into the forest. He snapped his teeth down hard and took out his Colt.

"This is where I do some detective work!" he muttered. "Reckon I ought to discover something this journey!"

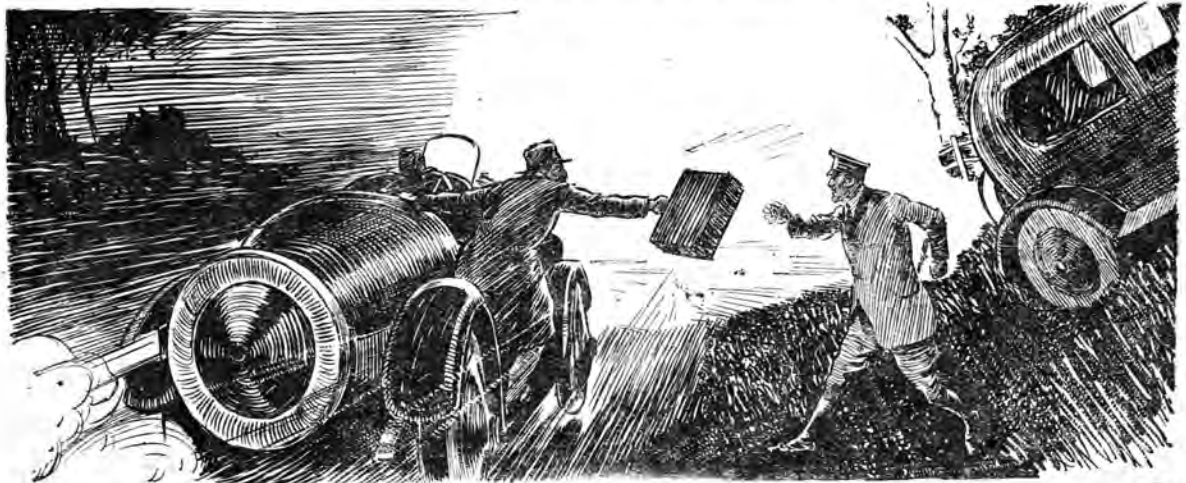
He hid his motor-cycle combination in the trees a short distance away, and then plunged into the forest, warily following the footprints, eyes and ears on the alert.

He found the trail comparatively easy to follow. It finally led him out of the forest to a desolate, lonely spot on the cliffs.

The sea breakers were thundering against the cliff walls a hundred feet below.

A short distance away, standing on the extreme edge of the cliffs, was the squat, mysterious stone pile known as the Mole. This place had been built centuries ago to serve as a lighthouse, but had actually been used by smugglers. For many years now it had been closed up, and was at the present time just an unshapely mass of stone, broken down and ravaged by storm and wind.

Reg, crouching behind a mass of rocks,



The car swerved, and the man crouching on the running board reached out and snatched the leather valise from the astounded young road scout's hand.



From the darkness of the cellar came a strange hissing sound. Reg swung round with his torchlight, and the thin pencil of light revealed the sinister, cruel face of Abdul Mullah.

saw two men lurking on the cliffs near the Mole. His eyes took on a glint, and, with revolver gripped firmly, he made his way with the utmost caution across the rocks, creeping closer to the Mole.

Suddenly he drew his body up taut, and he stared upwards with amazed eyes.

A figure had appeared on the top of the Mole—a weird figure dressed in flowing white robes. Its face was so horrible and ghoulish that Patrolman Reg, brave though he was, felt his blood run cold as he looked at it.

The figure raised an arm and made a quick, deft movement with it. Next minute a small, scintillating object hurtled down towards the two men crouching on the rocks below. A shout of agony rang out from one of them, and the pair a minute later came scrambling over the rocks to where the young road scout was hiding.

The uncanny figure on the Mole disappeared as swiftly and silently as it had come.

Reg gave a quick look round him, and heard a shout from one of the men:

"Look! It's that infernal road scout who chased us last night! Get him, Latimer! We can't let him stay at large now!"

"All right, Jessop! But my arm—"

"The knife only inflicted a surface wound, you fool! We must get this scout, I say!"

Reg was now scrambling over the rocks to get away. The two rascals dashed after him, their faces dark with rage and malice. The one with the wounded arm aimed a revolver-shot at him that flattened itself against the rock behind Reg's head.

The plucky road scout sent back a bullet, and then, gritting his teeth, he began to clamber down the jagged cliff-side—his only path to freedom. He saw his two pursuers scramble down after him. It was touch and go now. The two men, Latimer and Jessop, were determined that Reg should not escape, and the odds were decidedly in their favour.

But Reg kept doggedly on, hiding behind the projecting rocks, and climbing down with a daring that few could show.

All of a sudden, while he was hanging on with both hands to a jutting-out lump of rock, the malevolent face of one

of his pursuers peered down at him from behind another rock above.

"Got you!" snarled the rascal triumphantly, and he drew out his revolver.

Reg's heart thumped wildly. His own revolver was in his pocket, and he could not get at it. He was completely at the mercy of the man above.

Zing! came the vicious note of his adversary's gun, and a bullet whined down at him.

Reg gave a loud cry, and his hold on the rock loosened. His body reeled outward into space and he dropped, disappearing from view an instant later.

A hoarse chuckle came from the man above.

"I got him that time, Latimer! Hark! He's struck the water!"

A distant splash from below came to the rascals' ears.

"Come on, then, Jessop!" rapped Latimer. "We'll just about catch him! We've got to get him, dead or alive! This way!"

The pair scrambled down the cliff-side towards the sea below.

CHAPTER 4.

The Secret of the Mole!

A PAIR of gleaming eyes watched them go.

Patrolman Reg had not fallen into the sea. He had carried out a daring ruse that had occurred to him while he was hanging on in his precarious position to the rock above. Just below him, he had noted, was a ledge, and on it a large, loose boulder.

In the same instant that Jessop had fired, Reg had given a howl and sprang not into the sea, but on to that ledge. An instant after landing he had kicked the boulder off the ledge, and it was the sound of the rock falling into the sea that had hoodwinked the pair of rascals above.

He crouched on the ledge, waiting, with bated breath, while his unsuspecting adversaries passed. Fate was in his favour, for they did not see him, so eager were they to get down to the sea.

Patrolman Reg, crouching on the ledge in the cliffs, chuckled to himself when he saw the two rascals scramble down to the rocks below. While they were looking anxiously about for him

to rise to the surface, Reg climbed up the rocks and reached the top safely.

"They'll be down there some time yet, I reckon—waiting for the body to rise!" he murmured, with a grin. "Now, if I can get into that mysterious Mole—"

He ducked suddenly behind the rocks, for a stone section in the Mole wall had swung open, and the white-robed figure appeared—the figure he had seen on top of the Mole a short while ago.

Reg saw a man of the Hindu type. His face was sinister and evil, but it had not that ghastly, devilish look it had taken on on top of the Mole.

The mysterious Hindu walked swiftly over to the cliffs and peered down. Seeing Jessop and the other below, he drew a cruel-looking knife from the folds of his white robe and commenced to climb down.

"Fing!" muttered Patrolman Reg. "This is where I get into the Mole!"

He darted in through the aperture in the stone wall. All was dark and musty within. He found himself in a narrow stone passage, which eventually led him to some crumbling stone stairs. He climbed them and came to a room. Entering, he stopped short, with a cry of amazement.

The room was furnished barely, but at one end of it was a wooden frame-like structure which he immediately recognised as one of the old-time racks used for the torture of human beings.

The old man he had rescued from the overturned car was in the rack, great leather straps and iron chains holding him in the cruel framework.

Professor Carfew's dull eyes lighted up with joy and hope when he saw the young road scout.

"Get me out, for the love of Heaven!" he cried hoarsely. "The fiend has been torturing me to tell—"

He broke off with a moan, and Reg saw that the old man's suffering rendered him incapable of further speech.

He stepped quickly over to the rack, and grappled with the great leather straps and the irons. The task of releasing the old man from the rack proved more difficult than it seemed. Ten minutes passed, and then steps sounded on the stone passage below. The noise awakened the old man, from his listless state.

"He is coming back! Leave me! You will not get me free now! Escape

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if you can! Reach my house—in the cellar—the bottle of Chambertin with the cross—Oh!”

The steps came nearer. They were almost at the door now. Patrolman Reg darted back behind the door, his revolver raised.

Two men entered the room, dragging with them a third.

Patrolman Reg saw, to his surprise, that they were Jessop and his companion, and they had with them the unconscious figure of the Hindu.

“So this is Abdul Mullah’s hang-out—eh?” said Jessop, on entering. “And here’s old Carfew, done up in a rack! I—”

“Hands up!”

Patrolman Reg walked out from behind the door and pointed his revolver menacingly at them. Shouts of rage and amazement came from the two trapped rascals.

“It’s the road scout again! He—he’s not drowned!” hoarsed Jessop’s companion.

“No; I’m very much alive!” smiled Reg. “And I’m just going to find out now what all this mysterious business is about! Jessop, release Professor Carfew from the rack, and then with some of the straps truss up your partner!”

Jessop had to obey. Snarling, he undid the rest of the professor’s bonds, and then he bound his own partner’s hands and feet. Patrolman Reg saw that he did the job properly, too.

Professor Carfew, though still dazed and weak from his terrible ordeal, held the revolver over Jessop while Reg tied up the rascal.

“That’s got the pair of ‘em prisoners, anyway!” said Reg, taking back his revolver. “Now to—”

He gave a sudden cry of alarm. Abdul Mullah, whom he believed to be unconscious, leaped suddenly into life, and sprang at Reg with a knife gleaming in his hand.

The young scout was too quick for the Hindu, however. He ducked, and next minute sent a shot swinging at the hand holding the knife. The shot missed, and the knife, coming back at him, glanced across his fingers, and caused him to drop his revolver.

Reg then did the only sane thing left for him to do. He took to his heels and bolted down the stairs. The Hindu, his breath hissing like a wild animal’s, pounded after him.

Reg reached the open with a sigh of relief, and tore towards the rocks. There he found a hiding-place.

To his surprise, the Hindu did not follow him, but ran across the rocks into the forest.

Some time later Reg heard the departing hum of a motor-car.

He tore into the forest after Abdul Mullah, and, as he had expected, he found that the Hindu had driven away in Latimer’s car.

It did not take Reg long to run back to where he had hidden his motor-cycle combination. Jenny was still there. He leaped into the saddle, got the engine going, and sent the powerful outfit leaping down into the road and away after the car.

He did some quick reasoning as he tore along the road.

Was Abdul Mullah going to Carfew’s house? He was convinced that that was the Hindu’s destination. He decided to go there, not only because of that, but because of those faintly-gasped words of the professor’s while he was undoing him from the rack in the Mole.

Abdul Mullah had had a good start, and the car was nowhere in sight.

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Reg did not relax the terrific pace of his machine an iota, except where traffic made it necessary. He saw several policemen taking his number on his ignoring their shouts to him to stop.

The young road scout knew every road and lane in the county. This knowledge stood him in good stead, for it enabled him to take a number of short cuts to Donnington Hall.

He reached the large, rambling country mansion in record time. He looked round, but saw no sign of the car. He drove inside the gates, and left his outfit behind the gate-keeper’s lodge.

He encountered several of Inspector Dobson’s men in the grounds. Reg did not stop to explain, but demanded of them where the cellars were.

The startled butler showed him the way.

The young road scout went down alone into the dark, musty vaults under the house where the wine was stored.

In the light of his pocket-torch he saw the grim stone walls stacked high with row upon row of bottles.

“The bottle of Chambertin with the cross.” That was the only clue he had. He walked swiftly through the cellars, searching for the bottle he wanted.

He came to a shelf where a bottle had been removed. He reached up, and took down the next bottle to it. His eyes gleamed when he read the name “Chambertin” on the dirt-grimed label. But there was no cross on it.

All the bottles on that shelf contained Chambertin, however. Each had the same label. Reg examined them all closely, and at last a cry of satisfaction escaped his lips.

He picked up a bottle that had a whitewash cross on the glass, near the label. He thrust it into his pocket, and then turned, his nerves tensed.

A strange sound, a hissing breath, and a footstep came to his ears from the darkness of the cellar beyond.

He swung round with his torchlight, and the thin pencil of light revealed the sinister, cruel face of Abdul Mullah!

The Hindu had found his way into the cellar unobserved, and was coming towards Reg with the knife raised to strike!

Reg acted on an impulse of swift thought.

As the black rascal sprang towards him he reached out, gasped a bottle of wine from the shelf nearest him, and flung it into his adversary’s face.

A scream of pain and rage rang through the dark cellar. The Hindu’s knife clattered to the floor. Next minute Reg hurled himself at the white-clad figure, and bore him backwards to the floor.

A terribly grim struggle ensued. Abdul Mullah had the strength of a tiger, and he fought with murderous fury. But Patrolman Reg grappled with him, and they rolled to and fro over the cellar floor.

The Hindu’s hand reached out for the knife, which the fallen torchlight revealed on the cellar floor. Reg whirled him over, and grasped the hand just as the long, dark fingers were closing over the knife.

He had to exert all his strength to keep the Hindu’s fingers away from the weapon. Both strained every nerve and muscle in the grim struggle.

Then Reg, with a cunning twist learnt out in the East, swung his man over, got astride his chest, and gripped the Hindu’s larynx in his large, firm hands.

A minute later Inspector Dobson and three police-officers dashed into the cellar and a pair of handcuffs were snapped over Abdul Mullah’s wrists.

CHAPTER 5.

Patrolman Reg’s Story!

IMMEDIATELY after the capture of the Hindu, Patrolman Reg, with a hurried word to Dobson, ran out of the cellar and into the grounds of the house.

Outside, he found the car that Abdul Mullah had taken from its hiding-place in the forest.

Reg leaped into the driving-seat, started the engine, and drove the car away at top speed, back to the Mole on the cliffs.

There he found Latimer and Jessop, still trussed up, and Professor Carfew.

The old man was pale and ill, and it was plain that the efforts of his recent suffering were beginning to take toll.

Jessop and Latimer were bundled into the car by Patrolman Reg. He then helped the professor into the seat beside him, and then he drove away.

En route for Donnington Hall, Professor Carfew told Reg an amazing story.

He had barely finished it when he fell forward in a heap. Reg bent down, and saw that the old man was unconscious. The trials of the last two days had proved too much for his feeble constitution.

Donnington Hall was reached at length, and Reg handed over the professor to the care of his servants, and a doctor was telephoned for.

Inspector Dobson was truly amazed on seeing the young road scout’s two prisoners in the car.

“What the blazes—” gasped Dobson. “By heck, young ‘un, this is a fresh surprise! Who are these birds? What have they done?”

“I’ll explain everything when you’ve put the bracelets on ‘em!” grinned Patrolman Reg.

This was speedily done, amid curses from Latimer and Jessop. Then Inspector Dobson and two of his colleagues followed Reg into the spacious library.

“Now, Travers, out with it!” barked the grizzled police-inspector. “You’ve worked things on a lone hand right from the start. Tell us all about it!”

“Last night, inspector, you were called to this house in consequence of some very startling events that had taken place here!” said Patrolman Reg, looking round with his large, blue, laughing eyes.

“A weird figure in white, and a face like a nightmare, had broken in, badly mauled two of the servants, scared the rest stiff, and murderously attacked Professor Carfew in his study. That apparition, needless to say, was our dusky friend, Abdul Mullah, whom you have in hand-irons downstairs. He is known in certain sections of the underworld as the Mad Mullah. He’s properly crazy. He’s got a sort of rubber face which he can work into all sorts of shapes. He makes use of this little gift of contortionism to scare people and inspire them with fear when he’s got a job on. Abdul Mullah, in spite of the bats he’s got in his belfry, is one of the cleverest crooks working in Europe and the East.”

“By Jove! I’ve heard of him!” breathed Inspector Dobson. “Scotland Yard and the Secret Service have been trying to lay hands on the Mad Mullah for years! So that’s the rascal downstairs!”

“That’s him!” grinned Reg. “This business is one of the biggest bits of work he’s ever been engaged on. A month ago the Sultan of Malpogor sent Professor Carfew a collection of the most priceless pearls in the world. These pearls are the pick of the Orient, and their value cannot be calculated in pounds sterling. There are nearly two hundred of them. Many attempts have been made

by crooks of all nations to lay hold of those pearls. Abdul Mullah was one of those crooks, and our other friends, Latimer and Jessop, were two others.

"The Sultan sent the pearls secretly to Professor Carfew to have them copied. The professor, you know, is a specialist in pearls, and startled the world a few months ago by producing cheap imitations that were so much like real pearls that even some experts were deceived. Well, the Sultan's idea was to have a second set of pearls, faithful imitations of the original gems, so that he'd be able to hoodwink the various pearl fans who were after them—see?"

Dobson and his colleagues nodded with rapt interest.

"The Sultan of Malpregor thought his little ruse was a secret, but Abdul Mullah got to know that Professor Carfew had the real pearls, and Latimer also found it out. Both determined to get those pearls by hook or by crook. Latimer enlisted the services of Jessop, an international crook as cunning as himself.

"Mullah broke into this house two nights ago. But he didn't find the pearls. Professor Carfew had thought of an excellent hiding-place for them. He had hidden the real pearls in a bottle of Chambertin in the wine-cellar of this house, and marked the bottle with a whitewash cross. All old bottles of wine have whitewash on them, and the cross would not excite suspicion, although at the same time it served to identify the precious bottle to Professor Carfew.

"Mullah had to leave the house, after raising no end of a shindy. The professor had escaped to the grounds. He was almost driven mad with anxiety that those priceless gems would be stolen. He got into the cellar, took the bottle from the shelf, and drove away in his car, intending to find a place in Southaven where he could keep the pearls safe. On his way, he lost control of his car, which dashed up the side of the road, overturned, and gave him severe injuries. The bottle was in a leather valise inside the car. I found him lying there, as you know, and got him out of the wreckage, and found the bag in the car.

"Now let me go back a little. Latimer and Jessop had also chosen that night for the robbery of the pearls. But Abdul Mullah got there first. Jessop, skulking in the grounds, saw Professor Carfew come out of the cellar with the valise and drive away in his car. Latimer and

Jessop immediately drove away, by another route, in their car, intending to intercept the professor's car and relieve him of the bag. Driving up to the spot where the professor's car was overturned, they saw what had happened. They also saw me standing at the side of the road with the bag in my hand. Jessop climbed over the side of the car, and Latimer steered the car so that it came as close to me as possible—close enough to enable Jessop to reach down and snatch the bag from my hand as the car passed. I gave chase; but, as you know, they got rid of me by throwing down an empty trunk across my path.

"When I returned, Professor Carfew—whom I had left at the side of the road—was gone. Abdul Mullah was also out to intercept the professor. He came up while I was chasing Latimer and Jessop. Seeing the professor lying wounded at the side of the road, he took him into his own car, and drove him away to the Mole, which he was making his temporary headquarters. His idea was to torture the professor into telling him where the pearls were hidden. Professor Carfew was too badly injured to tell him anything; but Mullah, the inhuman rascal, attended to his wounds roughly, and then put him in the rack. Fortunately, I got into the Mole in time and rescued the professor, and made Latimer and Jessop prisoners."

"But what made Latimer and Jessop go to the Mole?" demanded Inspector Dobson. "They had the pearls, hadn't they? The bottle containing the pearls was in the bag, and they took the bag from you!"

"Yes; but the pearls were not inside the bag!" smiled Patrolman Reg. "The professor, in his haste, made a mistake, and took the wrong bottle, leaving the bottle containing the pearls in the wine-cellar. The bag contained a bottle of Chambertin—a most delectable wine, but hardly satisfying to Latimer and Jessop when they opened the bag they had taken so much trouble to get hold of.

"They jumped to the conclusion, of course, that Abdul Mullah had forestalled them, and had succeeded in stealing the pearls. So to-day they went to the Mole to have it out with Abdul Mullah. I trailed them there, and nearly lost my life on the cliffs. Abdul Mullah went down the cliffs to murder Latimer and Jessop, but they tricked him, and brought him back to the Mole a prisoner. Then I trapped them, and took them

prisoners. Then Mullah escaped, and came here, surmising, after hearing what Latimer said about the bottle of wine in the bag, that the pearls were hidden in a bottle in the wine-cellar of this house. I got to the cellar first, and found the bottle. Then Mullah came in, and we had a fight. You came in, and snapped the bracelets on him. I fetched in Latimer and Jessop, and the professor is now under medical care, and will, I expect, recover."

Inspector Dobson looked in wonder at the young A. A. scout.

"By heck, Travers, you're a marvel!" he gulped. "You've rounded up all three of the rascals, saved the professor's life, and safeguarded the pearls! Good for you, young 'un! Where's the bottle containing the pearls?"

The young road scout took a bottle from his pocket, drew the cork, and emptied from it into his handkerchief a mass of wondrous pearls.

"You'd better take them, inspector, and see that they're put into a safe place until the professor is well enough to look after them himself," said Reg Travers, with a smile. "Real beauties, aren't they? I'm off now to see Superintendent Brent and report the day's proceedings!"

THE END.

(You will read with interest the splendid complete story of the Chums of Thunder Creek, entitled: "THE SPORTING SEVEN!" in next week's bumper issue of the GEM. Make sure you order your copy early.)

THE RESULT OF THE "LEICESTER CITY" FOOTBALL COMPETITION.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the picture. The First Prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

W. SIDWELL,
15, Broadmead Road,
Folkestone.

So many competitors qualified for the third grade of prizes that division among them of the prizes offered was impracticable. The Second Prize of £2 10s. and the ten prizes of 5s. each have therefore been added together and divided among the following twenty competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

John Hogben, 35, Bournemouth Road, Folkestone; William Gilbert, 13, Sandhurst Gardens, Belfast; William Scott, 424, Parliamentary Road, Glasgow; S. J. Evans, 44, Regent Street, Gloucester; Mrs. E. Arnold, 27, Delorme Street, Fulham, S.W. 6; W. Boyd Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Charles H. Morton, 7, Eyre Street, Pallion, Sunderland; Nora Wyles, 51, Maruion Road, Southsea, Hants; Geo. Chambers, 172, Dover Road, Folkestone; Miss W. Wrigglesworth, 13, Church Street, Kidderminster; Archie Fullarton, 1, Adam Street, Gourcock, Scotland; Miss M. Gunn, 15, Waverley Park, Edinburgh; R. W. Stratton, 63, High Street, Whittlesey, Cambs; Ernest B. Simpson, 16, East View, Deepdale, Preston, Lancs; Thomas Howarth, 1, Pomfret Street, Accrington Road, Burnley; Fred Taylor, 53, Flaxby Road, Darnall, Sheffield; Miss A. Brewster, Polam Hall, Darlington; Oswald Williams, 71, Melrose Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey; F. Tarbotton, 37, Lyndhurst Street, Leeds Road, Bradford; V. Linater, 101, Maperton Road, Bradford, Yorks.

SOLUTION.

Leicester City club had a great fight to establish itself, owing to the enormous drawing power Rugby has in that district. But it has courageously kept the flag flying. There have been several splendid sides, but never a really first-class one.

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THE SPIDER OF THE NORTH!

A plucky Lancashire boy sets out to track down the "Spider," whose evil power has become the curse of Lancashire. This is famous David Goodwin's most powerful story.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

TOM COMPTON, a young piercer, formerly of Barton's Mills, sets out to track down the "Spider," whose evil power has become the curse of Lancashire.

Mill after mill has suffered at the hands of this treacherous foe. At last Tom, by chance, actually catches the Spider in Barton's Mill. He gives chase, but the Spider, a sinister figure in blue goggles, makes good his escape. He drops a pocket-book, however, from which Tom Compton obtains valuable information.

Tom is unable to save Barton's Mill, which is blown up, the owner being killed. From that time it becomes Tom's only ambition to crush the Spider. He obtains a post through a friend, Dick Stearns, on the staff of the "Clarion," the offices of which are next to those of the Spider's. Here he meets Dennis Gale, another victim of the Spider's handiwork, who promises to assist him in his great fight. The Spider plans to capture Compton and Stearns, but his attempt proves futile.

Later, another mill is threatened, and Peter Grant, the manager, calls for Compton's assistance. Tom hurries to the scene, and is just in time to avert disaster. The Spider then tries another cunning scheme to bring about the end of Compton, but is again unsuccessful. After this Tom receives a strange message—a call for help from Mr. Kane, who is supposed to be made prisoner by the Spider in an old hulk out at sea. Tom, half suspicious, hurries to the scene.

(Now read on.)

In Dire Peril!

A CHOKING cry answered Compton, but from where he could not tell. It seemed to come from the bowels of the ship.

His heart beating rapidly, he clambered down through the hatchway, drew a candle-end from his pocket, and lit it. The lower deck, after-cabin, and waist of the ship were all sound enough, being above the rise of the tides, but the lower part of the ship was honey-combed by the sea, and her ribs were open.

Tom called again, and once more the faint cry answered him—weaker this time, and almost despairing. He lowered himself, candle in hand, through the lazarette hatch, and on to a broken platform of wood above the ribs, where the black water sucked and gurgled among the weed-hung timbers.

"Good heavens!" Tom gave a sudden exclamation at the strange sight he saw, for chained to the green ribs, his arms above his head, was Morton Kane himself, haggard and white, the swift tide

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mounting about his neck. He cast despairing eyes at Tom.

"I fear you're too late!" he gasped hoarsely. "They've got me at last, Tom! I'm chained to these infernal beams, and the tide's rising fast. You can do no more than avenge me!"

Tom stuck his candle-end on a beam, out of reach of harm, whipped off his coat, gripped his knife between his teeth, and slipped into the water, making his way rapidly from rib to rib of the hulk till he reached his employer's side.

"Wait till I've freed you, then we'll talk of vengeance," he said, taking the knife from his teeth. "Punishment, not vengeance, for I'm going to get you out of this alive!"

"You are too late, boy!" gasped Kane, as Tom dug away at the staples where they joined the wood. "The tide's rising rapidly. I tell you, and these staples are immovable. The chains on my wrists are too thick to break. My ankles are tied, too, with rope only, but under water."

Tom no sooner heard this than he abandoned the staples instantly and turned over.

"Sit tight," he said, rather unnecessarily. "I'll soon have those free; but they must be tackled at once."

The boy dived downwards, gripping Kane's legs under water till he felt the ropes that bound his ankles. Three deft cuts, entirely by feeling, severed the bonds, and Tom bobbed up again, gasping for breath.

"Lucky those weren't chains," he panted, "or you really would have been done for. Now for those staples!"

He dug and dug away, but the ribs, though so long exposed to the water, were not rotten. They were of hard Burmah teak, and they defied Tom's knife, for the staples were deep set.

Kane bore the strain as long as he could; but the tide crept higher, and reached his chin. He had seemed outwardly cool enough till now, but suddenly he became seized with painful nervousness.

"Quick, boy—quick!"

Tom dug desperately; but there was a sharp crack, and his blade snapped short. The boy turned white at this,

for the situation was now desperate indeed.

"Never mind!" cried Kane. "What a fool I am! They left a marlinespike on the beam by the platform there before they went. Get it—quick! I saw them put it there. Why didn't I think of it before?"

Tom was already struggling back to the platform through the lapping water, and in a moment was back with a stout marlinespike.

"That's it!" cried Kane, with a great sigh of relief. "That'll screw the staples round. The top link of each chain is swivelled. But look sharp; the water's up to my lips!"

Tom slipped the spike into the staple, and, to his joy, found he was able to turn it.

"She's coming out!" he cried.

Then an exclamation of dismay broke from him. The staple jammed, and on giving the spike an extra turn, to Tom's horror, it snapped off short.

"The spike's smashed!"

"Great heavens," cried Kane, struggling in his bonds. "I'm lost—lost, and there is so much to do! You must free me, my boy—you must! Go on deck, and see if there is no help within sight."

"The night's black as pitch," said Tom despairingly, hacking away with his broken knife again.

In the midst of his despair he wondered to see how the man's iron nerve had broken down, and the change in him. When he arrived, Kane had seemed to recognise his fate and receive it calmly, but the breaking of the spike broke him down altogether.

"I'm done for!" gurgled Kane. "Go on deck, I tell you, and see if there's a boat in sight."

The water was over Kane's lips, it lapped about his nostrils. Tom groaned with misery.

Suddenly an idea seized him, a notion of despair. He whipped the revolver he carried from his pocket. Kane's face seemed to change at the sight of it.

Was it any use? Tom clapped the muzzle to the top link of the chain and fired. The report echoed and roared through the hollow ship, and a shout of joy broke from Tom's lips. The chain was blown bodily away from the staple by the explosion and the heavy bullet.

Quickly Tom clapped the pistol to the other staple and fired again. He had to fire three times before the chain gave way, but at the third shot the link was hurled across the hold of the ship, and

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Morton Kane, released from his bonds, slipped down, and his head went under.

He bobbed up again in a moment, and, with a cry of triumph, Tom seized him by the coat and swam laboriously across the flooded hold towards the platform. They both hung there for a few moments, and then, with an effort, Tom dragged himself up and hauled Kane after him. They sank down on the planks, utterly exhausted.

"Thank Heaven!" panted Tom.

"Amen!" said Morton Kane. "And you, Tom, you've saved my life! When did you get my message?"

"About four hours ago."

"Heaven and earth! And you managed to get here in time, too!"

"Only just, sir."

"I sent that message two days ago."

"What!" exclaimed Tom, "Your messenger was pretty slow, then."

"The message reached someone who could find you to-day, I expect," said Kane. "I fell into the hands of the enemy three days ago, by a trick that's too long to explain now. They got me out in the country at the back here, but I escaped. I wasn't able to get away, though; they got me again, and kept me prisoner in an old farmhouse. I thought they'd make short work of me, but they were waiting for orders from the Spider, who was afraid I might be traced, and the crime exposed. At last I overheard the plan to bring me here, and leave me tied up, and I managed to get that note into the hands of a farm-labourer, who got it to one of the cotton hands, and so to you. But tell me, quick, what's happened in my absence?"

Tom gave a rapid and concise account of the late events, including the affair at the hospital, and his employer listened eagerly.

"We must get back at once!" cried Kane. "Let us lose no time, but leave this horrible place; it gives me the creeps! I am unarmed, too. My nerves are upset. Let me have that revolver of yours, Tom, and I shall feel more myself."

"Well, sir," said Tom, with some hesitation, for he had no intention of depriving himself of his only weapon. "I think I'd rather keep it. And there'll be no danger while I've got it, for I'm pretty quick on the shoot now."

Kane looked as if he would like to press the matter, but Tom was not to be persuaded to part with his revolver.

"You've got a boat, haven't you?" said Kane. "Let us get back quickly."

They made their way to the upper deck, and Tom led Kane to the place where he had left the old shore-boat. On reaching it, he gave a sudden exclamation.

"She's gone!"

"What?" cried Kane anxiously.

"Vanished, sir! She's nowhere in sight. It must be treachery of some kind."

"Impossible!" said Kane eagerly. "You couldn't have made her fast."

"I'll swear I did!" returned Tom, "I took especial care, and tied her up with a rolling hitch. She couldn't have worked loose. And the painter was sound, too."

"Confound it!" cried Kane irritably. "What a waste of time! We shall have to wait till low tide, and then walk ashore across the sands. It won't be so very long; the tide's fallen an inch or more already."

"By George," said Tom, turning to him, "then you wouldn't have drowned, after all! The water would have fallen just in time to save you!"

Kane broke into a nervous, trembling laugh.

"And I thought I was booked for

the next world," he said. "It—it's been a little too much for me, Tom. Well, as the boat's gone, let's go below, out of the wind, and wait till we can—"

"Look out!" cried Tom.

A dark, silent shape suddenly flitted from behind the deck-house and stole up behind Tom. But the boy, turning, saw it in the nick of time. The figure made a rush at him, and he whipped the pistol from his pocket.

The next moment it was dashed from his hand by some heavy weapon before he could level it. The dark figure made a rush. Tom found himself grappling with a man of enormous strength. He heard Kane's voice crying aloud:

"Look out! The boats!"

Three black craft came dashing up out of the darkness, driven by furiously-piled oars; but Tom could give no heed to them, for he was striving for his life with the man who held him in his grip.

Odds Against Him!

"GIVE a hand here!" gasped Tom, for he felt his ribs cracking under the grasp of his assailant.

But no help came to him. He could not see what Morton Kane was doing, and whether he, too, was at hand-grips with an enemy. Both Tom and his assailant had grappled so closely and held each other's arms so tight that no weapon could be drawn. They staggered to and fro for a moment over the deck.

"Come on, mates! I've got him!" cried Tom's captor hoarsely. "Slip a knife in him between the shoulders! Look sharp!"

The nearest boat bumped alongside, and her crew sprang aboard the hulk.

At that moment, as Tom and his captor struggled up and down, the ruffian caught his foot against a stanchion, which threw him slightly off his balance.

Seizing the chance like lightning, Tom threw all his weight forward and "back-heeled" his captor, and both fell heavily on the deck. The ruffian was undermost, and his head struck the corner of the fore-scuttle with tremendous force, and his limbs relaxed helplessly.

Tom tore himself away, and sprang backwards just as one of the newcomers ran blindly at him.

The boy twisted aside, thrust out a leg, and the knifer fell sprawling. Tom dashed forward just in time to see a tall figure lifted in the grip of a couple of men and heaved over the side. It was Morton Kane.

"Hands off, Dummkopf!" shouted a German voice in the midst of the scrimmage. "I am not der cub! Dere he is!"

"At him, lads!" cried another; and four of the boatmen made a rush.

Tom vaulted over the cabin-top out of the way, and they swept past. Then he dashed for the side again, in an agony of fear lest Morton Kane were once more kidnapped.

"Where are you, sir?" he cried, for there were three boats within a few yards; and, even as Tom spoke, a pistol snapped and a bullet rang past his ear.

"Here! Help!" cried Kane's voice; and, in the uproar, Tom could not tell from which boat it came.

But he leaped blindly just as the men on the hulk rushed at him again, and as he jumped he felt the sharp sting of a knife between the shoulder-blades.

"Now you've got him, poys! Finish der cub!" shrieked those on deck.

But Tom's arrival in the boat was unexpected, and it demoralised the crew. He landed with both feet on the back



Tom Compton lowered himself on to the broken platform of the hulk, and gave a sudden exclamation as his glance fell upon Morton Kane, chained to the green ribs, his arms above his head, and the swift tide mounting about his neck.



"Look out! The boats!" As Tom grappled with his assailant he heard Kane's voice crying out aloud, then three black craft bumped alongside the hulk, their crews springing aboard like lightning.

of the stroke oarsman, and both tumbled into the bottom of the boat together.

The oarsman—a hairy longshoreman—had all the wind knocked out of him by the impact, and showed no fight; but as Tom scrambled up two other men rushed at him, one with an open knife, and a third behind them.

Fortunately, they got in each other's way, and as Tom upset the first with a left-hander under the chin he blessed the kindly darkness that had saved him. Had it been daylight he would have been past praying for long before. But as he floored his man he saw that Kane was not in the boat, and he sang out again anxiously:

"Where are you, sir? Which way?"
"Here!" came Kane's voice faintly.
"They are carrying me off!"

Tom thought he heard a derisive laugh; but he had no time to speculate on it, for the remaining two of the crew—both of them Germans, by their voices—were at him again.

They grappled him with such force this time—one shrieking to the other to hold the victim while he drew his knife—that Tom found himself in the tightest place of the whole scrimmage.

He struggled violently, and felt the boat rock and sway under him. The unsteadiness of the craft at once gave him his cue, and, seeing the flash of steel in the hand of one of his captors, he saw that desperate measures were necessary, and, flinging his weight violently sideways and dragging the first man with him, he upset the vessel bodily.

The rickety old shore-boat lurched her gunwale under and turned turtle, throwing all her crew into the water. Tom

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felt his captors relax their hold of him, with a frightened shriek, as the water closed over their heads, and as Tom bobbed up his first care was for the other boats. To his amazement, he saw them both no more than black smudges in the distance, rowing rapidly away.

"I shall drown—I shall drown!" yelled the German who had drawn the knife, beating the water like a puppy-dog; while the other, spluttering and swearing, struck out towards the hulk.

An oar floated within reach of the other, and he grasped it with a guttural cry, and ceased his floundering, for it served to keep his head above water.

The man who had been stunned had come to instantly on being soured in the water, and was already swimming quietly towards the hulk, stopping to tow the man with the oar along with him.

Tom, treading water, surveyed the scene keenly, to see what his next move ought to be.

Then he became aware that his late companions were in dire trouble. They were clawing at the smooth sides of the hulk, up which they were unable to climb, or to get their hands on the rail.

"We die! We are dead men!" they screamed.

And then one caught sight of Tom, who had mounted the keel of the boat.

"Ah, coot young man, gome and dake us aboard! We cannot get up! We shall drown!"

"Then drown away, and a jolly good riddance!" retorted Tom, who at that moment captured one of the floor-boards that was floating by, and began to paddle himself towards the shore. "It doesn't interest me whether you drown

or not, and I'll bet some of you will never see your happy Dutchland again!"

The ruffians set up a fresh wail at this; but Tom took no notice. He did not see why he should waste time in rescuing the scoundrels when the life of his employer was in deadly danger, to say nothing of the fact that they would certainly turn on him again if he gave them the chance.

Besides, he knew that the tide was falling fast, and that they could get up on the other side if they had the sense to go there, so he did not at all object to leaving them to enjoy a good soaking.

Tom paddled landwards desperately, for the dry beach was yet half a mile away, and he was afraid the ebb-tide would sweep him away to sea. He found, to his joy, that he was gaining slowly.

It was a long and back-breaking job; but at last he got the boat into shallow water, and waded the last two or three hundred yards to the beach.

His arms were stiff and tired, but his legs ached for a stretch after their long soak in the water; and he did not stop to rest. His bicycle was his chief anxiety. Was it still where he left it?

(Another grand instalment packed with thrills and breathless situations next week.)

"THE MYSTERIOUS BELLINGER!"

(Continued from page 15.)

He recognised many of the stolen articles after comparing them with some particulars in his notebook.

"Sam Privett was well acquainted with the secret of this place," Sharpe remarked. "He must have discovered it years ago, and possibly used it then for similar purposes—that mattress looks pretty time-worn—but on this occasion he overstepped the bounds of cunning, which is as bad, for a thief, as having no cunning at all. Stay! Listen!"

The investigator raised both hands above his head, grasping a jutting piece of wood which protruded from the wall and twisting it slowly. A grating sound was heard; then, as the detective worked more strongly, the boom of a heavy bell penetrated to where they stood.

Sharpe smiled as he released his hold. "You see what happened?" he said. "Privett must have discovered by some means that the bell-beam, which pierces this wall, was loose and would revolve, thus swinging the bell independently of the rope. And, realising this, he fancied that it might be a good thing for him if the church got the name of being haunted, thus keeping folk away from it and lessening the risk of his schemes possibly being detected. They're a superstitious lot round here, and the Rev. Mr. Molton, who had asked me to inquire into this mysterious tolling, mentioned that several members of his flock had already forsaken him."

Inspector Danvers nodded understandingly. "I see," he said. "You mean that if Sam Privett had been content to leave the bell-ringing stunt alone he might have carried on here indefinitely without much risk of detection. Too clever by half—eh?"

"That's it," Sharpe answered, as he slowly filled his pipe. "And now, old man, you may take the credit for all this burglary affair, if you like, because I really wasn't engaged for it at all. I shall tell Mr. Molton how the matter stands—that his ghostly bellringer has definitely retired from business—and then, Timothy Dennis, we shall beat a retreat back to town."

THE END.

(Another thrilling Anthony Sharpe detective story coming soon! Look out for it, boys!)

"IN ANOTHER'S NAME!"

(Continued from page 17.)

Cardew had lost a fiver, and a valuable gold hunter worth many fivers. Blake had lost his wallet, containing a couple of Treasury notes; Kit Wildrake, the Canadian junior, had lost a silver watch—priceless, according to him; while, like the Shell, practically every fellow had been relieved of something.

"What do you make of it, Blake?" asked Tom Merry.

"I'm blessed if I know what to make of it!" grunted Blake moodily. "It's too awful for words. And, from what Kildare said, the thief—or thieves—have been at work in the studies also!"

"I'm afraid so," said Tom Merry.

That question was soon settled. When, after changing, the juniors streamed downstairs, they found that the mysterious marauder had also visited the junior studies. Fortunately, very few fellows kept anything of great value in their studies.

"Who on earth could have done it?" asked Tom Merry, for about the fortieth time. "It's plain it was someone outside."

"Or inside!" grunted Herries. "Who stayed in all afternoon? Surely somebody spotted or heard something?"

"Skimpole and Trimble were indoors, and so were Racke and his pals," said Tom Merry. "But old Skimpy's out of the question, so's Baggy. And as for Racke & Co.—well, even they must be ruled out of this. It's above their weight, in any case."

"What about that new chap—Lathom?" asked Kit Wildrake hesitatingly.

Blake shook his head, and laughed.

"He was out running with us, of course," he said. "But that reminds me. Where on earth can Gussy have got to? Anybody seen him?"

"I did," said Gore of the Shell, who was standing near. "I overtook him the other-side of Rylecombe Woods. He'd sprained his ankle, and was turning back."

"My hat! Then where is the silly dummy?" asked Blake. "We'd better ask old Taggy if he's come in yet."

And, followed by Herries and Digby, and the Terrible Three, the puzzled Blake hurried along the passage. As they were crossing the lighted hall, a muddily figure, clad in running-shorts, came up the steps and entered. It was the red-haired Ginger.

"Hallo! You back, then?" said Blake, eyeing him curiously. "I say, where did you leave Gussy, Lathom?"

"Far side of the woods," replied Ginger, with a stare. "He'd sprained 'is ankle, or somethin'. But ain't 'e come in yet?"

"No!" said Blake curtly. "But you're jolly late, aren't you?"

"Yes; I guess I got off the trail and lost meself on the moor. But after wanderin' about, I met a farm-labourer, what put me right, and 'ere I am," said Ginger coolly.

The lie came easily and carelessly. As a matter of fact, the young rascal had been back at St. Jim's a couple of hours ago. The first twenty minutes of that time had been spent in rifling the deserted studies and dormitories, and then he had returned to the cloisters with his haul, and, after hiding it there, had remained in hiding until now.

But the juniors saw no reason to doubt his explanation, and they passed into the darkening quad.

Ginger grinned after them.

"Then they don't suspect me!" he muttered. "That was a cute dodge o' mine to 'ide out of the way for a bit. They won't suspect me now. But, my 'at! Where can old Eyeglass 'ave got to?"

But that was a question which quite a number of people at St. Jim's were soon to be asking that evening.

For D'Arcy was missing. Inquiries were made round about, and at a late hour search-parties composed of seniors scoured the neighbourhood, but without avail. D'Arcy seemed to have completely vanished. And St. Jim's retired that night buzzing with excitement and suspense. The wholesale thefts alone had caused a tremendous sensation; but the unaccountable disappearance of D'Arcy quite put that in the shade. The affair was a mystery—or, at least, it was a mystery to all but Ginger, the new boy.

"They've got 'im!" muttered that youth fiercely, as he went up to the Fourth Form dormitory that night. "E bin messin' about the camp, and they've collared 'im. But I ain't goin' to 'ave old Eyeglass 'armed, and if the gov'nor starts any games with 'im, there's goin' to be trouble."

Which showed that Ginger, the impostor, had his own ideas of right and wrong!

THE END.

(See particulars of next week's programme in page 2.)

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