

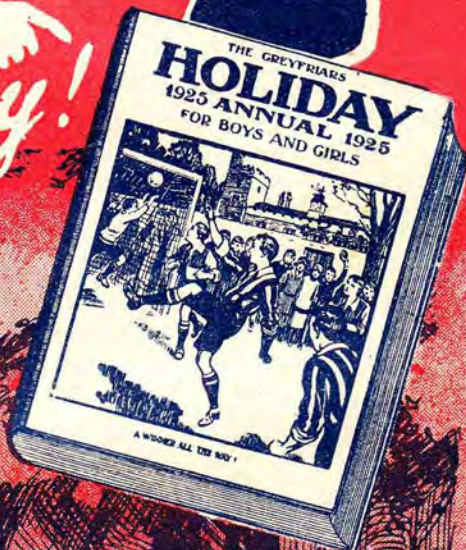
OUT NEXT MONDAY—THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"—ORDER IT TO-DAY

The GEM 2^D

EVERY WEDNESDAY

No. 864.
Vol. XXVI.
August 30th,
1924.

Out next Monday!



THE PERIL OF ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY!

The swell of St. Jim's slept on peacefully, quite unconscious of the nearness of the desperate fugitive from justice! (A dramatic incident from the grand long complete school story of Tom Merry & Co. inside.)



Your Editor Chats With His Readers.

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

"JUNGLE JINKS" Every Thursday

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"
Published Yearly

MY DEAR CHUMS,—It is no end of a pleasant task to me this week to introduce some of the leading features of our new issue to my friends and readers all over the world. But before proceeding with this agreeable duty, I will just refer to the grand opportunity you now have offered of obtaining the "Holiday Annual." The new volume of that cheery book beats all records. It is bright and captivating. It will dismiss dull care, and turn a wet day into the cheeriest of times. The book is known to practically every reader of the GEM. What I hope my chums will do is to circulate the good news of the splendid volume. Its stories are the best on the market.

"THE CAPTURED CARAVAN!"

By Martin Clifford.

There are lively times for the famous seven on tramp. Coming events cast their shadows before. The new yarn brings in the doughty Horace Coker of Greyfriars, with his trusty henchmen, Potter and Greene. When St. Jim's encounters Greyfriars it is a case of Greeks meeting Greeks. Coker has a caravan, and the two opposing parties clash in exciting fashion. We all know Coker. His methods are often hectic, and in this rollicking new story his character gets the limelight generously. But he does not find it easy going. He may think that St. Jim's can be sat upon; but Coker often makes mistakes. He has a few errors to his credit in Mr. Martin Clifford's latest yarn. Tom Merry & Co. are on the warpath with a vengeance, and the outcome will please all Gemites. Not a doubt of that!

A SCOUTING NUMBER!

The "St. Jim's News" will be well to the fore next week with a special issue all about Scouts. The St. Jim's troop has done great things. It is still doing them. The many readers who write to me about the supplement will be satisfied this time. The "St. Jim's News" has never had anything smarter or more appropriate, for the whole world is interested in the Scout movement nowadays, and there is abundant reason for it.

"THE STOLEN RACER!"

By Cecil Fanshaw.

A gripping yarn of the Turf will be found in the GEM for next Wednesday. It narrates a thrilling experience of Sid Morris, the stable-boy. Sid is confronted
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with a problem which taxes him more severely than any difficulty which has come his way yet. That he wins through against odds is enormously to his credit. You will be interested in the strange discovery of an American visitor. He has something to say about the Ashdown House Stables, which is much to the point.

"THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!"

By Roland Spencer.

In the next instalment the Result gets rammed. This is but one thrilling episode in a narrative which increases in excitement with each chapter. Sarky Marline distinguishes himself once more next week.

A REQUEST!

Every season that comes round there are more students of natural history busy finding out the secrets of the woods and fields. A GEM reader tells me he wishes to get into touch with other supporters of the old paper who are as keen as he is on Nature subjects. Perhaps readers of similar tastes will write to John Boyd, Barlea, St. Catherine's Road, Giffnach, near Glasgow.

SNAKES!

A Yorkshire reader tells me he wants to have a snake for a pet, or a chameleon. He is not specially particular about which, but he is interested in the East, and he is, so he says, a youth of quaint notions. Now, there is no means of packing a crowd of details about snakes in a few lines. The species vary enormously. My chum must go to a dealer and inspect his stock, and pick up a few facts about the food required, etc. But as he wants a pet, what's the matter with a cheery dog?

THE TUCK HAMPER!

Many thanks to a chum who tells me he is simply delighted with the Tuck Hamper he has duly received. I am glad to say that this interesting competition is swinging along in fine style. Send in your best yarnlet with a twinkle in it. It may be your chance next time. Address entries to the "Editor, the GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4."

FREE BICYCLES!

For THREE WORDS our grand companion paper, the "Magnet Library," is offering a WEEKLY PRIZE of a HANDSOME "ROYAL ENFIELD" BICYCLE. That sounds simple, doesn't it, chums? Take it from me, the "Magnet" "CHARACTERS" COMPETITION IS SIMPLE! This is an opportunity that every GEM reader should make the most of; £8 bikes are not usually "picked up" so easily. For full particulars of this grand offer see this week's issue of the "Magnet Library," and then fill in the coupon right away.

Your Editor.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPERS ARE PRIME!

Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best storytelling in 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.

THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER!

ONLY JUST!

The stern voice of parental authority had made itself heard and little Jackie was forbidden to stay behind in the playground after school hours. "You must come straight home," said father. "If you don't—well, you know!" Jackie did know. He had felt the weight of father's hand before. But one day he forgot the order and arrived home nearly an hour late, dirty and very tired. "Look here," said his father angrily, "didn't you promise me that you wouldn't stay out and play games in the evening?" "Yes, father," was the reply. "And didn't I promise to punish you if you did stay behind?" "Yes, father," answered Jackie, still more meekly. "But as I did not keep my promise I won't hold you to yours!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to M. Pollecoff, Minmanton, South Road, Carnarvon.

QUITE CORRECT!

A country doctor in the North of Ireland was driving down a narrow lane when he noticed an old woman in the middle of the road picking up some pieces of turf. Pulling up his horse, he said sharply: "Women and donkeys are always in the way!" "Sure, sir," said the woman, stepping aside. "I'm glad you've the manners to put yourself last!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Stanley Todd, 37, Topping's Street, Boldon Colliery, Co. Durham.

SOME JOB!

Mr. and Mrs. Brown were out for a trial spin in their new car when the works went wrong and Mr. Brown had to get underneath the car to do some repairs. After a few minutes Mrs. Brown heard some ungentlemanly remarks coming from her husband. "John! John!" she cried. "You shouldn't talk like that! You should have the patience of Job!" "Job, he blowed!" said Mr. Brown. "He never had his nose caught in a cog-wheel, did he?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. E. Carman, 69, Richmond Park, Anfield, Liverpool.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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

Out on tramp, Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. come across the most astounding adventures—and all through Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who insists on sleeping in a strange old castle which the chums come across in their wanderings!



D'ARCY'S DISCOVERY!

A Magnificent Long Complete
School Story of Tom Merry & Co.
on Tramp.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Gussy Asks For It!

"**H**OW far now, fathead?"
"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"
"How far, ass?"
"Weally, Blake——"
"I suggest halting here, while we rag Gussy bald-headed!"
said Monty Lowther.

"Hear, hear!"
"Weally, you fellows——"
There were seven juniors in the party, and six of them seemed quite cross.

All of them were tired and dusty.
Even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, generally a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, looked much the worse for wear.

It was a blazing afternoon in August. The sun was setting now, over the Sussex downs; but it was still hot. The western sky was a mass of crimson and gold; against it, in masses of dark green, rose the wooded downs.

Had Tom Merry & Co. been looking for scenery, they need have gone no farther. But they were looking for something much more prosaic—camp and supper.

Gussy was the guide. Gussy had undertaken to land them at a special spot by six o'clock. Now it was half-past seven. The special spot seemed as far off as ever.

"And to think," said Jack Blake, "that we missed tea to get on to camp and have an early supper—trusting to that ass!"

"That churap!" said Digby.
"That bubbling jabberwock!" said Herries.
"We ought to have known better," remarked Manners.
"We knew quite well that Gussy was a born idiot."
"We did!" assented Lowther.

"We knew he was the biggest ass going!" assented Tom Merry. "It's really our own fault, if that's any comfort."

It wasn't, to judge by the looks of the St. Jim's fellows. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass reproachfully upon his comrades.

"Weally, you fellows——"
"Where's that camp?" demanded Blake. "Where's that dashed picturesque Norman ruin overlooking a stream, just the place for camping out?"

"You've told us all about it," grunted Herries. "Now point it out."

"Weally, Hewwies, it would be imposs to point it out when it is not yet in sight. Be reasonable, old chap."

"How far is it?" roared Tom Merry. "We've been hours and hours on the march. Where is it?"

"It cannot be vewy far now, old fellow. Keep your peekah up. I am as tired as you fellows, you know."

"That doesn't matter," growled Blake. "You've done it. We might have camped in that nice little wood five miles back——"

"And we let Gussy lead us on!" said Monty Lowther. "We actually thought that he knew what he was talking about! Really, we asked for trouble."

"Weally, Lowthah——"
Tom Merry took out his watch.

"We'll give him ten minutes more," he said. "If the camp doesn't turn up in ten minutes, we'll camp where we are, and give Gussy the ragging of his life."

"Hear, hear!"
"I pwotest——"
"Get on!" roared Blake. "You've got ten minutes to find your dashed old Norman ruin. If you haven't found

your giddy ancient ruin by that time, you'll be a modern ruin yourself."

"Weally, Blake——"
"Dry up, and get on."
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sniffed and marched onward, with his six weary companions trudging wearily after him.

Possibly by that time the swell of St. Jim's regretted that he had taken on the job of guide. Certainly his comrades regretted that they had let him do so.

The chums of St. Jim's had come together for a holiday tramp a few days before. They had met at D'Arcy's home a few weeks after the school had broken up for the summer holidays.

They had been camping out for two or three days now, and had enjoyed themselves immensely.

But in all matters, and especially in tramping and camping, the rough has to be taken with the smooth. Just now the St. Jim's party were getting a good allowance of the "rough."

They were in a part of the country unknown to them, with the exception of Gussy. Gussy knew it, or thought he did.

Gussy remembered a picnic in some previous holiday, at a dismantled Norman ruin by a little stream in the heart of the solitary downs. He was quite certain that he could find that lonely ruin without the slightest difficulty.

It was, as he had explained to his chums, an ideal spot for camping. There was water at hand, for bathing and for boiling. The ruin itself, though ancient and dismantled, afforded shelter from the rain—if any. It was far off the beaten track; there was no danger of finding trippers camped there. Hardly anybody knew about the place, in fact, excepting the shepherds of the downs.

So Tom Merry & Co. followed the lead of Arthur Augustus, and even postponed tea, in their touching faith in his guidance.

It was, Gussy had told them, a "few miles."
Of those few miles the party had now covered more than ten, and their destination seemed as far off as ever.

Indeed, they had a suspicion that they were not following a straight track at all, but covering a great deal of ground twice, if not thrice, in winding lanes and footpaths.

Now they were out on the open downs, with not even a sheep in sight; nothing but a glorious sunset, which was beautiful to look upon, but neither grateful nor comforting to a party of tired and hungry schoolboys.

Camping on the open downs, without any shelter if required, and without any water-supply, was not an attractive prospect. But the St. Jim's party were beginning to feel that they were prepared to camp anyhow and anywhere—supper or no supper.

So it was no wonder that they were growing cross, and that Arthur Augustus was in danger of getting a ragging.

The swell of St. Jim's tramped on, accelerating his pace a little, fatigued as he was, the other fellows trailing behind, growing crosser and crosser. They carried little baggage on their walking trip, but even that little seemed to weigh very heavily now.

Arthur Augustus glanced back.

"I feel suah that we are vewy close now, you fellows," he said hopefully.

"Good thing for you, if we are," said Tom Merry grimly. "You've got two more minutes."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"
"Make the most of it," said Blake.

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"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus broke into a trot. His comrades broke into a weary trot behind him.

With the aid of his celebrated eyeglass, Arthur Augustus scanned the downs as he trotted. There was no sign whatever of the Norman ruin he remembered so well, and which he was convinced was now quite close at hand. There was no sign or sound of the babbling stream he had described so enticingly to his comrades.

"You see," said Arthur Augustus, glancing back again, "this gground is vewy iwwegulah. The place might be quite close, and yet hidden froom sight by a woff of the downs."

"One minute!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus trotted on again. The sheep track that the juniors were following extended before them seemingly without end, and the ground was rising. What lay beyond the rise they did not know, or care very much. Only endless downs, they supposed, without a habitation or an inhabitant. It seemed to them that they had been tramping for ages over the rise and fall of the chalk hills.

"Time's up!" said Tom Merry suddenly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Collar him!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been trotting. Now he printed. After him rushed his six exasperated comrades.

"Collar the silly ass!"

"Bump him!"

"Oh cwumps!" gasped Arthur Augustus as he was collared. Bump!

CHAPTER 2:

At Last!

BUMP!

"Oh cwumps! Wefcase me! Ow!"

Bump!

"Yawwooh!"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"There!" gasped Tom Merry. "You ought to have some more, but perhaps that will do to go on with."

"Ow!"

Arthur Augustus sat breathlessly on the chalky earth. He sat and gasped, and glared at his comrades.

"You uttah wottahs—"

"Fathead!"

"You feafuhl wuffians—"

"We'll camp here while Gussy does his chinwag exercises," said Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet. His aristocratic face was crimson with indignation.

"You uttah wottahs!" he gasped. "I wefuse to camp heah. I am goin' on to find a decent camp. It is quite neah at hand. I wefuse to camp with you wottahs, anyhow. I wegard you with contempt."

"Look here, you ass—"

"Wats!"

With a last withering glare at his unrepentant comrades, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his back on them and tramped onward. Jack Blake yelled after him.

"Come back, you burbling chump! We're camping here, I tell you."

Arthur Augustus did not even turn his head. He tramped on doggedly, disregarding.

"Come back, fathead!" roared Tom Merry.

The swell of St. Jim's did not heed.

"Oh, let him rip!" growled Blake. "He's landed us in a precious spot for camping. Not a drop of water, and I'm as dry as a lime-kiln."

"Dry isn't the word for it!" groaned Digby. "I'm simply parched. I'd give five bob for a glass of water."

"What price a lemon-squash!" sighed Monty Lowther.

"Oh, don't!"

It was not a joyous camp. There was tuck in abundance in the ruck-sacks, but the last drop of liquid refreshment had been disposed of en route long ago. It was still hot, and the juniors had the dust of the chalky downs in their throats. They thought of the pellucid stream Gussy had described to them, and wished they had given him another bump or two.

Six juniors sat down in the rough grass, glad to sit down, at any rate. The figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy grew smaller and smaller as he topped the rise ahead. Tom Merry & Co. stared after him idly. At any other time they would have objected to Gussy going off on his own like this; but they were too tired now to bother about it. They were hungry, but still more thirsty, and they would have given anything for a shade from the relentless sunshine that blazed on the unsheltered downs.

"Hallo! The silly ass has stopped!" yawned Manners.

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The figure of Arthur Augustus, dark against the sunset, had come to a standstill on the top of the rise.

"Oh, he'll come back!" said Blake. "Bother him! If he comes back we'll bump him again."

"Yes, rather!"

"What a jolly place for camping!" groaned Digby. "Not even a tree, not a giddy bush! I'm baking!"

"I'm broiling!" sighed Lowther.

"Oh, for just one ginger-pop!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh dear!"

Certainly it was not a happy camp! All six of the campers realised that Gussy hadn't had enough. So they were quite pleased when he turned round in the distance and started to return. It gave them an opportunity to give him some more.

"He's coming back," said Herries.

Arthur Augustus came steadily down the slope towards the spot where the six halted juniors were baking in the sun.

Nearer and nearer he came, his eyeglass gleaming the sunlight back. He stopped at last, a few paces away. Six fellows sat in the grass and stared at him gloomily.

"I have returned," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Though you fellows have behaved like wotten hooligans I felt bound to stand by you, you bein' such a set of helpless duffahs!"

"Eh?"

"I wegard you with uttah contempt, and I wefuse to speak to you," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "But I am goin' to see you thlrough, as I feel that it is up to me to take care of you."

"Just wait a minute," murmured Blake. "I'm too tired to bump you just now. Wait a bit!"

"If you asses had kept on anothah half mile, you would have seen that I was wight," said Arthur Augustus. "Anothah time, powwaps, you will twust a fellow of tact and judgment."

Tom Merry rose from the grass.

"Give him some more!" he said.

"Yes, rather!"

Arthur Augustus backed away.

"Do you fellows know why I have returned?" he asked.

"Because you feel like a lost sheep without your keepers, I suppose!" growled Blake.

"You uttah ass—"

"Collar him!"

"You sillay chumps!" howled Arthur Augustus, jumping back. "I returned to tell you that the wuin is in sight—"

"What!"

"It is just ovah that wise in the gground."

"Oh, my hat! You've seen it?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh!" said Blake. "Water and all?"

"Yaas, you ass!"

"Oh, good!"

"Let's get on," said Tom Merry, with renewed cheerfulness.

The chums of St. Jim's realised now why Arthur Augustus had turned back from the top of the rise. Like Moses of old, he had seen the Promised Land from the hilltop, and had returned with the good news to his flagging followers.

That good news bucked them very much. With renewed energy, they tramped on. It was a weary tramp to the top of the chalky acclivity. But they reached the top at last.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry, as he looked down from the top on to the opposite slope.

"There it is!" said Arthur Augustus, with lofty dignity.

There it was! Less than half a mile away they could see the sunset reflected upon a brawling stream that ran between green, wooded banks. Among the trees by the stream rose masses of ancient masonry—what was left of an ancient Norman stronghold, dismantled many a long century ago.

The juniors' faces brightened.

"Good old Gussy!" said Blake. "He's led us a long way round, but we've got there at last! I vote that we let him off that other bumping!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Looks a jolly spot," said Tom Merry, "and there doesn't seem to be a giddy inhabitant for miles. We shall have it all to ourselves!"

"Topping!"

"You're let off, Gussy!" said Blake.

"Wats!"

"Look here—"

"Pway, do not address me, Blake! I wefuse to speak to you atfah your wuffianly conduct!"

"Thanks no end!" said Blake cheerily. "I'm in need of a rest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus made no rejoinder. With a set and dignified face, he walked on. Evidently the swell of St. Jim's was seriously offended. But his comrades were too



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood unsteadily, striking out blindly in all directions at an unseen, intangible foe. There was a shout from the distance. It was followed by the sound of running feet, and an electric lamp flashed among the ruins. Jack Blake was shouting. "Gussy! Where are you? Gussy!" "Help!" yelled D'Arcy. (See page 2.)

tired and hungry and thirsty to bother about that. They hurried on as fast as their weary legs would go, down the grassy slope towards the stream.

CHAPTER 3. In Camp!

"RIPPING!"

"Top-hole!"

"All right, and no mistake!"

Tom Merry & Co. were in a joyful mood now. That solitary spot in the heart of the downs was all that they had wanted, and more. A plunge into the cool stream was extremely refreshing after their long tramp. It was a relief to get rid of the dust of the highways and byeways. And never had ginger-pop seemed so delicious as deep draughts from the pellucid water of the stream.

Now they were in camp.

Only a red glow remained of the sunset in the west, and the moon was peeping up over the downs. There was plenty of firewood to be gathered along the stream, and the juniors had a camp-fire going, with a kettle singing over it and an iron pot simmering. The quenching of their thirst had quickened their hunger, and they were more than ready for supper.

Arthur Augustus sat on a camp-stool at a little distance from his comrades. His aristocratic face was still frozen in dignity in the ruddy light of the camp fire.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another and looked at Gussy and smiled. They were still of opinion that he had asked for a ragging, for there was little doubt that he had led them over many a long and weary and unnecessary mile. But here they were in camp and comfort, and so they had freely forgiven Gussy. But Gussy, it appeared, was not forgiving them. The juniors felt that it was time for Gussy to come round.

"Supper's ready, Gussy!" called out Blake.

"Thank you!" said D'Arcy, with calm dignity.

"You'll like this stew, old man!"

"I twust so!"

"Let me help you," said Blake hospitably.

"Thank you! I can help myself!"

"Anything the matter, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"You are vewy well awah what is the mattah, Blake."

"Toothache?" asked Blake sympathetically.

"Certainly not."

"Pain in your little inside?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, what's the matter, then, old fellow?"

"I wufese to discuss it with you, Blake, and I have already wemarked that I pwefer you not to address your wemarks to me."

"Floored again!" sighed Blake.

The juniors gave their attention to supper. They did it full justice, and Gussy's frozen attitude of dignity, fortunately, did not impair his appetite; he also did justice to a hearty supper. Then Tom Merry & Co. rested luxuriously in the grass, while Arthur Augustus sat on his camp-stool with his back to the old wall of the ruin. Arthur Augustus gazed straight before him at the stream, seemingly unconscious of the presence of six cheery juniors.

Round the camp the shades of night were settling down like a dark velvet cloak. Against the darkness the camp-fire leaped and flamed brightly. In the silence the murmur of the stream came musically through the night. The juniors felt as if they had been transported hundreds of miles from the habitations of men. In that solitude and silence it was really difficult to believe that there was a village within two or three miles and a railway-station within five or six. With the velvety darkness wrapping them in, they had a feeling as if they were camping in the heart of some vast unpeopled solitude.

"Might be in the middle of a giddy American prairie!" remarked Manners.

"Only there you wouldn't have the current number of the 'Daily Mail,'" said Blake, with a grin.

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And he drew that publication from his pocket.

"I picked this up at the last village we passed," he added. "I thought you'd like the latest cricket reports, Gussy!"

The juniors grinned; but Arthur Augustus did not smile. He did not seem to hear Blake. Evidently the swell of St. Jim's was not "coming round" yet!

"Your brother Conway is playing for Hampshire, isn't he, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas!"

"I think he's mentioned here," said Blake. "Shall I read out the report to you, Gussy?"

"You need not trouble."

"No trouble at all," said Blake blandly.

And he read the cricket report to Gussy.

Arthur Augustus did not heed.

"Hallo! Here's something to interest old Gussy!" said Blake, the cricket news having failed to "draw" the swell of St. Jim's.

"What's that?" asked Tom Merry, as Arthur Augustus did not speak.

"Great sale of neckties and silk socks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus gave no sign.

"Like me to read out the parties, Gussy?" asked Blake affably. "It's a bit of a trouble reading by firelight; but if you're interested—"

"I am not intewested!"

"Not interested in a sale of silk socks!" exclaimed Blake, in astonishment.

"Wats!"

"Well, that beats it," said Blake. "I thought I'd found something to make you sit up and take notice, old chap!"

"Will you kindly address your remarks to someone else, Blake?"

"Anything else in the paper?" asked Tom Merry, laughing. The process of bringing Arthur Augustus round seemed to be a rather protracted one.

"Let's see. Yes, that man Scaley isn't caught yet," said Blake, glancing at the news columns.

"Who the thump's Scaley?" asked Manners.

"Banker man who bolted with the funds. He's been in the papers a lot lately," said Blake. "He's supposed to have got abroad with a stolen passport, and they're looking for him in France and Italy. Like me to read it out, Gussy?"

"I am not intewested in abscondin' bankahs, Blake!"

"I was just thinking that this is where Gussy would have come in useful," said Blake, with a private wink at his comrades. "What they really need in a case like this is the help of a fellow of tact and judgment."

"That's so," said Tom Merry gravely.

"This man Scaley has got away with ten thousand pounds and beaten Scotland Yard hollow!" said Blake.

"Would he have done that with a fellow like Gussy on his track?"

"Never!"

"Well, hardly ever!" murmured Lowther.

"I've often thought that Gussy would make a first-rate detective," went on Blake musingly. "Tact, you know—"

"And judgment—" said Digby solemnly.

"And his way of getting right to the point," said Herries, entering into the game, as it were.

"Especially when he's leading fellows to a camp!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Hem! Yes! What do you think, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus' face was relaxing. The soothing voice of flattery was beginning to have its effect. But just then the process of pulling Gussy's leg and bringing him round was interrupted in a rather startling fashion.

Crash!

There was a roar from the camp-fire, and a scattering of sparks. The juniors leaped to their feet, startled.

"What the thump—"

"What—"

"Stand clear!" shouted Tom Merry.

He seized Arthur Augustus and dragged him away from the old wall. The juniors backed away hurriedly. From the darkness above a fragment of stone came crashing down. It landed in the camp-fire, again scattering wild sparks far and wide.

"Oh, my hat! Keep clear of that dashed old wall!" exclaimed Blake. "The whole dashed thing may come tumbling down."

The juniors backed farther off. Two large stones had crashed down, both into the camp-fire. A third one came whizzing, and it crashed on the ground only a few inches from the spot where Arthur Augustus had been sitting. A fourth followed, and the camp-stool upon which the swell of St. Jim's had sat was crushed out of all resemblance to a camp-stool beneath a fragment of rock weighing at least twenty pounds.

"Phew!" gasped Tom Merry.

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Standing at a safe distance, the juniors looked up in the darkness, watching for a further fall of the old masonry. But there was no more. Silence succeeded to the deafening crashes of the falling stones.

CHAPTER 4.

On His Own!

TOM MERRY & CO. stood for some minutes without speaking. Their faces were startled and a little pale. Scattered patches of the camp-fire burned in three or four places, and Tom Merry stirred at last and proceeded to stamp them out. It was a sudden and unexpected danger that had loomed over the camping party. They had camped under the shadow of the ancient wall, without a thought that it might be unsafe, though at the foot of it lay little heaps of broken masonry which must have fallen from the top at different times—heaps covered with mosses and grass.

Arthur Augustus proceeded to smooth his collar and tie, which had been disturbed by Tom Merry's grasp. Tom had dragged him out of danger, but Gussy was thinking chiefly of his collar.

"Well, my hat!" said Manners at last. "That was a starter! Fancy the dashed old wall giving when we were sitting fairly under it!"

"Might have knocked our brains out," said Blake, with a slight shiver. "We were rather asses, really. We might have known some more of that old wall would come down some time. There's a lot down already."

Tom Merry stared up at the wall. His brow was wrinkled in a puzzled frown.

"It's queer, though," he said.

"Don't see it," said Blake. "There's a ton or two lying around that's come down at one time or another. It will all come down some day."

"Yes, but you can see that those fragments are moss-grown; they've been down some time," said Tom. "I fancy bits of the wall come tumbling down when there's a storm or a high wind. But there's no wind to-night—hardly a breath of air. It's odd that the wall should start tumbling now."

"Must be on its last legs," said Blake carelessly. "We'll jolly well camp at a safe distance from it."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Tom.

"Gussy's camp-stool has gone west," said Monty Lowther. Lucky Gussy didn't go west along with it. You got him away just in time, Tom."

"I was just goin' to retire from the spot," said Arthur Augustus coldly, "and I wewget that you considered it necessary to wumple my collah in this way, Tom Mewwy."

"What?" ejaculated Tom.

"My collah is wumpled and wuffed, and pwactically wuined, and you are awah that I am vewy short of collahs."

"You silly ass, did you want that rock on your silly napper?" roared Tom Merry.

"I wufuse to be called a sillay ass!" was Arthur Augustus' frigid answer.

"After all, it wouldn't have knocked Gussy's brains out," remarked Lowther. "You can't knock out what isn't there."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, what about turning in?" said Blake, with a yawn. "I'm jolly tired. I was thinking we'd camp in the ruins, but after those stones coming down I think we'd better give that dashed old show a wide berth, what?"

"The wider the better," said Tom. "It's a fine night, and we don't want any shelter. We'll keep well outside. It would be no joke to be woke up by an old wall tumbling on one's head."

The juniors unpacked their sleeping gear from the ruck-sacks. It was of the simplest variety, but sufficient for camping on warm August nights. They selected a spot far enough from the ruin to be safe from falling stones, and were settling down, when they observed that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was moving off.

"Where are you going, fathead?" called out Blake.

No reply.

"Where are you going, Gussy?" roared Blake.

"I am goin' to camp."

"Camp with us here, ass."

"I wufuse to camp with fellows I am no longah fwinds with."

"You silly owl!" roared Blake.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus moved on, and disappeared through the yawning opening in the old walls where once a gateway had been. He took his ground-sheet and his rug with him.

Blake sat up, anxious.

"Gussy," he bawled, "you know jolly well that it's not safe in the ruins! Come out, you burbling ass!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"If you camp there we'll jolly well come after you and root you out, you born idiot!"



The hunted man tore off D'Arcy's necktie, and used it to bind the junior's hands behind his back. Then taking a great mass of stone in both hands, he rolled it aside, revealing a dark opening in the midst of the piled masonry. He signed savagely to the junior to enter, and Arthur Augustus obeyed. (See page 16.)

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy—" called out Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus did not answer. He had disappeared from sight, and now he was silent also. Evidently he was determined not to camp with the fellows who had handled him so disrespectfully, forgetful of the claims of his lofty dignity.

"The silly ass!" growled Blake. "I'd go after him and yank him back by his silly ears, only I'm so jolly tired."

"Oh, let him rip!" yawned Dig.

"After all, he'll find a safe spot; he's not such an idiot," said Tom Merry. "The old duffer will turn up bright and smiling in the morning. I'm going to sleep."

Tom Merry closed his eyes, and in less than a minute was deep in the embrace of Morpheus. The other fellows followed his example. They were tired out by their long tramp under Gussy's guidance, and they could have slept through a thunderstorm. Over the wide downs the moon sailed, streaming down silver light, on trees and stream and rolling ridges, and on six recumbent forms.

Arthur Augustus did not settle down so soon. He was looking for a camp in the Norman ruin.

He had a pocket electric torch with him, and he turned on its light as he went into the dismantled old place. At almost every step he stumbled over fragments of fallen masonry. Hardly a fragment of any roof remained, but on all sides the old walls rose, jagged at their tops where fragments had broken away, pierced here and there by old broken spaces where windows had been. Through the openings and crannies in the old walls the moonlight glimmered with a strangely eerie effect.

Arthur Augustus started at a sudden sound in the ruin. It was the clink of a falling stone.

"Bai Jove! I shall have to be careful!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's.

The old ruin was very silent, and in the glimmering moonlight looked ghostly, uncanny. Arthur Augustus regretted a little, perhaps, that he had not, after all, camped with the rest of the party. They were not a hundred yards away, but there was no sound or movement from them, and the silence and solitude of the Norman ruin had an eerie effect on him. However, he did not think of turning back.

He flashed his light to and fro, looking for a spot to arrange his ground-sheet and rug out of danger of falling stones. Strange shadows moved and danced in the moonlight and

the flashing ray of the electric torch. Arthur Augustus halted suddenly, his heart beating more quickly. He almost believed that, as he passed round a stack of piled masonry, a dark figure darted away in shadowy silence.

"Oh!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

The next moment he smiled.

"Bai Jove! I'm gettin' nerves!" he murmured. "Those fellows would gwin if they knew I had jumped at a shadow! Wats!"

And he moved on resolutely, heedless of ghostly shadows.

He stopped at last, and spread his ground-sheet on the cracked old moss-grown flags, and settled down to sleep, with his rug round him. He was as tired as the rest of the party, and in a few minutes he was deep in slumber—from which he was destined to have a sudden and rude awakening.

CHAPTER 5.

A Wild Night for Gussy!

"O H!"

Arthur Augustus gasped as he woke.

What had happened—what was happening?

The swell of St. Jim's had been dreaming as he lay asleep in the old ruin on the downs. He had dreamed of old times, of Norman knights in armour, and fair ladies—dim pictures called up to his mind by his surroundings. The dream had changed into a nightmare—brought on, possibly, by fatigue, and possibly by the fact that Arthur Augustus was sleeping on his back. It seemed to him that, from the visionary crowd of dim, mediæval figures that peopled his dream, one figure had detached itself, and was creeping upon him—creeping, creeping, with stealthy tread. As is usual in the grip of a nightmare, he was unable to move. He lay still, as under a spell, and still that strange figure crept closer, till it bent over him and grasped him by the throat.

In that horrid grasp the swell of St. Jim's awoke.

For an instant he knew that it was a dream. He had dreamed that a savage hand was laid on his throat.

The next instant cold shudders ran through his spine. For his throat was in an unseen grasp.

It was no dream now.

Some dark, indefinable shape was bending over him, and fingers that seemed like steel were twined round his gasping

throat, and for some seconds the swell of St. Jim's lay, overcome with horror.

Then he struggled up, striking out wildly.

Unknown even to himself a loud and terrible cry burst from him. It rang and echoed through the old ruins.

His lashing fists struck nothing. The grasp on his throat was gone. Scarcely knowing what he did, D'Arcy stood unsteadily, still striking out blindly in all directions at an unseen intangible foe.

There was a shout from the distance.

It was followed by the sound of running feet, and an electric lamp flashed among the ruins. Jack Blake was shouting.

"Gussy, where are you? Gussy!"

"Help!" yelled D'Arcy.

"We're coming!"

Stumbling over the loose stones, Jack Blake came dashing up, the electric light flashing in his hand. There was a patter of hurried footsteps as his comrades followed him. Blake arrived, breathless and panting.

"Gussy! Oh, you're all right!"

"Yaas!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in the excitement of the moment forgetting that he was no longer on speaking terms with his comrades. "He's gone!"

"He? Who?" exclaimed Tom Merry, coming up panting.

"The—the wascal who collared me!"

"Collared you?" exclaimed Tom blankly. "Who did?"

"I—I don't know! Somebody did!"

The juniors were all on the scene now. They stared round among the masses of shadowy masonry.

"You think somebody collared you?" asked Herries.

"I do not think that somebody did, Hewwies. I know that somebody did. He gasped my throat and woke me up!"

"H'm!"

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"If you do not believe me, Hewwies——"

"You were dreaming, old chap."

"It was not a dream, Hewwies!"

"Well, you can see that there's nobody here excepting us," said the practical Herries. "So you must have dreamed it, you see!"

"You haven't been robbed?" asked Dig.

"No."

"There might be some tramp camping here, I suppose," said Tom. "But why should he touch you? He might have taken your watch while you were asleep, but he wouldn't want to throttle you, I suppose. Besides, he didn't! If a fellow had you by the throat you couldn't have yelled unless he'd let you go."

"I suppose he let go."

"H'm!"

A sudden suspicion flashed into D'Arcy's mind. He glanced round sharply at his companions.

"Was it one of you fellows playin' twicks?" he demanded.

"Oh, my hat! No!"

"It would be just like one of Lowthah's sillay twicks."

"You silly owl!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "I've been fast asleep, only you woke me up with your yelling!"

"I do not wemembah yellin', Lowthah!"

"Well, you did, like a cat with its tail on fire."

"You sillay ass——"

"It's nerves, old man, through camping here alone," said Herries. "You shouldn't have done it. Come back and camp with us now."

"It was just nightmare, old man," urged Dig.

"Nerves!" repeated Herries.

Arthur Augustus, with a stony face, proceeded to rearrange his rug. His comrades looked at him.

"Are you sticking here?" demanded Manners.

"Yaas!"

"Look here! Come back with us!" exclaimed Blake.

"I refuse to do anythin' of the kind! I will show you fellows whethah I suffah fwom nerves!" said Arthur Augustus scornfully.

"Look here, you ass——" exclaimed Blake impatiently. Blake was feeling strongly tempted to punch the noble nose of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Pway wetire and leave me to west," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"But if there's somebody lurking around, who took you by the neck, you don't want to stay here alone and have it over again!" urged Tom.

"I shall not go to sleep again. I shall keep watch for the wascal, and give him a feahful thwashin' if he turns up again!"

"Better come back and camp with us."

"Wats!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at Gussy. They were quite convinced that he had been the victim of a nightmare, and that there was nothing more in it than that. All the same, they were reluctant to leave him alone in the ruins. It was barely possible that some ruffianly tramp, hitherto unseen, was

lurking in the old ruin, though why he should have taken the sleeping junior by the throat was a mystery.

"You won't come away?" asked Tom at last.

"Certainly not!"

"Then we'll jolly well camp here with you," said Tom. "I don't believe anything's really happened, but we're not leaving you alone after this. I can still hear that horrid yell you gave. It made me think for a minute that something awful had happened."

"I should pwefer you to wetire and leave me alone."

"Rats!"

"I have already remarked that I wegard you fellows with uttah contempt, and have no desiah whatevah for your company!" said Arthur Augustus crushingly.

"My dear chap, that's all right—we're used to your funny ways, you know," said Blake cheerily.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard and deep. In his deep indignation he quite forgot the horror of his late experience. To have his lofty and overwhelming dignity characterised as "funny ways" was really too much. He did not answer—words failed him. He lay down in his rug again, ignoring the existence of Tom Merry & Co.

The juniors fetched their sleeping things and settled down round him. They were soon fast asleep, not at all alarmed or disturbed by Gussy's recital of what had happened to him—having not the slightest doubt that it had been merely nightmare.

But Arthur Augustus was determined to remain awake.

He remembered, with a shudder, that clutch of a steely hand on his throat; he knew, or, at least, he was certain, that it had been real and not a part of his dream. And he was resolved to watch for the unknown rascal who had grasped him, hoping that the dastard would turn up again while he was on the watch.

The swell of St. Jim's remained keenly on the watch for about ten minutes. Then his eyelids drooped.

He was very sleepy.

"Bai Jove! I'm noddin' off!" he murmured drowsily. "I—I mustn't go to sleep—I mustn't—I—I——"

And he slumbered.

He woke suddenly, feeling a grasp on his shoulder, shaking him vigorously. His eyes, as they opened, were dazzled by bright sunshine. He started up.

"You scoundwel! It is you again! You wascally wuffian, I——"

"Draw it mild, old man," chuckled Blake.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

It was broad daylight and the grasp on his shoulder was Blake's, and Blake was shaking him to wake him up. Arthur Augustus rubbed his eyes and rose to his feet.

"Oh! You!" he said sheepishly.

Blake chuckled.

"Little me! You've been sleeping like a top! We've got breakfast ready, Gussy; old man. Take a dip while I'm making the coffee."

"Wight-ho!"

And Arthur Augustus walked down to the stream and plunged into the cool water, and then joined his comrades at breakfast on the sunny greensward.

CHAPTER 6.

Left Behind!

TOM MERRY & CO. disposed of a cheery breakfast. There were rashers of bacon fried over the spirit stove, eggs poached by Blake's skilful hand, coffee that was fresh and hot and comforting. Over that hearty breakfast the chums of St. Jim's discussed their plans for the day, hardly noticing that Arthur Augustus did not contribute any remarks to the discussion. They had almost forgotten, by that time, that the swell of St. Jim's had let the sun go down on his wrath, and it did not occur to them in the cheery morning on the downs, that he had allowed the sun to rise upon it also. But so it was! The dignity of Arthur Augustus had been offended, and that was a serious matter, howsoever unimportant it might seem to the other fellows. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was wrapped in chilly dignity as in a garment.

"We'll take it easy to-day," said Tom Merry. "We put in a few extra miles yesterday owing to Gussy being guide——"

"Without getting any forrarder," remarked Manners.

"Still, we did the miles," said Tom. "Let's have an easy morning, and get to Redleaf in time for lunch at the inn. So far as I can make out there's a village called Redleaf about four miles from here, and there's bound to be an inn there."

"Good egg!" agreed Blake.

"We'll have a ramble over this giddy old ruin before we start," said Blake. "I dare say it's worth seeing if anybody ever came this way to see it."

"Yes, let's," assented Tom.

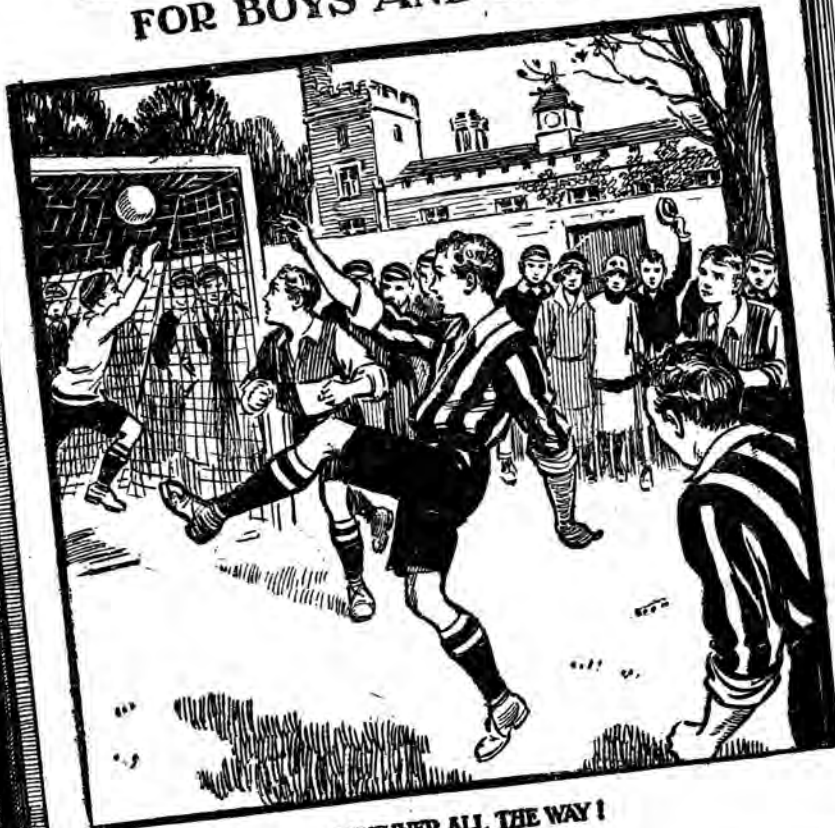
Having finished breakfast, and washed up and packed up

(Continued on page 10.)

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ready to start, the juniors strolled towards the ruins. Arthur Augustus remained sitting by the stream, and Blake called back to him.

"Don't you want to explore the jolly old ruin, Gussy?"

"Wats!"

"Oh, my hat! I forgot Gussy was on his dignity!" yawned Blake. "Perhaps he will get over it by the time we start. Come on!"

Leaving Arthur Augustus sitting by the stream, with no company but that of his lofty dignity, the six juniors went into the ruins. There did not seem much to see. Once upon a time, no doubt, the building had been of some importance—perhaps the retreat of some fierce old Norman robber baron. But centuries had passed since it had been habitable. An antiquary might have found interest in it, but to the St. Jim's juniors it was little more than a congeries of shabby old walls and masses of fallen masonry, piled in wild disorder. They clambered and stumbled over moss-grown heaps.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly. "Somebody's been here rather recently, you chaps."

He stooped over a cranny in the broken-heaps, and picked up a quite unromantic object. It was a corned beef tin, empty. Fractions of its former contents clung to the inside of the tin, and Tom, who had learned to use his eyes as a Boy Scout, noted that it was quite fresh, showing that the tin had only recently been opened.

"This was opened yesterday," said Tom. "Somebody must have been camping here then. My hat! I wonder if there really was a tramp in the ruins last night, playing tricks on Gussy."

"Why the dickens should he?" said Herries.

"Blessed if I know! Might have meant to pick his pocket," said Tom. "Anyhow, that tin shows that somebody was here yesterday, and he might have stayed the night."

"If so, he was gone before we woke up this morning," said Lowther. "We saw nothing of him."

"Oh, he's gone right enough," agreed Tom.

The juniors clambered about among the ruins for half an hour or more, when they realised that they had had enough of exploring. They found no further traces of campers, and certainly saw no sign of anyone but themselves about the spot.

"I'm fed-up with this," yawned Blake. "About time we got on the march, too. Let's chuck it!"

"Just what I was thinking," assented Tom.

And the ramble in the ruins was "chucked" accordingly. The juniors made their way out, and walked back to the camp by the stream, where they had left Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's was no longer there. Blake knitted his brows.

"That silly ass can't have gone off on his own!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, bless him!" growled Herries. "I'm getting rather fed-up with Gussy. Better give him another ragging."

"My hat! There he is—on top of the wall!" exclaimed Tom.

"The ass! He will break his neck next."

Silhouetted against the blue, cloudless sky, the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could be seen. He had climbed to the top of the old wall, from which the fragments had fallen into the camp-fire the previous night. He seemed to be examining the broken summit of the wall with a strange intentness.

"Gussy!" roared Blake.

The juniors walked back towards the ruins. Arthur Augustus did not heed them; he did not even glance down at the six juniors standing at the foot of the wall, on the ashes of the last night's camp-fire.

"Come down, fathead!" roared Blake.

"That wall isn't safe, ass!" bawled Herries. "Don't you remember that part of it toppled down last night, dummy?" Then the eyeglass of Arthur Augustus was turned towards his comrades below.

"The wall is quite safe!" he called back.

"It wasn't safe last night, ass, or some of it wouldn't have toppled down into our camp."

"It did not topple down into our camp, Hewwies."

"You ass, don't you remember the stones nearly bumped on your silly head?" shouted Herries.

"Yaas!"

"Well, then, fathead—"

"Those stones did not topple down, Hewwies. I have examined the wall vewy carefully, and I am convinced that they did not topple down. They were thrown down."

"Thrown down?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And who threw them down, ass?" demanded Digby.

"The same chap who collared me when I was asleep, I pwesume!"

"What rot!"

"I don't know," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I was rather surprised at the stones tumbling down, when there was

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no wind. And you remember that tin we found? It looks as if there really was somebody in the ruins last night trying to jape us."

"Might have been," said Blake. "Anyhow, he's gone now, if he was ever there. Come down, Gussy!"

"I am not comin' down, Blake."

"But we're just goin' to start!"

"I am not pweventin' you fworm startin', Blake!"

"We're not going without you, ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, especially by a fellow whose acquaintance I have dropped."

"Look here, you burbling bandersnatch—"

"Wats!"

"Gussy, old man—" pleaded Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus, standing on the top of the old wall, looked down on the six juniors with implacable severity. His very eyeglass gleamed with disdain.

"I wegard you," he said crushingly, "as a lot of wuffians. I wefuse to twamp any longah with you. I wefire fworm the partay!"

"You silly chump!" roared Herries.

"I shall be obliged if you will cease to address oppwewbious epithets to me, or any wemarks whatevah!"

Blake breathed hard.

"Look here, you ass, if you don't join up at once, you burbler, we shall start and leave you behind, you howling jabblerwock!"

"I am waitin' for you to do so," answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "I shall not descend until you are gone."

For full five minutes Tom Merry & Co. stood at the foot of the wall, telling Arthur Augustus D'Arcy what they thought of him. They told him quite plainly, in fact with painful frankness, and they told him at the top of their voices.

But their objurgations produced no effect whatever upon the swell of St. Jim's. He listened with calm disdain.

Evidently the noble mind of Arthur Augustus was made up. And when he had made up his noble mind he had the firmness of a rock, not to say the obstinacy of a mule.

The chums of St. Jim's gave it up at last.

Herries suggested clambering on the wall, and dragging Gussy down by main force. But as that would have led to broken limbs, and possibly to broken necks, Herries' suggestion was not adopted.

"After all, it's a free country," said Monty Lowther. "If a chap wants to play the goat, let him play the giddy goat. And let us get off!"

"Last time of asking, Gussy!" bawled Blake.

"Wats!"

The juniors walked back to the stream. They were exasperated with their noble chum—and undoubtedly, had Arthur Augustus been within reach, he would have had another bumping, and his lofty dignity would have received a fresh shock.

"Are we going to drop the ass like this?" asked Tom.

"We can't hang about here for ever," said Manners.

Blake knitted his brows.

"We're in no hurry to get anywhere special," he said.

"Let's walk over to Redleaf as we arranged. We'll have a day on the downs, and come back here to-night to camp. By that time the asinine dummy will be fed-up with playing the goat."

"Right!" said Digby.

The Terrible Three looked dubious—upon which Blake at once became obstinate.

"You Shell bouncers can clear off if you like," he said.

"But Gussy's our pal, though he's a howling ass, and we're not standing him."

"Oh, bosh!" said Tom Merry cheerily. "A day on the downs will be all right. We'll get lunch at Redleaf. Come on!"

And the juniors started.

As they passed the ruin, Blake shouted up to the elegant youth on top of the old wall.

"We're going, Gussy!"

"Vewy good!"

"Sure you won't come?"

"Quite suah!"

"Fathead!"

"Wats!"

And six juniors tramped away, and were soon lost to the sight of the swell of St. Jim's, standing on the top of the wall, and gazing calmly and implacably after them.

CHAPTER 7.

D'Arcy's Discovery!

"B AI Jove!"

It was noon on the downs.

The August sun blazed down, and the grass and the chalky ridges summered with heat.

It was very pleasant in the shade of the trees by the running stream, close to the old Norman ruin.



There was a roar from the camp fire, and a scattering of sparks. The juniors leaped to their feet, startled. "What the thump—" "What—" "Stand clear!" shouted Tom Merry. He seized Arthur Augustus and dragged him away from the old wall. The juniors backed away hurriedly. From the darkness above, a fragment of stone came crashing down. (See page 6.)

But Arthur Augustus was growing restless.

He had spent the morning exploring the Norman ruin; thinking that perhaps the unknown person who had played tricks on him the night before might be still lingering there. But he had found no trace of a human being's presence—only one or two traces that someone had been there recently. Had he found the unknown trickster, Arthur Augustus was prepared to give him a fearful thrashing—overlooking any difficulty he might have found in thrashing some hefty, bulky tramp. But there was no tramp—and at noon Gussy unpacked supplies from his rucksack, and took his solitary lunch.

He had not repented of the parting with his comrades. His dignity had been offended; and with Gussy, a question of personal dignity came before all other questions whatsoever.

But undoubtedly he was feeling lonely.

Also, he was at rather a loss—he felt at a loose end. To continue the summer tramp "on his own" was not a very attractive idea. And to go home and give it up was not attractive either. Neither was it attractive to camp by the Norman ruin all by himself. He decided that later in the day he would walk to the nearest railway station and take a train—though he had not quite decided on his destination. Meanwhile, it was very pleasant, though rather solitary, where he was.

Moreover, though Tom Merry & Co. had marched off and disappeared over the downs, Gussy did not quite believe that they were gone for good. And if they came back for him, with proper acknowledgements of the serious fault they had committed, he was prepared to restore them to the old friendly footing. And although he had dropped their acquaintance, the swell of St. Jim's realised that if they came back and found him gone it would be a shock to them, and he did not want to give them that shock. So he determined to put in that day, at least, by the Norman ruin, and leave his departure at least until nightfall.

He did not like the idea of camping alone in the place after the shades of night had fallen. His experience of the previous night was still fresh in his mind. By this time he had come to the conclusion that it had been the act of some vagrant, probably intoxicated; and that vagrant was no longer on the spot. Nevertheless, he did not like the idea of camping alone in that solitary spot after what had happened.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured again as he rose after his lonely lunch. "I weally wish those boundahs had behaved themselves. It is watah wotten bein' on one's own like this! In fact it is vewy wotten!"

The swell of St. Jim's was bored. He had explored the ruins, he had had a swim, and he had lunched. The attractions of the spot seemed really to be rather exhausted. It was too hot for much exertion now, and Arthur Augustus had not even a book with him. He found Blake's "Daily Mail," and wondered whether Blake had left it behind on purpose for him—a thought that softened his heart. Certainly, in his enforced idleness, the newspaper was very welcome.

Sitting by the stream, with his back to a shady tree, Arthur Augustus drowsily perused the paper. He read all the cricket news with care and interest, and with equal interest he read about the Boy Scouts' Jamboree at Wembley. The City page did not attract him—he did not care whether Home Rails were up or down, or whether the French exchange was at 75 or 105. And the news columns did not attract him very much—paragraphs of thrilling interest passed him by like the idle wind which he regarded not. But at last, in sheer boredom, he turned to the news, and read the whole column about the absconding banker, Mr. Septimus Scaley. It was like a tale of another world to Gussy. How a man could possibly abscond with other people's money in his pockets was a mystery to him. He realised that it takes all sorts to make up a world; but he was fervently glad that he had never come across Mr. Scaley's sort.

Somewhere or other in the wide world Mr. Scaley was lurking, with ten thousand pounds in his pockets, and justice at his heels. Gussy wondered dimly what the man's feelings were like—whether he suffered more from his conscience, or from fear of pursuit. "Picture on back page" appeared at the end of the column, and Gussy turned to the back page, curious to see the features of a man who was capable of bolting with money that did not belong to him.

The photograph of Mr. Scaley showed a man of middle age, with a hard, clean-shaven face, an aquiline nose with a bulbous tip, and deep-set eyes very close together. It was a hard, penetrating face, not easily forgotten when once seen.

"The howwid wottah!" murmured Gussy. "He won't have a dog's chance. He's bound to be recognised when he's seen. I weally don't see how he could get abowd with a stolen passport; passports have photogwaphs on them.

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The howwid villain is pwobably lurkin' in England at this vewy moment, pewwaps passin' himself off as a touwist at some holiday wesort. Bai Jove! A fellow might sit down to dinnah with him without knowin' it—with a howwid thief!"

Arthur Augustus had exhausted the newspaper now, and he was quite fed-up on the case of Mr. Scaley. He threw the paper aside, leaned his head back against the trunk of the tree, and slumbered.

It was drowsy in the midsummer heat, with the babbling of the stream and the buzz of innumerable tiny insects in his ears. Arthur Augustus had not meant to doze; but he did doze, and from a doze he passed into sleep, leaning against the tree-trunk, under the shade of the green branches.

Perhaps it was natural that, as he slept, visions of the previous night should return to his dreaming mind. Once more Gussy dreamed of Norman knights and barons and hooded dames thronging the old building, and mixed up with them was the news he had lately absorbed from the "Daily Mail"—Lord Conway batting, and Mr. Scaley dodging the police, and swarms of Boy Scouts in the big Jamboree at Wembley. It was a mix-up even for a dream, for it seemed to Gussy that his brother Conway was batting for Hampshire, clad in Norman armour, with a myriad of Boy Scouts fielding, and Mr. Scaley, the banker, bowling—but oddly enough, only the head and shoulders of Mr. Scaley, just as Gussy had seen them in the photograph on the back of the newspaper.

It was a weird dream, doubtless partly due to the cheese Gussy had eaten at lunch.

That amazing cricket match faded out of Gussy's dream, and it seemed that the face of Mr. Scaley had turned towards him specially, looking at him as it had looked from the back page of the paper.

The hard face, the sharp, close-set eyes, the hard-set, thin lips—they seemed quite close to Gussy, staring at him, watching him craftily, suspiciously, threateningly.

But the face now was not exactly the same as the face in the newspaper picture; there was a rough growth of beard on the chin, and the lines of the features were thinner and more haggard.

And then Gussy, still dreaming, or half dreaming, became aware of the fact that his eyes were open, and that he was awake.

Yet, strangely enough, the face he had seen in his dream did not disappear.

Arthur Augustus sat quite still, his eyes half open, in a dizzy state of half sleeping and half waking.

The face was still there.

Was he still dreaming? Was this a dream within a dream—one of those strange double visions that sometimes occur in slumber, especially after cheese or lobster? Had he only dreamed that he had awakened, and was he still asleep?

Otherwise, how could the face of Mr. Scaley, the banker, be staring at him over a bush only a few feet distant?

Yet there it was!

There it was—the hard, penetrating face, the close-set, watchful eyes, the knitted, threatening brows, and the rough growth of several days' beard on the sharp chin.

A grasshopper settled on Arthur Augustus' nose. Without thinking, he raised his hand to brush it off. Evidently he was awake!

As he moved the face vanished.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sprang to his feet. He stared at the bush, over which the strange face had glared at him. No one was in sight.

He rubbed his eyes.

"Bai Jove! What—what the mewwy thump—" He stared blankly at the low bush. "I—I could sweah that he was lookin' at me! I am suah I was awake! What a swange and howwid dweam! I must be gettin' nerry, bai Jove—weally nerry."

Arthur Augustus felt quite distressed. It was no joke to be the victim of a waking fancy continued from a dream; it seemed to hint of "nerves" to a quite unpleasant extent. Yet that Mr. Scaley, the absconding banker, could really have been looking at him, as he slept, over that low bush, was too impossible to be real.

"Bai Jove! This won't do!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

He still stared towards the bush. That it had been a fancy seemed incontrovertible, and yet—he stepped towards the bush, to look with his own eyes, and make absolutely certain that no one was there. All was silent and still. The face, if there had been a face, had vanished. Arthur Augustus pushed through the bush—not with the slightest real expectation of finding anyone there, but just to satisfy himself that there was no one.

And then—

"Gweat Scott!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

The next instant he was on his back in the grass, and a knee was planted on his chest, and two close-set, savage eyes glared down at him.



Scaley went down with a crash, with half a dozen St. Jim's fellows sprawling over him. "Got him!" roared Blake. "Oh!" panted Scaley. The juniors were six to one, but the man struggled and fought like a wildcat, and for several minutes Tom Merry & Co. had their hands full with him. (See page 17.)

CHAPTER 8. In Desperate Hands!

"OH!"

Arthur Augustus could only gasp. He understood now.

Like a flash the knowledge came, and illuminated everything. It almost seemed like a dream now, so strange and startling was it; but it was real—it was savagely real. It was a heavy knee that ground hard on his chest, pinning him down. It was a savage, threatening face that glared down at him—the face from the back page of the "Daily Mail"—the face of Septimus Scaley. And Arthur Augustus understood it all now—now that it was too late for the knowledge to save him from danger. The dark figure he had seen dodging in the ruins; that had been no shadowy fancy, after all. The clutch on his throat as he slept the night before—the stones hurled from the old wall into the camp—it was no drunken trickery of a lurking vagrant. That lonely old Norman ruin on the Sussex downs, hidden far from the sight of men, was the hiding-place of the fugitive swindler, Septimus Scaley.

The man for whom the police were searching far and wide, the man who was hunted and tracked in England and France, and had baffled the police of two countries—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had found him!

Unfortunately, at the same time, he had found Arthur Augustus!

D'Arcy could not speak.

He could only stare up at the threatening face, overwhelmed by the startling strangeness of the discovery.

Neither did Scaley speak.

He had grasped the schoolboy and secured him, when discovery was inevitable. But obviously he had acted on the spur of the moment, and had decided yet on nothing further.

The close-set eyes gleamed down at D'Arcy, and the gleam in them was murderous. It dawned upon the swell of St. Jim's that he was in danger, though he did not realise the full extent of the danger; he did not grasp at once an understanding of the desperate mood of the hunted man, discovered in his hidden retreat.

It was Arthur Augustus who spoke first.

"Will you have the kindness to remove your knee from my chest? You are wathah hurtin' me, and you are wufflin' my waistcoat!"

The man above him gritted his teeth.

"You young scoundrel! Who are you?"

"I wefuse to be addressed as a scoundrel, especially by a dirty thief!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"You know me?" muttered the man huskily.

"I know your face from the picture in the newspaper," returned Arthur Augustus. "I should know your wotten face anywhah, you wascal, though you are vewy much in want of a shave!"

"You will pay for it!" muttered Scaley. "Hang you! You shall pay for your spying! What business was it of yours, hang you? You will suffer for it! You shall not betray me!"

"Will you allow me to wise?"

The banker did not heed.

"How did you know I was here?" he hissed.

(Continued on page 16.)

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EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

ALTHOUGH it is true that only a proportion of the fellows are wet-bobs, the Rhyll is generally fairly well crowded with craft of all kinds during leisure hours this time of the year.

There is no doubt that more of the chaps would use the river if there was not a rule—and a rigidly enforced one at that—which forbids non-swimmers to use the boats. Of course, it's a wise measure, because the river is pretty deep in parts, and there would be more than a chance of something unpleasant happening if no sort of supervision was exercised by the powers that be.

It isn't as though all the boating was carried out in a legitimate fashion. There are some asses who seem to consider that normal sculling, rowing, or paddling—there is no punting, by the way, as the river is totally unsuited for that kind of craft—is far too tame. They are not content with skimming along the surface of the river. They needs must act the fool in all kinds of ways, such as ramming a canoe with a double-sculler or obstructing the passage of a single-sculler, and prodding the occupant overboard with a boathook. Even scratch racing fairs are sometimes attacked in this manner, and you can take it from me that a crew in such a tricksey craft as a racing-shell don't stand much chance against a couple of heavy tubs with four or five fellows in each.

Then, again, just imagine a fellow like Baggy Trimble missing a stroke and capsizing. Why, his great form floundering in the water would surely cause the river to overflow its banks! That would mean that near-by inhabitants would complain, and boating would be put an end to once and for all. I am sure none of us would like that to come about.

But a good deal of the trouble and abuses arising from the use of the river are due to the canoes. A lot of fellows who can't handle a scull or an oar manage to make some sort of a show in a canoe, and in many cases they are able to propel the canoe along without having learnt how to keep it on a straight course by means of that slight twist of the paddle at the finish of a stroke, with the result that they are all over the river, sometimes running into one bank and then into the other, in constant danger of colliding or being collided with.

Or else they get right up the river and land on forbidden ground, and give rise to complaints which, in most cases, are laid at the door of the Boating Club in general.

Tom Merry

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REFLECTIONS on the RIVER.

By
Ralph Reckness Cardew.

IN my opinion, boating is one of the most delightful pastimes that one can indulge in.

I know of few things more enjoyable than to sit in the stern of a double-sculler, with a rudder-line in each hand, urging my dear old pals, Clive and Levison, to uphold the prestige of the study by putting their backs into it and passing everything on the river.

Often times, from the midst of my cushions, I watch the easy grace of their movements, and envy them the splendid, health-giving exercise they are obtaining. But not for worlds would I deprive them of one single moment of their enjoyment by suggesting that I take a turn with the sculls.

They are both so generous and self-sacrificing that I have no doubt they would yield place to me without any sign of regret were I to be so selfish as to ask them to do so. But I am content to take the will for the deed, and to follow the noble example of unselfishness they set me.

Of course, rowing and sculling provide an excellent form of muscular exertion for the fellow who likes to take his pleasures sadly and utilise a sunlit river, in all its green and golden glory, as a sort of open-air gymnasium.

With a pair of sculls and a sliding-seat you can exercise no end of muscles that you hardly knew you possessed until you've made them ache—and which, in all probability, you would be far happier if you didn't possess at all.

As a matter of fact, I have on occasion been misguided enough to do a little in that way myself. Not a lot, mind you, but just enough to afford me an unaccustomed feeling of totally undeserved virtue.

I have even rowed in the junior eight. Once I was in a crew that licked the Grammar School. And, would you believe it, Tom Merry even said that I was a great asset to the St. Jim's crew! If he'd said that I was a great ass, I might have believed him!

I cannot think what could have possessed me that I should have agreed to take part in such an affair. The memory of it comes to me sometimes when I awaken in the dead of night, and I shudder. It has come into my mind during moments of happiness and stilled my mirth. It causes me to doubt my own sanity.

Ah, well, it is never likely to occur again!

(I don't know so much about that. Cardew is a useful man with an oar when he likes to discard his slackness and make an effort. We shall probably be glad of him in a crew one of these days. So I should advise him not to feel too certain that he will never again find a sliding-seat under him.—T. M.)

THE JOYS OF BOATING!

By Monty Lowther.

THIS being the season of the year when the music of the river invites mere mortals to make asses of themselves by alluding to a pair of sculls as "oars," or by clinging to the tops of mud-embedded punt-poles like so many monkeys-on-the-stick, I have been asked to write an article on the joys of boating.

Mind you, these are Tom Merry's instructions, and the title of the article is from his pen, not mine. It would never have occurred to me to suppose that there was any sort of joy about boating; but, as Tom Merry says there is, I will take his word for it, and try to think that there may be—for the purposes of this column, at any rate.

But he ought really to have given Cardew the job of writing this, because that lazy slacker is the only fellow I know who is in the enviable position of being able to find real enjoyment on the river. You see, he owns a small motor-boat—though how long he would continue to own it if Ralton or the Head became aware of its existence I wouldn't like to say—and he does the thing in style.

Whereas we ordinary, common, or garden fellows have to pull along like giddy galley-slaves, yanking some antiquated tub through the water by sheer muscular exertion, and watch him go speeding past with a throbbing engine at his feet, an iced drink at his elbow, and a confoundedly irritating smile between his collar and the brim of his panama.

Oh, I've had some merry times on the river! I was once rammed when I was alone in a canoe, and fished out by an excited idiot who didn't wait to see whether I could swim before he started in to qualify for a foyval Humane Society medal.

It happened to be Tompkins of the Fourth, and perhaps it isn't exactly the truth to say that he fished me out. All he did was to stick a boathook into my bags, and then discover that he hadn't sufficient strength to lug me aboard the boat he was in. When Mulvaney got his silly fists to the boathook my bags gave way under the strain. Bags, these days, are not meant to bear the weight of one's body, even though they may perhaps help to take the sting from Linton's cane when one is in a bending attitude.

Of course, Tompkins was very sorry about it. He explained that he lost his head when he saw me overboard. From his point of view, that was probably all right; but I was worrying less about his point of view than I was about the point of the boathook. The excuse that he'd lost his head didn't console me for the fact that I'd lost the seat of my bags, and they are of more value to me than Tompkins' head is to him any old day in the week.



JUST LIKE GRUNDY!

By William Cuthbert Gunn.

IT'S a pretty well-known fact that Grundy is a first-class champion chump at all kinds of sports and athletics. He's so absolutely hopeless at everything that it wouldn't be an easy job to pick on any one thing at which he makes a special idiot of himself; but if I had to make a choice, I think I should select boating in order to fill the bill.

Any kind of boating—sculling, rowing, canoeing; I don't know what he's like at punting because we get no chance for that on the Rhyl, but, from what I know of Grundy, I wouldn't trust myself within yards of him while he'd got a punt-pole in his fists.

And the most peculiar thing about it is that boating is the very accomplishment at which Grundy particularly fancies his chance.

He is more than ordinarily vain about his skill on the river. Of course, that skill doesn't exist outside the realms of Grundy's day-dreaming; but Grundy is the only fellow at St. Jim's who isn't aware of that fact, and his pride in what doesn't exist would be funny if it was not dashed unpleasant at times.

At least, it is to Wilkins and I. Other people don't worry much about Grundy, but we have to put in enough overtime at it to make up for them.

Grundy's great ambition is to stroke a winning crew. No harm in that, of course, if it went no further. It's a free country, and there are no laws against a fellow harbouring ambitions of any kind, so long as they stop at that. It's when they start trying to put their silly, cranky notions into practice, to work their ambitions out of their systems, as it were, that the trouble is apt to commence.

Now, if Grundy would only be content to limit his aspirations to the winning of the Diamond Sculls, say, Wilkins and I would be reasonably happy—so far as boating is concerned, at any rate.

If Grundy yearned to set up a record for single-scullers, then I—and Wilkins, too—would warble in joyous cadence, "Let him get on with it!"

It is true that Grundy in a single-sculler is far funnier than ten thousand feet of Felix film, but, at least, he is a nuisance to nobody but himself—and the unfortunate fellows in other boats with which he collides every few yards.

But a racing eight is another matter. It's had enough to be on the same stretch of river with Grundy; when it comes to being in the same boat, life becomes a wearisome burden.

I don't in the least mind Grundy making an exhibition of himself. It's having to share the performance that gets my goat every time.

Of course, Grundy doesn't often get a practice eight together. The fellows know him too well, and they take jolly good care to steer clear of him when they see him going round in boating-rig beating up recruits.

Not that we get any chance to side-step

him. He sees to that. He's even gone so far as to lock us in the study while he went round mug-hunting for the other five of a crew.

In fact, he did it only last evening. Directly after tea, up he sprang, out of the door he went, and click! sounded the lock a second after he'd closed the door behind him.

He'd taken us quite off our guard. Not that we'd any excuse for that, because we ought to know by now that we've got to be on our guard every moment when we're dealing with Grundy.

Wilkins was across the room in a couple of strides, but he was too late. The mischief had been done. He banged on the door so hard that Grundy had to come back, though.

"Stop that row!" shouted Grundy authoritatively. "You'll have the whole of the corridor coming out in a minute!"

"If I thought they'd come out and scrag you, I'd biff the door with a cricket-bat!" replied Wilkins viciously. "What the thump do you think you're playing at—locking us in here?"

"Never mind what I'm playing at! You stop there till I come back!"

"Why, you cheeky blighter—"

"Eh?" interrupted Grundy's voice from the other side of the door in very ominous tones. "A cheeky blighter, am I, Wilkins? I haven't time to stop now, but when I come back I shall have a word or two to say about that. I shan't be more than a quarter of an hour, and you might as well be getting into rowing-shorts to save time!"

"Rowing-shorts be hanged! They're up in the dorm!"

"No, they're not!" contradicted Grundy. "They're in the cupboard with the rest of your kit, shoes and all. I brought them down before tea."

"But we're not going on the river!" I snapped.

"Oh, yes, you are!" returned Grundy grimly. "You may not think so, but you can take it from me you are! And what I say goes in this study!"

"Yes, it goes in at one ear and out of the other," snorted Wilkins.

"Does it? Well, when I come back I'll give you a pair of ears thick enough to be worth talking about! Now, don't waste time arguing! Get ready!"

And off he went, as the sound of his retreating footsteps—like road-meanders pounding stones into the ground with wooden clubs—testified.

"It didn't work!" said Wilkins disappointedly.

I knew what he meant. He'd been cheeking Grundy deliberately, in the hope that he'd open the door to take vengeance, and give us a chance to make a dash for it.

"But I'll be hanged if I'm going to put rowing-kit on!" I vowed.

"He's not likely to get a crew together," said Wilkins, "and three of us can't very well take out a shell."

"Grundy's fool enough to try," I reminded him. "Still, I agree with you. I think the whole business will fall through. He'll be coming back in a few minutes to grumble about the lazy slackers who refuse to back him up."

But I had reckoned without my host. If there is one thing Grundy is over-endowed with, to almost as great an extent as he is under-endowed with brains, it is obstinacy. He could open a correspondence college for teaching mules their business, and do well at it.

He turned up in less than five minutes and unlocked the door. When he saw us sitting there in ordinary togs he fairly gibbered with rage.

"Didn't I tell you to change?" he shouted.

"And here you are, sitting down like that! Get into your rowing-togs, you couple of pie-faced baboons, or I'll—I'll—"

"What's the use of changing?" protested Wilkins. "You haven't got a crew, and three of us can't take a shell out!"

"Eh—who says I haven't got a crew?" "You can't have one! I know jolly well nobody would be fool enough to—I mean, nobody appreciates your wonderful abilities as a stroke well enough to row in the same boat!"

Wilkins finished his sentence in a different manner from that which he had intended in consequence of a distinctly threatening movement on the part of Grundy.

Anyway, we changed. There was no help for it. And while we were doing so we learnt the worst. It appeared that Grundy, knowing perfectly well that he could not hope to get a scratch eight together, had decided to make up a four. He had therefore needed only one recruit, and he had secured, of all impossible idiots, surely the most impossible—always excluding Grundy himself, of course—Skimpy!

I had never before seen Skimpy in rowing-togs, and I doubted at the time that they



With Grundy at stroke we bumped into crafts on both sides!

were really his at all. I was inclined to suspect that they actually belonged to Gore, and, as a matter of fact, I was right. They did—which was unfortunate for Skimpy, and hardly less so for us, as things turned out.

We trooped down to the river and got a ship out of the boathouse. We were a long time getting clear of the landing-stage, partly in consequence of Skimpy's not knowing which end of the oar to put into the water, and also because—well, Grundy was stroking the boat, and that statement is surely sufficient to explain why we were in the dicken's of a mess.

If we'd been an Oxford college eight rowing in a bump race we should have been at the head of the river within the first five minutes. Instead of which we were jolly nearly being at the bottom of the river—in a very literal sense. We bumped into other craft more times than there are colleges at Oxford and Cambridge put together.

Then we ranged up alongside a boat, with Gore, Buck Finn, and Boulton aboard. When Gore stopped talking for a moment in order to think of something more to say, he noticed that Skimpy was wearing his rowing kit. Ah, well, I suppose we should have been all in the ditch sooner or later, any old how, so it really made no difference in the end!



"I did not know you were heah," answered Arthur Augustus calmly.

"Don't lie to me!" hissed the man savagely. "Tell me the truth, you young fool! Can't you see that you are in desperate hands?"

"I can see that I am in the hands of a wotten rascal!" retorted D'Arcy. "If you will allow me to wise, I will punch your cheeky nose for accusin' me of lyin'!"

"Answer me! How did you know I was here?"

"I did not know."

"Fool! Tell me the truth! Why did you and your companions come here at all?"

"To camp. We're on a walkin' tour, you see, and I brought the othah chaps heah."

"Why did you not go with them, then, when they went?"

"That is my bizney."

The man's hand went into his pocket, and came out again with a large clasp-knife in it. He opened the knife.

"You had better speak frankly," he said. "Listen to me! If I am caught I am a ruined man. Seven years penal servitude, and beggary—do you understand? I did not cut and run until affairs were hopeless—I have only my liberty left, and the little I was able to take with me. I shall not allow a spy's life to stand in the way of my freedom. Can you understand, or are you a fool?"

Arthur Augustus shivered slightly. He was utterly at the mercy of the fugitive swindler.

"I have told you the twuth," he said. "I knew nothin' about your bein' heah. I nevah knew anythin' about you at all. I have seen your name mentioned in the papahs, but I did not know any of the particulahs till Blake, wead them out of the papah last night. It nevah occurred to me for a moment that you were anywhah about. Why should it?"

The man stared at him hard.

"It was you I seized in the ruins last night?"

"Yaas. I thought it was some beastlay twamp playin' twicks."

"It was meant to frighten you away," muttered Scaley.

Gussy's lip curled disdainfully.

"It isn't so jolly easy to fwighten me," he said.

"I saw you examining the wall this morning—I heard you tell the others that the stones had not fallen by accident—"

"Yaas, that is twue."

"Then you guessed—or knew—"

"Wubbish! I supposed it was some twamp or vagwant—"

"You are too clever, my boy," said Scaley, with bitter sarcasm. "If you had supposed that the ruins here were an unsafe place for camping, as I intended you to suppose, it would have been better for you. If you had been frightened away by what happened last night, it would have been for your good. The others have gone—you have remained. Why?"

"Because I am no longah on speakin' terms with those chaps," answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "We have had a wov, and I refused to pwoceed in their company. If you have been spyin' and listenin' as seems to be the case, you are probably awah of that."

The man nodded slowly. It was clear that from his lurking-place he had heard a good deal of the talk between Arthur Augustus and Tom Merry & Co.

"And that is all?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You did not know I was here—your friends did not know—"

"Certainly not."

"They know, and suspect, nothing—even now?" asked Scaley, his eyes searching the junior's face.

"Nothin' at all."

"Good!" said the man, with a deep breath of relief. "And you have parted with them—they have gone on their way without you?"

"Yaas!"

"You would have done well to go with them. Now that you have found me, what do you think of doing?"

"I am bound to weport the circumstance at the neawest police-station. You are a howwid thief, and you have a lot of stolen money in your pockets," said Arthur Augustus steadily. "I cannot possibly avoid givin' information to the police."

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"Suppose I offer you a share—"

"What?"

"A hundred pounds—two hundred—"

"You scoundwel!"

"You would refuse?"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly. "Do you think I would soil my hands with stolen money, you awful wottah?"

Scaley smiled bitterly.

"Even if you would, I could not trust you," he said. "There is too much at stake. My liberty is worth more than your life."

Again Arthur Augustus felt a cold feeling down his spine. He was realising more keenly now the terrible danger which shadowed him. The hunted man was utterly desperate.

He was fingering the clasp-knife, and the look in his haggard eyes was terrible. But Arthur Augustus kept cool.

"You had bettah wemembah," he said, with a slight tremor in his voice, "that goin' to pwison is wathah bettah than bein' hanged, Mr. Scaley."

"Fool! Fool! Why did you not go with the others?" muttered Scaley. "Fool! You have driven me to this! Fool! How could I suppose that you knew nothing—how— Fool! Why did you not go? How could I imagine that you had remained here only on account of a childish dispute—and not to watch and spy? Fool!"

He ground his teeth.

Arthur Augustus was silent. But he felt, rather justly, that he was not the fool of the two. Hiding in oppressive solitude, incessant fear had evidently shaken the nerves of the hunted man, and rendered him restlessly suspicious, and so brought about the discovery. For had he realised that his presence in the lonely ruin was unsuspected, and that D'Arcy's remaining on the spot had had nothing to do with him, he need not have dogged and watched the junior, and so revealed himself. Savage and threatening as he was, capable of any desperate deed, the man was evidently flabby and cowardly, a creature of tattered nerves.

Even now, while capable of any act, however wicked, to secure his safety, it was clear that the villain hesitated, from fear of the possible consequences.

He looked round, over the stream, the trees, the lonely ruin and the solitary downs. D'Arcy could follow his thoughts in the workings of his haggard face.

"Who would know?" The man muttered aloud. "Who could know? And yet—yet—"

He gave the junior a look of hatred.

"Get up!"

He removed his knee, and allowed Arthur Augustus to rise to his feet. His grasp closed on the schoolboy's collar like a vice.

"Come with me! Give me no trouble—I warn you!"

It was futile to resist, and Arthur Augustus realised that it would be wiser not to stir the savage temper of the fugitive. He might have done in hot blood what he dared not do in cold.

With that iron grasp on his collar, the junior was taken into the Norman ruins.

He went quietly.

Close by a great pile of broken masonry the man halted. He tore off D'Arcy's necktie, and used it to bind the junior's hands behind his back.

Then he released Arthur Augustus. Taking a great mass of stone in both hands, he rolled it aside, revealing a dark opening in the midst of the piled masonry. He signed savagely to the junior to enter, and Arthur Augustus obeyed.

He had to stoop his head to get inside. The man followed him in, and from within drew back the great stone into its place.

D'Arcy stood, with stooping head, in dense darkness. He understood that this was the hiding-place of the hunted man.

A match scratched. A candle was lighted.

"Get on!"

D'Arcy stumbled forward in the glimmering light.

Farther on there was more space. He was able to stand upright. He could see now that this had been a small room, or cell, in the ancient building. Falling masonry had covered it, stacking high over it and hiding it from sight. The wretched fugitive, seeking desperately for a hiding-place, had found it; but it was not surprising that it had escaped discovery by Tom Merry & Co. in their ramble over the ruins, though they must have passed close to the piled stones behind which the desperate man had been crouching.

Two bags and a small wallet lay in a corner. A number of tins and packets and bottles could be seen—the provisions that the hunted man had brought with him.

Undoubtedly he had hoped to lie securely in hiding there till the hue and cry was over; till the chase died down, and he could find an opportunity of escaping abroad with his plunder. So far, his scheme had been a success; the hunt for Septimus Scaley had never come near that lonely spot on the Sussex downs. His chief danger, indeed, had been

from chance—from some wandering tramp or picnicking party.

Arthur Augustus stood in silence, his heart beating fast. Scaley groped in one of the bags, and picked out a strap. With that he bound the junior's ankles together.

Then he took D'Arcy's handkerchief, rolled it into a gag, and drove it into the junior's mouth, securing it there with a string.

"You are safe now," he said bitterly. "I warn you to make no attempt to escape, or to make a sound if anyone should come to the ruins. If I spare your life you know the reason. I have enough to face, if I am caught, without that. But I shall take no risks. Add to my danger, and your dead body will be buried under these stones! Bear that in mind."

He moved away, the big stone was rolled aside to give him egress, and then replaced. Obviously he was going to gather up Arthur Augustus' belongings, to remove all traces of the junior's presence on the spot. Arthur Augustus was left alone in darkness.

CHAPTER 9.

Looking After Gussy!

"JOLLY good lunch!"

"Top-hole!"

"Only it's rotten that that silly ass isn't here!" growled Blake.

"Rotten!" agreed Tom Merry.

Six juniors were taking their ease at their inn. Tom Merry & Co. had rambled over the green downs that morning and arrived at the village of Redleaf, where they found a little inn with a green and flowery garden shaded by trees; and where, in the green garden, they disposed of an ample and welcome lunch. They had been feeling exasperated with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and hoping that a day's solitude would have the effect of driving a little common sense into his aristocratic head. But lunch had an ameliorating effect. As they leaned back lazily in their chairs in the pleasant shade of the trees they thought of their chum who had been left behind, and felt a little remorseful. It was such a ripping lunch that it really was "rotten" that Gussy was not there to share it.

"After all, Gussy only wants to have his silly old leg pulled," said Blake.

"That's all," said Tom, laughing.

"And he did guide us to a jolly good camp, though he lost the way about a dozen times, and took us for such a thundering long tramp."

"He did," agreed Tom.

"I thought perhaps he would follow on, and we should find him in Redleaf," went on Blake. "But he hasn't."

"Obstinate ass!" yawned Manners.

Blake grunted.

"That's all very well. Not such an ass as some fellows in the Shell, anyhow."

"And some in the Fourth," grinned Monty Lowther. "After all, Study No. 6 are all much alike."

"Oh, don't be a funny idiot!" said Blake. "Look here. Gussy's had a morning on his own. He might clear off and go home, and we don't want that. As he hasn't followed us—" Blake paused.

"As the jolly old mountain won't come to Mahomet, it's up to Mahomet to hike off to the jolly old mountain!" suggested Lowther.

"Well—" said Blake.

"I was just thinking so," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Let's go back for the old duffer, and if he won't come round, we'll pull his silly old leg till he smiles again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What I'm afraid of is that the ass may clear off on his own," said Blake. "But for that, I'd give him till night to get a little sense into his duffy old napper. But he's still a member of this party, though he doesn't know it. Let's go and see if he's still there. If he is, we'll let him rip till sundown."

"My dear chap, if we see him he will see us," said Manners.

"That shows how much sense they have in the Shell," said Blake. "You fellows must be no end of a worry to your Form master, with intellects like that."

"Look here, you ass—"

Blake tapped the field-glasses that hung in a little leather case over his shoulder.

"What's the matter with spotting him from a quarter of a mile off, if he's there?" he demanded. "If he's there, we'll leave him there to browse; by sundown he will realise that even the company of you Shell chaps is better than none. If he's gone, we'll follow him and yank him back by the ears. See?"

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry.

And that programme being agreed upon, Tom Merry & Co. paid their bill and left the Redleaf inn.

In the hot sunny afternoon they sauntered away by a sheep-track over the downs.

They did not hurry themselves. There was no occasion for hurry; and it was hot; and they were out to take things easy.

In blazing sunshine, they came at last to the chalky ridge that overlooked the Norman ruin and the stream, and their camp of the night before.

"Careful now," grinned Blake. "Gussy may be looking this way. Remember you're Scouts."

And the grinning juniors took cover as they advanced over the ridge. Keeping in cover of scattered bushes, they looked down from the chalky acclivity on the old ruin in the distance and the shining stream. Blake unsung his field-glasses and put them to his eyes, turning the screw to adjust them to the distance. With the naked eye, a tiny figure could be seen moving by the bank, but it was too far off for anything like recognition.

Blake turned the glasses on it.

Then he gave a jump.

"My only hat!"

"Is it Gussy?" asked Dig.

"No fear—it's a man. What the thump is he doing?" Blake handed the glasses to Tom Merry. "Take a squint."

Tom looked through the glasses. The distant scene seemed to rush to his eyes. The tiny moving figure by the water became a man—a man who was stooping and apparently gathering up something from the ground. Tom, in amazement, saw him pick up a rucksack and sling it over his shoulder, then a stick, and then a Panama hat. And as he moved, the man was glancing to right and left and over his shoulders, with a secret restlessness that betrayed the thief.

Tom lowered the glasses.

"That's some dashed thief stealing Gussy's things," he said. "It's odd, but there seemed something familiar in his face. Old Gussy must have gone for a swim, I fancy, and this merchant is bagging his goods while he's away."

"That tramp!" exclaimed Herries.

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's it. The fellow who was in the ruins last night. He hadn't cleared off, after all, perhaps."

Monty Lowther burst into a chuckle.

"Poor old Gussy! If he's gone for a swim, and fin's his clothes gone when he comes out—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lucky for him we've come back, though we're not on speaking terms!" grinned Manners.

"Come on!" exclaimed Blake. "We've got to collar that chap. Gussy can't come on a walking tour without his trousers. You know how jolly particular he is."

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

"Hold on!" said Tom quickly. "If that thief sees us coming he will bolt, and we mayn't be able to see where he gets to. Keep the ruin between us and him, and he won't see us coming."

"Good egg!"

The six juniors hurried down the slope, but they hurried with caution. They were Boy Scouts again now for the nonce, and they used their Scoutcraft. They bent low as they ran, so that little could be seen of them over the high, waving grass, and they kept the Norman ruin in a direct line between them and the man they were advancing upon.

Hot as it was they put on good speed.

They reached the crumbling walls of the ruin and slacked down. With the caution of Red Indian warriors on the war-path, they crept round the ruins towards the stream.

Suddenly they sighted the man they had seen through the field-glasses on the ridge.

He was no longer carrying the rucksack, the stick, and the Panama hat. Apparently, he had disposed of them somewhere. He was going over the same ground, stooping, and apparently searching every inch of it, in case some small article had been left behind. He picked up a tin plate, and then a box of matches, relics of Gussy's lonely camp.

"All together!" whispered Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!"

There was a sudden rush.

The man heard the rush of footsteps and started up, a cry breaking from his lips.

His startled, terrified face was turned straight towards the oncoming juniors, and they saw it in the clear sunlight—the hard features, the close-set eyes, the bitter mouth. And then they knew why the man had seemed familiar through the glasses. It was the face of the newspaper photograph—the face of Septimus Scaley.

The next moment they were upon him.

Scaley went down with a crash, with half a dozen St. Jim's fellows sprawling over him.

"Got him!" roared Blake.

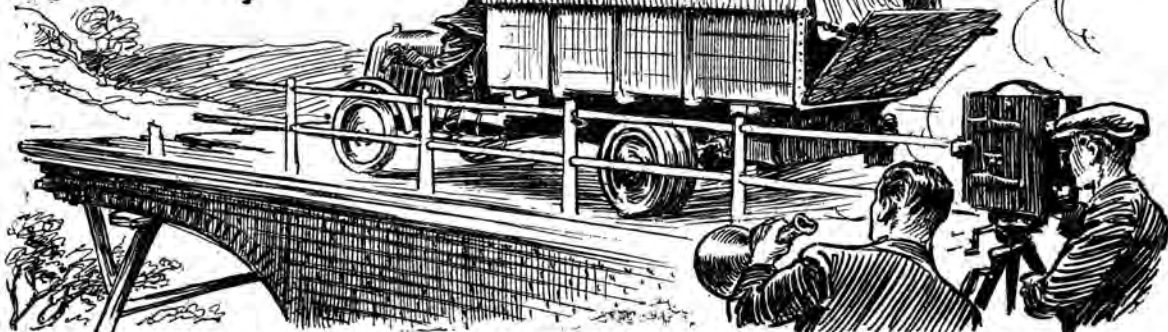
(Continued on page 28.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 864.

Bob Harkley, Denny Burdett, and Sandy Munro are for ever meeting trouble! In this adventure they learn how high can be—

THE PRICE OF SILENCE!

by Geoffrey Prout.



A Thrilling Yarn, dealing with the exciting adventures of Bob Harkley & Co., aboard their ramshackle motor-lorry—Ermyntrude.

CHAPTER 1.

The Smash!

BOB HARKLEY, armed with a long spanner—and a short temper—stepped back from the motor-van, Ermyntrude, and breathed hard. It was a dark night, and the chums were in Surrey.

Bob's handsome face was set off to great advantage by a wide black grease smear stretching from his chin to his temple. Bob, the chief of the band of three who ran that motor-van, had been having a confidential chat with the engine. Sandy Munro, the youngest of the three, a red-headed young Scot with very large ears, told Bob not to call it names.

"Call what names?" snapped Bob.

"It," replied Sandy.

"It, you fatheaded, aeroplane-eared lump of uselessness," rasped Bob politely. "I haven't called it names. I wouldn't be such a fool. I wouldn't call anyone names. This is the first time Ermyntrude has let us down—"

"There's a reason, Bob, partner and comrade. There's a reason, depend upon that," broke in Denny Burdett, flicking a small patch of dust off his coat-sleeve.

"Rot!" said Bob. "Sandy said I'd been most particular to refer to it every time as the engine—"

"That's just the point," said Sandy. "You called it an engine. I call it an It. It's no engine, that thing! An engine is supposed to engine, an' that one won't engine at all!"

"If a walker can't walk it's because he's lame," said Denny. "Same thing if a tramper can't tramp; but when a motor won't mote, comrades, depend upon it, there's nothing wrong, but there's a very good reason. Ermyntrude's never let us down before, and she isn't letting us down this time."

"Well, anyway, I haven't uttered a word against Ermyntrude," said Bob. "I wouldn't! She's a splendid motor-van, and she has a dear little engine. The sweet note of its running is always music to my ears—"

"It would be music to mine at this moment—"

"Shut up, you dithering ass!" hissed Bob in a stage-whisper. "I'm pandering to her. As I was saying, that engine is a beauty. Starts up on the instant, first turn. And when it's running it's a

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dream. Wouldn't let us down for worlds, would it? Crank up again, Denny, and we'll see if the beastly thing will fire this time!"

Denny cranked and cranked. Ermyntrude only sucked and gurgled and hissed, but she wouldn't fire.

"No good!" said Bob. "The rotten thing's conked out for good at last. Chuck it, Denny. I'm sick of doctoring the brute. Here we've been stuck for five hours! Bah, it's sickening!"

Denny shook his head sadly.

"I tell you two idiots that there's a reason," he said. "It would be bad for our health, or something, to go on. Ermy knows! Chuck it, and let's have a stroll, making the best of a bad job—or, rather, I should say, a good job—till danger's stormy night departs, and Ermyntrude, under the star of peace, yields to our gentle persuasion."

Sandy and Bob grumbled, and after Bob had struggled into his coat the three friends walked off down the road. Denny was smiling serenely, but Sandy and Bob only returned scowls for their chum's look of contented happiness.

Although the night was dark, it was quite pleasant. The warmth of summer was in the air, and as a gentle night-wind rose, rustling the leaves above, and fanning the faces of the young motor-men, they began to forget about Ermyntrude and her stubborn ways.

"Gosh, it's a night of nights, this," said Denny. "Peace, perfect peace, and everything in the garden perfectly lovely. Do you know, chums, I think I could write poetry."

"So could I if I had a copy o' Robbie Burns beside me to copy from," said Sandy.

Denny sighed and looked dreamily into the darkness along the pine-bordered Surrey road. Suddenly he stiffened, and a low, swift exclamation escaped his lips. He drew Sandy and Bob, none too gently, off the road on to the soft carpet of pine-needles under the trees.

"What's the trouble, chump?" said Bob. "Inspiration?"

"No, agitation," replied Denny promptly. "I declare I'm trembling like a leaf. It gave me quite a turn."

"What's the trouble, anyway?" asked Bob, realising his chum had really seen something alarming.

"I saw two men on the road," said Denny. "You know how good my sight is in the dark. I have heard tell in our family that my great uncle was fond of cats. That's where I get my wonderful sense of sight in the darkness from. Joking apart, comrades, let's watch this. Two men in the road with a rope. One has gone to either side of the road, with the rope stretched out. Practical joke on someone, I'll bet. Let's watch the fun. If you can't see, I'll report how the jokes goes."

"I can see all right," replied Bob, peering up the road. "I can see the rope stretched out, anyway. They lowered it down on to the road as I spoke."

"I s'pose it will be a practical joke?" remarked Sandy grimly. "Seems to me a rotten sort of thing to give a pedestrian a turn by making that rope jump up right under his nose a dark night like this—"

"Thinking it's highway robbery?" asked Bob sarcastically.

"No, Ah'm not!" snapped Sandy, relapsing into a more pronounced Scottish accent. "Ah'm thinkin' o' yon motor-bike comin' along the road. Ah can hear it distinctly—"

"Trust you, with ears like that," began Denny, but Bob gripped his chum's arm.

"Sandy's right. This may be foul play," he said. "We must investigate here. Gosh, that bike's near now! He's travelling at a lick, whoever it is!"

"You're right, Bob. We must have a hand in this. The motorist will be thrown yards. Killed, for sure, if he hits that rope." Denny Burdett was suddenly keen and brusque. "We've got to charge those men—"

"Risky! Supposing it's the police trying to nab a criminal?"

"Jingo, yes! But they wouldn't risk killing him. Maybe they intend him to see the rope and pull up."

"It's a bit of a problem, isn't it?" remarked Bob. "If we're to do anything we'll have to be quick now. Come on, settle quick. Anything or nothing!"

"Let's charge," gritted out Denny. "We'll chance it. I have a feeling that

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Ermyntrude stopped so that we'd be on the spot here for something—

"That's bilge-water," said Bob. "But charge it is! I'm game—and we'll have to look alive!"

The roar of the motor-bicycle sounded nearer and nearer, and the chums sprinted along on the soft pine-needles. They gasped as the glare of a headlamp suddenly illuminated the trees. The motor-bicycle came careering round a corner not fifty yards beyond the rope. A chosen spot, for sure! No police-trap, this!

Now yelling a warning to the motorist, Bob and Denny and Sandy charged in line. They crashed up against a man standing by one end of the rope. The man shouted in alarm, and met the chums' charge solid. But he went down in the crash!

The rope was tied tightly to a tree. The motorist had not seen it lying in the road. The man on the other side had suddenly hauled it taut, and the bicycle flashed right into it.

Bob leapt at the rope, a knife he had grabbed from the hand of the ruffian they had downed flashing in his hand. He slashed at the rope, but it was a thick piece of manilla, and the motorist hit it before Bob could hack it free.

The motor-bicycle swayed, and its rider shouted in fear. The two remaining strands, at the place where Bob had cut it, snapped, and the free end hit Bob a stinging whiplash on the cheek. The cycle was free, but was swaying dizzily here and there in its mad career along the road, its headlamp throwing its beam about wildly, making a ghastly picture of the trees. Then the machine crashed, and its rider went hurtling from it, to bring up with a sickening thud against a pine-tree.

The friends rushed over frantically. An icy fear gripped Bob's heart. Suppose that man they had downed had meant to cut the rope at the last second? They had prevented him. The result—a mangled form by the roadside.

With faces white and lips tight, the chums fell on their knees beside the senseless motor-cyclist. He showed no sign of any terrible injury; but his face was white, and he was unconscious. The men who had been at the rope were now heard pounding away through the pine-wood.

"We must get him to Ermyntrude, and see what can be done," gasped Denny. "What a ghastly business! I— I hope we weren't the means of this accident, Bob."

Bob was trembling.

"I know what ye mean, Denny," cut in Sandy. "But yon man we sent flyin' wasna goin' to cut the rope. Else why did the man on the other side tighten it?"

"Good for you, Sandy, old pal!" cried Bob heartily, fear having now left him. "Of course! I didn't think of that! Well, let's get this chap to Ermyntrude. It's a sure thing the old brute of a van would be helpless just when we want her to rush off for a doctor. Come on!"

The chums had a struggle getting the dead-weight form of the injured man along the road. He was a big man, with clean-cut features, and well-tended white hands came to view as Denny ripped off his driving gauntlets. The wrecked motor-bicycle was left behind.

The lights of the van came to view at last, and the chums halted for a breather. They all had bellows to mend. As the sound of their own footfalls ceased they heard feet pounding along the road behind them. A voice was heard, too.

"They gorn right along the road. Catch 'em, Benser. Tomkins and

Laurence 'ave gorn back to clear away the bike an' the rope."

Another voice shouted out a parting warning to the chasers.

"Don't let them cubs get clear w' heidence!"

Denny and Sandy and Bob gathered up their burden with a catch of the breath, and hurried on towards Ermyntrude. Although the van was useless to them, being disabled, they did not think of that. Their one idea was to reach the van. And the pounding feet were not so far behind. They drew nearer and nearer!

CHAPTER 2.

The Mysterious Stranger!

AT last the van was hard by. The chasers could now be dimly seen, too.

"Into the van and defend it!" snapped Bob.

But Denny gave a frantic heave at the senseless man as he was being bundled into the van, then whipped round to the starting-handle. Sandy worked the throttle, and Denny tore at the handle. The engine sucked and gurgled, and just as Bob came into the light of the headlights, his face white and inquiring, the pounding of the feet of the chasers was drowned by a bang, and then the clatter and rattle and roaring of the engine.

Denny shouted with delight, and Bob leapt into the driver's-seat. Three men were now close up, and Bob meshed into gear and let in the clutch. The old van jerked forward with a joyous bound just as one of the chasers leapt at the back of the car and missed one of the flying canvas curtains by inches.

Sandy was clawing at the side of the wind-screen, his feet scraping along the road, and Denny sprang on to the bonnet. The car gathered speed, and Bob let her go all he knew. Denny and Sandy consolidated the positions they had captured, and if it had not been for the roar and clank and rattle of the engine, punctuated by an occasional bang, the chuckles of the chums might have been heard.

"Good-bye, old beans!" laughed Denny, as he clawed round to squeeze in beside Sandy.

Burdett waved his hand elegantly towards the rear, where four furious ruffians were standing, perplexed and frightened, shaking their fists at the speeding van.

Bob drove hard for ten miles, then slowed down for Denny to get round to the back and sit with the injured man. Denny had to use his legs a bit, for Bob kept up a fairish speed, saying that now the van was going he was going to keep it going, and wouldn't risk a stop yet.

Another few miles brought them to the outskirts of a fair-sized country town—Guildford, to be more particular as to locality. Here, Bob pulled up, for there were a few people about, and they felt that they had put enough distance between them and any chasing criminals, as well as being within hail of help should it be needed in event of attack.

Denny was the first to speak when the engine had stopped its chattering, and he had skipped out of the back, and met his chums on their way to see the patient.

"What did I tell you about Ermyntrude?" said Denny joyfully. "Ermyntrude stopped, and wouldn't go on because there was a life for us to save. And when we wanted her to start, oh, so badly, she fired immediately!"

"It's a fair knock-out!" said Bob. "Blest if I know what was wrong with the engine! But how's the patient?"

"Oh, able to sit up and take a little notice now," said Denny. "He's taking a little nourishment, too. Scoffed all our

corned beef, and is making inroads into our second loaf. Says he never could resist new bread, and I can well believe it. Come round and look. He's not hurt at all."

The chums gaped into the van, and, viewing the motor-cyclist as if he were a wild animal at the Zoo, saw him sitting on his haunches, the flickering light of a guttering candle illuminating his grinning features, while he masticated steadily.

"I say, you boys," he mumbled, his mouth full, "I'm downright grateful to you. I had a spill, didn't I?"

"I believe you did have a bit of a tumble," said Bob, his wonder showing in his face. "I hope the pine-tree you hit is bearing up under the ordeal, anyway, as well as you are. Much hurt, sir?"

"A bit. But it's nothing. Smack on the shoulder, and a bit buzzy in the head. I say, this new bread's a treat. I've finished your half-pound of cheese, but you don't mind, I hope?"

"No, not a bit, sir," replied Bob. "We're awfully relieved you're not dead, believe me. Eat away! It's better than a shilling's-worth at the pictures to see you so hearty. Eat the van, if you like, but leave us the chassis. We want the chassis. We're of opinion that this van saved us from a slice of trouble this night. My pal has told you about the man who tried to kill you and nearly nabbed us, too, I suppose?"

"Yes, he did say something about that," replied the "patient." "But you must be mistaken."

"Perhaps so," said Denny, waving his hand airily. "Pines at night are eerie things. Every bush seems a man giving you a clout on the head. In fact, it was so realistic that I've a lump on my cranium as big as a walnut. A grass-snake, squirming across the road, is just like a length of three-inch manilla, hitched up to a pine-tree, and stretching taut across the road, of course. And we're just the excitable sort of chaps to get so strung up with the eeriness of our surroundings that we imagine men are leaping at us from all directions, and we just get away by the skin of our teeth in our van."

"Your sarcasm is excusable," said the patient, pausing in his meal for a second. "Well, boys, be sports, and take what has just been said for the truth, will you? Think it's that, and let it rest at that."

"But the smashed motor-bike and the rope!" cried Bob. "There'll be inquiries. We'll have to go forward and report."

"Oh, no, you won't!" said the "patient." "They'll clear away all evi—I mean, you must have been mistaken."

"We're jolly well not, and we intend to find out what the giddy mystery is before you go, sir!" said Bob heatedly. "There's something wrong at bottom in a business of this sort."

The man rose and crawled stiffly out of the van. Then he stretched his legs painfully by taking a turn or two, walking stiffly, in the road.

"Well, I can't blame you for being suspicious. But if I prove to you I'm an honest man, will you let this drop? No one will know about it. You'll see nothing about a smashed motor-bike, rope, etc., in the local paper to-morrow. There'll be no sign—"

"Who are you, anyway, and what were you doing going along that lick at night on Surrey roads?" asked Bob.

"What were you doing in Surrey, anyway?"

The man's eyes twinkled as he spoke. THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 864.

He regarded the chums quizzically. He looked a fine, clean man right through.

"We? That's beside the point; but we were just having a look over the ground we're to use in a few days' time. We're starring in a big picture—for the films, you know."

"Precisely what I was doing," returned the big man, with surprised eyes. "I'm starring in a big picture to be produced by the Jewel Film Service."

Bob and Denny and Sandy gasped, and Bob wished he could recall his words about "starring."

"Well—er—we're not exactly starring in our picture," said Bob lamely. "It's to be a Jewel Film Service production, too. Mr. Raynley has given us the job of driving this van in a comic thing of one reel entitled 'Rattle-trap Riots.'"

The stranger tried to choke back his mirth.

"My picture is entitled 'Burning Beacons,'" he said. "I'm a thrill-stunt star."

"I thought so when I saw you hit that tree," said Denny brightly. "That's how it is you got off with such slight injuries, of course."

"Well, I suppose my training had a bit to do with it. Don't think me ungrateful, boys. I'd like to reward you handsomely."

"Oh, that's all right," said Bob. "Don't mention it."

"Well, I'm new to Raynley's company. But I dare say you know me. I'm Hervey Starling, the stunt king—"

Bob plucked at Mr. Starling's sleeve. "Come into the light," he said. Starling obeyed.

"Jingo, so you are!"

Mr. Starling planted his feet wide apart and regarded the chums with amusement.

"Well, will you let me go, or are you going to hand me over to the police?" he said.

"We're sorry, Mr. Starling," said Denny. "We didn't mean to be impudent or anything like that. But you'll admit it was a funny business."

"It was!" agreed Starling with feeling. "A darned funny business. But will you be young pals to me and say no word to anyone? And don't ask me to explain. If this is Guildford—it looks like it—I'm lodging here with Raynley for the scenes to be set in the pine country. Shake hands, like fellow artists of the films, accept my warmest thanks for the sporting way in which you have dealt with this nasty business; tell me your out-of-pocket expenses, and let us be pals, forgetting what happened to-night. Shall we?"

The chums grinned and shook hands. Then they drove Starling to Raynley's hotel, said good-night, and went off to their own lodgings, where they had a private lock-up shed for Ermytrude.

CHAPTER 3.

Acting the Part!

THE chums saw a lot of Starling while they were in Surrey with Raynley's company. The subject of the "accident" in the pine-wood was taboo between them and the star actor, but that only made the friends discuss it all the more amongst themselves, and think big thoughts. All sorts of wild explanations of the mystery were put forward. They could find all sorts of motives for the attack on Starling. But where they stuck was Starling's motive for keeping silent, when a word to the police would put the men

who were trying to get him out of the way safe under lock and key.

One day, after the chums had had a tiring rehearsal of their part in "Rattle-trap Riots," Starling came staggering into their lodgings. The actor's face was haggard and dirty. His shirt-collar was torn, his clothes dusty and rumpled, and his knuckles bleeding. He appealed to the chums to let him have a wash and brush up, so that he could remove any very glaring signs that he had been up against trouble again.

Wonderingly, with never a murmur in regard to their curiosity to know what had happened, the chums placed their room at the disposal of the actor. He made good use of his time, and, when the transformation was complete, he gripped the comrades' hands in turn.

"You're real pals, boys," he said. "I'll never forget this, and the sporting way in which you are keeping silent, too. But I am bound by honour not to breathe a word to a soul. If you could help me, I'd ask you, like a shot, for I know your help would be freely given."

"Rattle-trap Riots" was finished the and strong, but film-acting wasn't what the chums had before imagined it. Even Mr. Starling's daring stunts in his own play—"Burning Beacons"—were milk-and-water affairs when viewed from the aspect of the other players. The way these thrill-stunts were worked was an eye-opener for the chums. For instance, hanging over a cliff on a rope, with the villain cutting through the rope above, isn't particularly thrilling when a life-net is arranged four feet below, just out of view of the camera.

However, in many instances, Starling did have to take big risks. And the chums hungered for a more prominent part in their new venture of film-acting. Ermytrude, of their party, was the only star. They themselves merely had to drive, swerving about on the road in a very mild way. And driving along like this with groups of joking and sneering actors dressed as super-fierce "bad" men of the wild and woolly West, big revolvers held to the chums' heads, was not at all exciting. The truth was, Denny and Bob and Sandy were bored stiff with the whole thing.

After their last rehearsal, Denny flopped down on the double bed in their room, and gasped weakly.

"This'll kill me, comrades," he said. "It's too frightfully exciting for words. We've rehearsed again and again, and spoilt miles of film, and every time Raynley has stood by shouting at us through a megaphone. If it weren't for Raynley and his nasty, personal remarks during the acting, there'd be no excitement in it at all."

"We ought to be given a better part," said Sandy. "How can a chap put on a terrified expression going at a snail's pace? Raynley ought to let us tow a real smoking bomb or something, to get the terror into it. And the rotten jokes those other actors make when we're being filmed aren't funny enough for the risk of our laughing suddenly. If they were, we'd be terrified at the possibility of Raynley's abuse, and there you'd get the result."

"Fact is," said Denny. "Chaplin's quite safe. We shan't oust him out of his star position if this is the only sort of opportunity we're going to get as film actors—"

"The real fact is," cut in Bob, "we're not blessed actors. We've had no training; but we can drive, and that, and a look of terror, is all that Raynley wants. We're merely supers. But I believe he's a bit fed-up with us. However, we act before the camera again to-morrow for the last time, and I'll bet we'll get the sack immediately after

it. I'm blest if I can look anything but bored stiff."

However, the chums were not so bad as Raynley's bullying led them to suppose. Bullying is the order of the day by the man who is directing the filming of a play.

"Rattle-trap Riots" was finished the next day, and after the scenes in which Ermytrude took part, the chums having been made perfectly miserable by Raynley's nasty remarks through the megaphone, the producer shook hands with them and told them they had done fine!

Denny nearly fainted there and then, but after the shock they began to pluck up wonderfully, and dreamed dreams of ousting Charlie Chaplin from first place as a comic actor after all.

They were so bucked that they went in a body to Raynley and asked him if he would give them a part in another play. Raynley at once agreed, saying he had an exciting motor dash scene in "Burning Beacons" to take shortly.

"Do—do you mean the broken bridge one, sir?" asked Bob, with bated breath.

"Yes, that's the one," replied Raynley. "You'll have to act a bit in that. I shall want most careful driving, because you, Harkley, will have to drive to within a foot of the lip of the broken arch of the bridge. The Council have given me till the end of the week for the scene. Then they say their contractors want to start work repairing the bridge. I'll give you your chance to-morrow. If you rehearse all right, I'll film the scene with you, Harkley, and you, Burdett, in it. I'm afraid there'll be no place for you, Sandy. But never mind. Take it from me that you'll make a better actor than your big pals if you stick it!"

Sandy was keenly disappointed, despite Raynley's words of comfort. He grumbled loudly, and would not accompany the chums round to see Mr. Starling, for the scenes would have to be acted with that great star.

The archway of a bridge over a gully had broken in quite recently, while the Jewel Film Company were in Surrey. Raynley said this was a stroke of luck, and applied to the County Council for rights to use the broken bridge for "Burning Beacons." The scenario writer of the company put in extra scenes, bringing in the broken bridge for a thrill, and all had been arranged. Raynley had ordered the broken half-arch to be shored up and strengthened to take the weight of the car, which would be driven to within a foot of the lip. Then the car would be withdrawn, the shoring posts knocked away, and another car, faked up to be like the previous one and with dummies in it for the actors, would be shot over the top, the scene completed, and the wreck below cleared away. It seemed like something which would interest the chums, though there was really nothing exciting in it—that is, the acting of it.

The day arrived, and keen and attentive, Denny and Bob sitting beside Starling, bound and helpless in the car, listened to Raynley's parting injunctions.

"I needn't say anything to you, Starling," said the producer. "But you two boys, remember you are supposed to be young toughs. Talk to each other out of the corners of your mouths, have a vulgar sneer on your lips, and jerk your thumbs over your shoulders when indicating directions, as I've said before. Sway your shoulders like real scoundrels when you walk. Remember, you're doing a criminal action in capturing and binding and running off with the hero. So look furtive and a bit desperate. Do as you did at the last

rehearsal, and you'll do well. Remember, Harkley, drive slowly to within a foot of the lip of the bridge, then stop, put in the reverse, and draw out again.

"Leave me to get the fake car and dummies shot over. We'll do your scene below as soon after as possible, so you two and Mr. Starling will have to get down into the gully and stand by the wreckage till I'm ready with the camera for you. Starling must be carried down. I'll have a stretcher there, ready, for I don't want the binding ropes to look different below from what they were above. But I'll talk again about this. For the present we'll do scene fifty-eight. Now then, into the bushes, and come staggering out with Starling. Camera ready, there?"

"Ay, standing by, sir."
"Good, then get on with it, you. You're too slow for a funeral, you Harkley and Burdett. Pep in it, mind, and forget you're acting. Live it, live it!"

Denny and Bob came staggering out from the bushes, carrying the bound form of Starling between them—no light task as they well knew from a previous experience. They did not have to act puffing and blowing, but did it naturally.

Glancing furtively round them, from right to left, they made for the car, Raynley's rating at them through the megaphone coming to their ears:

"Don't turn your face away from the camera so often!" Pause. "Don't hide your captive from the camera, you block-heads!" Another pause. "Your captive's struggling, you wooden idiots! Clout him over the head! More of a sneer, Burdett. Don't act, Harkley, for the love of Mike! Live it! Live it!"

Denny and Bob, perspiring and a bit panicky throughout their ordeal, bundled Starling into the car, and then Bob did a bit of good work which brought a howl of delight to them via the megaphone. He crouched low suddenly, and looked swiftly towards the camera, with drooping lips, a wrinkled nose, and desperate, furtive wild eyes. Then he sprang into the driver's seat, and Denny, wiping his forehead with his sleeve, with a quick, frightened look at the camera, nipped in beside Bob and slammed the door.

Bob drove off swiftly, still glancing quickly here and there, and Raynley danced with delight.

The scene ended, and Raynley ran up to the car shouting:

"Fine—fine! You boys are warming up to it! Now scene fifty-nine. Pull up a minute till the camera's in position. Now! Drive like blazes, and don't forget the furtive looks and occasional alarms!"

On sped Bob towards the broken bridge. Then, at the signal, he pulled up and waited for the camera to get down to the scene of the bridge—scene sixty of the scenario. At the signal that all was ready, Bob let in the clutch again, and flew onwards towards the bridge.

A real feeling of madness seemed to make Bob's brain swim. What if he were to lose his wits and go crashing on, right over the lip? What if he, although he had to go slowly near the bridge, excitedly made a mistake and accelerated instead of stopping with only a foot to spare between them and destruction? The young motor driver laughed wildly to himself as he thought of it. Then, drawing near to the camera, he began to study facial expression once more. Denny acted well, and the chums looked exactly as if they were flying from danger of discovery, two criminals with a kidnapped man aboard their car.

Bob slowed down as close to the gap in the road as he dared. And as he slowed, just before the front wheels of the car passed out on to the overhanging

archway, there was the flash of a red head at the roadside, and Sandy Munro, cut and bruised, collar awry, covered with dust, leapt at the running-board of the car and sprawled across Denny's knees.

Raynley howled with fury. Bob glared indignantly at Sandy for spoiling a good scene, and in that flash Sandy jammed his foot on the foot-brake, and swept Bob's foot off the accelerator pedal. The car moved a yard on to the broken archway, then stopped dead. There was a slight rumble below, the road cracked right across, the crash of falling masonry was heard in the gully, and the car bumped as it began to feel the drop over the almost sheer edge of the gully.

CHAPTER 4. Guardian Angels!

THE car had bumped down on to its framework on the road. The half-arch had broken with the weight of the engine and the front wheels of the car were sticking out over the drop. The height made Denny and Bob turn dizzy as they stared at the gully over the windscreen. Sandy had undoubtedly saved them! If Bob had

would be sure to go over into the gully. They said that Denny and Bob would be all right, having their arms free. They'd get hurt, but probably not killed. But Mr. Starling, being bound and helpless, would be sure to bring up against something with his head—

Raynley was livid with fury. "Search the wood!" he roared. "Lead the party, Munro! I'll see into this. Starling, you've had a narrow escape—"

"And a quarter of a reel of film has been ruined," broke in Starling coolly. "Any extra pay for having to do the rotten business all over again, Raynley?"

Raynley laughed bitterly. "Thank your stars for your neck,



The motor-bicycle swayed, and its rider shouted in fear, as he came into collision with the tautened rope. The two remaining strands at the place where Bob had cut it, snapped, and the free end hit him a stinging whiplash on the cheek. The bicycle was free again, but was swaying dizzily here and there in its mad career along the road.

driven right out on to the broken archway—

Raynley saw what had happened. He at once realised that the broken archway had given way under the weight of the front wheels of the car, despite the shoring-up work below. He came running over excitedly, the camera-man with him, the camera on the latter's shoulder.

With a towing span of steel-wire rope the car was hauled away from its precarious position, and investigations started. It was discovered that the props below the archway had recently been cut nearly through with a saw! Sandy was telling Raynley all about it.

"I was fed-up, sir, and went into the wood alone to try to work off my bad temper. I heard the men discussing what had been done. They said the car

that's all," he said. "Now about the police—"

Starling was now free of his bonds. He drew Raynley aside, and the pair talked for a while. At last Raynley nodded, and turned towards the men and women about him.

"All for scene sixty-two below into the gully!" he said. "We'll do scene sixty over again later. I'll get sixty-one completed. Miss Hatherleigh, please accompany Mr. Starling and the others below."

Miss Hatherleigh, dressed as a wild girl of the mountains, set off chattering and frightened, with Starling. She did all she could to draw Starling into conversation regarding the accident that had just happened. But Starling, although he seemed most anxious to

please Miss Hatherleigh in everything, would not be drawn to talk. He reiterated:

"What should I know about it, Ethel? Forget it! That's the best thing to do with unpleasant things. I think young Munro was a brick, don't you?"

"He's a dear, and I'll never forget what he has done for you, Hervey—"

Bob and Denny, grinning, pushed on ahead.

Soon after they had got down to below the broken bridge the fake car had been shot over the lip and was lying in a terrible condition of wreck below. The smash had been filmed. Bob and Denny shuddered at the practical demonstration of what would have happened to them had not Sandy saved them. The dummies were lying in ghastly positions, sufficiently natural for the purpose of the film. It was horrible to look upon even this disaster of dummies and an old, useless car.

Starling was bound up again. Bob and Denny were pulled about a bit by Raynley, the kerchiefs round their necks twisted awry, and their faces, already whitened and touched up for the camera, made horrible by smears of black paint to represent blood. The chums then lay down in place of the dummies, eyes staring and ghastly, fingers hooked, and jaws dropped. Starling writhed and twisted in agony near by, and, to the sound of Raynley's bullying via the megaphone, Miss Hatherleigh, the "wild girl of the mountains," rushed on to the scene in horror, and fell on her knees beside Starling.

There was some love stuff here; the girl released Starling from his bonds, and the man, risen by the help of the girl, shook his fist savagely at Denny and Bob—lying as if dead—and then staggered out of the picture leaning on the slim figure of the girl.

The scene ended, and Denny and Bob rose. Raynley's good temper was restored. The superb acting of Starling and Miss Hatherleigh had filled him with delight, and he slapped Bob and Denny on the shoulders.

"You did well, boys," he said. "You'll have to do scene sixty over again, but there'll be no danger this time. By the way, I ask you, as a favour to me, not to say anything about this accident to the broken archway. Only a few of us know it was engineered. We're all going to keep mum. Can't say why. You will, won't you?"

The chums promised, and, feeling that the mystery was even more baffling than ever, got back to Guildford, for the light had failed, and no more photography could be done that day.

In their room that night Sandy, having been unsuccessful in leading the search-party for the men he had heard plotting, the chums discussed matters in detail.

"It was another attempt to kill Starling, for sure," said Bob.

"Maybe a love motive. You've noticed Starling and Miss Hatherleigh?"

"Bah! What rot!" said Bob. "Denny, I'm surprised at you. That explanation would be all right for a photo-play, but not for yours heartily. If so, why doesn't Starling put his hated rival out of the way by telling the police?"

"If'm, yes; I'd forgotten that. It's still a jolly old mystery, then—eh?"

"Jollier and older than ever," cut in Sandy. "But I say this—if Starling doesn't make a move soon, I wouldn't give tuppence for his chances of winning through safely, whatever the mystery is."

"Well, comrades," said Denny, "Sandy being right, as he mostly isn't, I propose we help Starling on the quiet."

"How?" said Bob. "He won't let us barge in at all."

"By being near him as often as we can. We can watch him, and be handy while we are all together here in Surrey. For instance, he's going down to Ditchling Beacon for a trip to-morrow. Ditchling Beacon's a hill, and has nothing to do with burning beacons, which means sort of alarm beacon things, like lighthouses. I think we'd like to see Ditchling Beacon, too, don't you?"

"Yes; I've heard it's a jolly nice spot," said Sandy. "A run down there in Ermyntude would be most pleasant."

"Ermy's been feeling neglected of late," said Bob. "The old girl saved Starling in the first instance, so she won't do anything wrong this time. I hear that the view from the hill at Ditchling is great."

"Right," said Denny. "Here's one for sweet slumber. I never heard of Ditchling Beacon till yesterday, when Starling told me he was going there. But I must confess I've a burning longing to see Ditchling Beacon. Ditchling Beacon is—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob. "You babble on like a brook, Denny. Good-night! Last man in blows out the candle."

CHAPTER 5.

The Fight at the Mill!

HERVEY STARLING did not take the straight road to Ditchling. He was driving a two-seater car of the sporting type, but he drove very steadily. How steadily can be judged from the fact that Ermyntude, clanking and rattling a mile behind, could easily keep in touch.

Starling was out to see Surrey, and he knew how to choose a picturesque route. The roads were good, and the variety of the scenery was delightful. Here would be a wild sweep of pine land, miles of waste open, rocky spaces, veritable Wild West scenery; then would come a perfect picture of typical English scenery—hills and trees—perfect, humming Surrey lanes, an occasional Surrey water-mill, droning its labour in unison with the hum of the grayfly and the bee,



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the wash of water, and the distant lowing of cattle.

The chums were glad to be out on the road in such glorious summer weather, and they almost forgot the task to which they had set themselves—namely, being the temporary guardian angels of Hervey Starling, the film star.

They were brought back to the grimness of things with a jerk, however. Sandy had been keeping the sharpest look-out of all. Denny was day-dreaming, and Bob's business in hand—that of driving Ermyntude—left him no time for anything but thought to keep his engine running and the gears from jamming when changing, which had to be done so often in Ermyntude.

"Look out!" yelled Sandy, suddenly. "Starling has swerved. He's on the crest of the next hill. I'll bet he's met trouble again. Let her rip, Bob!"

Bob accelerated pace, and Ermyntude vibrated in every part as the old van clattered on down the hill and took the next slope with a rush. To the glory of Bob's driving, she got up the slope on top gear, and lurched over the crest like a switchback-railway car.

They flashed past Starling's car, drawn on to the grassy bank at the roadside, empty! Sandy and Denny were all eyes now. At last Sandy cried out to Bob to stop. Bob caught the words above the frightful din of the engine, shut off power, and pulled Ermyntude up within fifty yards—a feat, with Ermyntude.

In the fraction of a split second Sandy was out on to the road, running back towards Starling's car. Denny and Bob were close behind.

"There!" cried Sandy, pointing to the grassy bank.

Denny and Bob looked over, and saw the trail in the long grass—the trail of four or five pairs of feet. It passed through the hedge, and the chums followed it up, bursting through the hedge like limbered guns going into action.

The trail led them across a small paddock. They followed it with ease, and saw signs where the feet had trampled the grass about here and there, as if in a struggle. But the chums did not wait to investigate closely. They followed on with all speed.

Through another hedge they burst, and here they met two men, lying in ambush. The men leapt at the chums. But the comrades were ready for any surprise, and they fought savagely. Bob knocked out one of the men with a perfect upper-cut, and Denny was pressing the other man hard. Sandy and Bob together sailed in, and Bob struck as hard as he could—and that was hard—sufficiently strong enough to keep the man quiet for some time.

On went the chase. "Look—a water-mill!" gasped Denny at last. "Working, too! We'll yell for assistance; the miller and his men will turn out!"

But they didn't, for the mill was obviously the objective of the captors of Hervey Starling. They had the actor in their grip—two at his shoulders and two at his legs. And they were oscillating his big frame steadily. Starling was senseless.

"They're going to pitch him into the mill stream!" yelled Bob. "The wheel—it's working! Quick, chums—dash in!"

The comrades rushed at the villains—brutal looking men, four in number, under the command of a thin-faced, cunning-looking person rather loudly dressed. But Starling was in the stream even as his chums' first blows got home. Out of the corner of their eyes the plucky comrades of the road saw the mighty splash as Starling's bulky figure took the swift current. And on the

actor was swept, relentlessly, powerfully, a course that would brook no check.

The great, churning wheel of the mill roared close by. And Starling's body was being whisked along, ever faster in the narrowing course of the mill-stream.

The ruffians fought to hold the chums back from the stream. Bob went back with a cry, chin in air, knocked out. Denny dodged a swinging blow from one of the ruffians, and crashed his fist behind the man's ear. Sandy broke free and ran towards the mill-stream.

Two of the men now rushed Bab towards the water. The young motor-man was sent hurtling into the water, to go drifting, a helpless, senseless form, towards the wheel, in the wake of Starling.

Denny broke clear of his men, and, frantic with fear, he rushed after Sandy. All Burdett's thoughts were for Bob. Bob would be ground to death, smashed beyond recognition by the mill-wheel! He was helpless. Denny was too far behind to help Starling; but he could intercept Bob.

Springing high into the air, the plucky youth flew out over the swift stream. He entered the water with a mighty splash, and, gasping and coughing, he clutched at Bob's clothing.

He got a grip. He clawed round for Bob's collar, then turned on his back and kicked out frantically for the opposite shore. He felt the cruel current gripping at his legs and arms. He saw the bushes and banks of the stream flash by as the current swept him on. Now the mill-wheel seemed to tower above him; its terrible roar sounded in his ears. He saw the legs of Hervey Starling career into the air then disappear in the boiling cauldron at the foot of the mill-wheel.

Denny clutched at the now narrowed sides of the mill-stream. His feet felt bottom, but he was torn along. His hand gripped the top of one of the border planks, but the weight of Bob was too great. His grip was torn away. huge splinters in his hand.

The great wheel seemed to smash down on top of him. Well, he had Bob! He had done his best. He braced himself to choke back his yell of fear, when the great wheel seemed to slow down, and, as he reached it, it stopped.

Denny, almost senseless, weakly clawed at one of the slimy paddles. He gasped and groaned, and a red mist seemed to blot out his vision. Then strong hands closed on his coat collar, he was hauled upward, still gripping Bob, and he knew no more till he opened his eyes in the grinding-room of the mill.

Sandy was there, anxiously bending over him. Sandy was dripping wet, too—apparently only just out of the water.

"Bob?" gasped Denny weakly.

"All right, Denny, thanks to you, old pal," said Sandy huskily.

"Thank Heaven!" said Denny fervently. "Starling—er—have you found him?"

"Yes; and he's living. Been right under the wheel. But I stopped it in time," spoke Sandy swiftly. "I rushed into the mill and rammed a baulk of timber through a window into the spokes. It trapped Starling below, but it saved you and Bob. I dived down and hauled Starling out. He's terribly mangled, Denny. Oh, he's in a terrible state! A picnic party saw us speed up after we saw Starling sverve. They heard me yell. They followed closely; a fine group of young men, fit medicine for any band of toughs. The brutes who pitched Bob in ran, the others following. We're all all right, Denny."

"Thank Heaven!" repeated Denny simply. "Sandy, you're a real little pal!"

Starling was taken quickly back to Guildford in the picnic-party's big touring-car. The chums followed on in Ermyntude. Nothing could be done by them for Starling that day. Raynley had taken charge of the actor, and had called in two doctors.

Three days after the terrible happenings at the mill the chums were called round to Starling's bedside. Starling was conscious, but terribly battered by his experience under the mill-wheel.

The film star thanked the chums for what they had done, and complimented Sandy on his smart headwork, when there was not the fraction of a second to spare, the headwork that had undoubtedly saved his life.



The great churning wheel of the mill roared close by. And Starling's body was being whisked along, in the narrowing course of the mill-stream. The three staunch chums fought hard with the ruffians in an endeavour to make an attempt at saving the film star from his terrible plight.

"Boys," said Starling weakly, "I want to confide in you and trust you, as gentlemen, to act as I desire. My sister's husband, unknown to her, was once a crook, and should be serving in prison for his crimes. But he is going straight now. I could land him and the men who were once his companions, the latter still desiring to carry on criminal work, in prison any day. They know it, and, unknown to my sister's husband, have tried to get me out of the way, for I have threatened to talk if they commit any more crimes. You see, I have the men watched by a private agent.

"How can I report, though I s'pose I ought to, without putting my sister into a terrible position? Well, I don't intend to do so merely to save my own skin, and I must confess that my own skin and my sister's happiness are the only two things that interest me. Well, boys, this has appeared in the papers—this mill tragedy. You, I hear, have breathed no word to reporters and have

referred the police to me, saying truthfully you don't know why I was attacked. But you know now. I ask you again, boys, to keep close in regard to this business. Raynley is in my confidence, too."

The chums promised. They could do no other. After all, it was Starling's affair, and he may be right about the band-breaking up and leaving him in peace.

Raynley kept the chums on for some time, giving them work as supers here and there. They were waiting for Starling's complete recovery to complete scene sixty of "Burning Beacons."

Further trouble was, however, saved all concerned regarding Starling's secret. Starling's sister sensed something wrong, and her husband, though an ex-crook, being not a bad sort of fellow at bottom, confessed all to his wife. She at once persuaded her husband to confess to his own crimes, and take his griel.

All this came in a letter to Starling. Starling protested strongly, but his sister's husband took the plunge. He crossed his own particular Rubicon, and proved himself a man.

"Do you know, chums," said Denny, when it was all over and they were speeding, more or less, down towards the West Country in Ermyntude—"do you know. I rather admire that brother-in-law of Starling's, for all he was once a crook. Let us hope that the influence

of a good woman in his life will continue to have the good effect it has started with, and that it will make an honest man out of a rogue who has settled his account with the world by taking his griel."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob.

"And Starling's safe," put in Sandy. "May we often see his sporting face on the screen. He's safe, that's the main thing."

"So is Charlie Chaplin," drawled Denny. "Do you know, I fancy Raynley wasn't sorry to see us go—"

And Denny and Bob and Sandy could have sworn that Ermyntude indulged in a horrible, grating laugh as Bob changed gear at that moment.

THE END.

(There will be another rattling yarn of Bob Barkley & Co., soon. Meanwhile, make sure you read "THE STOLEN RACER!" next week's thrilling yarn of Sid Morris, stableboy.)

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SARKY MARLINE, a trustworthy, bow-legged old seaman in command of the *Result*.

DAN DERRICK, a cheery youth, and son of Captain Derrick—known as "Dare-Devil" Derrick—a rugged sea captain of some sixty-five years.

BRIAN CARR, a chum of Dan's, and son of "Amphibious" Carr, inventor of a patent diving-dress which Brian in his research work had perfected.

Their unscrupulous rival, known as the "Rat," a round-shouldered, beady-eyed Mexican half-breed, aboard the *Golden Gain*.

Steered by the trusty hands of Sarky Marline, the salvage boat *Result* sets out on its great voyage in quest of sunken Spanish treasure. Reaching Thiribeach, Brian Carr and Dan Derrick, garbed in their patent diving-dresses, take the first plunge into the depths



of the mighty ocean, where they locate the *Maria de Castellon*, an old Spanish galleon, in whose lazaret hold lies hidden fabulous wealth. The chums find themselves up against great odds, for there are rivals in the quest, a rascally set of rogues under the leadership of Morveno, commonly known as the "Rat." Brian gets captured, but, thanks to the hard hitting of Sarky Marline, he is able to gain his freedom. Further gruelling fights on the sea bottom follow, but the cool courage displayed by the chums is rewarded with the first fruits of victory. Morveno is determined to lay hands on the second of the galleons, and by a cunning ruse the *Golden Gain* is able to make a rapid get-away for Islay. The weather prevents all operations being carried out, however. The *Result* is soon hot on their track. Dan and Brian go ashore, where they fall into the hands of Morveno. They effect an escape, after which they go down to locate the second galleon. After a short search they find it—and a wonderful sight the old-time ship is, as she lies on the bottom, overgrown with shells, and with her masts broken off short!

(Now read on.)

A Message From Above!

"IF we're not the luckiest beggars in Christendom, Dan!" gasped Brian.

"Well, it's not so wonderful, Brian, after all," replied Dan, choking back his excitement. "There are only three spots where the galleon could rest, come to think of it. Here, because she sank on the flood; right under where we left the *Result* if she had sunk at slack water; or farther over to the north-west, if she had sunk on the ebb. We've hit the spot first time down instead of third, that's all."

"Let's shoot up the dan-buoy, and get telephone contact above."

"They'll take an hour, maybe, to spot the buoy and pick it up when it reaches the surface."

"Then we'll shoot it up now, leave it anchored, and go and explore so's we'll have something exciting to report when we do get 'em at the end of our surface wire."

"Good man! Hack through the seizing, then. See that the telephone coil runs out all right as the buoy shoots upward."

Soon the conical-shaped dan-buoy with its staff disappeared above and the hempen line and telephone wire snaked up through the darkness. Dan and Brian stood clear as the rope ran out. It seemed an interminable time getting to the surface, but soon it began to whisk the coils of rope loose with more power. At last the running out stopped. The dan-buoy was floating.

"Plenty of slack," said Brian, looking at his depth indicator. "We're in seventy fathoms, Dan! We've been descending as we walked. Good job we took a hundred fathoms hemp line with the buoy. Crumbs, but my father was wonderful! Here are we, about four hundred and fifty feet below the surface, and breathing as easily as we would in a pine forest. It's great!"

"Well, despite your wonderful invention, we can't stop down here for ever, Brian," replied Dan. "Let's get over to the galleon."

The chums soon reached the old ship. She was such a picture of romantic interest that their pulses quickened and

their brains seemed to swim. She was lying on flat rock, and her woodwork was encrusted with shell deposit. The high stern-castle had come adrift, no doubt when the ship struck bottom. It was lying detached, and the heavy carved poop-rail was close to the chums.

Brian scraped at the rail with his axe, and old-type lettering was revealed, carved into the teak-wood.

"Might as well confirm definitely that this is the ship we want," said Brian; and Dan fell to scraping as well as his chum.

Very soon the letters were clear and unmistakable:

"DOLORES DEL MONCAYO LOS HUESCA."

"This is the ship, Brian!" cried Dan excitedly. "Gosh, I wouldn't have missed these adventures for anything! It's all like a fairy-tale. Let's get aboard, anyway, and see if the treasure is there. That's the main thing, after all."

By dint of great labour Brian and Dan got into the saloon cabins of the ship. They soon found the lazaret hatch, and it was open. They were standing on the side of the main saloon of the galleon, with the deck upright, like a wall, beside them, and their feet in the clutter of dead men's bones, all fallen to that side, of course, as the ship took her last resting-place. The ribs of one man were jammed somehow at the lip of the lazaret hatch. One leg of the saloon table was still sticking out of the deck. The rest of the table had fallen to the side when the crash of the galleon taking bottom came.

"Those rib-bones, Dan, looks as if some poor chap was just getting out of the hatch when the ship filled and sank. He got jammed evidently," Brian pointed up to the hatch. "Well, son, we've just got to hack footholds in the deck and get through that hatch. We'll find the treasure tumbled in a terrible mess on the side of the hold, for sure."

The chums very soon got up to the hatchway. Then they clambered over, and lowered themselves into the lazaret hold.

When they were standing against the mighty ribs of the ancient vessel, Brian swung his lamp round, and the young divers gasped in sheer amazement. It was a gruesome sight that met their gaze. The bones of the dead men were lying

in tumbled heaps here and there. The treasure chests had slid across the decks and had burst against the side of the ship. Bars of gold and silver lay here and there, all encrusted by shell growth.

The very bones of the men had become rough and crusted. Indeed, in many cases the shell deposit held certain parts of the skeletons together—parts which, otherwise, would have fallen adrift long ago.

"By jingo, there must have been some men down here with the treasure when the ship sank, Brian," said Dan, his throat dry and his heart heavy at the pitiful sight.

"Funny," replied Brian. "They all ought to have been above on deck, you know. What's this?"

Brian stooped and picked up what looked like the claw of a huge bird. It was the bones of a man's hand, the fingers tightly clenched. Shell growth had cemented the fingers together. They were clutching something.

Holding the hand with awe, Brian peered at it. At last a low, swift exclamation escaped the young diver.

"This is pitiful, Dan!" he cried. "Look, these fleshless fingers are clutching a handful of coins. See! I can get one out without breaking away the grip."

Dan peered with interest at the coin Brian had extracted.

"Gosh, it's a thick 'un!" said the lad. "And it's gold!"

"It's a doubloon," replied Brian. "See, there are heaps between the ribs of the ship. We'll want canvas bags to clear this lot. Wonder what happened here, way back in Armada days?"

"I think an obvious reconstruction would be that land was sighted, the galleon driving ashore, practically foundered, and the men being fully aware that they might be able to bribe their way to safety with plenty of money, should they reach land, made a raid on the treasure. But the ship sank just above here while they were grabbing at the gold."

"You're about right, I expect, Dan," said Brian. "What's this?"

The young diver stooped and picked up four coins all crusted together.

"They're different in size," he said.

Dan took one and scraped the shell growth from it.

"Gosh, Brian, it's a dollar!" gasped the youngster.

Brian laughed heartily, thus relieving the tension of the moment.

"It's a piece of eight, sonny," he said. "See, silver! That dollar mark is an '8' with two lines drawn down through it, the lines supposed to represent the 'Pillars of Hercules,' that is, Gibraltar. It's this sign that is adopted by the Americans for their dollar. Pieces of eight were common in Mexico, I believe. But let's judge the worth of this little lot. Here are jewels, by jingo!"

Brian picked up a lump of conglomerated growth and broke it through. Red and green and sapphire gleamed out.

"Ha, the sea thought she had this little lot for good," laughed the young man a trifle wildly. "Great Cæsar, Dan, this treasure here might be worth millions! The fabulous

wealth the Press talks about may be true, after all. Crumbs, I've never dreamt of such a find! Here, let's get out and see if the dan-buoy has been picked up. We'll talk to the Don about this."

The chums clambered out of the galleon, and made their way towards the rope of the buoy they had sent above to mark their position.

Brian connected himself to the telephone wire and shouted:

"Hallo!"

"Hallo, hallo-o-o! That you, Brian!" came back faintly through the receiver.

"Yes," replied Brian swiftly. "Oh, it's great, senior! We've found the ship. Doubloons, pieces of eight, ingots, and jewels. Might be worth millions! The dan-buoy's about forty-five degrees from the vertical. We're in seventy fathoms—"

"I'm sendin' down at once," returned a mocking voice. "It's the Gain got the dan-buoy, not the Result. Ha, ha, ha!"

Brian staggered. Dan had heard, too, and the youngster swayed where he stood.

"The Rat's voice!" gasped Brian. "The Golden Gain has found our buoy, and Rayne will be down here immediately. We are helpless to communicate with the Result. And Rayne's coming! He's—"

"He'll come prepared, Brian," gritted out Dan. "This is terrible, terrible! He'll be armed—perhaps bombs, certainly something. But we must fight, Brian! We must prepare for his coming. If we could capture him we might be able to bind him with the dan-buoy rope or something."

"He'll risk nothing, Dan," returned Brian miserably. "We'll have no chance against him. They might sink a depth charge first. I— Look out, Dan, something's coming down now! Oh, heaven, it is a depth charge! Into this cave, quick!"

No sooner had Brian and Dan squirmed their way into the niche between the columns of basalt than they felt themselves struck and buffeted. They saw the basalt formations totter and careen above them, and Brian gripped Dan and pulled him back to the farthest corner of the niche.

The very refuge they were crouching in was closing! Were they to be trapped like this in the gloomy depths, perhaps to be crushed to death? It was attempted murder this time! And the rocks were crashing down in awful, nerve-shattering silence all round them!

Apparently nothing could save them. It seemed that they were doomed!



Rayne held his light up and saw the two helmets of the chums, cheek by jowl, peering out of the niche. It was a horrible, grotesque sight—the great brazen helmets, with two pairs of burning eyes peering out of the ports.

Trapped in the Depths!

CROUCHING there in that closing niche between the columns of basalt, Brian and Dan waited for the crash that would be the end of all things on this earth for them. The depth charge had exploded with terrible effect. Now the water was cloudy, and nothing could be seen, and the chums were forced chock-a-block against each other by the caving-in sides of the niche.

They still had telephonic communication with each other. A few seconds sufficed to tell them whether danger was past or not. They were a few seconds of the most terrible suspense.

Brian found his voice first.

"Dan, Dan! Are you all right?" he cried.

"Yes," gasped Dan into his mouthpiece. "Thank Heaven, Brian. We're jammed in, but the rocks didn't close enough to crush us."

Brian groaned.

"Dan, lad," he said, "we're probably worse off than we should have been if the rocks had crushed us!"

"You—you mean—"

"That we're jammed here to starve or suffocate."

Dan's silence expressed more than words. It was all too true. The murderous villains above would think that the depth charge had killed them outright. They would not trouble to search, by means of a diver in the suit of Brian which they had stolen at the outset of the adventure. Even if they did, and they were found, what would happen? They would be left, of course, one more grim secret for the ocean to guard!

Brian was again the one to break silence.

"I'm surprised at Rayne," he said.

"So am I," answered Dan. "The descent of that depth charge speaks for itself. Rayne must have countenanced the dropping of it, for he is the only one who could come down—the only one able to use your invention."

"I'm surprised at Rayne," repeated Brian. "I thought him a sport, if not too scrupulous in his methods of attaining his own ends. But this—"

"Look!" muttered Dan. "The water's clearing! Jingo, what a mess that explosion made, Brian. Look at the rocks, lying about all over the place like a broken temple of ancient days. There's one thing, your light's still going, though mine—"

Even as Dan spoke, the light from Brian's lamp became fainter and fainter. At last it died out, and the chums were in pitchy darkness.

Brian heard Dan gasp.

"Hold up, Dan, lad," said the young diver. "I'll grope for the lamp—think I can reach it—and perhaps I'll be able to put it right."

Dan felt his chum groping about here and there. At last a gasp sounding faintly in the receiver of his telephone made the boy speak.

"Found it's no good, chum!" he asked. "Or can't you reach it?"

"It's jammed, Dan, same as we are. I'm afraid it has got cracked, and is leaking. It'll be useless hoping to get a light. Your lamp's outside, isn't it?"

"Yes, and smashed to smithereens, I expect. Anyway, it went out. So our last chance is gone, Brian?"

"Fraid so," replied Brian bitterly. "Rayne might have spotted us if our light had been shining. But without that as a guide—well, looking for a needle in a haystack would be simple compared to looking for us in the mess we saw when the light was going."

The chums relapsed into silence again. Neither cared to express his thoughts to the other.

After a while, Dan spoke:

"I suppose the dan-buoy will be adrift," he said.

"Certain," replied Brian. "An explosion like that would be sure to break that thin hempen line and the telephone wires. Still, it's a chance that it wasn't broken. If not, Rayne will be sure to look for it. If he finds us—but it's hardly possible—he'll connect himself with us by telephone, for sure. Then we can appeal to him as a Britisher."

But weary, weary hours passed, and nothing happened. The luminous hands of the helmet clocks crept on and on. The ticking sounded in the young divers' ears like the beat of sledge-hammers. It seemed a dirge.

Four hours, five hours passed. Nothing happened. The chums, though still breathing easily, felt that they were merely waiting for death. They began to talk to each other as dying men will talk—spoke of their great regard for each other, and a hundred little pleasant incidents in their adventures were recalled.

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They were both as calm as the depths they were in—terribly calm.

"We're approaching the sixth hour jammed in here, Brian," said Dan. "I wonder where the Result is? I wonder what's happening above—"

Dan broke off as a cry sounded from Brian. At first the lad thought that his chum had been injured in the explosion, and, like a hero, had choked back the knowledge from Dan till that moment. But Brian's voice, vibrant with emotion, strong, ringing with hope, was not the voice of a dying man.

"Dan, Dan, I saw a light!"

Dan shot a glance towards where he knew the tiny opening between the columns of basalt was situated. It was only a matter of a few inches from his helmet. He saw nothing at first. Then—flash! It made the lad gasp, and his heart pounded strongly. Flash! Again it was seen, faint and distant. Flash, flash, flash, here and there, expressive of someone searching about on the bed of the sea.

It could be none other than Jefferson Rayne. And for what was he searching? The galleon? Most likely. Themselves? Possibly. And a wild feeling of joy surged up in those young breasts at the renewal of a hope that had seemed gone for ever.

Flash, flash, flash! Here and there bobbed the light, now getting stronger and stronger. Rayne was obviously moving about amongst the rocks, the light being occasionally eclipsed by some obstruction here and there. For Brian's special lamps threw their light all round, not in a single beam like a searchlight. Or, at least, if the shutter was not pushed up they would, and in searching work a diver would have the shutter down so that the rays would be diffused in the water all round.

At last the diver was visible to the desperate young fellows. He was moving about over the uneven bottom. Now he was heard by the galleon, and the chums' hearts missed a beat as he took three or four quick steps towards the ancient vessel. Those steps expressed that he had just seen the wreck.

The chums' hearts sank, for the diver went stumbling forward towards the wreck, excited eagerness in his every movement. He had been looking for the wreck, not for them!

Well, they might have known it. But if only they had the means of signalling—a light, to flash the rays forward towards him, to attract his attention and check his lust for galleon treasure with the knowledge that there were lives to save!

Fortune's Favours!

THE chums thought bitter thoughts about Jefferson Rayne. But they spoke no word. They merely watched!

The man was lunging towards the galleon, tottering in his eagerness. Here was his first prize within his grasp, and no one to say him nay! The treasures that ancient vessel might hold would soon be within his view! The chums could well understand the whirl of thoughts that were chasing each other through Rayne's mind.

"All for gold—all for gold!" muttered Brian. "To see Rayne like that, Dan, makes me feel ashamed that my own eyes glinted when we saw that treasure. Treasure! Bah! It makes beasts of gentlemen, rogues of honest people, and sends incarnate of blackguards! And yet it grips! I admit it gripped me, and I forgot all in the excitement of finding it. I—I can hardly blame Rayne, somehow, for forgetting—something—"

A low exclamation escaped Dan.

"Look!" said the boy. "Wait, Brian, before we criticise Rayne too much. He's turning away from the galleon, even before he knows what that lazaret hold contains! If he comes—if he—"

"He has spotted the rocks all broken by the depth-charge, Dan," hissed Brian. "He's coming over! Oh, Rayne, Rayne, how little you know that your every movement is regulating our heartbeats. Glory be, Dan, humanity has triumphed! He is coming over to search for us, where the bomb exploded. Even if he expects only to find our dead bodies, he is not wholly bad."

The diver lurched forward towards where he could see the depth-charge had exploded. He swung his lamp around over the ruins of the basalt columns, and a gesture with his free hand told the chums his thoughts at that moment. It was just as if he had said, "Terrible, terrible! And I have done this—to them!"

Rayne poked about here and there, and there seemed something frantic in his movements. Brian and Dan involuntarily shouted as their rival drew to within ten yards of their terrible prison. Then they laughed hysterically at their action. It was futile, of course.

At last Rayne started forward eagerly. He held his lamp on high, and peeped into the niche. There he saw the two helmets of the chums, cheek by jowl, peering out of the niche. It was a horribly grotesque sight—the great brazen helmets, with two pairs of burning eyes peering out of the ports.

Rayne stretched his hand into the niche, and the chums felt the movement against their helmets. Brian heard a click, then a voice:

"At last I have found you, boys—at last! What will you have been thinking? Thank God you are alive! Expected to find—"

"This has saved us, Rayne," replied Brian—"this niche! It closed, but not enough to crush us—only to imprison us!"

Rayne laughed. All the emotion went out of his voice. "So!" he said. "Couldn't be better! You'd no idea what an infernal struggle I had to turn away from the galleon and continue my search for you. I find you alive and kicking! Good! And prisoners. Excellent! I promise you, boys, after I have saved the treasure from this galleon, I will have you released somehow, though it looks a dickens of a job! Still, I'll do it. But the treasure's mine—mine, this time!"

Rayne laughed again, a trifle wildly.

"You have no idea, Rayne, what your words mean to us," said Brian. "You have promised to save us, and we feel you will. But we are still your rivals, remember—"

"Boy, don't think I would bargain with you on account of your lives. It suffices for me that this 'fabulous' wealth—worth probably millions, as you yourself said on the telephone—is mine for certain this time! I pray you do your worst once more when you are free. You two are the cleanest rivals I have ever been up against, and I'll try to be clean, too. I won't promise you your lives on conditions, like Morveno would, but I promise you your lives without conditions—after I have raised this treasure!"

"Rayne," said Brian soberly, "I can't fathom you. One minute you try to blow us to smithereens, the next you offer us our lives, and won't even bargain with us, when you could, and so get the rest of the galleons all to yourself—that is, if we agreed to let the Don buy our lives at such a price; and I dare say we should, for the Don would wish it."

Rayne seemed to be choking. At last he spoke.

"You don't mean to say you thought I sent down that depth-charge, Carr, do you?" he gasped. "But there, I

can't blame you! No, boy; Morveno did that. He had the thing all ready to drop from a davit. I protested. I don't want to pose as anything but what I am—a bit of a rogue—but I fought. There was a scuffle, and Morveno, with his horrible laugh, had me held off by the men. Then the depth-charge splashed over. Imagine my feelings when I saw the dead fish rise all round!

"Morveno ordered me over to look for the galleon and get the treasure. I obeyed; but my first thought was to look for you—for your remains. I confess the sight of the galleon turned my head; and, after all, I'm not a good man. But I pulled up. However, enough of this sop. You're my prisoners, and I'll release you when I desire to do so!"

Without further word, Rayne snatched the contact-pins from Brian's helmet, and turned eagerly towards the galleon, the lust for gold again master of him.

"He's a man, and white, too, for all he's a rogue, Dan!" said Brian.

"He's a sport, and thank Heaven for it, Brian!" returned Dan simply.

The young divers watched Rayne clamber about the wreck. They saw him disappear round the stern-post of the vessel, then, his light being hidden by the bulk of the ancient craft, they were plunged into darkness once more.

Suddenly Brian yelled.

"What's the trouble?" asked Dan, in great alarm.

"Jingo! Look out, chum!" gasped Brian. "Something clawing at my leg. It's—it's like the claw of a huge lobster!"

Dan got panicky, and felt with his own leg for Brian's.

"It—it may be, perhaps?" he asked.

"Goodness knows!" grated out Brian. "They don't generally trawl at this depth—only for scientific purposes—so it is really not known for certain whether terrible fish exist or not. But I've never heard tell of anything like huge crustaceans. Still, the thing's sawing at me like anything. Not hurting, though—"

Dan now yelped, and gasped in alarm.

"Something against my helmet, Brian!" he cried swiftly.

"Sawing up and down, too! I can touch it. Jumping Jupiter! It's a steel cable!"

"Steel cable?" shrieked Brian. "Cable? Dan, it must be from a ship above. I know—the hook for raising the treasure! Here, I don't mind putting my hand down now. Gosh, that's what it is, chum! And the hook's caught in the rocks."

"There's a telephone-wire attached to it!" shouted Dan. Brian's hands clawed at the cable and wire. He got the end of the latter, and his numbed fingers had just enough feeling in them to discover that on the end was a contact-pin for the helmet telephone. Brian made the contact on the lower holes he had fitted to the helmets, thanking Heaven for the foresight he had shown in doing so, for he could not reach the top of his helmet.

Immediately words sounded, thin and distant, in the receivers of Dan and Brian:

"Hallo, Rayne-Rayne! That you connected up?"

(The chums are in communication, not with the Result, but with their enemy the Rat. Be sure you read what happens in next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful serial, chums.)

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"D'ARCY'S DISCOVERY!"

(Continued from page 17.)

"Oh!" panted Scaley. "Oh!"

He struggled desperately.

The juniors were six to one, but the man struggled and fought like a wildcat, and for several minutes they had their hands full with him.

But the heavy odds were bound to tell. Scaley lay breathless, exhausted, at last, in the grasp of Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 10.

Gussy's Lucky Day!

TOM MERRY panted.

"Got him! Do you know who he is, you fellows? You remember that photograph in the 'Daily Mail'—"

"Scaley!" said Blake breathlessly.

"The jolly old banker."

"Oh, what a giddy prize!" chuckled Monty Lowther, rubbing his nose. "He barked my boko, the cheeky cad; but it's worth it!"

"Sit on him!"

Scaley groaned in despair.

"But, I say, where's Gussy?" exclaimed Blake, with a sudden feeling of alarm. "Has this chap—" Blake jumped up and shouted, "Gussy! Gussy!"

His voice rang and echoed, but there was no reply, save the echo.

"Gussy! D'Arcy!"

"We saw that man picking up his things!" exclaimed Herries. "He can't have gone. Gussy!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"If this man has—" His grasp closed more fiercely on the panting prisoner. "Where is our pal? Where's the chap we left here? Sharp!"

Scaley only groaned. The haggard misery in his face might have touched the juniors at any other time, scoundrel as he was. But their sudden anxiety for Arthur Augustus banished every other thought. Where was Gussy? Had he come upon the desperate fugitive, and— He could not have gone, as they had seen his belongings, even his hat, on the spot when watching the thief from the ridge. What had happened to D'Arcy?

"Where is he, you villain?" demanded Herries huskily.

"I—I will show you," stammered the wretch. "The game's up now." He scanned the juniors' set faces. "Listen to me! I will take you to your friend and— and save him—save his life, and give you a thousand pounds to let me go!"

Blake's grasp on his collar interrupted him.

"Tell me where he is, before I bang your head on these stones!" he said, with savage emphasis.

"I—I'll show you!"

"Quick, then, you villain!"

In the grasp of the juniors, with faltering steps, the hunted man led them into the ruins, and pointed to the great stone that hid his den. The stone was rolled aside.

"Gussy!"

There was no answer, but the sound of a wriggling movement. Blake struck a match and plunged into the shadowy den.

"Gussy! Thank goodness! Oh, Gussy, you ass!"

A minute more and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood in the sunshine, his aristocratic face a little pale, but quite cool and collected.

"Thank goodness you're not hurt, old chap!" said Tom.

"I—I was afraid, for a minute—"

"I am not hurt, dear boy, though I have been tweeked in a vewy wuffianly mannah by that disgustin' scoundrel," said Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy much obliged to you fellows. That man is Scaley, the abscondin' bankah—"

"We've recognised him," said Tom, "and we're jolly well going to hand him over to the police. I suppose you found him here, and—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass—fortunately still undamaged after all his adventures—upon his comrades.

"I was in a fearful scrape," he said. "I weally do not know what would have happened if you fellows hadn't come back. In the circumstances, I feel bound to ovahlook your wathah wotten conduct of yestahday, and to admit you to my fiendship again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What are you cacklin' at?" demanded Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Dear old ass!" said Blake, still chuckling.

"Weally, Blake—"

"O day worthy to be marked with a white stone!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "We've caught a giddy absconder and we are readmitted to Gussy's friendship. And all is calm and bright!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The following day Tom Merry & Co. were on tramp again, but the tramping of Septimus Scaley was done. He found repose within the strong walls of the prison that had waited for him so long. And so long as the St. Jim's walking tour lasted an unflinching topic round the camp-fire was the adventure on the Sussex Downs and D'Arcy's Discovery.

THE END.

(Tom Merry & Co. meet with further exciting adventures in next week's magnificent story, entitled: "THE CAPTURED CARAVAN!" By Martin Clifford. Don't miss it.)



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