

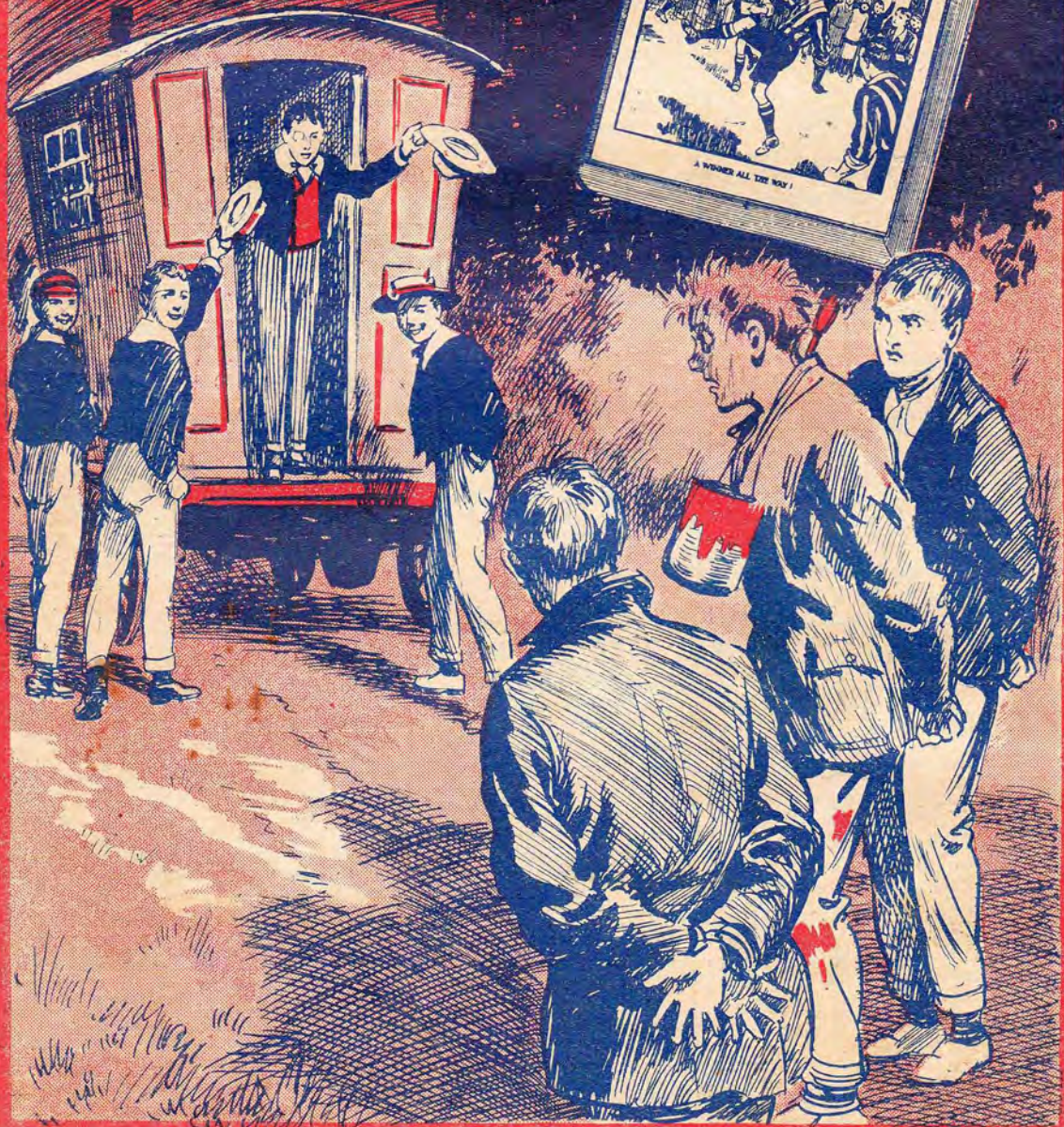
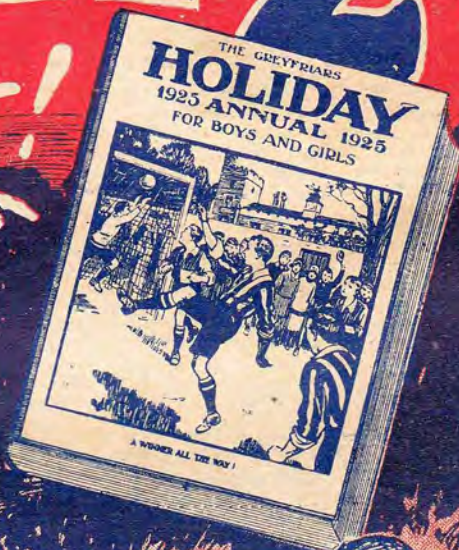
THE NEW "HOLIDAY ANNUAL" IS ON SALE TO-DAY!

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D

No. 865.
Vol. XXVI.
September 6th,
1924.

Just Out!



TOM MERRY & CO. CAPTURE COKER'S CARAVAN!

Full of wrath and powerless to resist, Coker & Co., of Greyfriars, watch with gleaming eyes the capture of their caravan by Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. (An exciting incident from the grand, long complete school story by Martin Clifford inside.)



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.

MY DEAR CHUMS.—Before I mention some of the excellent features I have coming in our next number, I should like to refer to a particularly fine letter to hand from an enthusiastic reader at Chelmsford. The writer says that Mr. Martin Clifford invokes the greatest enthusiasm when he is telling a story in his unique serious vein. That is all right enough, and the remark contains the germ of a magnificent compliment, but what about the St. Jim's author when he is working out a humorous theme? Is there anything brighter or better, or more calculated to chase away the "glooms"? I doubt it.

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL!"

Now's your chance! The time is now, not yesterday, or to-morrow, but just this identical flying hour. The "Holiday Annual" is on sale everywhere. If you find the least difficulty send to the Publisher at these offices. A newsagent or book-dealer may—and is, in fact, certain—to find himself sold out. He cannot always tell what copies may be wanted, though it is general knowledge that the demand for the "Holiday Annual" beats all records. The new issue is the best and breeziest ever, full of life and good spirits, and with plenty of side features in the way of admirable articles for hobbyists. And then the yarns! These are all front line, right on the wicket stories. Please tell any pal who does not yet know about the "Holiday Annual" that this is an opportunity not to be missed.

"THE ST. JIM'S CARAVANNERS!"

By Martin Clifford.

A more laughable tale than next week's long complete could not be found. The brilliant author carries on with the stupendous adventures of that caravan—and Horace Coker of Greyfriars. To say the yarn is well worth reading does not meet the case. When you read this stunning tale of the old school you will agree with those who say the best stories appear weekly—in the GEM. In this new caravanning tale we have all the bright and taking incidents clipping after each other at the run. The whirl of action is baffling, and the plot, so smart and amusing, never stands still. Of course, Coker is his own original, blundering self, and, naturally gifted as he is with such a prize temperament, he lands into big trouble. A fairly deep chalk-pit cuts no inconsiderable figure in the narrative, also a tramp, and in the touchy termination we find Coker, the tyrant over Messrs. Potter and Greene, no end glad to be hauled out of his dilemma by the trusty Tom Merry & Co. But I am wrong in one detail. It was not so much the termination that was touchy as dear old Coker!

A JAPE ISSUE!

The "St. Jim's News" for next Wednesday is a sparkler of the sparkiest. The jape takes many shapes; THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 865.

it possesses infinite variety, and at St. Jim's it is always new. To the looker-on the jape is always alluring, but only those endowed with a first-class, Al at Lloyd's sense of humour can enjoy a jape which is directed against their own most noble selves. In the new supplement the whole business is reviewed with no unskilful hand. The staff rallied to the task, for one and all are specialists at japing. I know one thing that will be said by everybody when the new number is in your hands—namely, that there ought to be more of it. No better or more stimulating compliment than that! But, anyway, the fun is packed close, and you will find these rollicking pages are worth reading more than once. Just drop me a postcard and tell me what you think of this supplement.

"THE HOUSE OF SCREAMS!"

By Geoffrey Prout.

This title has a grip in it, as a title should have, but just wait till you get the yarn! Geoffrey Prout is one of the men able to deal with romance in a manner second to none. He gives in his new tale some further adventures of those chums, true as tried steel, Bob Harkley, Sandy Munro, and Denny Burdett. They are aboard the Eryntrude, and in their voyagings light upon a mystery which thrills the heart. The story throbs with excitement, and carries you right into that strange world of the unexpected; but amidst all the surprising happenings the reader gets the idea that it is all just what might have occurred. Mr. Prout's realism is beyond criticism.

"THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!"

By Roland Spencer.

The next instalment describes the sensational dash to save the Result, which has been rammed. This serial of the sea rings of the old spirit of brave service and desperate resolve. The navigators of Spain who swept the seas in the historic past left a notable legacy for the doughty mariners of to-day. It is good reading, and the coming chapters will fascinate every Gemite.

THE TUCK HAMPER!

A Lancashire reader sends me word that he had a delightful dream the other night. He dreamt he had won a Tuck Hamper, but the GEM weekly prize is far too real to be met only in an unsubstantial dream. It is a good, sound, infinitely pleasing fact, and it can be won by any reader who sends in something extra bright in the way of a rib-tickling yarnlet. Send in your best story. This feature remains the same steady draw. Address the Editor, the GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

Your Editor.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPERS ARE PRIME!

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

TUCK FOR BURY!

HIS GRIEVANCE!

Two Lancashire weavers were discussing the proposal to keep boys at school a year or two longer. "Art in favour o' childer gom' t' skoo' till they're sixteen?" asked the first. "No, I am nor," replied his friend. "I'm noane gooin' to have our Bill connin' wheam fro' t' skoo' an' axin' me for sixpence for a shave!" A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to: S. Fenton, 23, Irwell Terrace, Warth Fold, Bury, Lancs.

TEACHER THINKS DIFFERENT!

Tommy had just brought home his school report, in which he had come in twenty-fifth out of a class of twenty-five. "Don't you think I have done well, dad?" he asked. "I am afraid you don't try hard enough," answered his father. "That isn't what teacher thinks, then," said the lad, "'cause he says I'm the most trying boy in the class!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to George Cousins, 2, Waltham Road, Woodford Bridge, Essex.

REVENGE!

Willie (with catapult): "Come on, Freddie. We'll settle him now if we can see him." Freddie: "Settle what?" Willie: "Why that little dicky bird that told mamma we played truant from school last Friday!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Walter Harris, 4, Vernon Street, Hafod, Swansea, Glam.

TAKING PRECAUTIONS!

An Irishman was nailing down a box which he intended sending by post. It was essential that the box should not be inverted, and a friend ventured to suggest to Mike to write conspicuously on the case: "This side up, with care." A few days later Mike reported to his friend that all the contents of the box had been broken. "Heavens! Did you label it, 'This side up'?" "Yes, I did. And for fear they shouldn't see it on the top, I put it on the bottom as well!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. W. Tec, The Bungalow, Deane's Park Road, Fareham, Hampshire.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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

There are lively times for Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, when they meet Coker & Co., of Greyfriars, but the loudest and longest laugh is on the side of the Seven on Tramp!



CHAPTER 1. Old Rivals!

"H I!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the St. Jim's Fourth did not stop.

He did not even glance round.

Certainly, he heard that loud shout which echoed along the sunny Surrey road and across the meadows on either side. The shouter had a powerful voice.

But like the oft-quoted gladiator of old, Arthur Augustus heard, but he heeded not.

It never even occurred to his noble mind that he could possibly be addressed in such a manner.

The shouter shouted again, while Arthur Augustus sauntered on gracefully.

"You young ass!" Still it did not occur to Arthur Augustus that he was being addressed. He did not recognise the description at all.

"You dummy! Hi, here!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wondah who that is shoutin'! He has a wathah waucous voice, I must say!"

And he glanced round, still not supposing that he was addressed, but mildly interested.

A caravan was halted beside the road, on a wide belt of grass. A big and rather bony horse was cropping the grass. Three fellows stood by the caravan—one of them a very burly and hefty-looking fellow, with rugged features. He waved a large hand to D'Arcy as the swell of St. Jim's glanced idly round.

"Hi! Are you deaf?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Bai Jove! Are you addressin' me?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, you young ass!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus extracted his celebrated eyeglass from his waistcoat pocket, and jammed it into his noble eye. With the aid of the eyeglass, he gave the burly fellow a look of withering scorn. Just at the same time he recognised him, and ejaculated:

"Cokah!"

Arthur Augustus had seen the burly fellow before. Indeed, the rugged features of Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, were not easily forgotten. Gussy had seen him at Greyfriars, when he had gone over with Tom Merry's team for the cricket matches, and he had met him on a summer vacation once.

Coker of Greyfriars beckoned energetically to the St. Jim's junior. The recognition was not mutual. Coker had forgotten the existence of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's, if he had ever taken note of it at all.

"Come here, young shaver!"

"Young shavah!" repeated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dazedly. It was scarcely credible that he, the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, was being addressed on a public road as a young shaver. But there it was! It was incredible, but it was happening!

"Can't you hear me?" bawled Coker. "My hat! Is the kid deaf, or silly, or what?"

THE CAPTURED CARAVAN!

A Magnificent Long Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and their Greyfriars Rivals.

By
Martin Clifford.

"Weally, Cokah—"

"Hallo! You know my name, do you?" said Coker.

"Well, come here! I want you!"

"I wefuse to come there, Cokah!"

"What!"

"I wegard you as a cheekay ass, Cokah!"

"Wha-a-at!"

There was a faint chuckle from Coker's two companions—Potter and Greene of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars. Horace Coker turned and glared at them.

"What are you cackling at?"

"Hem!"

"Do you think there's anything funny in that kid's cheek?"

"Um!"

"Look here, Potter—"

"He's going," said Potter. "If you want to ask him the way, you'd better ask him before he's gone, hadn't you?"

Coker turned his lofty attention on D'Arcy again. Having told Coker what he thought of him, Arthur Augustus was resuming his graceful saunter, with his noble nose well in the air.

Arthur Augustus was due at Tom Merry's camp for lunch, anyhow, and he had no time to waste on Coker. Tom Merry & Co. were camped by a Surrey lane half a mile away, and Arthur Augustus had been to the nearest village for a supply of provisions. There were no provisions visible about the swell of St. Jim's now; but Gussy had his own way of doing these things.

"Hi!" roared Coker.

Gussy sauntered on regardless.

Having encountered Coker of Greyfriars on a previous summer vacation, he had no desire whatever to repeat the experience. The less he saw of Horace Coker, the better Gussy liked it.

But Coker was not to be denied.

At Greyfriars Coker prided himself on having a short way with fags. And apparently he considered himself entitled to apply his methods to boyhood in general, whenever and wherever he came across it.

Coker seemed surprised when Arthur Augustus walked on unheeding.

"Hi!" he roared again. "Do you hear?"

Again Arthur Augustus understudied the celebrated gladiator, and heeded not.

Coker's patience, such as it was, failed him. He started at a run in pursuit of the St. Jim's junior.

"Here, you cheeky young rascal!"

Arthur Augustus spun round as he heard the rushing footsteps in pursuit. Coker was rushing him down a good deal like a bull.

"Bai Jove!"

"Now, then, you young ass!" Coker reached out for the collar of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Coker was a powerful fellow, and he fairly towered over the swell of St. Jim's. But Arthur Augustus was a fighting-man, and he was not to be handled by any fellow, however big, with impunity. His right fist came up like lightning, and jarred on Coker's prominent nose; and Coker, much to his own surprise, sat down in the dust.

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"Ow!" ejaculated Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Potter and Greene involuntarily. To the two fellows lounging by the caravan there seemed something entertaining in Coker's sudden and unexpected downfall.

"There, you cheeky wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great indignation. "Hands off, you wuffian!"

Coker scrambled up.

He fairly hurled himself on the Fourth-Former of St. Jim's.

"Hands off, you wuffian!" shouted Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

But Coker's hands were on—hard! Arthur Augustus hit out valiantly. He hit hard and he hit often. But he crumpled up in the hefty grasp of the big senior of Greyfriars.

"Now, you young scoundrel," gasped Coker.

"Ow! Yawwoh!"

Horace Coker fixed an iron grip on the back of Gussy's collar. Then his powerful arm dragged the swell of St. Jim's along the road towards the caravan. Arthur Augustus struggled furiously, but he had to go; and he went, his heels kicking up clouds of dust as he was bundled along.

Potter and Greene looked at one another, and shrugged their shoulders in a sort of hopeless way. They were accustomed to Coker and his methods. They knew their Coker—so well, indeed, that they had hesitated before consenting to go caravanning with him that summer vac. It was only the circumstance that Coker was "standing" the caravan and the expenses attached thereto that decided Potter and Greene to join up. Even so, they felt sometimes that Coker was getting a little more than his money's worth.

"There!" gasped Coker. "That's how I handle cheeky kids!"

"Ow!"

"Now be civil, and answer when you're spoken to!"

"Wow!"

"I say, Coker—" began Greene.

"You needn't say anything, Greene."

"But—" began Potter.

"Don't talk, Potter; you talk too much, old fellow. Now, you cheeky young rascal!"

Arthur Augustus reeled breathless against a wheel of the caravan.

"It's a St. Jim's kid, I think," said Potter.

"Is it?" said Coker indifferently.

"I've seen him before," said Potter. "Isn't your name D'Arcy, young 'un?"

"Ow! Yaas!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Didn't we meet you on the Thames last vac?" asked Greene.

"Yaas, wathah, and we jollay well licked you!" panted Arthur Augustus. "And as soon as I get my bweath, I am goin' to lick Cokah again."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

"You cheeky wuffian!"

"So you're one of that impudent gang, are you?" said Coker, staring at the ruffled and breathless swell of St. Jim's. "I remember! I'll take some of the cheek out of you."

"Coker, old man!" murmured Potter.

"Shut up, Potter!"

"But look here—"

"I keep on telling you that you talk too much, Potter! Can't you take a tip?"

Potter, with a homicidal look, shut up. And Horace Coker turned all his lofty attention upon the swell of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 2.

Coker's Way!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY set his collar straight and re-arranged his tie. Coker stood directly before him, and there was no escape for Arthur Augustus till Coker chose to let him go. It dawned upon Gussy's powerful brain that in a scrap he was nowhere near Coker's weight, and he realised that he was booked for trouble if the great Horace chose to be rusty. But he stood undaunted, and stared at Coker's rugged face with withering scorn and defiance. Potter and Greene lounged along towards the hedge, into the shade of the trees—leaving Coker on his own.

"Now, you young rascal!" said Coker, raising his hand magisterially. "I remember now that you were one of the cheeky gang who cheeked me on the river last summer vac. But I'm not going to lick you for that now. You're not worth it. But mind, no more cheek."

"Wats!"

"What?" roared Coker.

"Wats!" repeated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy undauntedly.

"You'd better take care," said Coker, shaking a warning finger at the breathless swell of St. Jim's. "If I hit you I fancy you'd break into pieces—a tailor's dummy!"

"Wats!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

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"I suppose the rest of you are somewhere about, what?" demanded Coker.

"I wufese to wewly to you, Cokah! It is no bizney of yours if Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah, and Blake and Hewwies and Dig are with me or not with me. I wufese to tell you anythin' about it."

"Well, you young ass," said Coker. "Look here, when I called to you I wanted to ask the way to Upper Ponders. It's a dashed village in this dashed district somewhere."

"I am quite awah of that, Cokah, as I have just been there buyin' pwovisions for my partay."

"Oh, you've been there buying grub, have you?" said Coker. "Where's the grub? I don't see it."

"I am not cawwyin' a numbah of large parcels myself," answered Arthur Augustus stiffly. "I have an objection to doin' so. The village gwocah is sendin' his boy with them."

"Lazybones!" snapped Coker.

"Weally, you cheeky ass—"

"Rotten young slacker," said Coker severely. "But blow your silly provisions, and blow you, for that matter. Does this road go to Upper Ponders?"

"Certainly not."

"What road does, then?"

"No woad at all, that I am awah of. You see, the woad stays where it is."

"What?"

"But if you follow this woad you will awwive at Uppah Pondahs," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

Coker stared at him.

"Is that means for a joke, you young ass? Are you trying to pull my leg? By Jove, I've a jolly good mind to lay you across my knee and spank you."

"You uttah wuffian!"

"Dry up!" said Coker. "Don't talk when I'm talking! It's cheeky. Look here, we get to Upper Ponders by this road—good. How far is it?"

"Aftah your wuffianly conduct, Cokah, I am not bound to give you any information. Howevah, I do not mind tellin' you that it is about a quartah of a mile by the woad."

"Let's get on, Coker," called out Greene. "We can get in in time for lunch there, if we get a move on."

"I knew this was the road for Ponders," remarked Potter.

"I told you so, you know, Coker."

Coker snorted.

"I know you did, Potter—that's what made me feel doubtful about it. You know what a dummy you are."

"Look here—"

"For goodness sake, Potter, don't keep on talking. You really make a fellow tired. Clack, clack, clack, all the time!" exclaimed Coker impatiently. "Now then, D'Arcy, we want a boy to lead the horse."

"Eh?"

"We've done a good bit on foot and now we're going to take a rest in the van," explained Coker. "We want a boy to lead the horse as far as Ponders."

"Bai Jove!"

"I'll give you half-a-crown," said Coker munificently. "Now, take hold of it, and get a move on."

Arthur Augustus regarded him blankly.

"Is it weally poss, Cokah, that you are offewin' me a half-a-crown to lead your beastlay horse?" he gasped.

"Certainly and good pay, too; but I'm not mean," said Coker. "I often give a kid a shilling or two to lead the horse. It saves a lot of trouble, caravanning, and the kids are glad of it. I'm waiting for you to get a move on. You fellows jump in, there."

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance, and climbed into the caravan. Coker led the horse out into the road, while Arthur Augustus, in a dumbfounded state, gazed at him.

"Get a move on, kid!" said Coker.

"I wufese to do anythin' of the sort!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you as an insultin' wottah, Cokah."

"Are you taking hold of that horse?" demanded Coker, knitting his rugged brows.

"Coker—" began Potter.

"Shut up, Potter! I give you one second, D'Arcy, to do as you're told," said Coker. "I'm not particular about the way I deal with cheeky fags, I can tell you. You should see the way I handle 'em at Greyfriars!"

"I am vewy glad that I do not belong to Gweyfwiahs, Cokah, as you do," said Arthur Augustus. "I should wegard it as howwid to belong to the same school as such an unwuly wottah and wuffian."

"I'll lead the old geegee, if you like, Coker," said Greene from the van.

"You won't," said Coker. "I've told this kid to do it, and I'm accustomed to being obeyed by fags."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Now, then, D'Arcy—"

"Wats!"

"Last time of asking!" roared Coker.

"Go and eat coke!"

Horace Coker made a jump at the swell of St. Jim's, red



"Collar him!" "Bump him!" "Rag him!" "Oh, my hat!" gasped Coker. "Leggo! Hands off, you young scoundrels! Why, I—I—I'll—Yarooooooop!" The Greyfriars Fifth-Former went down in the road with a crash, with Blake, Herries, and Digby, of St. Jim's, sprawling over him. Coker was a hefty fellow, but the three sturdy St. Jim's fellows were a little more than a match for him. (See this page).

wrath in his rugged face. Although he affected to have almost forgotten it, Coker had by no means forgotten his encounter with Tom Merry & Co. on the river long ago. He was quite glad to meet again with a member of that cheery party, and put him through it a little.

But Arthur Augustus was very much on the alert now. He was watching Coker, and he was ready.

As Coker rushed at him Arthur Augustus dodged round the caravan, eluding Coker's outstretched grasp, and then started up the road in full flight.

"Stop!" roared Coker.

Gussy was not likely to stop.

He sprinted on, and on his track sprinted Coker, panting with wrath and exertion. Potter and Greene watched the race from the caravan calmly. They had no intention of joining in it.

"Hallo, there's some more of the gang!" yawned Potter. "Coker doesn't see 'em, of course! He wouldn't! I wonder what's going to happen to old Coker?"

Three fellows in straw hats had appeared in the lane, from a turning a little distance on. Blake and Herries and Digby of the St. Jim's Fourth had strolled out to meet Gussy on his camp-ward way. They came round the turning in time to see him in full flight from Horace Coker of Greyfriars.

Coker was gaining fast, with his long legs going like steam. His eyes were fixed on the fleeing Gussy, and he did not even see that three fellows had turned into the road.

"Wescue, you fellows!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Coker's hand dropped on his shoulder. And a second later three pairs of hands dropped on Coker. And then Potter and Greene, sitting on the caravan a hundred yards away, were treated to a scene that was quite an entertainment in its way.

CHAPTER 3. Highway Robbery!

"COLLAR him!"
"Bump him!"
"Rag him!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Coker. "Leggo! Hands off, you young scoundrels! Why, I—I—I'll—Yarooooooop!" Coker went down into the road in a sprawling heap. Over him sprawled Blake and Herries and Digby of St. Jim's.

Coker was a hefty fellow. He never counted odds. His pluck was as boundless as his obtuseness. But three sturdy Fourth-Formers were a little more than a match even for the burly Fifth Form senior of Greyfriars. Coker sprawled in the road, smothered with dust, and he found Jack Blake sitting on his chest, Robert Arthur Digby holding his wrists, and George Herries trampling on his legs. And he found, too, that he could not dislodge them.

"Gerrup!" roared Coker breathlessly. "Gerroff! Ow!"

"Wag the wottah, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. Blake chuckled.

"What's the naughty boy been doing?" he asked.

"The uttah wuffian has tweated me with gwoss diswesp-ect!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "He has wumpled my collah—"

"Awful!" said Digby solemnly. "If he has rumped Gussy's collar, you fellows, hanging is rather too good for him!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"It's that hooligan Coker of Greyfriars," said Herries. "You remember we had trouble with him one vac. He's cheeky!"

"I'll give you cheeky!" bawled Coker, wriggling under the St. Jim's juniors. "Gerroff, you young scoundrels!"

"Bump him, deah boys!"

"He's a bit too heavy for bumping," said Blake. "We'll dust him. Gather up some dust in his hat, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

There was plenty of dust in the Surrey lane, churned up by carts and motor-cars—too much, in fact. Coker's straw hat came in handy to collect it, and Gussy soon had it nearly full. Meanwhile Coker struggled and wriggled and roared, but he struggled, wriggled, and roared in vain. Blake & Co. held him fast, jammed down on his back in the road, and Coker's mighty efforts only exhausted his strength in vain. In the struggle his collar came out, along with his tie, and his jacket was split, and all the buttons flew off his waistcoat. Coker was getting more and more damaged every moment.

On the distant van Potter and Greene were grinning contentedly. It did not seem to occur to them to go to the aid of their great chief and leader. Perhaps they considered that Coker, having asked for it, ought to have it. Perhaps they thought it might do him good. At all events, they watched the scene with grinning faces, and sat tight.

Arthur Augustus handed a straw hat full of dust to Blake. Blake proceeded to distribute it over Coker.

He poured it on his head and rubbed it into his hair. He poured it down his neck, he smothered Coker's clothes with it. Caravanners often collect a great deal of dust, but all the dust Coker had collected since he started caravanning was a joke to this. It seemed to the hapless Coker that he lived, moved, breathed, and had his being in dust.

His face was streaming with perspiration, and the dust mingled with it, coating him nicely. Through a thick coat of dust his eyes glared with rage. And his mouth, open to utter emphatic objurgations, was filled with dust also, and after that Coker made no further remarks, except in the way of spluttering and spluttering.

"There!" said Blake. "I think that does him nicely! Want any more, Coker?"

"Groooogh!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I weally think that does him vewy nicely indeed!"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

Blake looked round towards the caravan. He had kept a wary eye open on that van all the time, rather surprised that Coker's pals did not come to the rescue.

"Hallo, they're getting a move on," he remarked. "Time we did the same, I think!"

Potter and Greene, at last, were descending from the van. They were really sorry to interrupt the proceedings, which they considered might do Coker good, but they realised that there would be trouble to come—with Coker—if they did not intervene at all. Already it would be a little difficult to explain to Coker why they had not intervened before. So they came out of the van, and, with a view to eventualities, brought with them a couple of big sticks. They lounged along the lane towards the corner where the hapless Coker was gathering dust.

"May as well go," grinned Dig. "They're rather big for us to tackle, and I don't like the look of those sticks!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hook it!" said Herries.

Coker was released. He sat up, spluttering dust and gouging dust out of his mouth and eyes and nose and ears. Blake and Co. disappeared round the corner at a trot.

Potter and Greene did not seek to overtake them. Coker had his own manners and customs, but Potter and Greene were not hunting for trouble with juniors of another school. Blake & Co. were well off the scene by the time the two Fifth-Formers reached Coker. They tried to suppress their smiles as they looked at them. It was difficult not to smile, but it was quite dangerous to do so, with Coker in his present frame of mind.

Coker gave them a dusty glare.

"You slacking rotters—"

"Coker, old chap—"

"Why didn't you come and help me?" spluttered Coker.

"Why, we've come, old fellow," said Potter soothingly.

"Here we are!"

"Look at me!" gasped Coker.

"You look a bit dusty, old chap," said Greene. "Fancy a set of fags having the cheek to handle you like that! Past belief, isn't it, Potter?"

"Oh, quite!" agreed Potter.

Coker staggered to his feet. He was mopping at the dust with his handkerchief. Potter obligingly picked up his hat for him.

"You'll want a wash before we get on, Coker," remarked Greene. "This looks like being late for lunch at Ponders."

"Lunch!" hooted Coker.

"Yes, lunch, old chap. It's nearly two."

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"Blow lunch! I've a jolly good mind to punch your head or not coming to help me sooner—"

"But we came—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Coker stamped away towards the caravan. Potter and Greene exchanged a private grin, and loafed after him. It was true that they were late for lunch, and they were hungry. But they felt that this was really worth waiting lunch for. Coker arrived at the caravan, and glared round at them.

"Can't you get a chap a basin of water, you slackers?"

"Certainly, old chap."

"Can't you find the soap for a chap?"

"Here you are, old man."

"Where's the towel?" howled Coker.

"Here, dear boy."

Coker sponged his face and towelled it. From its coating of dust it emerged as red as a beetroot, fairly flaming, in fact. A ruddy-cheeked country boy, with a large basket on his shoulder, came along the lane from the direction of the village, and he slowed down, to stare at Coker, and grin. Coker's truculent eye rested on him; and then Coker noted the stack of all kinds of provisions in the big basket. Coker's powerful brain did not often work quickly; but what was obvious, even Coker could see at a glance. He remembered what D'Arcy had said, and he was aware at once that this was the grocer's boy, carrying the supply of provisions from Ponders to Tom Merry's camp.

"Here, you chawbacon!" said Coker, dropping the sponge with a splash into the basin, and jumping into the road in front of the village boy. "You stop!"

The country lad backed away in some alarm. Coker, with his flaming face dripping with water, and his eyes actually glaring, was rather a startling sight.

"You're taking that grub to some fellows camped farther on?" demanded Coker.

"Yes, zur."

"Fellow named D'Arcy ordered it, what?"

"Yes, zur," said the lad. "That was the name he gave the giv'nor, zur, and I'm to take it to him at his camp in Fliggis Lane, zur."

"Just so," said Coker. "Well, shove all that stuff into my caravan, sharp! Do you hear?"

"Eh?"

"Shove it into the caravan. I suppose it's paid for?"

"Yes, zur."

"Coker—" began Potter and Greene, together.

"I'm confiscating this grub," said Coker coolly.

"Confiscating it!" repeated Potter, in a dazed sort of way.

"Yes; punishing those fags for their cheek, you know. Put it in the van, kid, and there's a shilling for you."

"But, zur—" gasped the dismayed village lad.

"Shut up! Here, I'll do it myself."

Coker grasped the big basket, and jerked it away from the grocer's boy. He up-ended it into the van, and Tom Merry & Co.'s ample supply of provisions rolled out. Coker tossed the empty basket back to the astounded lad.

"Now go on and find your Mr. D'Arcy, and tell him that I've confiscated his grub," he said truculently. "Tell him that he can get it back if he knows how—say it was Coker bagged it, see?"

"I—I say—"

"Get a move on!" snapped Coker. "Look here, if you're not gone in two ticks, I shall kick you! Sharp's the word!"

"But, zur—"

Coker drew back a big boot. The grocer's boy hurried on, in a state of great astonishment and dismay, to carry the message to Tom Merry & Co.

Coker towelled his heated face.

"Rather a neat stroke, what?" he said.

"Is—is—is it?" articulated Potter, while Greene gazed at his great leader dumbfounded.

"I think so," grinned Coker. "Those kids are waiting for lunch—so are we! Well, we're getting the lunch."

"But—but there's a couple of pounds' worth of stuff there, at least!" gasped Potter.

"The more the merrier."

"It—it—it's highway robbery."

"What?" bawled Coker.

"Well, what do you call it?" demanded Potter. "Look here, Coker, this sort of thing means trouble. You can't confiscate grub, as you call it, as if you were a Form master dealing with a fag at school."

"Can't I?" roared Coker.

"No, you can't!"

"We'll jolly well see whether I can or not! Get into the van. We're going to camp and have lunch—that's our lunch. You lead the horse, Greene. Now, then, get going."

"But—but—"

"Didn't you hear me say get going?" bawled Coker. And the Greyfriars caravanners got going.



In the grasp of the Greyfriars Fifth-Former, Lowther went whirling over. "Sit on him, Potter!" shouted Horace Coker. Potter settled himself comfortably on Lowther's chest, while Coker, with hefty kicks, sent the camp utensils flying in all directions. (See page 10.)

CHAPTER 4. No Tuck!

TOM MERRY sat on a felled trunk by the side of a shady green lane, and looked at his watch and grunted. It was past two o'clock, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy should have been back from Ponders with the tuck long, long ago. Blake and Herries and Dig, spurred on by a keen desire for lunch, had gone to meet him; Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther remained in charge of the camp of the St. Jim's walking party. The Terrible Three were hungry, and with the passing minutes, their hunger grew more keen. It had seemed quite a bright idea to camp in that beautiful Surrey lane, and get ready for lunch—while one member of the party walked on to the village for supplies. Doubtless the brightness of the idea would have remained undimmed, had the chosen member been any other than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But as the chums of St. Jim's knew from of old, if there was any trouble floating around, Arthur Augustus was the fellow to hit up against it.

"Run over by a motor-car, most likely," Monty Lowther remarked thoughtfully. "Or perhaps knocked on the head by a tramp for his gold watch. In either case, I hope he's got it hot and hard."

Really Lowther did not feel so ferocious as all that. But he was very hungry.

"More likely found a necktie shop in Ponders," said Manners, shaking his head. "Give Gussy a scent on a new necktie, and naturally he forgets time and space."

"And lunch," said Merry, laughing. "Never mind—lunch will be all the better when we get it—we shall have jolly good appetites for it, anyhow."

"Those three noodles don't seem to have hurried him up much," went on Lowther. "Missed the way, most likely, or missed Gussy, or missed themselves! Our own fault, really, for trusting Fourth Form kids."

"Of all the blithering idiots—" remarked Manners, thinking of Blake & Co.

"Why grouse?" said Tom cheerily. "They'll be back sooner or later, and—talk of angels! Here they are!"

Study No. 6 appeared in sight in the lane. They looked a little dusty, especially Arthur Augustus; but all of them seemed in a satisfied mood.

"Here we are again!" said Blake cheerily. "We lost a few minutes—"

"You don't mean hours?" asked Lowther.

"No, I don't—I mean minutes. We came on Coker of Greyfriars—he was ragging Gussy, so we ragged him."

"Oh! Coker floating around in these parts?" said Tom Merry. "We had trouble with him on the Thames last vac."

"Yaas, wathah! But the feahful boundah has had a lesson this time," chuckled D'Arcy. "You should have seen him! It weally was worth waitin' lunch for."

"Oh, rather," said Herries. "All the same, I'm jolly hungry, and the sooner we feed the better."

"Oh, blow Coker!" said Manners. "Coker would have kept, anyhow."

"The uthah outsidah insulted me, Mannahs. He had the feahful cheek to offah me half-a-crown to lead his beastlay cavavan horse."

The Terrible Three grinned.

"Must have been an ass," said Lowther. "But, of course, he doesn't know you as we do, and wouldn't guess that you'd lead the geegee into a ditch, or something of that sort."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, where's the grub?" asked Tom Merry. "I dare say it was worth while putting in a few minutes ragging that Greyfriars bounder. But now you're here, where's the grub?"

"Hasn't the kid awwived yet?"

"What kid?"

"The gwocah's kid," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, I could not vewy well cawwy a lot of parcels myself."

"Why couldn't you?" bawled Manners.

"I wegard that as a widiculous question, Mannahs—the weasons are obvious," answered Arthur Augustus. "But it is all wight. The gwocah pwomised to send on his boy as soon as the stuff was packed weady, and so there is no time lost."

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"I expected him to follow me in a few minutes. He may be here any moment, you know."

"Ass!"

Tom Merry & Co. stared down the lane. There was no sign yet of the boy from the village grocer's.

"We'd better make it a high tea, when it comes—if it ever does come!" sighed Monty Lowther. "Or perhaps it will happen along in time for supper. Or for brekker to-morrow."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Oh, don't keep on grumbling, old chap," said Blake, feeling bound to stand up for Gussy, as a Fourth-Former and a member of Study No. 6 at St. Jim's. "I dare say the grocer's kid will get the stuff here as soon as Gussy would have, if he'd waited for it."

"Fathead!" said Lowther.

"Ass!" said Blake.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Here he comes, I think," said Tom Merry, pouring oil on the troubled waters, so to speak. "At least, it's a kid with a big basket."

Across a field-path close at hand the grocer's boy from Ponders appeared in sight. He came on at a leisurely pace, with his big basket on his arm. The big basket swung to and fro on the arm of the grocer's boy, which seemed to indicate that there was not much inside it. Seven hungry juniors watched him, and as he came through the gap in the hedge into the lane, they observed that the basket was empty. The village lad touched his cap.

"Mr. D'Arcy—"

"Yaas?"

"It's been took," said the grocer's boy. "A bloke with a caravan stopped me on the road, and took all the stuff out of the basket. Told me his name was Coker, and he's confiscated it. I think that was the word. Says you're to get it back if you know how, zur."

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. blinked at the grocer's boy.

"Coker—"

"Bagged our grub!"

"The blinking burglar!"

"The thumping footpad!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, this is rather thick, even for a born idiot like Coker," said Tom Merry with a whistle.

"Sorry, zur, but he was too big for me," said the grocer's boy. "Shall I go to the police-station in Ponders, zur, and tell 'um?"

"Wats! No," said Arthur Augustus.

"Look here, this is highway robbery!" bawled Herries.

"We're not standing this sort of thing. If a tramp did it we should jolly well give him in charge."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"We can't give Coker in charge," said Tom Merry, laughing. "But we're jolly well going to get our stuff back. Was there much of it, Gussy?"

"Two pounds seven shillings and sixpence, deah boy."

"Oh, my hat! And Coker's got it," said Tom. "It's all right, youngster, you couldn't help it. Here's sixpence for you; you can run home."

"Thank you, zur!" said the grocer's boy. And he plodded cheerily away, swinging his empty basket and whistling.

"I'm hungry!" announced Herries, with unnecessary emphasis.

"I think we're all pretty sharp set," said Tom Merry. "Where did you fellows leave Coker and his caravan?"

"Jolly nearly half a mile away!" said Blake.

"Well, let's get a move on. This may be a jest of Coker's, and he may hand over the stuff when we ask him. If not, of course, we're jolly well going to take it. No time to waste."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We can't leave the stuff here unguarded," said Blake.

"One of us had better stay—"

"Gussy," suggested Monty Lowther. "It's about all he's good for."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Gussy's had a walk already, so he can stay and rest," said Tom Merry diplomatically. "Come on, the rest of you."

"I vegard that as a good ideah, you fellows—"

"Good! Now—"

"Only I am afwaid you chaps will land into twouble if I am not with you," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "So I had bettah come. Lowthah can remain and look aftah the camp. Even Lowthah has sense enough for that."

"Why, you silly owl—"

"I wefuse to be charactewised as a sillay owl, Lowthah! I considah—"

"Are we going after that grub," asked Dig, "or are we staying here to listen to a slanging match?"

"I'm jolly well going after the grub," said Herries, and he picked up a stick and started.

"I think Lowthah had bettah stay—"

"I know Gussy had better stay—"

"Toss up for it," suggested Tom Merry, and he started after Herries, followed by Blake and Digby.

The toss of a penny decided the contested point. Arthur Augustus guessed head, and head it was. The swell of St. Jim's smiled cheerily.

"You stay, Lowthah, deah boy," he said.

Lowther snorted.

"Mind you take care of the bags and things," admonished Arthur Augustus. "Keep an eye open for twamps."

"Fathead!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus started after the other fellows, but he turned back again:

"Lowthah!"

"Well?" howled Lowther.

"Pway keep an eye open for twamps, and do not let any of our things be stolen, you know. I hardly like twustin' you to mind the camp—but if you are vevy careful—Yawooooooooooooop!"

A green turf missed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble head by an inch. He jumped.

"Lowthah, you wuffian—"

"Want another?" demanded Monty Lowther ferociously. "Just hang on a tick, then."

Arthur Augustus did not hang on, he hurried after Tom Merry & Co. Monty Lowther, hungry, and considerably annoyed at being left out of the prospective scrap with Coker & Co., remained in charge of the St. Jim's camp, while Tom Merry & Co., with warlike intentions, proceeded to look for Coker's caravan—and Coker.

CHAPTER 5.

Catching Coker!

"THIS is the place!"

"And where's the giddy van?"

"Goodness knows."

It was the place—Blake and Herries and Dig and D'Arcy were all sure of that. On that grassy spot Coker's caravan had reposed when last they had seen it. But Coker's caravan was not to be seen now.

Tom Merry & Co. had, somehow, expected that Coker would be there. But Coker had evidently moved on. The Greyfriars caravan was gone, and Coker was gone with it—likewise the ample lunch captured by Coker.

The juniors looked up and down the road. A caravan was a slowly-moving vehicle; but Coker had had plenty of time to get out of sight. The caravan was gone.

Tom Merry looked in the dusty road for tracks. Plenty of tracks were to be seen, especially where the heavy van

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had rested on the roadside grass. But there were innumerable traces in the dust of carts and vans and motor-cars, and to pick out the trail of Coker's caravan was a task that would have puzzled the most gifted Scout that could have been picked out from all the thousands at Wembley.

"Nothing doing," said Tom. "They've gone—and the grub's gone. We'd better get on to the village shop." "We're not letting them do us in the eye like this!" said Blake, breathing hard. "It may suit the shell; but it won't do for the Fourth."

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus emphatically.

Tom Merry waved his hand soothingly.

"We're going to make Coker sit up," he said. "But all in good time. I'd rather trail them down after lunch than before."

"Something in that," agreed Herries. "I'm frightfully hungry."

But Blake was obstinate. He was hungry, certainly; but the more hungry he was, the more eager he felt to get to those quarters with the Greyfriars Fifth-Former. Coker's high-handed proceedings had roused the ire of all the St. Jim's party; and, in Blake's view, lunch was a secondary consideration.

"By the time we've shopped and fed, they may be miles away," he said. "Very likely they're scoffing our lunch in their van, and keeping going all the time. We want to find them before they're out of reach."

"Somethin' in that, deah boy."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I'm on," he said. "Let's scatter and hunt for the giddy caravan, then. Any fellow who picks up sign, give the Curlew call. We'll meet in an hour at the village shop at Ponders if we don't have any luck."

"Right-ho!"

And the six juniors separated, to search for Coker's caravan.

There were a dozen winding lanes quite near at hand, and in any one of them it was possible that the lumbering van might be sighted—a caravan was, after all, a rather conspicuous object on the landscape. And passers-by and workers in the fields could be questioned. With six keen fellows all searching for information, it seemed quite probable that Coker's van would be run down.

Once it was run down, the rest was easy. There were three big seniors in the Greyfriars party, and Tom Merry & Co. were only juniors; but they would be two to one. They had no doubt about their ability to handle Coker & Co.

But Coker's van seemed to have vanished into thin air. At the end of the stipulated hour Tom Merry turned up to the rendezvous at the village store in Upper Ponders, and found Manners already there, sitting on a sack of dog-biscuits and eating cake.

"I thought I'd begin," said Manners. "Any luck?"

"None. Shove that cake this way."

A few minutes later Digby came in. He called for cake and ginger-beer, before he confided to the two Shell fellows that he hadn't found Coker. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the next to arrive, and then came Herries. They discussed cake and ginger-beer with considerable satisfaction, and waited for Blake. But Jack Blake did not arrive at the rendezvous.

"Perhaps Blake's found the cads," Herries suggested.

"Perhaps they've found him!" remarked Manners.

"Well, we can only wait," said Tom Merry philosophically. "Poor old Lowther will be getting frightfully hungry by this time. But I suppose we're bound to wait for Blake."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And they waited, rather uneasily. Meanwhile, Blake was not enjoying life. Manners' suggestion that the enemy had found him was well-founded. Of the six searchers, Jack Blake was the only one who had the good luck—or otherwise—to land on Coker's caravan; and he landed on it quite unexpectedly. Blake was turning the corner of a lane when the caravan came round the corner from the opposite direction, at a trot. Blake jumped aside; and then, recognising the caravan, he made a jump at the horse's head, and dragged it to a halt.

Coker was driving. He stared in wrath and astonishment at the St. Jim's junior hanging on to the horse's head.

"Here! Leggo that horse!" roared Coker.

Blake held on manfully. At the same time, he gave the curlew call, the well-known signal of the St. Jim's Scouts. Unfortunately, his fellow-searchers, scattered over the countryside, were too far off to hear it. Potter, with his mouth full of cake—D'Arcy's cake—looked out of the van.

"Hallo, one of that gang again!" he exclaimed.

Coker jumped down.

Blake repeated the curlew call desperately. But there were no ears to hear. He let go the horse as Coker rushed on him.

Coker grinned with glee. He was quite glad of this meeting with the playful junior who had dusted him.

Blake stood his ground pluckily. But the big Fifth-Former of Greyfriars fairly bowled him over with his rush.

"Got the cad!" shouted Coker. "Lend a hand here, you fellows!"

"Oh, cuff him and let him go!" yawned Greene.

"Lend a hand here, I tell you!"

Potter and Greene sighed and descended from the van. Really, they weren't looking for trouble on that pleasant summer's afternoon, especially after a hearty lunch—D'Arcy's lunch. But the word of Horace Coker was law on board the Greyfriars caravan.

Blake was struggling savagely in Coker's grasp. He seemed like an eel to Coker, and would certainly have got loose, but for the arrival of Potter and Greene. In the grasp of the three Greyfriars seniors the St. Jim's junior had no chance.

"Now, then," said Coker, in his most truculent tone, as Blake was reduced to helplessness. "What do you mean by stopping my horse?"

"What do you mean by stealing our lunch?" roared Blake.

"Do you mean confiscating it?"

"I mean stealing it!"

"I've had a lot of cheek from this gang of fags," said Coker. "It's quite clear that they need a lesson about cheeking their betters. Where are the rest of the gang, you young scoundrel?"

"Find out!" retorted Blake.

"Well, never mind them," said Coker. "I'm dealing with you. You made me pretty dusty. Roll him over! We'll see how he likes dust himself—and there's lots here, luckily."

It did not seem lucky to Blake. The grinning Greyfriars trio rolled him in the dusty lane till it seemed to Blake that he was the dizzy centre of a universe of dust. When Coker considered that he had had enough—by which time Blake thought he had had much too much—the hapless junior sat up dazedly, spluttering and gasping.

Coker regarded him with a cheery grin.

"Like it?" he asked.

"Groooogh!"

"Not so jolly funny now, is it?"

"Gug-gug-goooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mmmmmmm!" mumbled Blake. "Oh, you rotters! Groogh!"

"There's a cord in the van, Greene. Hand it out."

Greene handed it out.

Blake was past resistance now. He only gasped and spluttered as the caravanners bent him almost double, and Coker bound his wrists to his knees.

"Now you can go and look for your pals," said Coker cheerily. "Tell 'em I'll give them some of the same if I come across them. Bunk!"

"You—you funny idiot!" spluttered Blake. "Do you think I can walk like this?"

"I think so—unless you're going to spend the rest of your life here," grinned Coker. "Please yourself. Still, I don't mind lending you my boot to start you."

"Whoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake started. He found that he could get along in a weird, bending attitude; but his aspect as he went was irresistibly funny, and the Greyfriars trio yelled with laughter.

Coker & Co. mounted into their caravan in great good humour. The van rolled away, and Blake disappeared from sight among the hedges. Coker grinned complacently as he drove on.

"I fancy those fags are a bit sorry for their cheek by this time," he remarked. "I'm rather glad we came across them. It's a chap's duty to teach cheeky youngsters their place. And I'm the fellow to do it—what!"

"Oh, rather!" agreed Potter. "I hope they won't send a policeman to inquire after that grub!"

"Don't talk rot, Potter! That's the worst of you! Whenever you open your mouth, you talk some silly rot!"

"But really, you know—" said Greene.

"It's the same with you, Greeney. You're really just as big an ass as Potter! Luckily, I've got brains enough for three!" said Coker. "Now, what's on that signboard yonder? Can you see it?"

"Fliggin Lane," said Greene.

"I've heard of that before somewhere."

"It's where that grocery kid was taking the groceries," said Potter. "Those St. Jim's fags were camped about there somewhere."

"Then we're close on their camp," said Coker.

Potter and Greene looked a little alarmed. They had no desire whatever to come on Tom Merry & Co. in full force, after the happenings of that afternoon.

"Let's turn off," said Greene.

"Rot!"

"We don't want a scrap with the whole gang!" urged Potter.

"I do!"

"Look here, there's a crowd of them!"

"I'm a match for them, I hope. Besides, you fellows can help a little. You're not much good, but you can put up some sort of a scrap with Lower School fags, I suppose?"

And Coker drove on—and so it came to pass that Coker's caravan arrived at Tom Merry's camp in the shady lane—deserted now by all but Monty Lowther!

CHAPTER 6.

Lowther's Luck!

MONTY LOWTHER glanced round idly at the sound of wheels.

Lowther was not in the best of tempers just then.

He was hungry—really ravenously hungry. It was getting late in the afternoon, and there had been no lunch; and the St. Jim's walkers had breakfasted quite early. Owing to the chapter of accidents that had occurred, lunch seemed as far off as ever. It was not Tom Merry & Co.'s lucky day, by any means.

What was detaining his friends now Lowther didn't know and couldn't guess. Evidently they hadn't come on Coker and recovered the lunch, or they would have been back in camp long before this. If the caravan had gone on, and they had started in pursuit, goodness only knows when they would be back. In that eventuality, Monty Lowther saw himself, in his mind's eye, reduced to a ghastly skeleton. He couldn't leave the camp unguarded, he couldn't carry away all the paraphernalia on his own shoulders, so he could only sit and wait like Sister Anne, in the hope of seeing somebody coming. He hoped that somebody would turn up with provender before he was reduced to skin and bone. He would have given a great deal to see a baked-potato merchant or even an ice-cream man rambling by. But Fliggis Lane was a secluded quarter, and there was little traffic in it.

Then came the sound of wheels, and a caravan, gaily painted in red and yellow, came lumbering along the lane. Monty Lowther debated in his mind whether he could venture to stop the caravan, explain to the caravanners that he was stranded foodless in Fliggis Lane like Robinson Crusoe on his island, and beg, borrow, or buy something in the nature of grub. Generally caravanners were good-natured folk, and could be expected to feel for other ramblers in distress. Monty had not quite decided this point when he recognised Horace Coker driving the horse, and realised that this caravan was Coker's caravan.

"Coker!" murmured the Shell fellow, getting up out of the grass, and picking up a stick.

He felt that he might need a stick handy. He had not forgotten that old trouble of a former vac with Coker on the river, and he was sure that Coker hadn't. The happenings on that day must have refreshed Coker's memory, anyhow.

Monty hoped that the caravan would roll on, the Greyfriars trio passing the camp unnoticed. But that hope was jealous. Horace Coker was looking for the camp. He grinned gleefully when he spotted it, with Monty Lowther standing under the trees.

"That's the show, you fellows," said Coker.

"That's it," agreed Greene. "Not worth troubling about, Coker! Let's get on, old fellow!"

Potter and Greene were not disposed to hunt for more trouble. In that they differed from their great leader. Coker felt that he was a winner all along the line to-day; and he was hungry for more trouble. At his last meeting with Tom Merry & Co. on the silvery Thames, Coker had had the worst of it—very much the worst. Now he was setting that matter right. Besides, he had been severely dusted by Blake & Co., and that was an indignity that had to be avenged. Without even taking the trouble to answer Greene, Horace Coker halted the caravan close by the St. Jim's camp.

He jumped down.

"Come on!" he said.

"I say, Coker—" murmured Potter.

"Did you hear me, Potter?"

"Yes; but—"

"You're a good deal of an ass, Potter. But surely you've got sense enough to do as you're told," said Coker.

"Look here—"

"I said 'Come on!'" said Coker. "I mean 'Come on!' I always mean what I say, and say what I mean, as I believe I've mentioned before. I'm waiting for you two!"

Potter and Greene descended from the van. Monty Lowther backed away a little, gripping his stick, and eyeing the trio warily.

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"You're one of that St. Jim's gang, I think!" grinned Coker.

"You know I am," said Lowther. "Don't say you think, old bean—you can't think, you know. You haven't the apparatus!"

Potter and Greene grinned at that. Coker did not grin. He fixed a lofty frown on Monty Lowther.

"More cheek!" he remarked. "That's all right! I'll give you something to cure all that. So you're all alone here? Give me that stick!"

"Eh?"

"And bend over," added Coker.

"Bend over!" repeated Lowther blankly.

"Yes; I'm going to lick you!"

"Dear man!" said Lowther.

"Are you giving me that stick?" roared Coker.

"Yes—hard, if you come near enough!"

That was enough for Horace Coker. He rushed at the Shell fellow of St. Jim's, and Monty Lowther gave him the stick, with a terrific whack.

There was a wild yell from Coker as he received it. But the next moment Lowther was in his grasp, and whirling over.

"Sit on him, Potter!" shouted Coker.

"Oh, all right!" said Potter resignedly. He sat on Monty Lowther, pinning him down in the grass.

"Gerroff, you cad!" howled Lowther.

Potter settled himself comfortably on Lowther's chest. He was not in the least disposed for strenuous stunts like Coker; but he did not mind sitting on Lowther—he did not mind where he sat, so long as he sat somewhere. Lowther's chest was as good as anywhere else.

"Keep him safe!" said Coker. "Now lend me a hand, Greene, and we'll jolly well rag their camp!"

"I say, isn't that a bit rough, Coker, old man?" ventured Greene.

"Of course it is; that's what I want. I'm teaching these cheeky fags a lesson, and I'm going to rub it well in—see?"

Coker proceeded to rub it in. He took a flying kick at the spirit-stove and kettle, and landed them in a hedge. He picked up the rucksacks in which the juniors carried their baggage, one after another, and tossed them up into the trees. Seven rucksacks adorned the high branches over Fliggis Lane in a few minutes.

"I'll give 'em a bit of exercise, getting them down!" grinned Coker. "Stamp on those tin cups and things, Greene!"

"I say—"

"I said stamp on them!" roared Coker.

"Oh, all right!"

"Those rugs can be put into the ditch. They can do a washing-day when they come back."

"You Hun!" yelled Lowther.

"Hallo, still cheeky?" smiled Coker. "All right, I haven't done with you yet, my pippin! Wait till I've finished with your giddy camp, and then I'll give you what you're asking for."

Tom Merry's camp was quite a wreck when Coker had finished. Having done his work thoroughly, the great Horace turned to Monty Lowther. That hapless youth had been struggling desperately under Potter; but he was pinned down by the Greyfriars Fifth-Former, and he had no chance. He could only wait till Coker was free to deal with him, in a rather apprehensive frame of mind.

"Greene!"

"Hallo! What next?" asked Greene.

"There was a tin of yellow paint left in the van, you remember? Get it out!"

"Dash it all, Coker, we're not going to paint the van now!" urged Greene.

"Get out that paint!"

Greene got the paint out.

"It didn't occur to you to get the brush, too, did it?" said Coker, with gentle sarcasm. "My hat! If I had a brain like yours, Greene, old chap, I'd ask my friends and relations to find a nice quiet home for idiots for me to retire into. Get the brush!"

Greene got the brush.

"Now roll that young scoundrel over, face up."

Greene realised that it was not the van that was to be painted, and he grinned. Monty Lowther realised it, too, and he gave a howl of alarm and wrath.

"You cheeky rotter! If you touch me with that paint—"

"Flatten him out!" said Coker, unheeding.

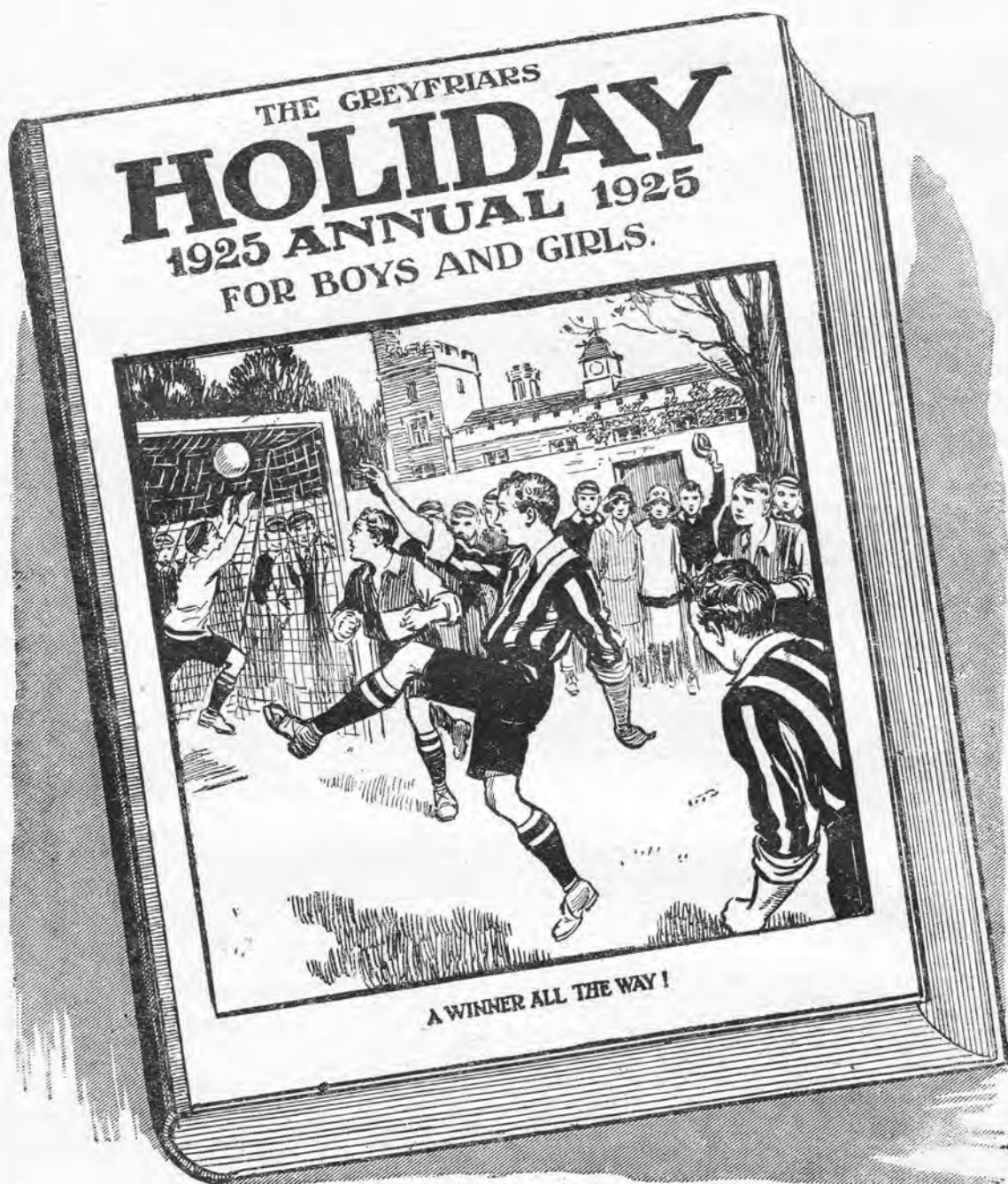
Monty Lowther put up a desperate resistance. But with Potter and Greene grasping him by either end, he was flattened out on his back, in spite of his resistance.

Then Coker dipped the brush in the yellow paint and started. He laid on the paint with a liberal hand.

It was a rich yellow, and a coat of it gave Monty Lowther a weird and startling appearance. Coker daubed some on his hair to add to the effect, and on his ears and his neck. He

(Continued on page 12.)

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grinned as he painted. He had been dusted by Blake & Co. But the dusting of Coker was a mere joke to the painting of Monty Lowther.

"Looks a regular beauty, doesn't he?" grinned Coker, when he had finished.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooh!" came faintly from Lowther.

"Now I think we may as well be off," yawned Coker. "I think these kids have had a bit of a lesson. The other young rascals don't seem to be coming back. I'd like to deal with the whole gang, but we can't waste time waiting about for lags."

"No fear," said Potter fervently. And Greene nodded a hasty assent. After their proceedings at Tom Merry's camp Potter and Greene were keenly desirous of avoiding a meeting with Tom Merry & Co. Coker would have welcomed it, regardless of consequences, and he was rather disappointed.

"Let's get going, old man," said Greene. "We've really done enough, you know."

"Too much, I think," murmured Potter.

"Put the paint back in the van, Greeney. Don't forget to wipe the brush. Have a little sense, old chap. Do you wish now that you'd bent over when I told you, young Lowther, and taken your licking?"

"Groooh!"

"If you want any more," continued Coker, "you can tell your pals, when they come back, that I'll be glad to see them. I'm sorry to have missed them, and I hope they'll come my way. We're going on into Kent, if you feel inclined to come after us. Ha, ha!"

Coker led the van into the road again, and the Greyfriars caravanners rolled away. Monty Lowther stood and looked after them, with a yellow glare, and feelings that could not have been expressed in words.

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry's Wheeze!

TOM MERRY slid off the oil-barrel in the village store and put down his ginger-beer glass.

"We'd better clear," he said. "We've waited here an hour, and there's no sign of Blake. Lowther will be famished by this time. We really must get back with some grub."

"Yass, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus.

"Blake may drop in any minute," said Herries. "We don't want him to come and find us gone. We agreed to wait."

"But we can't hang on here all the afternoon," said Tom. "We'll leave word with the grocer to tell him to come back to camp."

"He's landed in some trouble, of course," said Manners.

"Wats! Blake can look after himself all wight."

"Well, why hasn't he turned up, then?" demanded Manners.

"I weally do not know, Mannahs. But you can wely on Studay No. 6 to look aftah themselves all wight. Pwobably he is takin' the caravan somewhah."

"Well, we can't hang up here while he does it," said Tom. "We're bound to get back to Monty. We'll take some grub with us. It's pretty clear that we sha'n't get our lunch back from Coker."

"We're not letting him off!" roared Herries.

"No fear. We're going on the warpath, and we're going to strew the hungry churchyard with his bones before we've done with him. But just at present we'd better get back to camp."

And that was settled. A further supply of provisions having been purchased, and a message left for Blake should he turn up, Tom Merry & Co. left the village store and walked out of Ponders. They had made inquiries of the village grocer, but he knew nothing of Coker's caravan. Evidently it had not rolled through the village. Where it was by this time Tom Merry & Co. could not guess; but they had no intention of leaving the matter where it was. Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth had to learn that he couldn't deal with St. Jim's fellows in such a high-handed manner. That was a settled point.

The juniors were about half-way between Ponders and Fliggis Lane, when they sighted a peculiar-looking pedestrian on the road.

He was a youth, who was walking bent almost double, and proceeding almost at a snail's pace. The juniors could not help regarding him with wonder. Why a fellow should walk in that extraordinary manner was a mystery to them.

"Why," ejaculated Tom Merry suddenly, "it's Blake!"

"Blake! Bai Jove!"

"What on earth is he doing that for?" asked Manners. "Is that a Fourth Form idea of a joke? Look at those yokels cackling at him!"

Three or four labourers in a field were staring at Blake as he wriggled along the lane, and grinning broadly. Probably they supposed that the peculiar pedestrian was some

sort of a lunatic. Certainly his attitude was an amazing one.

"Bai Jove! Has he had sunstroke?" asked Arthur Augustus, seriously concerned. "Weally, he is acting like a fellow out of his mind, you know. It weally is vewy peculiar."

"Mad as a hatter, I should say!" grunted Manners.

The juniors bore down on Blake. That hapless youth sighted them and yelled.

"Buck up, you slackers! Get a move on, you duffers! Where have you been all this time, you dummies? Can't you help a chap, you images?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"My hat! He's tied!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he noted that Blake's wrists were corded to his knees, accounting for his peculiar attitude and his weird method of progression.

"Gweat Scott! What did you do that for, Blake?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in great astonishment.

"What?" howled Blake.

"Weally, you know, this is a vewy widiculous pwocedint'," said Arthur Augustus severely. "It makes you look utahly absurd, Blake."

"You blinking chump—"

"I wefuse to be called a blinkin' chump, Blake. And I wepeat that it is utahly widiculous of you to pwance about in this absurd mannah. What are you doin' it for?"

"Get my hands loose, so that I can dot him in the eye," breathed Blake ferociously.

"Weally, you know—"

Tom Merry, laughing, cut Blake's hands loose. The hapless Fourth-Former rubbed his chafed wrists.

"Who did it?" asked Tom.

"Coker, of course, you ass! I found the van, you dummy, while you silly owls were wandering about somewhere, and they were too many for me!" snorted Blake. "They left me like this!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Then you didn't do it yourself, Blake, deah boy?"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"How long ago was it?" asked Herries, with a warlike look round in hope of seeing the red and yellow caravan topping the green hedges.

"More than an hour!" groaned Blake. "I've had a ghastly time. Where have you idiots been?"

"We were waiting for you at the village shop—"

"Just like you!" said Blake.

"Well, we arranged to wait, you know," urged Tom Merry mildly.

"Oh, rats!" Blake did not seem in a reasonable mood. His experiences with Coker & Co. had apparently affected his temper a little. "If you'd come along sooner you'd have heard my signal, and we could have handled those rotters. Now they're gone. I suppose you didn't think of bringing any grub from the shop?"

"Yes, we did, old chap—lots," said Digby. "Look here—lovely ham, and biscuits, and cake—"

"Oh, good!" said Blake, mollified.

Blake left off chafing his wrists and started operations on the ham and biscuits. The juniors moved on towards the camp.

"Which way did the van go?" asked Tom.

"Towards Fliggis Lane," said Blake. "I shouldn't wonder if those rotters spot our camp."

"Well, Lowther's there," said Manners.

Grunt from Blake.

"Fat lot of good—a Shell fellow in charge," he said.

"Well, I dare say he hasn't been caught bending, like a Fourth Form chap," grinned Manners.

"Oh, you're an ass!"

"Let's get on," said Tom Merry cheerily. "We've had rather the worst of it so far, but one swallow doesn't make a summer, so why grouse? We'll make Coker sorry for himself later on."

"Yass, wathah."

Tom Merry & Co. proceeded at a trot. The possibility that Coker & Co. had lighted on their camp, with only one fellow in charge, was rather disquieting. They came along Fliggis Lane at last at a run. There was a sudden yell from Arthur Augustus.

"Gweat Scott; what's that?"

"What—" gasped Blake.

"That" was a yellow face that glared at the six juniors as they came running up. For some moments they did not recognise Monty Lowther. They had never seen him with a complexion like that before.

Lowther had been rubbing at the paint with his handkerchief and handfuls of leaves. But he had only succeeded in rubbing it in. Under the paint his face was crimson with wrath and rubbing. But all that could be seen was a countenance of brightest yellow.

"Monty, old man!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Was it Coker?" roared Manners.

"Ow—yes—groooh!"



The St. Jim's juniors were about half-way down the lane when they sighted a peculiar-looking pedestrian on the road. He was a youth who was walking bent, almost double, and proceeding almost at a snail's pace. "Why," ejaculated Tom Merry suddenly, "it's Blake!" "What on earth is he doing that for?" asked Manners. "Is that a Fourth-Form idea of a joke?" (See page 12.)

"Bai Jove! Did you weally let Cokah paint your face in that howwid way, Lowthah?" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Why did you let him do it, old fellow?"

Monty Lowther did not reply in words. He reached out with a yellow hand and smacked.

"Yawoooooop!"

"Have another?" asked Monty ferociously. "You've only got to ask another silly-fool question, you know."

"You uttah wuffian—"

"My hat! They seem to have wrecked the camp!" said Tom Merry. "This is rather thick! Where's the rucksacks, Monty?"

"Somewhere up in the trees."

"Where's the stove?" asked Dig.

"Somewhere in the hedges!"

"They've stamped all our tin crocks out of shape!" roared Herries.

"Blow the crocks!" growled Lowther. "How am I going to get this paint off my face? Oh, I'll scalp Coker for this!"

"You can't get it off," said Blake, with a chuckle. "You'll have to keep that complexion for days and days—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly owl!" roared Lowther. "Look here, I shall have to get some turpentine to shift this paint. I can't go anywhere looking like this. One of you cut off to the village and get some turpentine."

"I wefuse to do anythin' for you, Lowthah! I weward you as a savage wuffian, and I have a great mind to give you a fearful thwashin'."

"Fathead!"

"All serene, old chap, we'll see you through," said Tom Merry soothingly. "My hat! We'll make Coker sorry for all this before we've done with him. You fellows collect up the things, and I'll go and get the jolly old turpentine."

Vengeance on Coker of Greyfriars had to be postponed. The St. Jim's fellows yearned for it; but it couldn't be helped. For the rest of that afternoon they were too busy.

Long, long did Monty Lowther labour at removing the brilliant complexion Coker had bestowed on him. Most of it was gone at long last, though traces of yellow still cropped up here and there. And when he had finished he had a strong scent of turpentine that was, as Arthur Augustus declared, horrid. Blake warned him not to strike a match lest he should set himself on fire. Soap and water, and plenty of

them, made Monty Lowther feel clean and wholesome again, at last; but he was very tired when he had finished.

The rucksacks were recovered from the high branches by venturesome climbers. Other goods were hunted for and gathered up; but some were damaged beyond repair.

The remarks made on the subject of Coker were almost sulphurous. Tom Merry & Co. sat down, at last, to a late tea, in the sunset on the Surrey hills. They were tired, and they were exasperated, and they were not thinking of continuing their walking-tour—they were thinking of Coker and vengeance.

"We're going after those rotters!" said Blake. "We'll spend the rest of the vac on the job, if necessary."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm not going to sleep again till I've hammered Coker," said Monty Lowther ferociously.

"We're going on the giddy warpath!" agreed Tom Merry. "There will be a moon to-night, and we're taking the jolly old trail. That's all right. And I've got a wheeze—"

Blake grunted.

"Shell wheezes are not much good as a rule," he said. "But let's hear it!"

"Coker bagged our lunch, like a giddy highwayman. He's ragged our camp, Coker's going to get it in the neck. We're going to have a quid pro quo—a Roland for a giddy Oliver! He bagged our grub—we're going to bag his caravan!"

"What?"

"Caravanning is quite jolly," said Tom. "We went caravanning one vac, and it was all right—really better than a walking-tour. Well, we're going caravanning again—in Coker's caravan."

Blake chuckled.

"Oh, good! Ripping! I was thinking of ragging their van; but it's no end of a stunt bagging it instead! Hear, hear!"

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," said Tom Merry. "If Coker can confiscate our property we can confiscate his, and we're jolly well going to."

"Hear, hear!"

And after tea, Tom Merry & Co. in a determined mood, set out in the summer sunset, on the trail of Coker's caravan.

(Continued on page 16.)

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The St. Jim's News

SPECIAL "SCOUTING"
NUMBER.

EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

THERE are very many Boy Scouts among the readers of "St. Jim's News," and some of them have recently written to me, asking whether the School Scout Troop has been disbanded, in view of the fact that so little mention of it has appeared in the pages of the "Gem."

Instead of saying "Decidedly not!" and leaving it at that, I have prepared a more effective answer—this Special Scouting Issue of our little journal, and I venture to think that the following pages will convince any reader of the fact that the St. Jim's Troop of Boy Scouts is in a very flourishing and active state indeed.

The scouting side of our school life hasn't been much in the limelight for a long time, certainly. The truth is that nothing very extraordinary has happened in connection with it—nothing, that is, worthy of a long story, though it is true that many little incidents, humorous and otherwise, have occurred during short week-end camps and field days.

The troop comprises eight patrols, seven composed of School House boys, and the other—the "Ravens," of which Figgins is patrol-leader—of New House Fellows. The full strength of a patrol is six, but the Ravens are nine strong, in order to keep the New House members together, there not being enough of them to make up two patrols.

Two of the School House patrols are under strength. The reason is that patrol-leaders are elected by vote of the patrol, and if a fellow happens to find himself in charge of a leader for whom he has no particular use, he soon contrives to transfer to another patrol. Grundy, for instance, managed to get himself elected as a leader, and, as nobody is anxious to trust himself to Grundy's leadership, his patrol (the "Bulls"; most appropriate, isn't it?) consists of Grundy himself, Wilkins, and Gunn, with Skimpole—whenever he can be made to turn out.

Blake is leader of the "Owls," Wildrake of the "Eks," and Macdonald of the "Curlews." These are Fourth-Form patrols. Talbot is leader of the "Wolves," and Noble of the "Kangaroos," which is composed entirely of Colovials. I am troop-leader, and also patrol-leader of the "Lions." These three patrols are recruited from the Sixth.

Mr. Railton is scoutmaster, with Kildare and Darrell as assistant-scoutmasters.

Tom Merry

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SKIMMY the SCOUT!

By
Monty Lowther.

MOST of the funniest scouting incidents in my experience have occurred in connection with the "Bull" patrol. Considering that Grundy is the leader—the practically self-appointed leader, I might add—of the Bulls, there is no matter for wonderment in that fact.

Skimpole is a member of the Bull Patrol. He doesn't often turn out with them, it is true, but occasionally Grundy manages to run him to earth and bring him out on parade. His appearances in uniform are usually calculated to stagger creation.

He generally ambles up with his shirt back to front, his neckerchief round his waist in place of a belt, his haversack bulky with volumes on various "isms," a cap—or even a topper—in place of a scout hat, and a huge tomer under each arm.

Skimmy knows all about scouting—in theory. He can lay and light a camp-fire, cook over it, pitch tents, build bivouac-shelters, follow a trail, tie all manner of knots, read signs, stalk wild animals—anything and everything you can find mentioned in "Scouting for Boys," in fact—always provided, of course, that you don't call on him to actually do them.

He can recite you pages and pages from books of instruction on these subjects, but so far he has never made any attempt to put any of his wonderful knowledge into practice—which is, perhaps, just as well for the rest of the troop, since there would certainly be some kind of disaster if Skimmy took a hand in things.

As you were! I was wrong in stating that Skimmy has never attempted any practical scoutcraft.

One week-end camp he undertook to light the Bulls' camp-fire. He appropriated a bottle of paraffin that had been brought for the purpose of filling the lanterns, and set to work with armful of wood, tree-boughs, and a stack of straw which had been brought to fill the bags we use as mattresses.

The result was a fire all right. Unfortunately, though, it was not a camp-fire, but a bonfire, and by the time the Bulls' tent was well ablaze there was every prospect that the whole camp was going to end in smoke, as it were.

The fact that it didn't was almost entirely due to the Bulls being on the lee-side of the encampment, so that the flames and sparks were blown away from the rest of the tents.

A WARNING!
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THE SCOUT MOVEMENT!

By Victor Railton, M.A.

PERSONALLY, I consider that the Scout Movement is one of the finest ideas that has ever been conceived and carried out in this country. Of course, I am well aware of the fact that it isn't limited to this country. There are Boy Scouts all over the world, and they form a gigantic brotherhood, which, if the members of it only live up to the principles inculcated by the illustrious founder of the organisation—General Sir R. S. S. Baden-Powell—will undoubtedly do more towards the promotion of peace and good will among the peoples of the world than any kind of legislation could possibly bring about.

At the same time, I say "in this country," because I am convinced that here in England there is more urgent need of the Boy Scout training in good citizenship than in any other country in the world. Not because we are below standard in this respect, but because it is essential that we should be considerably above it.

England, with its mighty Empire, has tremendous responsibilities, and any organisation which helps us to realise those responsibilities, and fits us for undertaking them to the best advantage, is rendering incalculable service towards the welfare, not only of England and the British Empire, but of humanity at large.

"A scout is a friend to all, and a brother to every other scout, no matter to what social class the other scout belongs," says the "Scout Law." And when one considers what hatred and rancour is bred by foolish emphasis of class distinctions, the result for good of a few thousand fellows carrying out that principle at the most impressionable age of their lives cannot be over-estimated.

I would like to point out that, in connection with this law, the Chief Scout issues a warning not only against that form of snobbery which despises another fellow because he isn't so rich or well educated or clever, but also against that form—quite as abominable—which causes a boy or man to resent and regard as natural enemies the richer, cleverer, or better-educated people. It is what you are, not what circumstances have done for you, that marks you out as a decent fellow or a rotter.

Honesty, loyalty, helpfulness, courtesy, kindness to dumb creatures, obedience, cheerfulness, and thrift—the rest of the Scout Law isn't easy to keep, but it's worth while trying.

And don't forget what Lord Kitchener said at a rally and inspection in which I was myself taking part: "Once a scout, always a scout."

I have many friends who were Boy Scouts earlier in life, and, though circumstances make it impossible for them to wear shorts and a Stetson hat nowadays, they are still scouts at heart, with all a scout's love of fair play and clean-living.



JUST WILDRAKE!

By
Jack Blake (PL. "Owl" Patrol)

EVERY year the Grammar School Troop and the St. Jim's Troop take part in a number of special field days, and on these occasions there is invariably a fair amount of excitement going begging.

Curiously enough, the "Owl" Patrol, of which I am leader, generally manages to get into the thick of the fray, though, as you may guess, I am not grumbling about that in the least. No jolly fear!

We had a pretty good innings the last time we were out, though actually we had quite expected to be right out of the fun. You see, we were in the wrong part of the field of operations—or so we thought.

It was like this. A farm about two miles out of Rylcombe was supposed to be in a state of siege, and a relieving force was on its way to raise the siege. If a certain proportion of that force managed to reach the farm, they were to be considered as having succeeded.

We represented the besiegers, and the Grammarians the relieving force.

Any party, of either side, coming into contact with a superior force of the other side, were at once out of action, and had to retire from the game.

We drew lots for position, with the result that the Owls found themselves guarding a side of the farm which was mostly open country. There was absolutely no cover, and anybody approaching in our direction would have been visible before he had got within a hundred and fifty yards of us.

As soon as we had surveyed our position we agreed that there was practically no chance of any Grammarian risking an attempt to slip through on our side. At the same time, it was, of course, quite an important post, because, if it had been left unguarded, they'd have been able to simply walk through, open country or not. But it was obvious that there wasn't going to be any chance of covering ourselves with glory by making a nice haul of prisoners.

However, the job had got to be done, even if we didn't look like getting any medals for it, so I posted the patrol to what I considered the best advantage. Digby climbed a tree, from the topmost branches of which he was able to obtain a splendid and extensive view of the surrounding country; so that, all things considered, it didn't seem very likely that anybody was going to get through under the noses of the Owl Patrol.

Dig hadn't been very long in the tree before he reported somebody coming along the road.

"It's only a blessed tramp!" he added. "A real old jewelled-in-every-hole Weary Willie!" He broke into a few bars of melody. "Shuffling, shuffling, shuffling along!" he trilled.

"Shut up!" I snapped. "You needn't think you're a nightingale because you're roosting in a tree! If you feel so bird-like, you'd better build yourself a nest, or lay a couple of eggs—anything, in fact, that can be done without kicking up a row!"

The tramp was just coming round the bend, when Herries and I slipped out on to the road, just to make certain that everything was all right. He was padding along in a very forlorn manner. Judging by the appearance of his duds, he'd been robbing a scarecrow. An old tin was slung across his shoulders by a piece of string. Probably it was his domestic kettle and saucepan combined. It struck me that he could have given us some useful hints about open-air cooking, but at the moment we were too busy looking for Grammarians to speak to him. Ten minutes afterwards I could have kicked myself because I didn't.

He slouched past us, with a quick, furtive glance from his shifty eyes, and we slipped

back again into the cover of the roadside spinney.

Five minutes later a farm-cart came rumbling along. We stopped it, and made certain that no Grammarians were concealed underneath the load of hay with which it was filled. We were taking no chances—or, at least, we thought we weren't.

When the grinning farm-labourer had resumed his interrupted journey, we stood for a few moments in the road watching a youth on a bicycle who was approaching. He was clad in blue mechanics' overalls, and carried the frame of a bicycle over his shoulders, with the two wheels on his back. His hands and face were smeared with dirty oil.

"Who's this?" said Herries. "Don't know him," I replied. "He's not a villager, anyway. Probably one of the assistants from the cycle-shop at Wayland."

He came riding along leisurely, whistling shrilly and untunefully, and as he passed us he glanced across with a cheeky grin.

"Hallo, cocky!" he called out. "My word, the Brussels sprouts are out early this year, ain't they?"

Herries' face went very red, and he grasped his staff determinedly as he stepped towards the cyclist, who favoured him with a mocking grimace, and bore down on his pedals with the obvious intention of getting out of Herries' way as quickly as possible.



"Hallo, cocky!" cried the cyclist. "Brussels sprouts are out early this year, ain't they?"

But his luck was decidedly out. Before he had covered a dozen yards, there was a loud hiss from the direction of his back tyre, which immediately collapsed, so that he was riding on the rim.

He was forced to dismount hurriedly, and a quick examination of the road revealed the fact that he'd ridden over a piece of broken glass. He was so dismayed by the disaster that we couldn't help feeling sorry for him; and when he discovered that he'd left his repair-kit out of his toolbag, I got mine from my jigger, which I'd brought with me.

Between the three of us, the tyre was soon repaired, and he was loud in his thanks.

"If it 'adn't been for you young gent's, I'd ha' been in a mess," he said gratefully. "It's real kind of you! Good-afternoon, an' many thanks!"

He was just about to mount, when Wildrake suddenly appeared from nowhere particular and took a hand in the proceedings.

"Hallo!" he called out. "So you've roped one in, have you? Good work!"

There was the sound of a crash behind me. I spun round, to see Herries and the cyclist struggling on the ground beside the overturned machine.

"What the thump—" I gasped. "Why—why, you don't mean to say this blighter's a Grammarian in disguise?"

"You bet your boots that's just what he is!" smiled Wildrake. "He got scared when he saw I was spilling the beans, and it's sure lucky Herries was wide-awake

enough to corral him when he was trying to make his get-away."

I stared at the captive in amazement. A good deal of the oil had come off his face in the struggle, and I was able to recognise him as Perkins, one of the Grammar School Troop.

"My hat!" I said slowly. "And we actually repaired his blessed jigger for him. But we never suspected for a moment. Hang it, he even cheeked us when he was riding past."

"Oh, I guess he'd got his nerve with him," nodded Wildrake. "By the way, have you seen anything of a hobo—a regular hum-dinger of a pad-the-hoof?"

"Yes; a tramp came past about ten minutes—" I broke off, as a disquieting thought occurred to me suddenly. "I say, you don't mean to say he—"

"It was Gordon Gay," affirmed Wildrake calmly. "I allowed I'd be in time to head him off. Waal, it can't be helped. One more or less don't make such an all-fired difference in the long run. Now, get rid of Perkins for a bit. Let Herries guard him, and then call up the rest of your patrol and make 'em take cover on the other side of that hedge. I'm staging a hold-up, and the performance is just about due to commence."

I disposed my command according to Wildrake's requirements, and just as I had posted the last of them, the Canadian junior called my attention to a little group that were approaching along the road. When they came nearer I saw that it was composed of Lane, Carboy, and the two Wottons, and that they were carrying something between them with great care.

To my amazement it proved to be a hurdle, on which lay Frank Monk, his right leg swathed in a bandage, on which there was an ominous red stain.

Wildrake stepped out into the road and held up his hand.

"Hit up against trouble, I guess?" he said, as the Grammarians halted.

"Hallo, Wildrake," replied Carboy. "Don't delay us, old chap. We want to get poor old Monkey somewhere where we can attend to him properly. We're in the dickens of a hurry."

"Yep! I'll allow you sure would be. Seen any of our fellows along the road?"

"Only Figgins and his crowd, with a few of Macdonald's lot. But don't detain us; we want to get Monkey—"

"Sure! You said that before. So you've seen Figgys and Macdonald, eh? Either of them challenge you?"

"Challenge? Oh, you mean the game! Of course not. When they saw poor old Monk—"

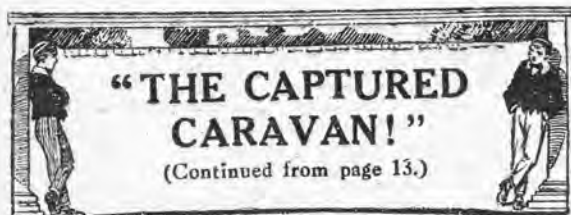
"They said 'Pass in peace, brothers. Only Huns fire on the R.A.M.C.' I guess! Waal, it was noble of them. Nearly as noble as it was boneheaded. But you sure ain't passing here on those terms. I'm a darned suspicious guy. I've gotta hunch that I can tell the difference between blood and red ink. You can tell poor old Monkey that I'm calling this bluff, and the sooner he jumps down from that hurdle the less likely he'll be to overtax the strength of his sorrowing comrades. I've been watching this sad little procession for about a quarter of a mile, and I may as well tell you I've seen things. A near-corps that can struggle up and jazz on the highway when it's passed one of our outposts is a sight too lively for my mind."

Well, of course, that did it. The Grammarians saw that their little ruse had failed, in consequence of the alertness of the Canadian junior, and there was nothing left for them to do, in view of the force that I immediately summoned from ambush, but to surrender.

Had it not been for Wildake I should certainly have allowed them to pass, supposing that Monk had really suffered some injury in an accident.

I tell you, Wildrake saves our bacon every time when it comes to scouting games!

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CHAPTER 8. Coker in Camp!

"THIS will do!"

Horace Coker was the speaker. The red-and-yellow caravan was a good distance from the spot where Coker had dealt so high-handedly with Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's. A good many miles had slipped by under the rumbling wheels.

Sunset was fading into dark—a glorious September evening. Potter and Greene, sitting in the van, surveyed their surroundings lazily and contentedly. Coker had stopped en route to lay in supplies for supper and breakfast; and when Coker laid in supplies, he laid them in with a lavish hand. Even Coker had his good points.

Many times that day Potter and Greene had wondered how long they could stand caravanning with Coker. They had realised that patience had its limits; that ordinary flesh and blood could not possibly stand Coker for more than a given time.

Now they felt that old Coker, after all, was not such a bad sort of chap in his own way. Potter and Greene, whose means were limited, wanted a cheap holiday—and this one undoubtedly was cheap. It was costing a great deal, but it was costing that great deal to Coker—or to Coker's affectionate Aunt Judy. A fellow who thought nothing of buying five pounds' worth of tuck at one fell swoop was a fellow for whom a great deal was to be said.

Potter and Greene were getting hungry. Their thoughts dwelt with pleasant anticipations upon a cold duck, a couple of cold fowls, and other magnificent things among Coker's new supplies. They no longer felt inclined to take Coker by his large ears, and bang his head against the caravan. They even agreed that Coker had, after all, done well in dealing drastically with that cheeky gang of St. Jim's fags. He had not, as was usual with Coker, made a mess of the enterprise. He had succeeded all along the line—Tom Merry & Co. were left to weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, while the Greyfriars caravanners rolled away in triumph. Coker had delivered the goods, so to speak.

Potter and Greene were so deep in mental contemplation of the cold duck and the cold fowls, that they did not hear Coker's remark. He repeated it, staring at them, at a loss to account for their disregard. It was difficult for Coker to understand, at any time, that any fellow could be forgetful of his important existence.

"I said this will do!" repeated Coker, more loudly.

"Will it?" asked Potter. "Yes! All right!"

He did not inquire what it was that would do. He wasn't interested sufficiently.

Coker halted the van.

"What are we stopping for?" asked Potter, sitting up and taking notice, as it were.

"Didn't you hear me say this would do?"

"Eh! Yes! But—"

"Well, then, ass, turn out," said Coker. "We're camping."

"Oh!" said Potter, "I see." He looked round from the van. It was a pleasant spot for camping—Potter acknowledged that.

A nice little field sloped slightly towards a purling stream. There was a gate, wide enough to admit the caravan. In a corner of the field a fat pony grazed lazily. Big, shady beech-trees loomed over the green field, thick with foliage. Certainly, Coker had an eye for a camping-place. Only one little objection occurred to his comrades—an objection which had not, apparently, occurred to Horace Coker's powerful intellect.

"Looks a ripping spot," said Potter. "But what about getting permission to camp?"

"Oh, that's all right."

lessly. "I'm willing to pay him ten shillings for camping in."

"You know where the owner lives?"

"Not at all—and don't want to," answered Coker carelessly. He can't ask more than that, unless he's a hog—and if he's a hog, I shall consider it my duty to disappoint him, see?"

"But he mayn't want caravanners camping in his field at all!" murmured Potter. "Some people don't."

"Quite right, too—catch me letting caravan trippers camp on my land, if I had any," said Coker.

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"Well, then—"

"That's different, of course. The landowner isn't likely to object to Greyfriars fellows—fellows like us. If he does, all the worse for him. This will suit us. Get that gate open."

"But—but I say!" stammered Greene, in alarm. He was quite dismayed at the possibility of some irate landowner marching into the camp with an infuriated demand to know what they meant by it.

"No need for you to say anything, Greene, as the matter's settled," explained Coker.

"But we may get turned off—"

"What utter rot! You can't imagine me letting anybody turn me off, I suppose. You're silly, Greene, old fellow."

"Look here, Coker—"

"Get that gate open. Are you getting deaf?"

Potter and Greene resigned themselves to their fate; in dealing with Horace Coker they were accustomed to resigning themselves to their fate. Greene opened the gate, and Potter led in the horse, Coker standing round to give the caravan a shove when it needed it. He gave it a hefty and efficient shove, which brought it into collision with the gate-post, scraping some paint off the post, and a great deal off the van. Coker snorted.

"Look here, Potter, lead that horse straight! You're running the van into the gate."

"You did it!" breathed Potter.

"Don't be a silly ass, Potter! Own up when you've done a clumsy thing—it's more manly than making silly excuses."

It was borne in upon George Potter's mind, for about the hundredth time, that the only effective way of dealing with Coker was by banging his head on the caravan. Unfortunately, Coker was rather too hefty for his head to be banged with impunity. Potter swallowed his wrath and marched on with the horse.

"Halt!" said Coker. "This is the place! Now, you fellows, gather some firewood for a camp-fire."

Potter and Greene exchanged glances. It was a beautiful little field, with grass almost like velvet. Evidently it belonged to some expensive place. What the owner would think, when he found a burnt patch left in his velvety sward by a caravanners' camp-fire, was really hardly to be imagined. Well-disciplined as Coker's faithful followers were, they hesitated.

"Well, what are you gaping at?" asked Coker pleasantly. "Didn't you hear me speak?"

"We—we can do without a camp-fire, old chap," murmured Potter. "We—we really oughtn't to do any damage here, you know."

"I said a camp-fire, and I mean a camp-fire," explained Coker. "I still mean it! Get some firewood from the hedge yonder."

"Oh dear!"

Potter and Greene gathered firewood. Coker himself lighted the fire; he explained that he was the only fellow in the party who knew how to light a camp-fire properly. Perhaps that was why it was a full half-hour before the fire was going.

However, it was going at last, blazing and crackling quite cheerily against the background of shadow. The sun was gone now, save for a faint red glimmer in the west. The caravanners' camp looked very merry and bright, with the camp-fire crackling and sparkling, and the purling stream reflecting the flames, and the big beeches looming overhead, and the kettle singing over the fire, and the steam of hot coffee rising, and handsome helpings of the fat of the land spread out on glimmering plates. The three seniors of Greyfriars sat round the fire, and they fully enjoyed their supper. It was really a supper of the gods; Coker did these things well.

Potter and Greene hoped against hope that the landowner would turn out to be a good-natured chap, or that he wouldn't discover the camp on his land before they flitted in the morning. Anyhow, it was no use arguing with Coker, and they were in for it now.

Coker leaned back against a wheel of the caravan, and surveyed his comrades with a satisfied smile. Potter and Greene leaned back, satisfied with the supper, at least.

"Something like, what?" asked Coker.

"Oh, ripping," agreed Potter.

"Top-hole," said Greene.

"Trust me to manage a caravanning trip," said Coker. "Trust me to find a camp. You fellows will get on all right, so long as you follow your leader, you know, and never think of setting up your own silly opinions against my judgment. That's an important point."

"Oh," gasped Potter, "is it?"

"Very!" said Coker. "Bear it in mind, old fellow. I think we've had a good day—a really jolly day! The only thing I'm sorry about is that I had to let off some of those St. Jim's fags. I think there were seven of them, and I only made an example of three of the gang. I think perhaps I ought to have stayed on and given the others a lesson. Still, we may come across them again."

Greene sat up suddenly.

Sid Morris is confronted with another big problem, but the new stable-boy of Ashdown House runs a "straight" course and wins through!



THE STOLEN RACER!

by Cecil Fanshaw.

A Thrilling Story of Racing Stable Rivalry.

CHAPTER 1.

A Surprise for Sid!

WITH a light saddle on his right arm, a bridle swinging in his left hand, young Sid Morris came running out of the saddle-room of the Ashdown House stables.

Whistling a rag-time snatch unmusically, the boy hurried across the stable-yard, making towards the centre loose-box on the farther side. This was the box of a horse called Hurricane, a big black, as fast as the wind, but with the temper of an untamed fiend.

From other boxes came the sounds of pawing horses, mingled with the voices of stable-lads shouting sharp commands.

For the sun had been up nearly half an hour, and the boys were hastily getting ready for an exercise gallop on the neighbouring downs. Sam Hall, their boss, was an early riser.

Reaching Hurricane's box, Sid lifted the latch and slipped inside, leaving the upper half of the door open. Almost immediately there came a rustle of straw, a furious snort, and a loud crash. Then something slammed up against the door like a miniature earthquake.

But it was only Sid jumping back. He was having his daily dust-up with Hurricane.

"Steady, old feller!" the lad cried soothingly, at the same time dodging another lightning, whizzing kick that threatened to knock his head off his shoulders. "Of course, you don't know me yet. But in another week— Ah, would you!"

Sid broke off, dropped his saddle and bridle, and sprang at Hurricane's head.

The big black had wheeled round in a flash, and a lean head, with eyes blazing and jaws agape, had darted at Sid with the speed of a cobra striking. But the boy got a vice-like grip of the headstall with one hand, and then started stroking the muscular satin neck with the other.

As he smoothed Hurricane's shining coat Sid murmured "horse-talk" in a low voice. Within a minute the black thoroughbred was blowing out his nostrils and rubbing his muzzle on the lad's shoulder.

But Sid was wary. He and Hurricane had only known each other for a few days. So he kept on soothing the savage horse, while he stretched out cautiously for the bridle.

"Smart work!" exclaimed a harsh voice suddenly.

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"Yes; I told you that boy would be able to handle him," boomed another.

Sid knew the latter voice. It was the voice of his boss, Sam Hall—a first-class trainer, but, at the same time, an utter rogue.

Straightening up quietly, Sid turned round, to see a rugged-looking man, whose piercing eyes peered out from under shaggy brows, standing beside his burly, red-faced boss.

Unnoticed by Sid, both had been watching the lad's skilful tactics from over the low door.

"The boy can certainly handle my horse, Hall," said the shaggy one, in grating tones. "And I know he's a terror. He's chewed up half a dozen lads since I shipped him over from America. I bought him in the States, you know."

Hall nodded thoughtfully. So the other man continued:

"Well, you vouch for the lad's riding. So now I guess you'd better tell him what he's wanted to do."

Hall rubbed his blue-black chin, as he usually did when his mind was busy. Then he barked:

"This is Mr. Morgan, Sid—Hurricane's owner," he said to the stable-boy. "I've told him about your riding. He's going to give you the mount on Hurricane, both in the Doncaster Cup and the Newbury Autumn Handicap. Got that?"

"Yes, sir, rather!" cried Sid, his blue eyes sparkling.

"Wait a minute!" cut in Hall, raising one big hand. "Here are your instructions. You're to get a bad start in the Doncaster Cup—"

"That's the ticket!" rasped Morgan. "Pulling's no good. It's too easily spotted. Yank your horse round when the gate goes up. You'll lose lengths. If you're clever, it'll look like Hurricane's fault. Then ride like blazes. Hurricane'll have shot his bolt by the time he's caught up the leaders!"

Sid bit off a gasp. But Hall, not pleased at being interrupted, continued:

"You hear Mr. Morgan, Sid? Well, mind you obey orders. You mustn't even get a place in the cup. Then Hurricane will get a light weight to carry in

the Newbury Handicap. You'll win that race on your head."

Sid stammered out that he understood. Indeed the scheme was quite plain. In order that Hurricane should be lightly handicapped at Newbury, thus making certain of his second race, he was to put up a bad show in the Doncaster Cup. That the racing public would be grossly cheated was nothing to the rascally owner and trainer.

A look of disgust, gone as soon as come, flashed across Sid's face. But Hall caught it.

"D'you understand, boy?" he thundered. "D'you think you're capable of doing as ordered?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gulped Sid, who was mighty anxious to keep his job. "I've got it all right."

"Good for you!" growled the burly trainer. "And now slap that saddle on. Then take Hurricane out on the downs by himself. He's too vicious yet to mix up with the other horses. I'll shove him in a trial gallop next week."

Hall and Morgan stamped off together, while Sid resumed his task of coaxing Hurricane to submit to being saddled. But, while he worked with his hands, his thoughts were also busy.

"I did badger my dad," the boy told himself, "to let me become a jockey. But I'm blown if I reckoned then to land in a stable of crooks! No matter. I've queered Hall's tricks twice without being spotted, and I'll do it again somehow. Sid Morris is going to ride straight. But he's also going to keep his job! Come on up, Hurricane!"

The big black, having failed in his efforts to bite Sid while the lad was girthing him, allowed himself to be led into the yard.

"Hi, Jim!" cried Sid, catching sight of the fair-haired youngster who was his only pal in Hall's crooked outfit. "Just give me a leg-up on this man-eater!"

"Right-ho!" called back Jim, scurrying over. Then, drawing close, he whispered: "What are you lookin' glum about, Sid? Is the boss puttin' up another dirty deal?"

"Yes!" snapped the elder boy. "But don't shout about it. I've got to lose one race on this horse so as to make certain of another. I don't think! Got my ankle?" he added, in a much louder tone. "Right! Up she goes!"

Jim gave a heave, and Sid shot up, to land squarely in his saddle. Then, with a sly wink at Jim, he gathered up his reins and clattered out of the paved yard.

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Hurricane, being as cunning as a fox, had stood perfectly still in the yard, but directly he found soft turf beneath his feet he played up all he knew.

The big horse proceeded in a series of gigantic bounds. But Sid stuck closer than a leech, merely kicked his mount's ribs, then sent him forward at a swinging canter.

A soft wind blew across the rolling downs, which here and there were dotted with clumps of gorse and small fir plantations. The flaming sun was increasing in strength every minute, and somewhere up in the blue sky a lark poured out a riot of song.

But Sid had no eyes for the landscape. He was trying to figure how he could ride square in the Doncaster Cup, without being promptly fired by his knavish boss.

Little did he dream that several keen eyes were watching him from above a fold in the ground, or what an exciting morning he was destined to have.

His brow furrowed, Sid cantered on. Hurricane was moving with a graceful, effortless stride, his black tail streaming out behind him. Once he tossed his crest, and pricked his ears at some distant objects. But Sid saw nothing, and kept him striding on.

Reaching the end of a spur, Sid reined up. Away to his right was a slight dip, then the broad downs rolled on again till they met the horizon. But on Sid's left was a narrow, green valley, flanked on each side near the bottom by thick fir plantations. After that, the ground rose again.

A moment's pause, then Sid turned Hurricane down into the valley.

Immediately, satisfied as to Sid's direction, several prone figures wriggled back from the crest of a rise. Out of sight they sprang to their feet. Then, running down a valley parallel to Sid's, they hurled themselves into the thick firs at the bottom.

It was the work of a moment for the stealthy watchers to force their way through the belt of trees, emerging below Sid. But on the fringe of the plantation they flung themselves flat, finding plenty of cover amongst high grass and bracken.

Hurricane, stepping daintily down the steep descent, soon drew close to the ambush. Reaching the floor of the valley, Sid gathered him together to canter up the further side.

As he did so there came a rustling in the grass, and Hurricane snorted, reared up, and wheeled.

"What the plague are you shyin' at?" gritted Sid, dealing his mount a light slap on his coal-black neck, and swinging him round again. "Are you scared of rabbits?"

But it was no rabbit that had made Hurricane shy, as Sid learnt an instant later. For, with a sudden, swift movement, half a dozen stoutly-built figures sprang up from the grass alongside.

They raised no cry. Their concerted rush was made in grim, determined silence, and things happened at racing speed.

Even as Hurricane, scared out of his wits, again went up on his hindlegs, two of the assailants jumped at his bridle, while a third aimed a swinging blow at Sid's head with a stout blackthorn. Another then jumped full at Sid, trying to clip the lad round his middle. It all happened in a flash.

"To blazes with you!" roared Sid, ducking under the whizzing club.

He heard the swish of the weapon, then he straightened up, to deal the wielder of the stick a slash across the face with his whip.

At that moment Sid felt powerful arms encircle his waist, and there came a

wrenching heave. But Sid's seat was firm, and he dug in his spurs.

Forward bounded Hurricane, his savage temper, already stirred, now literally ablaze. Even as he leapt he drove down with wide-open jaws at one fellow who clung to his reins.

The strong teeth clicked together within an inch of the attacker's face. He let go, and sprang back, tripping over a mound, and measuring his length on his back.

The other fellow had been swung off his legs, but he held on, until Hurricane's great shoulder dealt him a glancing blow. Then he joined his comrade on the ground, all the breath knocked out of his body.

Despite the congestion of things, Sid's keen eyes noted the appearance of his assailants. They looked a decent enough lot, no racecourse gang of toughs. Their features were sun-tanned, and their garb seemed the ordinary one of farm workers. Sid was astonished.

But, whoever they were, they were plainly out to damage Sid and steal his horse. Sid wasn't standing for that.

"Come on!" he yelled. "If you're wanting a scrap, here's one for you!"

Fearful of some missile from behind, he whirled Hurricane round to face a fresh onslaught.

"Pull th' lad off from his horse, boys!" roared one. "But don't hurt th' baste!"

Again they charged, all except the fellow downed by Hurricane, who still writhed in the grass.

Sid met them with driving cuts of his whip, while Hurricane reared up and flailed the air with his forelegs. They fell back. Then, as the black horse swung about, and let fly with his death-dealing hoofs, they broke and scattered.

Sid let out a shout, clapped home his heels, and thundered off in pursuit.

But, in very few strides, the defeated yokels gained the trees, crashing helter-skelter into safety.

"I may have a crook boss," Sid panted angrily, pulling up, "but I'm darned if I'll be yanked off a horse I've been trusted with! What in thunder's it all about, anyway?"

The yokels, however, hadn't stayed to explain. And the crashes of branches and the thud of flying feet died away rapidly.

Sid then remembered the winded

fellow in the grass, and swung his plunging horse round, and pounded back to the scene of conflict.

As he drew rein, the gasping fellow was just scrambling to his feet. His corduroy trousers were split across one knee, his blue shirt bore patches of mud, and he had lost his hat.

He made no attempt to fly after his comrades. Instead, with his face aflame with anger, he stood his ground, flinging out an accusing finger at the dumb-founded Sid.

"You're ridin' a stolen horse!" he bawled. "An' I'm betting you know it. You're as bad as that thief Morgan an' your blackguardly boss!"

"You're daft!" cried Sid. "This horse was shipped from America by Mr. Morgan himself!"

"I ain't no daft!" was the bellowed reply. "That ain't no more Morgan's horse than he's yourn. Get off him, right now!"

Sid laughed angrily. But something deterred him from galloping off, for the voice of the furious youth before him held a note of sincerity.

CHAPTER 2.

A Straight Tip!

"IF this ain't Mr. Morgan's horse," said Sid, pressing Hurricane forward with his knees, "then whose is he? Cough up a straight answer, if you ain't humbugging!"

"Mean to say you never heard Hurricane's real history?" gasped the rustic-looking fellow, surprised in his turn.



As Hurricane reared up, two of the assailants jumped at his bridle, while a third aimed a swinging blow at Sid's head with a stout blackthorn. Sid fought hard to keep his seat.

"I've only heard what a chap called Morgan said about him," replied Sid. "And you'd best not call me a thief! Of course, a lot of funny things—"

Sid broke off, for although he knew Hall and Morgan were both rogues, the lad was loyal to his boss.

"Well, I'll hand you the truth!" blurted the country lad. "Hurricane belongs to my dad, an' my dad's Farmer Lee, over yonder, at Close Farm. An' if I don't know my dad's ole boss when I see him my name ain't Jack Lee—that's straight!"

As he ended, the lad folded his muscular brown arms on his broad chest, and glared up at Sid.

"But how did your dad get hold of him, Lee?" asked Sid, frowning. "I tell you, Morgan swears he brought this horse from the States."

"States my eye!" scoffed the son of Farmer Lee. "Dad bought Hurricane from a feller from th' Argentine. That's in South Ameriky, ain't it? Anyway, wherever he come from, he said he was a breeder o' hosses in furrin parts. He used to bring some over here for sale for th' Army; others for gents who wanted 'em for polo—"

"Hurricane's a mighty hefty polo pony!" laughed Sid.

"I dunno nothin' about that," replied Lee. "Mebbe he was meant for th' Army, or p'raps for racin', and got mixed up on the ranch, where they bred him. The fact remains my dad spotted him at Tattersall's and bought him. The Argentine feller was at that sale, and spoke to dad. Then some varmint bibbed a gang o' gipsies to pinch the boss from dad's paddock. It took a sight o' time to trace that varmint. But we did. It was Morgan."

"But Hurricane's only been in our stables a week," observed Sid. "How did you know we'd got him?"

"Ain't lost sight o' that hoss for the last three months!" Lee jerked out promptly. "An' directly I knew Sam Hall was training him, I rounded up dad's farm-hands to come and pinch him back. I'd ha' got 'im, too, if the curs hadn't bolted!"

"Oh, no, you wouldn't!" retorted Sid, laying one hand on the neck of his mount, who was pawing impatiently. "Besides, your yarn may be faked up. How can you prove Hurricane belongs to your dad?"

"Has he got a scar on the inside of his thigh—the near one?" cried Lee eagerly. "And does he carry the trace of a worn-out brand on 'is off-flank? He does? Well, then, he's dad's hoss, though we didn't call him Hurricane."

Sid was startled. For from where he was standing young Lee couldn't have seen the marks he described. Yet Hurricane certainly did bear those marks!

"That's all right," remarked Sid, after a moment's pause. "But as you're so jolly certain, why don't you go to court? If you can prove Hurricane was pinched from your dad, you'd have a hummer of a case against Morgan."

"Morgan's a rich man," answered the young farmer, making a helpless gesture. "An' dad's nigh broke. He couldn't pay a lawyer to prove his case. Also we've lost tracks o' the Argentine feller. So there you are! But I guess I was only actin' th' fool to try to pinch the hoss."

Driving his hands into his deep pockets, Lee swung away dejectedly. But Sid called him back, and leaned down from his saddle.

"It's a case of money, is it?" breathed Sid. "Well, here's a way to get enough to pay any lawyer. Tell your dad to back Hurricane for the Doncaster Cup. I know most bets are like money

chucked down a drain. But this one won't be."

"How d'you know?" gasped Lee, spinning round on his heel. "Hosses trained by Sam Hall don't always try!"

"This one's going to!" laughed Sid, gathering up his reins. "I know, 'cause I'm going to ride him! It's as near a cert as anything can be. Quite a few folk are scared of Hurricane's winning. It's worth a try. Then, if you've got a real good case against Morgan, take it into court."

Sid clapped home his heels and thundered away. Lee stood staring after him, then sucked in his breath in surprise.

"Gee!" he gasped. "That's a tip straight from the hoss' mouth. I'll put it to th' old man. I reckon I'd put my shirt on a good thing like that. It's worth the risk to try an' get back ole Hurricane!"

Bursting with his information, the young farmer lurled himself into the plantation and crashed heavily away.

Meanwhile, Sid, cantering homewards across the swelling downs, was doing some hard thinking.

"I guess that chap Lee was pitching a straight yarn," he muttered. "All the more reason for Hurricane to lift the Doncaster Cup! But Hall will be watching the start through glasses!"

Sid fell silent a moment, then burst out:

"Why, I've got it! I'll make old Hurricane play up like a two-year-old at the gate. Then off we goes a buster—like a shot from a gun! I'll tell the boss Hurricane got away with me. It's a fizing idea! Sid Morris ain't riding faked races to please anyone!"

Hugging himself with delight at his smart notion, Sid slowed down as he drew near the stables, riding into the yard at a walk. Clapping eyes on young Jim, he beckoned to his pal to follow him into Hurricane's box.

Breathlessly he related all that had happened, Jim listening with his mouth and eyes wide open.

"So that's the game, Jim," Sid ended in a whisper. "I reckon if Hurricane pulls off the race that farmer chap'll win enough cash to prosecute Morgan an' recover his horse. An' Hurricane's a real good thing for the Doncaster Cup. Now scoot, Jim! If the boss sees us talking he'll smell a rat."

Jim scooted, wondering if he wouldn't chance sixpence on Hurricane himself.

Had either of the lads had more experience of racing they would have remembered that a vast number of "good things" don't come off.

CHAPTER 3.

A Dark Suspicion!

"LET 'er rip, Jim!"

Jim promptly pounced on the tap like a monkey on a bun, twisted it violently, and sent a gurgling rush of water down the hose.

Sid clogged across the yard in knee-high boots with wooden soles and scooped up the indiarubber pipe. Then he sent a spurting jet playing up and down the yard paving, the outer wall of the loose boxes, and Jim's legs.

It was now only two days before the Doncaster Cup, and Sid and Jim were busy washing down the yard. It was a job they liked, regarding it more as a rag than a bit of work.

But Jim didn't take his bath standing still. He quitted the tap and made a swift rush at Sid, getting both his hands on the pipe near the end. A tug-of-war followed.

"Ooooo-er! Grrrh!" spluttered Sid, as Jim wrenched the nozzle round and projected a hissing stream in his face.

"Just you wait a second!"

But Jim didn't wait. He galloped after the drenched Sid, who was staggering away with his arms flung up in defence, and soused him from head to foot. The yard was quickly awash.

The clatter of Sid's big boots, the wild war-whoops of Jim, and the yells of Sid, who was threatening vengeance, made a most infernal racket.

"Hi! What are you kids playing at?" shouted a voice.

Jim swung round, to see the sorrow face of a boy called Ed Dixon thrust over the lower half of a loose-box door.

It was Sid's chance. He rushed at Jim, sent him sprawling in the flood, and recovered possession of the pipe. Ed Dixon was not friendly with either Sid or Jim. So the two lads chucked up their own battle to try to get a rise out of him.

"It ain't no business o' yours, Ed!" yelled Sid. "But if you're aching for your summer wash, come an' get it. Yah! Dirty Dixons' scared of a bath!"

"You young rip! I'll teach yer!"

Ed jumped out from the box and made a lunging rush at Sid.

Splosh!

An icy spout hit Ed under the chin, burst in his face, and sent him reeling backwards, half-blinded. He tried to shout, but only strange, burbling noises passed his lips.

Swish! Swish!

The full force of the torrent caught Ed amidships, and down he went, the back of his head striking the hard paving and his heels kicking in the air.

Sid and Jim yelled encouragement, adding advice about sticking it. But Ed had had enough. He scrambled up and made a wild dash for safety.

Unluckily, in his haste, Ed beat it for the wrong box; for just as he reached the door there came a scream of equine rage from within, and out shot a black head with gaping jaws armed with terrible teeth. Hurricane lived in that box, and he hated intruders.

Ed let out one fearful yell, hurled himself sideways, and made a bee-line for the yard entrance. Sid followed him up, a volume of water still shooting from the hissing hosepipe.

Ed, howling like a maniac, gained the entrance, but even as he shot out he collided violently with somebody coming in.

The newcomer recoiled with a shout of anger, but not before Sid's fountain had swept his bowler hat from his head.

Sid dropped the pipe and stood agast. For the man he had doused was Morgan—Hurricane's crooked owner! And just behind Morgan was Sam Hall, together with a third man who was a stranger.

"I'm awfully sorry, sir!" began Sid, while the dropped pipe still streamed and gurgled at his feet. "I didn't see you coming!"

Morgan was a man of short temper. His shaggy eyebrows bristling, he whirled up his stick and sprang forward. Hall, too, thundered at Sid. But the stranger—a lean, sunburnt man, wearing a big, floppy hat—clutched Morgan's arm and prevented the blow from falling.

"I say," he drawled, "the boy didn't see you. There ain't any need to go off the deep end about a thing like that! Gee! Mr. Morgan, you ought to try living amongst dagoes, like I have to. They do try the temper a bit."

Breaking off, the lean stranger picked up Morgan's hat, wiped it, and gravely restored it to its furious owner.

Hall roared at Sid to quit fooling and clean up the mess. Whereat Jim hastily

turned off the water, and Sid vanished in quest of brooms.

Two minutes later, while the three men proceeded round the yard looking into the different boxes, Sid and Jim were vigorously brushing the water into the gutters.

"I'm jolly glad I did douse that Morgan, all the same," whispered Sid to Jim, making a terrific scraping row with his broom. "He's the crook owner that wants Hurricane to lose the cup. But the stranger seems a good sort. Wonder who he is. I guess he's from abroad by what he said."

Just then Sid caught Hall's booming voice and pricked up his ears.

"Is it only mares you want, Mr. Elmer?" the trainer was saying, in penetrating tones.

"Yes," drawled the stranger, whose name was evidently Elmer. "I've got a pretty decent stud down in Argentina. But I want to take back some fresh mares with me. I didn't really come over to buy horses. It was Wembley Exhibition that drew me. But now I'm here, and had heard you'd got some good stuff—Hallo!" Elmer broke off, as a black horse's head was thrust over a door. "What's that?"

"That's Hurricane!" rasped Morgan. "Don't go near him, he's vicious. Come and see the mares. Mr. Hall has two of mine I'm willing to sell."

Elmer paid no attention to Morgan, but strode quickly over to Hurricane, being greeted, to the other's astonishment, by a whickering neigh of delight.

Rubbing the nose of Hurricane, who displayed none of his usual ferocity, Elmer swung round on Morgan.

"Ain't it amazin'?" he drawled. "This horse is one I bred myself, down on my ranch. I brought him over with a bunch and sold him at Tattersall's. A farmer chap bought him. Where did you pick him up?"

Sid, who was working quite close, almost dropped his broom in astonishment. Here was proof positive of young Lee's story.

But Morgan cut in roughly: "You're mistaken, Mr. Elmer. I bought Hurricane in the United States, and shipped him over myself. Your horse must have been one like him."

"Quite so," boomed Hall. "Hurricane came from the States. And I must ask you to inspect the mares at once, Mr. Elmer. I'm excessively busy."

"Well, it is strange!" murmured Mr. Elmer, obviously unconvinced, as he swung away from Hurricane's box, "for I ain't often mistaken like that. However, the horse's greetin' me is nothing—sure. They mostly do."

The three men passed on. But the hurry of Morgan and Hall to get away from Hurricane's box was not lost on Sid or Jim.

"Hear that, Jim?" breathed Sid, scraping away noisily. "The boss knows darned well that Hurricane was stolen! By gosh, I wish that Elmer Johnny had gone into the box and had a squint at the boss' marks! But I reckon he could hardly ask to!"

"Well, keep your eyes skinned, Sid!" hissed Jim. "Our blinkin' boss an' that Morgan feller didn't half look mad when Hurricane was reckenised! Mebbe they're scared o' things comin' out."

Sid nodded, and made great play with his broom.

Some twenty minutes later, the inspection of the mares finished, the three men crossed the yard to leave. Sid and Jim had finished sweeping, and were now furishing gear in the saddle-room.

The dusk was falling, but Sid could make out the men's features as they paused at the yard entrance. Hall was

rubbing his chin—a sure sign that his mind was busy on some scheme.

"Sorry I can't drive you to the station, Mr. Elmer," came the trainer's deep voice; "my car's broken down. Mr. Morgan's staying the night with me. You don't mind walking? Good! You've got a fine evening."

Sid watched Elmer's tall figure swing into the deepening dusk. Then, turning, he glimpsed Morgan's face; it was working convulsively. Hall, too, appeared to have his fists clenched.

As the two rogues vanished towards Hall's house, Sid put down the saddle he was cleaning, and leaned across to Jim.

"The boss' car ain't bust, Jim," he whispered. "And I'm bettin' that that Argentine feller won't reach the station! It's a rotten business. He's a real, decent sort! I'm goin' to warn him. Comin', Jim?"

"What d'you take me for?" hissed Jim. "Someone'll spot us!"

"Give it time to get dark," replied Sid, "then we can hook off. I know a short cut across the downs an' through a wood. We'll catch that Johnny up before he's got half-way, and put him wise."



Jim nodded. And then the two lads had to wait for darkness with what patience they could. But Hall had already started to put his scheme into operation.

CHAPTER 4.

To the Rescue!

A MYRIAD stars winked and glittered in the black night sky. But no moon shone. And Sid and Jim, scurrying up a last rise towards a dimly seen plantation, were as soundless as shadows.

All at once, with startling suddenness, the night stillness was broken by a sharp shout. It had come from just beyond the belt of fir-trees, where, as Sid knew, ran the road from Ashdown House to the station.

"We're too late!" gasped Sid. "But come on!"

Panting for breath, the two lads raced in among the trees. As they neared the road the sounds of conflict grew louder.

Fierce yells, in a different tone, followed the first shout. Booted feet were

stamping up and down the hard roadway. Evidently Elmer had been attacked, and was putting up a rattling good fight against more than one assailant.

The scrap ended by Elmer being outed from behind just as Sid and Jim gained the edge of the trees.

With a gasp of dismay, Sid drew Jim back into the shadows.

"They've got him!" he groaned. "Hall must ha' had him followed from the start. There's three fellers there, and one of 'em is Foster."



As Dixon dashed out of the yard entrance, he collided violently with someone coming in. The newcomer recoiled with a shout of anger, but not before the fountain of water from Sid's hose had swept his bowler hat from his head.

Jim whistled softly, for Foster was the "head-lad" of Hall's stables. He was quite as much a rogue as his boss, and also a rough scrapper—if the odds were on his side!

"What shall we do?" breathed Jim, for it was obvious the two boys couldn't tackle three grown men.

"We'll watch 'em," whispered Sid. "Mebbe we can help Elmer yet."

Out in the white, dusty road, the three assassins were standing round the man they had felled. At a hoarse command from their leader, they picked up the unconscious figure and tramped off, blissfully ignorant of two pairs of watching eyes.

After going a few yards the men turned with their burden into the trees across the road.

A moment's pause, then Sid and Jim followed stealthily.

The wood was dark, and proved deep. But, after staggering for some distance along a narrow path, the men reached a clearing, in the centre of which stood a ruined hut.

"Sling him in!" came Foster's rough voice. "He'll keep till the boss can fix up to ship him abroad somewhere."

Then the men vanished. But they quickly reappeared, and hurried past the two concealed boys.

Hardly had the footfalls died away when Sid, with Jim at his heels, dashed into the hut, almost stumbling over a bound figure on the ground.

"It's Mr. Elmer all right!" gasped Sid, as the two lads dragged the bound man out. "Got a knife, Jim? Good! Chuck it over!"

"Where the—what the—" exclaimed Elmer, as, his bonds cut, he struggled up. "Oh, I remember! Two roughs came for me in front, while a third slogged me from behind. And hang it," he added, fumbling, "they've gone through my pockets—to make it look like robbery! But I guess it wasn't! Hallo! Where did you two lads come from?"

"Mr. Hall's stables, sir," replied Sid. "But don't say anything about us."

"I won't!" drawled Elmer, gingerly feeling a bump on the back of his head. "But I'll get the police on to your boss and Morgan! One of 'em put this up—p'raps because I recognised that horse, as, of course, I did. There's something all-fired queer—"

"You're right, sir!" broke in Sid. "Hurricane belongs to a farmer called Lee, across the downs. Morgan had him stolen!"

"What?" snapped Elmer. "Just say that again!"

Rapidly Sid told the Argentine rancher all about the encounter with Jack Lee, adding that Lee's father was aching for a chance to prosecute Morgan and recover his horse.

"The farmer had given up hope of ever seeing you again, sir," ended Sid. "But if he had you for a witness—"

"He will, sure!" gritted Elmer. "Folk don't sandbag me gratis! This is a police job. Meanwhile, I'm mighty obliged to you plucky lads!"

Elmer swung away, moving a trifle groggily. And Sid and Jim made rapid tracks for home.

"I reckon," panted Sid, "there's something tougher coming to that Morgan feller than a dousing from a hose!"

CHAPTER 5.

A Winner—and a Loser!

"HURRICANE'S playing up, by Jove! There he goes—up on his hindlegs! Now he's turned his back to the gate. Your lad's smart, Hall! He's going to fake the start all right!"

To Morgan's staccato remarks, Hall made no reply; but he smiled grimly as he kept his race-glasses glued on the post, where the horses for the Doncaster Cup were lining up.

"He'll get left all right," went on the harsh voice of Morgan. Then, changing the subject: "It's a good job that chap Elmer got caught. It gave me a shock when he recognised Hurricane! Confounded luck! Why, he's just the witness I hear that farmer chap is looking for. What have you done with him, Hall?"

"He'll be on a tramp steamer by to-night," replied Hall softly. "I left instructions with Foster. We'll have won the Newbury Handicap, and got Hurricane out of the country before Elmer can get back. And then, what can he prove? Hallo! They're off!"

"So they are!" gasped Morgan, as a thunderous shout went up from the packed stands. "And what the deuce is that boy playin' at? He's got away first! He's sold us, Hall! The pup! I'll—"

"Shut up!" hissed Hall. "Wait and

see what happens! I didn't trust young Sid! It'll be all right!"

Sid had acted well before the gate went up. In order to deceive his boss and the rascally Morgan, he had kept Hurricane rearing up and spinning round, head facing every way but the right one.

The starter's comments were caustic, but directly the tapes flew up Hurricane jumped off with the first.

In rear the field was bunched up, but no jockey was yet urging his mount.

"We've got 'em cold!" gasped Sid, as he steadied Hurricane to take the bend. "Even Hall will think I was bolted with. Here's where old Lee wins the money he needs!"

But Sid had reckoned without Hall, and Hall, smiling grimly up in the stand, had a trump card that was going to beat Sid.

Hurricane flashed into the straight, and a great roar went up from the throng. Then, all at once, Sid felt Hurricane stagger. He was stopping!

The boy laid a hand on the black, shining neck, and spoke to his horse in a shaking voice.

"What's up, boss?" he whispered. "Chuckin' it? Get going, for the love of Mike! You're winning! Don't you know it?"

But Hurricane was rolling in his stride. He shook his head angrily. Then, with a mighty roar of pounding hoofs, the field surged up and past.

A deafening din burst like a storm from the stands. Some were shouting horses' names, others merely yelled for the favourite; but Hurricane was plainly out of it.

A few seconds later the leaders swept past the judge's box, Hurricane cantering home last, and going lamer every stride. Sid pulled up and sprang to the ground.

Another "good thing" had failed to come off! Hurricane was amongst the "also rans."

Up in the grand-stand, Hall clapped Morgan on the back.

"Didn't I say wait and see?" he whispered. "Now they won't know how to weight Hurricane at Newbury. He'll get in light. And I've backed the winner of the cup as well!"

"So did I!" chuckled Morgan harshly. "But how did you—"

"Come and see," replied Hall, and led the way to the paddock.

Meanwhile Sid, who had led his horse through the paddock, and on to the

boxes beyond, was abusing himself heartily.

"I told the Lees to back Hurricane!" he groaned. "And now they've lost all their cash! What a mug's game betting it! They'll think I've sold 'em. 'A good thing,' by golly!"

Away from the crowd, Sid made haste to examine his horse. He had already found he was cut on the inside of his off foreleg, and had gone lame from the blow that caused the cut.

Now, picking up his near foreleg, Sid found the light plate—or racing shoe—had broken during the race. One end had twisted sideways, striking into Hurricane's off foreleg, and causing lameness.

Sid was gazing at the broken shoe in amazement, when he became suddenly aware that his boss was standing at his elbow.

With an expressionless face, Hall bent swiftly, snapped off the piece of broken metal, and went outside with it.

Joining Morgan, he displayed his find before dropping it into his pocket.

"What's that?" exclaimed Morgan, in surprise.

"Aluminium!" replied Hall grimly. "Unknown to young Sid, I had a brittle shoe made. Then I got Foster to fit it, so that when it broke it would twist outwards. Hurricane ain't hurt much; he'll be all right in a week."

Morgan commenced a throaty chuckle, but the chuckle died away suddenly, and the blood drained from his face, leaving it white, for coming towards him was the man he believed lying bound in a hut two hundred miles away.

"Elmer!" burst from Morgan's scarcely parted lips.

Elmer it was, and with Elmer were a plain-clothes police-officer and a white-bearded old fellow who looked like a farmer. A strongly built youth brought up the rear of the party.

"Jasper Morgan," said the policeman, "I hold a warrant for your arrest. The charge is one of stealing a racehorse from Mr. Lee of Close Farm. These three gentlemen here have all sworn to their evidence."

Morgan departed with the policeman, and at a sign from Elmer, old Lee and his son made off towards the paddock.

"Hall," said Elmer quietly, his eyes gleaming from under his big hat, "I reckon you know something about my being sandbagged. But I've dropped that, as it's a sight too difficult to prove. But anyway, now that Hurricane will be removed from your stable, I guess any game you fixed up with Morgan is about queered. And," he added, in case Hall should suspect how he escaped from the hut, "next time you employ footpads see they know how to tie knots!"

Hall laughed shortly, to hide his wrath, then spun round on his heel.

Sid knew nothing about Morgan's fate, until a few days later when he received a letter from Jack Lee. The letter thanked Sid for telling Elmer all the facts of the case, which had led to the Lees recovering their horse; and with the letter was a crisp banknote.

But Hall also had something to say to Sid. The crook trainer pointed out vigorously that he hadn't been fooled by Sid's antics at the post. And he added a warning that Sid had better obey orders in future.

THE END.

(There will be another grand racing yarn soon. Meanwhile, make sure you read: "THE HOUSE OF SCREAMS!" another magnificent yarn of the three staunch chums—Bob Harkley & Co., which will appear in next week's GEM.)

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THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!



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CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

DON ALONZO GUADIANA DE LA MANCHA, a Spaniard and financier of the expedition aboard the salvage boat *Result*.
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 grueling 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 and locate the second galleon. The explosion of a depth-charge wedges them together in the crevices of a rock. They are in an awkward position, when a cable comes down to them from above with a telephone wire attached. Brian taps the phone wire, only to find he is in communication not with the *Result*, but with their enemies on the *Golden Gain*!

(Now read on.)

Free at Last!

BRIAN CARR choked back the words he had at first meant to speak. He was thankful that the impulsiveness of those on top had saved disaster for him and Dan by the sudden checking of his own impulsive words.

"I kin hear ye gurglin' like a fool, Rayne! What's the troubles? Can't ye breathe well at that depth?"

The question gave Brian an idea. It flashed into his brain like a stroke of lightning. He gurgled the more.

"No—terrible!" he mumbled. "Can—hear—Morveno?"

"Yes, I kin hear!" Genuine alarm sounded in the Rat's voice. But his next words made Brian and Dan smile. "So it's bad down there? But ye'll be able to hook the hook on to the chests, won't ye? Ye've found the galleon? Don't say it's too bad to save, Rayne! How was it young Carr spoke so clean, an' you can't? Ye going to be beat by a cub-diver like Carr?"

Brian gasped as loudly as he could.

"It's bad—Morveno!" he gurgled, so that the Rat would not be able to recognise that it was not Rayne's voice. "But I'll—I'll hook on—hook on soon, and—give word—haul!"

The Rat now exclaimed with satisfaction:

"I'll wait at the phone, Rayne! Be quick, for the *Result* is nosin' round!"

Brian broke contact from above, and then spoke to Dan: "Heard all that, Dan?"

"Jingo, yes, old son, and it's great! The *Result*'s hard by!"

"Greater than that, my pippin!" said Brian. "Luck's still ours, and if it holds out a bit longer we'll get free from this place. How thick's the cable? About half an inch across, isn't it? Jingo, the *Golden Gain* goes in for strong raising gear at great depths! It'll be strong enough—or, at least, we stand a good chance. Find a good spot to hook that big hook into our particular rocks, give the order to haul, and, hey presto! with a bit of luck, it'll break away this column of basalt that is keeping us pinned in here."

Dan gasped in delighted amazement.

"Glory be, if we can!" he cried. "I believe I've got the spot here, Brian. But we stand a chance of being crushed!"

"True; but I'm game if you are! There's a bit jammed at the back of us cross-ways, which will act as a sort of wedge as the hook displaces the lumps—in fact, that is what saved us from being crushed when the depth-charge came down. Besides, our helmets are jammed together; they are as wide as our shoulders, pretty well, and are tremendously strong, you can take it from me. The risk won't be great. Sure you've got the spot? If we bungie it, we're done for a hundred chances to one the hook won't come down again close to us when they feel that there's nothing on the end. As it is, it's acting as a sort of anchor for the *Golden Gain*. But the salvage ship's got her screw going slowly, I expect, to take the strain off the cable; or, no doubt, as they think, to keep the hook from moving far from the spot where they imagine Rayne is."

"I've got the hook fixed as well as we can expect to fix it, Brian," said Dan, with bated breath.

"Right! Then I'll make contact again, and gurgle up the word 'Haul!' Don't you speak, remember, for any favour, for they'll hear!"

"Trust me; I won't forget myself!"

Brian sent the message above, and in a few minutes the chums felt the cable straining at their prison entrance. They felt the pressure on their bodies released, they were conscious that now their helmets were not jammed together. Breathlessly they stepped forward, groping into the darkness.

They were free!

The Tables Turned!

KEEPING direction by their luminous compasses, the chums pushed steadily towards the ancient galleon. After groping about for a while they discovered the old ship. Feeling with their hands they worked their way right round to the other side of her, and there they saw Rayne's light filtering out of the hole in the after-deck. This hole was the lazaret hatch.

The Dolores del Moncayo los Huesca, as the ship was called, was lying right on her beam ends, as the chums knew. They groped along the deck, rising like a wall beside them, and, stumbling over wreckage and getting caught up here and there occasionally, after a tedious exploration by the sense of touch they discovered the holes they had previously cut in the deck, as footholds, to enable them to mount to the hatchway.

At last they were up and peering in.
"Look, there he is!" whispered Dan, instinctively lowering his voice—though, of course, it was not necessary.
"Gosh, what gold will do to a man!"

Dan's remark was echoed in Brian's heart, for there, clumping about amongst the dead men's bones, was Rayne, feverishly breaking lumps of shell deposit which made, with precious gems of all sorts, a conglomerate growth of priceless treasure. The man seemed lost to all but the lust for treasure. He was like a grim miser gloating over his hoard. He was, no doubt, appraising the worth of the find, thinking the chums secure for as long as he might wish.

The chums dropped down amongst the gold, gems, and dead men's bones, and Rayne, quite unconscious of their approach, since there was no sense of hearing in the depths, continued his feverish raking about.

Heavy hands fell on his shoulders, and he swung ponderously round, his hand on his axe, to see a diver like himself peering through his observation port at him.

The hand groping for the axe received a blow. It fell numb to his side. Then the light went out!

Rayne felt himself heaved backwards. He struggled, but two pairs of hands were dragging him down. Soon he was trussed up with the fragment of hempen rope—the remains of the dan-buoy rope which the chums had luckily got hold of on emerging from their grim prison.

Brian connected himself by telephone with Rayne.
"We've taken you at your word, Rayne," he said. "We are your rivals—"

"You have tricked me!" shrieked Rayne, beside himself with rage. "You were not really imprisoned! You—you—"

"Steady on!" said Brian. "The Rat himself released us. The hook of the raising cable, by a great stroke of luck for us, caught in our niche. A mumbled word through the telephone got them to haul. The hook tore away the column that was holding us. So here we are!"

Rayne merely gasped with rage. Brian continued.
"Rayne, you're a decent sort," he said. "We make you an offer now—"

"So you are going to bargain with me on account of my life?" snarled the man.

"Not so! We will be fairer to you than you were to us—or, I hook's say fairer, for you were as fair as it was possible to be. We'll be more generous, Rayne. Give up your company with that half-breed above—that fiend the Rat! He's not fit company for an Englishman. By right of discovery these treasures are ours. Come in with us, and Dan and I have agreed to share our share with you."

"A thousand times no!" roared Rayne. "No, I say! Do your worst with me! Kill me at once, if you will! I defy you!"

Brian remained silent for a while. Then:

"If after reflection for five minutes you refuse our offer, we intend to salve this treasure, then deliver you back in an ignominious manner to the Rat. We don't want to be nasty with you, but we do want to be nasty to the Rat. He was most impolite, sending down that depth charge. We won't capture you, because you promised not to keep us prisoners, though I should have the right to recover my diving-dress. However, my rights in the patent have been secured, so if you remain allied with the Rat you can do your worst with the dress, but if you ally yourself with us you can do a good best."

"My answer has been given. I need no time to reflect. My answer is no!"

"You are a brave man, Rayne."
Jefferson Rayne laughed bitterly.
"I know you won't see me die, Carr," he said, "so I don't see where bravery comes in. But I want more than a miserable share of your share. Call me greedy, not brave."
"You belittle yourself, Rayne. But have your way. We can waste no more time with you."

Brian broke contact, and Dan and he began to converse.

"We'll get hold of that hook again," said Brian, "and telephone up to the Rat, saying that the hook jerked free because it got caught in a rock. I'll mumble and gasp to disguise my voice. I'll tell the Rat to stand by, and I'll wheedle out of him where the Result is lying-to. It won't be far away. You, Dan, must walk over the bed of the sea to a point from which you can shoot up close to the Result. They'll take you aboard. You can tell your yarn, and get the chain-net and two or three stout canvas bags lowered to

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me. I'll diddle the Rat all the time, making excuses for the delay. Let's get off now, Dan, and good luck be with us!"

The chums soon got into telephonic communication with the Golden Gain again. Brian managed things well. He said:

"Is—is—Result likely—interfere— Terrible pressure—down—here—Morveno!"

The reply came back.
"In the fiend's name, don't faint before you have hooked on the treasures, Rayne. The Result won't interfere. Two miles distant to the north-west—"

Brian immediately broke contact.

"Off you go, Dan, and good luck!" he said, gripping his chum's hand. And Dan set off, Brian watching him moving ponderously to the north-west till he was out of the rays of the lamp which Brian had taken from Rayne. Brian meant to keep that lamp. He was merely claiming some of his own property by doing so.

Dan staggered on in the darkness. He could only judge his distance. The bottom was too uneven to allow him to tow the speedometer, or "log," as the chums laughingly called it. He had a dangerous job. Suppose the Result steamed to another position? Suppose he should come up nearer to the Golden Gain than the Don's ship? The possibility was too likely to make Dan perfectly happy in his own share in the adventure.

He pushed on as quickly as he could, which was but a snail's pace. The tide was now ebbing, and in two hours' time he judged he had gone a mile—a terrible mile, sometimes stepping over the edge of a sheer rock, sometimes coming up sharp against an obstruction, sometimes sinking in pockets of ooze. The dangers were frightful without a light. But he had his compass, and the light was more necessary to Brian than to him.

At last he threw loose his ballast, and, with a gasp, felt himself out of control. Slowly he rose. As the pressure of the water became less he gathered speed, till he seemed to be rushing up and up and up. Once he brought up against a soft body. His hands felt the slimy skin of the lower part of a huge fish. Probably a blue-nose shark, for it was big enough.

The fish was as frightened as Dan, and wasted no time in getting clear, its great tail clouting Dan's helmet, so that the lad's ears sang. Luckily the "gills" of the diving-dress escaped injury.

Still upwards he rushed, now getting into glimmering daylight. He saw fish of all sorts. They sped away like lightning, in great fear. Great jellyfish flashed by. He was getting near the surface.

Suddenly he stopped, and felt water slamming against his observation port. He blinked his blood-shot eyes and peered out through the streaming glass. Purer air passed in through his gills, and the dried blood round his ears and nose became wet with a fresh outflow.

A great expanse of pulsating sea opened to his view. A topsail schooner, close-hauled, was lying up for the Clyde. A glance at his compass showed him that. Where was the Result?

Dan lashed at the water and turned himself half-round. Then he gasped. The Golden Gain was lying, rolling beam-on to the swell, not a mile distant.

Round splashed Dan again.

Now he could see the Result. She, too, was lying to about a mile away. Dan splashed and lashed out frantically, to make as much commotion as possible to attract attention. He saw a boat hurriedly shot overside from the Result. Men leapt in, oars were pushed out. Someone stood at the yoke-lines!

A swirl in the water turned Dan again. The Golden Gain had turned slightly, and from her, too, a boat came bouncing across the swell. Frantically the rowers rowed. It was the grimmest race ever raced on the sea—the rolling, helpless diver in the middle the objective.

Dan's heart thumped wildly. All he could do would be to lie there and wait to be picked up—by one boat or the other.

The Fight in the Boats!

A WAVELET slapped against Dan's observation port. The streaming water again blotted his vision. When he could again see, the boats were leaping at him, close to on either hand. Rough hands seized his shoulders, and he was hauled savagely aboard a boat. Which one? He had been handled roughly, but that was only to be expected.

He fell with a heavy bump on to the sternsheets of the boat. Then he felt a crash as the stem of the other boat met the one he was in amidships. Feet trampled on him, but the tough, steel-reinforced material of his dress saved

him from injury. Sea-boots clumped against his helmet, and he covered the gills with his hands to save them from injury. But his hands suffered in the act.

He now felt a violent swaying, and the utter silence, except for the sound of dull thuds, was terrifying. What desperate fight was going on? He could see legs and feet close to his port, moving about, leaping back, lunging forward. He was suddenly grasped and heaved upwards. Strong hands—half a dozen pairs at least—grasped him and lifted him bodily. He crashed against the gunwale of the other boat, and fell, the blows resounding in his brazen dome. He was stretched over a thwart, and he saw the flash of a pistol-shot above his glass port. The blade of an oar streaked forward, then the shining streak of a whizzing knife. Something soft and heavy fell over him, and the glass of his port was stained red.

Blood! Human blood!

Dan felt sick and horrified. He had been transhipped, and a deadly fight was going on for possession of him. Transhipped from where to where? Was he now in the hands of friends, or had he passed from the hands of friends into those of his enemies? The suspense was terrible.

At last peace seemed to descend on all. The rhythmic swaying of a boat being rowed made Dan sensible that, one way or the other, the fight was over. Hands fumbled at the thumbscrews of his helmet. The great brass dome was lifted, and his head was free. Drops of blood dripped from the glass on to his face and mingled with his own blood, which was flowing freely from his nose and ears. His eyes seemed seared with a red mist, for he could see nothing. A finger and thumb were placed gently on his lids as he closed them, and when he opened them again, after the finger and thumb had been withdrawn, he gave a gasp of joy.

He looked into the face of Don Alonzo Guadiana de la Mancha!

A glad cry escaped Dan, and the Don actually took the boy in his arms and hugged him.

"Thank Heaven—thank Heaven!" cried the Spaniard fervently. "They had you, Dan, though, of course, we didn't know it was you, but we fought and got you! But Brian, lad—Brian! Speak, in Heaven's name! Pull yourself together and speak! When we saw the commotion set up by the depth-charge—"

"Brian is safe, and has things his own way below, senior!" gasped Dan. "He—he—"

Dan was gulping in the pure air of the upper regions, and Guadiana, a look of unbounded relief passing across his face, told the boy not to speak, but to breathe steadily.

Dan was glad to do so, but he looked round the boat the while. The sight that met his eyes seemed to turn him sick and hollow. Three men were lying wounded and groaning pitifully. Two more men were terribly still, fingers hooked, faces turned to the sky, eyes staring.

"Only senseless, boy!" whispered Guadiana. "No deaths!"

A sudden rage seized Dan.

"One drop of human blood, senior," he cried, clenching his white, bloodless hand fiercely, "is too great a payment! All the gold and precious stones on the ocean bed are not worth it—"

"I know—I know, Dan!" said the Spaniard soothingly. "But any of them can withdraw, if they choose. I have offered to pay any man off at once with a good sum. But they want more. They desire to stay and fight, and risk it!"

"Cursed gold!" ground out Dan. "It is merely a turn of fortune which has allowed Brian and me to be breathing now. Is this—"

Guadiana put his small white hand on Dan's brow.

"Be calm, lad!" said the Spaniard. "You will make yourself ill. You are bleeding well! Don't excite yourself, but rest. Then I will have your story. Here's the Result!"

The first person who met Dan on board the ex-ocean tug was Sarky Marline. The sailor boomed out his delight at seeing Dan safe and sound before the boat was within fifty yards of the mother ship. Now he grasped both the hands of the young diver, and eagerly asked for news of Brian.

Dan then told his story swiftly, for the Result had to leap to action. When he had finished the men began to shout and leap about, and Guadiana turned to Sarky and ordered him to take the Result almost alongside the Golden Gain, then to drop No. 2 raising cable, hook, and, on Dan's advice, three canvas bags like mailbags and the big chain net.

The Result soon got close up to the Golden Gain. To the surprise of all, the Gain's company were very busy indeed. The Rat was loping about in great excitement, laughing his horrible laugh towards the Result, and occasionally shaking his thin, brown bony fist triumphantly.

The people of the Result were very puzzled. But they lowered their own gear, too, and waited. What was the explanation of the activity on board the Golden Gain? Why was the Rat so excited, the lantern-jawed skipper so

blustering, foul-mouthed, and authoritative? They evidently had had news from below.

A terrible fear gripped at Dan's heart. Had Rayne got free, somehow, and was working against time, alongside Brian, to gain at least half the treasure for the Golden Gain? Or had he overcome Brian? Dan stood to the telephone, trembling, listening intently for the slightest sign of a communication from below.

Surprises!

AT last, to Dan's unbounded relief, the voice of Brian came up from the depths.

"Don't answer," were the first words, "till the one at the telephone is out of hearing of the Golden Gain. Go below or in the wheelhouse or somewhere."

Dan went into the wheelhouse, and Guadiana and Sarky Marline, both agog with eagerness to hear the news, crowded in, too.

"Are you all right, Brian?" asked Dan. "What's the game?"

"It's all right," came the reply, tin-tinning faintly in the receiver. "Haul up when I say!"

Dan turned to the others and repeated what Brian had said. The man at the wheel, twisting the circle here and there, and communicating with the engineer below to keep



Rayne was like a grim miser gloating over his hoard. He was, no doubt, appraising the worth of his find, thinking the chums secure for as long as he might wish.

the propeller going sufficiently to hold the tug against the current, turned eagerly towards the group and listened.

"That all?" cried Sarky. "Didn't he say how things was goin'? Nothin' more than that?"

"I heard him break contact. You couldn't expect him to stand talking for half an hour, you know. There's a lot to be done below. However—Hallo, he's connected himself up again. Hallo, Brian—Brian! Dan speaking!"

"Haul up, chum!" was all Brian said; and Dan turned towards Guadiana and repeated the words.

All was now activity aboard the Result. The donkey engines began to whir and roar. The big cable drum grated and ground out its harsh, groaning notes as the cable was wound in. The same thing began to happen on the Golden Gain. What in thunder was in the air? Why couldn't Brian warn them if Rayne was having half the treasure?

The cables stretching down into the water—one from the Result and one from the Golden Gain—were quivering and jerking as the drums wound in the steel wire rope. The monotonous grinding continued, and soon the speed of the hauling increased as the weights at the ends began to feel less pressure in the water.

Clank-clink, clack-clack-clack, clink-clink, whoop—CHUG! The monotonous regularity of the different sounds—the working of the cogs in the drums, and the chugging of the cable as it fell flat on the drums, the hissing of steam and the whirring of the steam-engine continued, and eager men, with fever-bright eyes, peered overside into the water.

Dan left the phone, since Brian had apparently disappeared for good, and the lad peered overside with the rest. It was fascinating watching that quivering cable stretching down into the depths. It was exciting, thrilling, even for him, who had already seen the treasures below. For the men who had no idea what sort of treasure they would see, the excitement of the moment must have resulted in heavy heart-thumps and breathless heart-leaps every time it was thought the great chain net and the canvas bags were coming to view.

At last a shout was heard.

"Diver on surface t'port, sir!"

All looked over, and there was a diver, not a hundred yards away, lying awash on the surface. The Result was between him and the Golden Gain, so Dan at once yelled for a crew, and clambered into the boat riding to its painter alongside. A dozen salvage hands were close astern of him.

Dan took the yoke lines, and soon had the diver aboard the boat. It was Brian, as Dan expected, and the chums shook hands with great feeling on meeting again, though their separation had only been of such short duration.

Just as Brian began to blurt out his story a wild yell went up from the deck of the Result, the words clear though far away.

"Hurrah! Here she comes!"

"Twenty tons o' the brighties, ef an ounce!"

"The net full o' ingots, b'gum! See it gleamin' in places where the barnacles has been scratched off. Hurrah!"

"All the wealth o' the seas, wither me of it ain't. Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah! Dance around, me lucky lads."

"Spanish gold, boys—Spanish gold! All the best from Mexico! Hurrah! Stand from under there! Clear the decks."

"Empty 'em out. A thousand each fur the crew this 'aul, or I'm a Dutchie!"

"A thousand! Two thousand, ef a quid! Them bags is full o' jools, I'll bet me shirt!"

"Stand clear to trip net, there! Look alive, or you'll be buried!"

Laughing and shouting the men began prancing about on the decks round the haul.

"Look alive, you rowers!" gasped Brian. "We must be in on this. There are many surprises in the lucky-bags I have prepared for us all this afternoon! Row hard, there!"

The men needed no urging. Eyes unhealthily bright, tongues licking dry lips, hairy breasts heaving with their exertions, they bent to the oars, and the boat simply flew back to the Result.

On the way Brian swiftly told Dan that Rayne, though he still obstinately refused to come in on their side, had been overcome with gratitude to them when he told him how they had found Tony being ill-treated, and had him now in their keeping. Dan replied that Tony was still in bed, but getting stronger every hour.

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When on the deck of the Result Brian, laughing wildly, wiped the blood from his face with his hand, then surrendered himself to Sarky and Guadiana. The men fussed over Brian as if he were a hero. Indeed, Dan had painted a good picture of Brian as the hero of the day on his arrival aboard the Result.

"The Gain's excited, too," cried one man. "They're shoutin' like billy-ho."

"They can see their net and bags close below the surface. Turn out our own bags, anyway. Great Jupiter!"

"By Heaven, what wealth!"

"Emeralds, rubies, sapphires, diamonds—by gum! Worth millions!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah for galleon treasure! Three cheers for the Don—"

"Hold hard! What's the Gain got?"

All looked over towards the Golden Gain. Every face was tense but Brian's. That young diving expert was grinning. For the Golden Gain was just hauling her spoils aboard.

First the chain net was emptied on to the decks amongst the leaping, whooping, and excited men. Dull clanks and thumps sounded, and something of great weight spilled from the net. It was lumps of solid rock!

The Golden Gain's company were struck dumb! Then a howl of wrath went up to the sky at Brian's trick, and men in a frenzy of hate and fury raced along the salvage ship's decks, foaming at the mouth and shaking great horny fists towards the Result.

The Rat was staggering as if stunned by the sight of the useless weight they had lifted from the bottom. He seemed incapable of action for the moment. It was the lantern-jawed skipper who strode to the canvas bag and ripped and tugged at the piece of spun-yarn that held the mouth shut.

The bag opened, and as two hands gripped the bottom and jerked the mouth downwards the contents rolled out.

Jefferson Rayne, bound and helpless!

The men of the Golden Gain now seemed to go frantic with fury. They sprang into the rigging, they swarmed all over the bridge, hurling imprecations at the heads of the people on the Result.

The men of the Result pulled themselves together. A coarse joke was made, men grinned, then, suddenly, the full realisation of what had really happened burst upon them. Hats flew into air. Cheer after cheer rang out for Brian. The man in the wheelhouse tugged at the siren cord, and the Result's shaking funnel sent out her own roar of triumph.

The men on the Golden Gain seemed to go mad at that! The Rat, to the feet of whom the helpless form of Rayne had rolled, stood still with his evil stoop, and the terrible snarl distorting his evil features.

The Rat made one step towards the bound form of Rayne, looked into the glass of the helmet, then suddenly let out a horrible shriek of rage—a shriek that did not seem to be human.

The man leapt six feet into the air! His thin hands gripped the rail of the salvage ship, and he shook it like an infuriated caged ape at a zoo. His face was demoniacal. His fury uncontrollable.

Animal-like, he stood there, shaking the rail in his utter rage. Then his slashed mouth opened, and a fiendish laugh rang out.

All on the Result, awed, saw his single yellow fang hanging from the upper gums of his mouth. All heard him shriek a series of orders. But no one on the Result could catch what those orders were.

However, the Rat's own men had heard! Suddenly the Golden Gain slewed round, and then forged strongly ahead. Yells of alarm rang out along the Result's decks. Sea-booted feet pounded here and there. Precious stones were trampled under foot, golden doubloons kicked and sent flying in all directions. The engine-room telegraph clanged out its frantic warnings, and Sarky Marline's booming voice was heard above all the other sounds.

The Golden Gain, at full speed ahead, seemed to tower above the little Result. She literally leapt at the ex-ocean tug. Some there were on the Result who seemed turned to stone! But Sarky Marline's powerful voice galvanised all to action.

"Full speed astern, there in the wheelhouse! All hands collect port side and stand by the whaler. Shoot over the captain's dinghy, there! Throw loose all lifebelts and buoys and seat-rafts. The Gain's goin' to ram us!"



Dan Derrick was stretched over a thwart, and he saw the flash of a pistol shot above his glass port. The blade of an oar streaked forward, then the shining streak of a whizzing knife. Dan felt sick and horrified. He had been trans-shipped, and a deadly fight was going on for possession of him!

Boarders Away!

"THE Gain's goin' to ram us!"

The frantic cry rang out fore and aft as the feet pounded on the iron decks in obedience to Sarky Marline's promptly-shouted orders.

"Stand by the boat! Rouse all from below, you in the wheelhouse, there!"

But there was no one in the wheelhouse. The hand who had been on duty there had shot out promptly on the first alarm. Quick as light, Bill Jenks leapt to the little teak structure; but, instead of shouting the warning below to MacFadyen and his stokers and artificers, he jammed the telegraph hard over.

Clang, clang! sounded the engine-room bell. And, in prompt obedience to the order, the Result's big screw churned savagely at the water.

Jenks forced the wheel hard over, and the Result turned slightly. But no skill with wheel and engine controls could save the Result. The little tug lurched and swerved, but disaster followed close on the sudden stamp of the engines.

Crash!

The Golden Gain's ugly stem hit the Result with terrific force just aft of the midship section. Bill Jenks' idea had been to turn the Result so that she would receive a glancing blow instead of a dead square hit. But Sarky Marline's judgment had been better than Jenks'. Disaster was unavoidable, and Marline knew it. Thus, the sailor had concentrated on getting the ship's company close to the boat instead of making futile efforts to avoid collision.

Dan gasped as he crouched near the cabin companionway and felt the Result heel over heavily under the shock of the impact. What had Jenks done? He had been ordered to call all the engine-room and stokehold staff above. He had disobeyed. The men were still below, all unconscious of the desperate peril. Their first warning had been the crash of the collision. Their second would follow close on the first—the rapid inrush of solid green water. Their third warning would be their last—the hissing, scalding steam from the furnaces, the blowing up of the boilers; and then—oblivion.

Dan was horrified, forgetting his own peril in the desperate position of those below. And poor little Tony Rayne, lying weak and ill in Guadiana's cabin!

Dan's heart thumped like a sledge-hammer as he glanced here and there at the surging crowd round the boat. His first thought was to dive below and grab Tony. His second came even before the first had completely formed itself in his head.

With a loud cry, young Derrick sprang to his feet. His face looked terrible in its anger, and his jaw was set. Sarky Marline, as he hit out with long swinging blows at the men who were fighting to gain a seat in the boat, caught a glimpse of the boy's face.

"Split me, Cap'n Daredevil Derrick, as I'm a man!" he muttered. "A chop o' the old block!"

"Follow me!" rang out Dan's clear voice, commanding, the voice of one who had the situation well in hand. "Board the Gain! Capture her!"

A cheer or two rang out, and Bill Jenks, looking frightened at the effect of his own effort rather than the danger his own life was in, roared like a lion, grabbed a short iron bar and leapt after Dan.

Men followed like a pack of wolves. The Gain would be better than an overcrowded open boat! And revenge! With wild cries and yells of fury, the men piled after Dan and Jenks, each grabbing at any handy weapon on the way.

Dan was over the Golden Gain's bow, and Jenks was close behind. They met three men, who instantly went reeling back, yelping and bleeding, under the furious onslaught of the boy and the man.

"The bridge, Jenks!" gasped Dan. "Make for the bridge! Signal engine-room full ahead! Keep Gain jammed into Result's side. Only chance!"

A battle royal was now in progress on the deck of the Golden Gain. The boarders met the defenders solid, and the furious men had no scruples in the desperate fight. Knives went home with deadly precision, revolvers barked, and crowbars sent strong men falling over like sick oxen.

Jenks, swinging his bar like a madman, his face distorted and savage, bored in through the crowds of the defenders. He quickly made a pathway for himself, and at last, with Dan close behind, gained the ladder to the flying-bridge of the salvage ship.

Up went Jenks; up went Dan! The sailor met the brutal-faced skipper of the Golden Gain face to face. Each was armed with an iron bar, and the pair crashed like a couple of icebergs in collision.

It was a terrible fight. Dan dodged round the two men, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 865.

"THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!"

(Continued from previous page.)

and in the fraction of a split second he was beside the Rat, who had just put over the handles of one of the engine-room telegraphs. Morveno, terror-stricken, held his long, thin, brown hands before his face and gibbered for mercy. At sight of Dan's face the half-breed felt he was being confronted by Captain Derrick, whose exploits of old had plunged the evil man into the direst terror.

Dan swung round his right and took the Rat full on the jaw. The half-breed, light as a feather as he was, went flying back, to crash up against the canvas-covered rail aft, then to fall in a moaning heap on to the planking of the flying-bridge.

Dan swiftly turned to the telegraph. The indicator was at full astern, and the Golden Gain's screw was already beginning to churn, to draw the boat away and leave the tug to her doom.

Young Derrick took one leap towards the telegraph, bentwrench back the handles, and heard the clang, clang! below.

The Golden Gain quivered, and the puzzled engineer below obeyed the order. Full speed ahead! The salvage ship felt the sudden thrust of her screw, and her bows were jammed the tighter into the hole in the side of the Result.

A ringing cheer now sounded from the few men left on the Result. Sarky Marline threw his pilot cap high into the air, and yelled "Derrick for ever!" Then his orders barked out, short and clear, sending the men about him flashing off on their various jobs.

"Stop the tug's flamin' engine!" roared Sarky. "Get up them big tarpaulins and a coil o' two-inch manilla! Haul out the four-inch armoured hose, an' connect up wi' No. 1 water-pump! Carry, get yer 'elmut on an' stand by to go

over to connect up the lower edge o' the tarpaulins under the Result! I'll hev a span from each corner o' that tarpaulin, there, an' the other corners lashed one at the fore-chains and the other at the towin'-rail! Jump to it, ye crumples! Look alive, or it's widders there'll be in England this day!"

Dan heard Sarky's orders, sharp and clear, above the crowd of yelling and struggling men on the deck of the Golden Gain. Bill Jenks had overcome the skipper of the salvage ship, and had left him a senseless, bruised hulk, huddled against the canvas wind-screen on the port side. Jenks now took his stand at the top of the bridge ladder-way, "to interview callers," as he termed it, with a mighty guffaw. And that iron bar in such a strong pair of hands made men keep their distance.

Dan, in command of the Golden Gain for the moment, looked round for Jefferson Rayne. He saw the diver leaning unconcernedly against the after deckhouse, watching things, the lower part of his diving-dress still on. The man waved airily to Dan as their eyes met. Then his face resorted to a scowl as the memory of the adventures below the water flooded back on his mind—how he had been overcome, bound and attached to the Golden Gain's raising-gear instead of the treasures which the Rat had expected.

The two people of the Result on the bridge watched those below. The fight was now beginning to tell on the Result's men. Reinforcements had joined Morveno's company in dribbles, and now the company of the Result was sadly outnumbered.

"Better get down, Jenks," said Dan, jerking his head in exactly the way his father did when giving orders. "I'll look after the telegraphs. Sarky's almost ready to order us back on the Result, anyway!"

Jenks tugged at his forelock, and, with a prompt "Ay, ay, sir!" descended to the fore well-deck of the Golden Gain by the simple expedient of sliding down one of the iron poles which supported the flying bridge. Dan peered over and saw the man charging into the company of the Gain, attacking them in the rear and throwing them into confusion.

A cheer rang out from the Result's men, and then Dan swung round to the ladderway in wild alarm as a yell of triumph sounded close to him, and four men leapt up the ladder to regain possession of the bridge.

(Dan Derrick is in a tight place—a boy against four men! Be sure you read next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful serial, chums.)



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