

JOIN THE ST. JIM'S CHUMS ON THEIR CARAVAN HOLIDAY!

The **GEM** ^{2^d}



WHEN THE RIVAL JUNIORS OF ST. JIM'S GO CARAVANNING IT BECOMES A BATTLE OF WITS FOR POSSESSION OF THE CARAVAN!



The old gentleman, his face red with rage, came up to the caravanners and gazed at them speechlessly. It looked like trouble for Tom Merry & Co. "Good—good-evening, sir!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "You—you trespassing scoundrels!" roared the man, finding his voice. "How dare you camp here with your blackguardly caravan! I'll have you arrested!"

CHAPTER 1.

Gussy Keeps It Dark!

FIGGINS of the Fourth frowned darkly.

For ten minutes at least there had been a worried look on the brow of the great Figgins.

He was sprawling in the armchair in his study in the New House at St. Jim's. His long legs were stretched out, his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets, and his brow was corrugated.

Figgins seemed to be struggling with some mental problem—and struggling in vain.

And his studymates were not helping him in the least. Fatty Wynn was seated at the study table devoting his whole attention to a pie. Kerr was standing before the looking-glass, trying on artificial moustaches. Fatty Wynn was thinking of nothing but the pie—which was certainly a very nice pie, and worthy of Fatty's devotion. Kerr was thinking of nothing but his part in the

forthcoming performance by the New House Amateur Dramatic Society. Figgins wrestled unaided with his mental problem, whatever it was.

Hence the dark and reproachful frown which Figgins turned upon the Co., and the reproachful tone of his voice when he spoke.

"Talk about Julius Cæsar!"

"Who's talking about Julius Cæsar?" asked Kerr in surprise.

Figgins sniffed.

"You fellows remind me of him," he grunted.

"Blessed if I know why we should remind you of Julius Cæsar!" said Kerr in surprise.

"Here am I trying to think it out!" said Figgins bitterly. "Cudgelling my brains to work out what they're up to—"

"Who?"

"Those boulders!" snapped Figgins. "The School House boulders, of course! Here am I trying to think it out, and all you fellows are thinking of is rotten

pies and amateur theatricals! Talk about Julius Cæsar fiddling while Rome was burning. He wasn't in it with you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, where does the cackle come in?" demanded Figgins morosely.

"Ha, ha, ha! It wasn't Julius Cæsar!" chuckled Kerr. "It was Nero!"

Figgins sniffed more emphatically than before.

"I don't care a twopenny rap whether it was Julius Cæsar or Nero!" he said. "He was fiddling while Rome was burning, anyway. And that's what you fellows are doing."

Kerr grimed and took off the moustache. As a matter of fact, it was the canny Scots junior who did most of the thinking that was done in Figgins' study. He put away his moustaches very carefully and closed the property-box and composed his face seriously.

"Let's have it, Figg!" he said. "What's the trouble?"

"They're up to something," said Figgins, still morose. "But don't you

IT'S BETTER THAN A HOLIDAY—THIS FULL-OF-FUN EXCITING LONG STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO.'S CARAVAN TRIP!

CARAVANNERS!



By

MARTIN CLIFFORD

mind! You go on playing the giddy ox, and leave it to me!"

"I haven't noticed—" began Kerr. "Of course you wouldn't!" said Figgins sardonically. "You're too busy thinking about a silly part in a silly play. Lucky for this study that there's one fellow who keeps his eyes open!"

"Yes; they won't pull the wool over your eyes very easily, Figgy," said Kerr, who was an adept in the soft answer that turneth away wrath. "But what have you spotted now?"

Figgins' noble brow cleared a little. Kerr was interested now, and even Fatty Wynn was devoting only half his attention to the pie.

It was, indeed, a serious matter. The rivalry between the two Houses at St. Jim's was as keen as ever. And if Tom Merry & Co. of the School House were plotting a surprise for the rival House it was up to Figgins & Co. to keep their eyes very wide open.

"They've got something on!" said Figgins, condescending to explain at last. "In the first place, you know there's a House match on Saturday."

"Yes."

"Well," said Figgins impressively. "I hear that Tom Merry has asked Kangaroo to captain the junior team. He's standing out. Manners and Lowther aren't playing, either. And Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy—they're all standing out of the match. There's been quite a buzz about it in the School House, filling their places in the team."

"Maybe going up the river—"

"Ass!" said Figgins politely. "They wouldn't cut a House match to go up the river."

"More likely it's a feed," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "A picnic, you know—"

"Fathead! They wouldn't cut a House match for a picnic! You would, I dare say; but they wouldn't. They aren't wrapped up body and soul in rabbit pies!"

"Ahem!"

"I suppose there's something on," agreed Kerr, with a thoughtful nod. "When those two sets of asses leave off ragging one another it generally means that they're going for us. But what is the little game?"

"That's what I'm trying to think out," said Figgins. "It's something on an unusually big scale, I know that. They're scheming something for Saturday. Reddy heard D'Arcy talking this afternoon. He said to Blake that it would be a surprise for the New House

when they heard of it. Blake stamped on his foot, Reddy says. They're keeping it dark from us—awfully dark!"

"Then we've got to let in some light on the subject," said Kerr determinedly. "If there's seven chaps keeping the secret, it ought to be pretty easy to squeeze it out. Which of them are we going to tackle? Gussy's the man. If I couldn't screw a secret out of Gussy I'd eat my hat. Once get him talking and it will roll out!"

"Blake seems to be keeping a watch on him," said Figgins moodily. "I've got into talk with him three times, and each time Blake has chipped in and refused to leave us alone. Blake is all there."

Kerr looked thoughtfully out of the study window, as if seeking for inspiration in the old elm-trees in the quadrangle. He uttered a sudden exclamation as he caught sight of the elegant figure of the swell of St. Jim's sauntering in the quad.

"Talk of angels!" said Kerr. "Here's Gussy!"

He threw up the sash of the window and called out:

"Hullo, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came to a halt and turned his famous eyeglass up to the window of Figgins' study.

"Hullo, deah boy!"

"Come up, old chap!" said Kerr.

Arthur Augustus smiled. He had a secret to keep, and he prided himself on being awfully deep.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,538.

Tom Merry & Co.'s week-end caravan holiday is far more exciting than they anticipate—thanks to the old rivalry which exists between them and Figgins & Co.!

"Thanks, deah boy; but excuse me."

"We want your advice about a tenor solo we're going to introduce into our play," said Kerr. "We want you to show us how it goes, you know."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was attacked on his weakest spot. What he didn't know about tenor solos wasn't worth knowing.

"Wight-ho, deah boys!" he said at once.

And he disappeared in at the porch of the New House.

Kerr turned from the window, with a chuckle.

"Bagged him!" he said.

"I—I say, we're jolly well not going to hear him sing a tenor solo here, Kerr!" said Fatty Wynn in alarm.

"Rats! We can stand that, I should think, to pump him!"

"But we mayn't be able to pump him, after all, and then we shall have the tenor solo for nothing!"

"Shush!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's step was heard in the passage. His eyeglass and his genial smile gleamed in at the doorway.

"Come in!" said Kerr heartily.

"Yaas, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus came in. "I am vewy pleased indeed to give you some advice about singin'. I'm wathah a dab at that, you know! What is the solo you are goin' to introduce into your play, old chap?"

"Well, what would you advise?" said Kerr thoughtfully. "Something like that ripping solo at the last concert—what?"

"Yaas; that was wathah wipping," agreed Arthur Augustus. "But I doubt if there is a fellow in your House who could sing it. However, we can fix that up all wight. I'll sing it for you. You can give me a good part in your play."

"Ahem!" murmured Figgins.

"I should be vewy pleased to take a part," said D'Arcy generously. "Of course, you New House chaps are hardly up to givin' a play on your own. By puttin' me in with a weally good tenah solo, you will ensure the success of the performance. You can weckon on it, deah boy."

Figgins seemed to be on the point of exploding, but Kerr made him a sign.

"You're awfully good, Gussy," he said.

"Not at all, deah boy. Always glad to help you youngsters in a time of difficulty," said Arthur Augustus.

"Right-ho!" said Kerr heartily.

"Then we can depend on you for Saturday?"

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove! I—I'm afraid I can't help you on Saturday," he said. "It is vewy unforch, but I am booked for Saturday."

"Oh, the House match?" said Kerr carelessly.

"N-no. I'm not playin' cwicket."

"Then you can help us, Gussy. In a time of difficulty," said Kerr, "we naturally turn to you. Only just now I said to Figgins that you were the fellow we must rely upon to help us out."

Figgins grinned; but the double meaning of Kerr's remark was lost upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Yes, Gussy is the chap," said Figgins heartily. "Make it Saturday, Gussy. We shall rely on you."

"Imposs, deah boys! I'm awfully sorry, but it can't be done. You see, the othah fellows would be disappointed if I didn't go. And they will be bound to wun into some twouble if I don't go along with the party."

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Kerr's eyes gleamed; he was getting at it now.

"But couldn't that be put off, Gussy?"

"Imposs, aifah askin' the House-mastah for leave. Besides, Tom Mewwy is goin' this evenin' to make the awwancements with the man."

It was as much as Figgins & Co. could do to keep their faces composed. But they were getting very "warm" now. In a few minutes more, at this rate, the secret would be a secret no longer. But just then there was a hurried step in the passage, and Jack Blake of the Fourth dashed into the study, looking somewhat excited.

"Oh, you're here!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "I thought I spotted you coming here. You ass! I suppose you've been blabbing—what?"

"Nothing of the sort," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I've been talkin' about tenah solos, and haven't said a word about the twip—"

"Shurrup!"

"These fellows don't know that we're goin' to engage a—"

"Shut up!" roared Blake ferociously.

"Weally, Blake—"

But Arthur Augustus was not allowed to continue. Blake rushed him out of the study at top speed. They rushed down the passage to the stairs, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's wild expostulations dying away in the distance.

"Weally, Blake, I haven't said a word. I twust I can keep a secwet. Wow! You are wumplin' my jacket. You silly ass! I haven't told them about the— Yawoooh!"

Figgins & Co. looked at one another.

"Rotten luck Blake popping in just then!" growled Figgins.

"But we're on to it," Kerr said thoughtfully. "They're planning a trip of some kind, and they've had to ask the permission of their Housemaster. And Tom Merry is going this evening to make arrangements with some man. We're on the track."

"Yes, rather; but—"

"And we'll soon know the rest," said Kerr determinedly.

"Looks to me now as if it isn't up against us, after all. They've got some big scheme on, and they're afraid we shall chip in and muck it up for them—that's why they're keeping it dark."

"And we're jolly well going to chip in!" grinned Figgins.

"You bet! This is where the New House does the School House in the eye! We shan't get anything more out of Gussy now, but we'll try Herries. Come on!"

And the three juniors, well satisfied with their progress so far, quitted the study and the House, and proceeded in search of Herries and information.

CHAPTER 2.

The Great Scheme!

"AND Towser!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emphatically. "I wepeat, wats! I decline to considah Towser in the mattah for a moment."

"I tell you—"

"That wotten bulldog, Hewwies, has no respect whatever for a fellow's twousahs! And in the somewhat close quartahs of a cawavan, it is quite imposs. I wepeat—"

"Look here—"

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Piffle!"

It was a regular chorus. Herries

simply glared at the half a dozen fellows in Study No. 6, in the School House.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell—were in the Fourth Form study, discussing ways and means with the chums of the Fourth concerning that mysterious expedition which Figgins & Co. were so keen to know all about.

There was not always complete agreement between the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. But on the point under discussion there was a regular unanimity. Herries' proposal to take his bulldog, Towser, on the expedition met with the same reply from the Terrible Three and Blake, Digby, and D'Arcy. And that reply was "Rats!" "Now, look here," said Herries. "We've arranged this bisney very well so far. We've got leave from the Housemaster to clear off for the whole week-end."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"We know where to get a caravan, and we're going to get it—"

"Quite so; but—"

"We're laying in a good supply of tuck; and we've got everything we want for a jolly good time—"

"Precisely; but—"

"Blow your butts! How can fellows go caravanning without a dog?" demanded Herries.

"A dog is not necessary on a cawavan twip, Hewwies."

"Rot! Towser is coming with us."

"Wubbish!"

"Cheese it!"

"Put it to the vote!" suggested Manners.

"Hear, hear!"

"Hands up for Herries' beastly blug-hound coming on the trip!" grinned Monty Lowther.

Herries put his hand up promptly. On second thoughts he put up his other hand as well. But there was no other hand. The majority was evidently dead against the inclusion of the redoubtable Towser in the party.

"Hands up against Towser!"

Six pairs of hands went up as if by clockwork. Six juniors grinned at Herries, who frowned truculently.

"You see, you're in the minority," said Blake.

"But we shall want a dog with us to keep guard," said Herries. "We shall be camping out two nights in the caravan. Suppose we meet some robbers—"

"Suppose we meet your grand-mother!"

"And he'll be company for us," said Herries. "There never was such a good-tempered dog as Towser. He practically never bites anybody, and never unless a fellow looks at him; he doesn't like being looked at!"

"I refuse to wisk my twousahs in the pwesence of that wotten bulldog!"

"Then you can leave 'em here," said Herries gruffly.

"Why, you uttah ass—"

"I'll go and see Towser now," said Herries. "He hasn't been looking so very well lately, and the change of air may do him good. I mustn't forget to bring his biscuits."

"And I won't forget to bring some dog-poison," said Monty Lowther.

"Look here—"

"Oh, rot!" said Herries; and he cut short the discussion by departing from Study No. 6, and closing the door with unnecessary force.

Herries looked very excited and wrathful as he walked down to the kennels to see his unpopular favourite.

Three youths who were sauntering in the quadrangle joined Herries on his way to the kennels. They were Figgins & Co., of the New House, and their manner was friendly — suspiciously friendly, Herries might have thought, if all his thoughts hadn't been wrapped up in Towser at that moment.

"Going to see Towser—what?" said Figgins, guessing Herries' object from the direction he was taking, and wondering what was the cause of the cloud on his brow.

"Yes," grunted Herries.

"I hope he's well," said Kerr, with great solicitude.

"He's all right. He missed me during the vac, though," said Herries. "Towser is very sensitive. I'm jolly well not going to leave him behind again, not if I know it!"

The New House trio exchanged a glance. They "tumbled" at once. There had evidently been a discussion in the School House as to whether Towser should go on that mysterious expedition. Figgins & Co. felt themselves on the track once more. But they were very diplomatic.

"I wouldn't!" said Figgins heartily. "Love me, love my dog, you know. I'd take Towser with me, if I were you."

"I'm jolly well going to," said Herries unsuspiciously. "It's all rot to say that there wouldn't be room for Towser. If there wasn't room inside, there's the annex."

"Of course there is," said Kerr, wondering what on earth the annex was. "You—you could put him in the annex quite easily!"

"And he would keep guard," said Herries. "There might be footpads—who knows? Tramps, and all sorts of things late at night."

"Ye-es, of course!" stammered Figgins. "Of course there might!"

They had arrived at the kennels by this time. Towser greeted his master with a peculiar rumble, which was supposed to be a growl expressive of joy. Herries fondled the big head of his favourite, and Towser rumbled again.

"Leave him behind!" growled Herries wrathfully. "Not if I know it! Suppose he did get at the grub? I suppose we could get some more grub. We aren't going to the North Pole, or the South Sea Islands, that I know of."

"Of course not," agreed Figgins. "You're going—"

Herries appeared to recollect himself, and he gave the New House juniors a suspicious look.

"Never mind where we're going!" he said curtly. "Perhaps we're not going anywhere. Don't poke my dog's head like that, Wynn. He doesn't like it."

"Oh!" said Wynn.

"I wish you wouldn't stare at him, Figgins. He may bite you, and then you'll be blaming me, and talking rot about Towser being bad-tempered."

Figgins hurriedly backed away.

"Well, I'd take him, if I were you," said Kerr. "You can put him in the—the annex."

"What do you know about the annex?" grunted Herries. "It seems to me as if you fellows are trying to pump me. You clear off!"

The game was evidently up. Herries was on his guard now. The New House trio had gained a little additional information, but not much. They departed, chuckling as they walked back to the New House.

"Well, we're on the track," said



Figgins ran to the stile and brought his fist down on the straw hat among the bushes. "Great Scott!" he gasped, as the hat fell to the ground. "Spoofed!" exclaimed Kerr. Tom Merry had completely dished his shadowers!

Kerr, ticking off on his fingers the points elicited, so far. "They're going on an expedition. They're going to be out late. They've asked leave of the Housemaster. They're going to have something with an annex—whatever that may happen to be. And Tom Merry's going to make arrangements this evening with a man. We've got to see that man, too."

"How?" said Figgins, rather hopelessly.

"Tom Merry's going out. He must have a pass out of gates. Well, if he can get a pass, we can get a pass. And we're going to track him down. We've got to keep an eye on the gate, and see when Tom Merry starts, and keep him under our fatherly eye."

And after that the chums of the New House were very much on the lookout. And Tom Merry hadn't the slightest chance of leaving the school without being spotted.

CHAPTER 3.

Shadowed by Three!

TOM MERRY rose from the tea-table in his study in the School House. He looked at his watch.

"Time I was off," he remarked. "I mustn't be late in Wayland. You can trust me to look over the caravan and see that it's all right. No good a crowd of us going, or the New House bouncers might spot something. We don't want Figgins & Co. on the track. Blake says they are suspicious already. They've been trying to pump Gussy."

"Look out for them as you go out, then," said Manners. "It's got to be kept dark. If they knew we were having a caravan out on Saturday, we should have a whole army of them on our neck. It would be just like those

rotters to swoop down on us and collar the caravan and walk off with it."

"Just what I should expect, if they knew," said Tom. "I'll keep an eye open for them."

Tom Merry put on his straw hat, and sauntered out of the School House. It was a fine summer evening, and the quad was crowded.

Tom Merry smiled with satisfaction as he walked down to the gates. He was very pleased with the way things were going.

It had been Tom Merry's idea at the start, and the other fellows had taken it up quite enthusiastically. The idea of spending a week-end in a caravan was, as Blake said, simply nobby. A whole week would have been better, of course, but there were difficulties in the way of that. The cricket match on Saturday afternoon could be cut, but lessons could not be cut. That was where the masters came in.

Excepting for that, the Head had been very considerate in the matter. He could trust the juniors not to get into mischief, and he seemed to agree that experience in camping out was necessary and useful to fellows who belonged to the great organisation of Boy Scouts.

The juniors had leave to depart from St. Jim's after morning lessons on Saturday, on the understanding that they were to turn up to first lesson on Monday morning as usual, and not to "cut" church on Sunday. All the Head asked was that they should have the permission of their people, and that was easy to obtain. That settled it. Only it was necessary to keep it dark from their old rivals of the New House.

Figgins & Co. would be quite capable of raiding the caravan if they could, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,538.

and walking it off under the noses of the rightful owners. It was extremely necessary to keep a sharp look-out, and not give the rival House a chance of scoring.

Tom Merry gave a low whistle as he strolled down to the gates. The New House juniors were lounging in the gateway. The gates were not yet shut, and Figgins & Co. were there, apparently much interested in the scenery outside.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, as he came up. "Admiring the view?"

"Yes. Ripping, isn't it?" said Figgins, with great affability. "The trees are a lovely colour at this time of the year, don't you think?"

"Topping!" said Tom Merry gravely. "Going for a walk?" asked Kerr.

"Yes."
"We'll come along, if you like. You might meet some of the Grammarians."

"No. You'd miss calling-over," said Tom. "I suppose you haven't got passes out of gates?"

"Ahem! Well—"
"Ta-ta!" said Tom, with a smile.

And he walked out of the gates, fully convinced in his mind now that Figgins & Co. were there to watch for him, and that they had obtained passes in order to track him. Evidently they had succeeded in extracting some information from Arthur Augustus, after all.

But Tom Merry's manner as he walked down the lane did not seem to hint that he suspected anything. He did not look behind him once. Figgins & Co., who were following him down the lane, were glad that he did not look round.

Tom did not need to look behind. He had a small mirror in his pocket, and he had taken it out and was holding it so that he had a view in it of the lane behind him without allowing it to be seen from behind.

In the little looking-glass he had a full view of Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn coming along the lane in a very cautious manner.

Tom Merry grinned and slipped the looking-glass back into his pocket. He

strode on, still without turning his head.

Figgins & Co. were on the track, but they did not know where he was going, or what he was going for, or they would not be taking the trouble to track him down. If Tom Merry walked on to the place in Wayland where the caravan was to be hired, Figgins & Co. would soon know all about it. But Tom did not intend to do anything of the sort now. His plans had changed, and he chuckled to himself as he walked on.

The captain of the Shell passed the stile where the footpath led through the wood to Wayland. It had been his original intention to take that footpath. Now he passed it, keeping on towards Rylcombe.

"Not going to Wayland," said Kerr.

"I don't see what he can have to do in Rylcombe," said Figgins, a little puzzled.

"Still, he's going there."

The Co. kept on, a good distance behind Tom, but keeping him well in sight. They were ready to dodge into cover if the Shell fellow turned his head. But Tom Merry did not turn his head. Never had a shadower's task been easier.

They entered the village, and Tom Merry walked into Mrs. Murphy's little tuckshop, where he cheerfully regaled himself with a ginger-beer. Figgins & Co. would have been glad to do the same, for the evening was warm, and the lane dusty; but they could not venture to show themselves. On the opposite side of the way they waited for Tom Merry to come out.

They dodged into the doorway of Mr. Bunn's, the tailor's, as Tom came out of the tuckshop. He did not glance in their direction. He walked down the old High Street, and turned into the lane that led to Abbotsford. In the growing dusk Figgins & Co. followed on the track.

For about a mile they kept on, wondering whether the Shell fellow was going to Abbotsford, which was a considerable distance. Suddenly he vaulted over a stile, and followed a footpath through a dim meadow. Figgins & Co.

promptly followed. They kept the glimmer of Tom Merry's white straw hat in sight as they tramped through the dusk.

They asked themselves where the dickens he was going. According to all appearances he had started out for an aimless tramp across country. Yet they had it from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that he was going to see a man for the purpose of making the arrangements for that mysterious expedition on Saturday.

But where in the name of wonders was he going to see that man?

"Hold on!" murmured Kerr. "He's stopped!"

The Co. came to a halt. Tom Merry had crossed another stile, almost hidden by the bushes that grew round it. They could not see him now, but they could see the white straw hat quite plainly among the bushes. Apparently Tom Merry was leaning on the stile on the other side.

"Taking a rest!" muttered Fatty Wynn. "Well, I'm not sorry to have a rest."

"Is he looking back, Kerr?" muttered Figgins.

"He can't see us if he does. It's the strawyard we can spot him by," said Kerr. "Keep ready. He'll be moving on soon."

The Co. waited and watched. As the darkness grew thicker the straw hat over the stile grew dimmer to the view, and the three juniors crept a little closer to make sure of keeping it in sight. Half an hour had passed, and the Co. were growing puzzled and uneasy.

"Blessed if he isn't taking a jolly long rest!" murmured Figgins.

Kerr frowned thoughtfully.

"He may have spotted us," he muttered. "He may be sticking there for a joke on us, and laughing in his sleeve all the time."

"Well, he jolly well can't get to that man, whoever he is, without our being on his track, that's one comfort."

Ten minutes more passed. Still there was no movement at the stile. The straw hat had moved a little with a slight motion, and that was all.

"He must have gone to sleep," said Fatty Wynn, in a whisper.

"I've seen the hat move," said Kerr.

"But what's the little game?" said Figgins restively. "I'm getting fed-up. He can't have come out here to look at the stars, and make up poetry, I suppose?"

"Hardly. He must be pulling our leg."

"Oh, come on!" said Figgins, losing patience. "Anyway, we'll give him a jolly good bumping for leading us a dance like this!"

All the Co. were fed-up. It seemed only too evident that Tom Merry had guessed that they were there, and was amusing himself at their expense. They ran on to the stile, and Figgins brought his fist down on the straw hat among the bushes.

Then he gave a yell.

"Great Scott!"

"Spoofed!" said Kerr.

"Oh, the rotter!"

The straw hat had rolled to the ground under Figgins' heavy blow. But there was no head inside it, and there was no sign of Tom Merry.

Figgins & Co. gazed at the straw hat almost in stupefaction.

It had been perched on a branch over the stile, in the bushes, and had looked exactly as if it was on the head of the wearer, who was leaning on the stile. But there was no wearer. He had vanished.

"M-my hat!" stuttered Figgins.

"Oh crumbs!"

Super School Story of Harry Wharton & Co!



By FRANK RICHARDS



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"He knew we were after him!"

"He's been pulling our legs all the time! The rotter!"

"The beastly spoofer!"

Figgins picked up the straw hat. His feelings were almost too deep for words.

"Hallo! There's a note here!" he said.

A fragment of paper was pinned on the band of the hat. Figgins jerked it off, and Kerr struck a match. There was a pencilled scrawl on the paper. The Co. glared at it.

"Dear Figgy.—Would you mind taking the hat back to St. Jim's for me, as I have to leave it behind? I don't want to lose it, as it cost me seven-and-sixpence. Sorry I shan't see you again this evening; but you can leave the hat with the porter. I hope you enjoyed your walk. Nice evening for a walk, isn't it?"

"TOM MERRY.
"P.S.—This is where you smile."

Figgins did not smile.

"The—cheeky rotter!"

he growled. "I've a jolly good mind to jump on his beastly hat! We've been spoofered. But how the dickens were we to guess that he would have the nerve to go without a hat to keep an appointment?"

Kerr groaned.

"He's done us! Bring his blessed hat along. Let's get back."

And Figgins & Co. sadly and dolefully got back, and duly left Tom Merry's hat with Taggles the porter, to be called for.

CHAPTER 4.

Kerr Does Some Thinking!

"Bai Jove! Where's your hat, deah boy?"

The chums of the School House were waiting for Tom Merry to come in; and when he came in hatless, they were surprised.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Figgins is going to bring it home for me," he said. He went on to explain, and there was a chuckle from the juniors. The idea of Figgins & Co. spending their time that evening in watching Tom Merry's straw hat from a distance tickled them immensely.

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as vewy funny," grinned Arthur Augustus. "It was a weally good ideah. I shouldn't be surprised if the New House boundahs jump on your hat, though."

"I had to risk that," said Tom Merry. "Well, I've seen the man. It's all serene. The caravan is simply ripping. There's the annex all complete. Everything in topping order. They're going to send the van to Abbotsford by goods train, where we go for the start. They've undertaken to supply a first-class horse. On Saturday morning the caravan will be on the common at Abbotsford, with horse complete, with a man in charge, waiting for us."

"Good!"

"And Figgins & Co. don't know!" chuckled Blake.

"They smell a rat—but that's all! They haven't a suspicion of the caravan. They seem to be mighty curious about the matter," chuckled Tom. "They had quite a long walk this evening. I asked Taggles when I came in,

WHEN THE GAS COOKER BLEW UP!



"You're up early this morning, sir!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Martin, 62, Salisbury Road, Harrow, Middlesex.

but they hadn't got back yet. I'm afraid they won't have much time for their prep. This is what comes of being naughty and inquisitive kids."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. were very cheerful that evening. Figgins, in spite of his determined investigations, was as far as ever from learning what was on. And as the next day was Saturday, there wasn't much time left for the New House juniors to make further investigations. And on Saturday afternoon Figgins & Co. would be busy with the House match.

Tom Merry & Co. went to bed that night in a mood of complete satisfaction.

Figgins & Co. were not nearly so satisfied.

Figgins, in fact, remained awake quite a long time, thinking the matter out, but without getting any nearer to the solution. He fell asleep at last.

In the morning, Figgins looked quite worried.

He had not had much time for preparation the previous evening, and he was likely to have some trouble with Mr. Lathom, his Form-master, that morning; but that was not what was worrying the mind of the great Figgins.

He was thinking of the mysterious School House scheme which was to come off that day, and which he had not succeeded in penetrating. Some more of the New House fellows were thinking about it, too.

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, all knew that there was something on, and they hinted to Figgins that it was "up" to the junior captain of the House to see that the School House bounders didn't score over them. And Figgins had nothing to say in reply. He knew that it was up to him, but he had cudgelled his brain in vain. He was quite gloomy at breakfast-time, and after breakfast he walked out into the quadrangle with his chums in a pessimistic mood.

"I haven't an idea," he said gloomily. "That beast diddled us last night, and that was our last chance. And Reddy and the others are beginning to chip me about it. If these rotters get the

better of us, I shall never hear the end of it. Can't you think of something, Kerr?"

The Scottish junior smiled serenely.

"I've thought it out," he said.

"My hat! You mean to say you're on to it?" asked Figgins breathlessly.

"Not quite! But I've thought of somebody to pump."

Figgins shook his head.

"N.G.," he said. "The only one of them we could pump is Gussy, and they're watching him all the time. He never comes out of the House without Blake with him. Look at him now—there he is, and Blake with him."

Kerr glanced across the quadrangle at Arthur Augustus, who was sauntering in the morning sunshine, chatting with Blake. Blake did not leave him for a moment. He was evidently on the alert against the wiles of Figgins & Co.

"Never mind, Gussy," said Kerr carelessly. "I've thought of somebody else."

"Who are you going to get the information from then?"

"The Head."

Figgins and Wynn regarded their Scots chum in blank amazement.

"The Head!" repeated Figgins, dazedly.

"Look here," said Kerr quietly. "We know a bit already. They're going on an expedition, and they're going to stay out late at night—we know that. They've asked leave of their Housemaster, but a matter like that would have to be referred to the Head. I fancy they asked Railton to speak to the Head for them. But if it's a matter of staying out late at night, they would have to explain it all to the Head. He wouldn't let the kids in the Fourth and the Shell stay out late at night without a jolly good reason for it. They must have explained the whole bisney to him when they got leave."

"I suppose so," agreed Figgins. "Yes, of course they must. But if you're thinking of going to the Head to pump him, I can only say that you must be off your rocker."

"Not at all. I'm not going to the Head to ask him questions. I'm going to ask him for leave for us three to join them."

"Eh?"

"After giving permission to those bounders, he can't very well refuse it to us," said Kerr. "It isn't as if we were fellows like Levison or Mellish, who can't be trusted out of sight. We explain to the Head that we're going in the party, if he gives us leave. I fancy he will give us leave."

"B-b-but we're not going in the party!" stammered Figgins.

"Yes, we are!"

"Oh!"

"What about the House match?" said Fatty Wynn.

"If those fellows can cut it, we can cut it. There are plenty of chaps to take our places in the team."

"Ye-e-es, but—"

"Come on," said Kerr. "The Head will be in his study now, and we can catch him. Let's strike the iron while it's hot. Leave the talking to me."

"B-but I say, Kerr, old man—"

"Oh, come on!"

Kerr had his way. Figgins and Wynn followed him in silence to the School

House, but with some inward misgivings. They had great faith in the perspicacity of the Scots junior; but this time they could not help having doubts. But it was evidently the last chance, and they were willing to "give Kerr his head" as Figgy expressed it. They met the Terrible Three as they entered the School House, and the School House chums smiled at them sweetly.

"Have a nice walk last night?" asked Manners affably.

"Many thanks for bringing my hat home," said Tom Merry. "Taggles gave it to me this morning. It was really kind of you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins.

And they walked on without further rejoinder, and Kerr tapped at the door of the Head's study. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther walked out into the quad with smiling faces. They did not guess the purport of that visit to the Head.

CHAPTER 5.

Figgins & Co. Smile!

"COME in!"

Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, glanced up as the three New House juniors came respectfully into his study.

"If we might speak to you for one minute, sir—" began Kerr meekly.

"Certainly, Kerr. Go on."

"It—it's about the excursion this afternoon, sir," said Kerr. "Tom Merry and the others are going—"

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"Might we go as well, sir?"

The Head looked thoughtful.

"Ah! You wish to join the party, is that it? I do not see any objection. You understand that you do not leave till after lessons are over for the day."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"And you will be expected to appear for morning lessons as usual on Monday."

"On—on Monday, sir!" Kerr was a little surprised. It was to be a weekend, then!

"Yes, certainly. There is no objection to the excursion, but I could not allow lessons to be missed."

"Oh, certainly, sir; we understand that!"

"Then I will speak to your House-master," said the Head. "But there is another point. You must have the consent of your parents to this excursion, the same as the others. Is there time to obtain it?"

"Oh, yes, sir; we'll telegraph."

"Very well," said the Head. "Bring me the replies when you receive them, merely as a matter of form, of course. I hope you will have a very pleasant excursion, though I am afraid," added the Head with a smile, "that you will be a little crowded. Let me see, that will make a party of ten."

"Some of the School House fellows may be staying behind, sir," said Kerr. "You are very kind, sir, to give us leave."

"I think the excursion may be beneficial to you," said the Head kindly. "There are few healthier amusements than caravanning, especially in this splendid weather."

Figgins & Co. jumped.

They could not help it.

Caravanning!

That one word furnished the clue!

It was all the Co. could do to refrain from uttering a whoop of triumph as

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THEY HAD TO TAKE THE BUS!



Passenger: "What's the game?"
Fireman: "Our engine-driver's down with 'flu!"

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that word fell from the lips of Dr. Holmes. As it was, their faces were so irradiated that the Head could not help noticing it. He smiled benignantly.

"I am sure you will enjoy yourselves," he said, "and I think I can trust you not to get into mischief."

"Oh, yes, sir!" chorused the Co.

"Thank you so much, sir!"

And they left the Head's study as if they were walking on air.

"My only hat!" began Fatty Wynn in the passage. But Figgins stopped him.

"Not a word till we're out of the School House!" he whispered. "Those rotters mustn't know that we've bowled them out. And don't grin! Keep a solemn chivvy, or they'll suspect something."

"Hold on a minute," said Kerr.

He turned back to the Head's study.

"If you please, sir, would it be possible for me to cut—I mean, miss—last lesson this morning, as I have some arrangements to make about the caravan."

"You must ask your Form-master, Kerr. However, I will speak to him."

"Thank you so much, sir."

Kerr rejoined his chums, and they left the School House. They were very, very careful not to let their satisfaction appear in their faces. They were so very careful, in fact, not to appear joyful that they looked utterly gloomy and depressed as they walked out of the School House. Some of the School House juniors glanced at them as they passed.

"Licked?" asked Reilly of the Fourth.

"No; not licked!" groaned Figgins.

"Lines—eh? Sure, ye look as if ye were going to a funeral."

"Not detained for this afternoon—what?" asked Kangaroo of the Shell.

"There's the House match, you know!"

"We shan't be able to play in that," said Figgins lugubriously. "We'll shove in some of the other fellows."

"Too bad!" said Noble sympathetically. "What have you been doing?"

"Ratty been complaining of you, I suppose," said Talbot of the Shell.

"Sorry you chaps seem to be in trouble," said Digby of the Fourth.

"What on earth's the matter?"

Figgins shook his head sadly.

"I don't want to talk about it," he said. "It—it's too bad!"

And the New House Co. departed with serious and solemn faces, but finding it hard to repress a wild desire to yell.

Not till they were on their own side of the quadrangle did they allow their faces to clear. Figgins led the way up to the study. He slammed the door, and then dropped into a chair and yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gurgled Fatty Wynn.

"We've got it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What did I tell you?" grinned Kerr.

Figgins gave him a mighty thump on the back.

"Good old Kerr! You did it! If the Head guessed that we had been pumping him—Oh, my sainted aunt!"

"The Head's a brick," said Kerr, "a real brick! He's going to speak to Lathom, and I shall cut last lesson—to make arrangements about the caravan."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll send off the telegrams home at once. We've got to have the answers for the Head. That's easy enough. As my people are in Scotland, my answer won't come in time; but we can leave instructions for it to be taken to the Head when it does come. So they're going caravanning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a really ripping wheeze," said Figgins admiringly. "We hadn't thought of it ourselves. I really wonder we didn't. And that's why they were keeping it dark. They suspect that we might chip in."

"And spoil the little game!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"And perhaps raid the giddy caravan," said Kerr.

"Oh!" ejaculated Figgins.

The Scots junior chuckled.

"That's what we're jolly well going to do. This is where the School House gets it in the neck."

"Raid the caravan?" said Figgins breathlessly. "Oh, that's too rich! I had thought of ragging the bounders!"

"Not good enough! We're going to borrow the caravan!" said Kerr resolutely. "Besides, we have told the Head we're going caravanning, and we're bound to tell the truth. There's only one thing for it, and we've got to pinch the caravan!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go easy, though," said Figgins thoughtfully. "We've found out that the bounders are going caravanning. But we don't know where the blessed caravan is, or anything else about it. It won't be so jolly easy."

"We can figure that out," said Kerr calmly. "We know what Tom Merry was doing last night, now. He was seeing the caravan man, and making arrangements with him. Now, the question is, where did he go to do it? Not much doubt on that point. Wayland is the only place near here where a caravan can be hired, and there's only one place in Wayland where they hire out caravans. That's Hooker's. It's as plain as the nose on your face that Tom Merry went over to Hooker's place last evening."

"I suppose so," said Figgins, with a nod.

"We can jolly soon find out," said Kerr.

"Yes, as you're cutting last lesson, you can go over."

"I've got something else to do then. We're going to find out now."

"But there's no time to go before lessons."

"There's time to telephone."

"By gum, you think of everything, old

chap!" said Figgins, in great admiration. "I don't know whether we can get at old Ratty's telephone, though."

"I shan't try to. I shall ask the House dame to let me use the one in her room. She'll do it like a bird, if we ask her nicely. No time to lose—come on!"

"Right-ho!"

There were two telephones in the New House—one in the study of the House-master, Mr. Ratcliff, the other in the housekeeper's room. The juniors sometimes used Mr. Ratcliff's telephone—but only in the absence of that gentleman, who did not look with an affectionate eye upon Figgins & Co. Mr. Ratcliff was in the House now, unfortunately.

But Figgins & Co. sought out the House dame, and asked her nicely, and were given the necessary permission. And they went into the House dame's sitting-room in great spirits, and Kerr took up the receiver.

"One nought one Wayland, please," he said

He was through in a couple of minutes.

"Hullo!"

"Hullo! Is that Hooker's, Wayland?"

"Yes."

"This is St. Jim's—the school."

"About our caravan—"

"Yes, the caravan ordered by Master Merry?"

"Yes. I want to know if it is ready?"

"The instructions were to have it ready at three o'clock this afternoon," said the voice on the wires. "It will be ready then."

"Yes, quite so. But we find that we can get off a little earlier. Would it be possible to have the caravan ready at two instead of three?"

"Ahem! I will see. Please hold on a few minutes, as I shall have to telephone to Abbotsford."

"Abbotsford!" ejaculated Kerr.

"Yes; as the caravan has already been despatched by goods train."

"Right-ho! I'll wait."

Kerr looked round at his chums with a grin.

"Got that?"

"Yes," chuckled Figgins and Wynn.

"It was Hooker's, you see. Taking it for granted was the best way. And we've got on to the whole bisney now.

They're going a good distance afield, so they've arranged to start from Abbotsford instead of Wayland. The caravan's been sent there by goods train. And they're to arrive at Abbotsford at three to take possession."

"But where?" said Figgins. "Abbotsford is rather a big place to hunt for a caravan."

"I'm going to find out where."

"Hullo!" came the voice. "Are you there?"

"Hullo!" replied Kerr.

"The van does not reach Abbotsford on the railway till two o'clock. It will be impossible for it to be ready till half-past two. Will that do?"

"But why?"

"It has to be sent from the station to the common, and the horse has to be put in there. It cannot be done under half an hour."

"All right. Can we depend on it for half-past two?"

"Absolutely!"

"Good! You're leaving somebody in charge of it?"

"Yes; as arranged with Master Merry."

"Who will it be?"

"A man named Thompson will be in charge. Master Merry was told—"

"Yes, that's all right. Just where on the common will it be waiting for us? Did Merry arrange that? He's a forgetful chap."

"Yes, that was arranged. On the common near the town, just outside Abbotsford."

"Right! We can depend on it that it will be there, horse and all, at half-past two?"

"Absolutely!"

"Thanks! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

Kerr hung up the receiver.

"What price that?" he remarked.

"Hurrah!"

"Those bounders are leaving after dinner by the train for Abbotsford, which gets there at two-forty, most likely," said Kerr. "That gives them easy time to walk down to the common before three. They're to find their giddy caravan ready for them—perhaps!"

"Perhaps!" chuckled Figgins.

"We've got to get there at half-past two," went on Kerr. "We shall find

the van ready—with no 'perhaps' about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But there isn't a train," said Fatty Wynn, "after dinner. There's only that one train to get there before three."

Kerr sniffed.

"Do you think I haven't thought of that? There's a train leaves Rylcombe at 12.30. It gets to Abbotsford at 1.40. That will give us a lot of time to wait there; but it's better to be too early than too late."

"But we can't catch the train."

"Why not?"

"Dinner—"

"We shall have to miss dinner, of course."

Fatty Wynn almost fell down.

"Miss dinner! Are you dotty?"

"Ass!" howled Kerr. "Are we going to spoil the jape of the season for the sake of letting you gorge?"

"But—but—we can't miss dinner! It's impossible! Miss dinner! My hat! I really think you must be out of your senses, Kerr," said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "Blessed if I ever heard of such a thing! Miss dinner!"

"We catch the early train and miss dinner," went on Kerr calmly, utterly unmoved by Fatty's breathless indignation.

"But—but—"

"Shut up! If you can't miss dinner, you can miss the caravan. Now about ways and means," said Kerr. "I've got off last lesson, and that will be time to lay in supplies for the caravan. Hand out all the tin you've got, and I'll do the shopping, and get it in a bundle ready. We shall only want grub—all the things required will be in the caravan, of course. Hand over the tin. We'll borrow some more of the fellows. We can settle up when our allowances come. And now about sending off these telegrams to our people—for permission to go caravanning."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Figgins.

"But I say—about dinner—" said Fatty Wynn, in dismay.

"Shut up!" roared the chums.

Figgins & Co. left the housekeeper's room, and dispatched the necessary telegrams to their people by means of

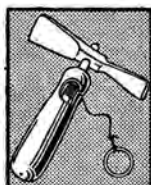
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the House page, whom they requested to take the replies when they came, and convey them to the Head.

Figgins & Co. were extremely satisfied with the way things were going. But when they appeared in the Form-room that morning they wore serious looks. They were still playing their parts; and Jack Blake, who scanned them curiously, did not receive a hint of their inward satisfaction. Figgins & Co. were very deep.

CHAPTER 6.

Running For It!

TOM MERRY came out of the Shell Form Room after morning lessons with a cheerful visage. He was feeling very cheerful.

It was a beautiful summer day—ideal weather for caravanning. And the caravan was to be ready on Abbotsford Common at three; and the chums of the School House had comfortable time to have their dinner and catch their train. There was not a cloud on the horizon—so far as Tom Merry knew.

The chums of Study No. 6 met the Terrible Three in the Form-room passage, also smiling contentedly.

"All sevene!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Those boundahs are not on the twack. They have been lookin' wathah wotten this mornin'."

"I dare say they're feeling rotten," grinned Blake. "They know there's something on, and they can't catch on to it. They will be ready to weep and wail when they find out we've gone caravanning."

"I asked Talbot to tell them, after we've gone!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"They've been looking awfully solemn!" chuckled Blake. "Kerr was let off for last lesson, and he cleared out of the Form-room. Went out looking for information, perhaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
But Tom Merry looked grave.
"Kerr missed last lesson!" he exclaimed. "Why?"

"Don't know! Lathom gave him leave, and he cleared off. But he can't have been investigating, I suppose?"

"Of course not, deah boy. They don't know anything about the car—"

"Shush!" whispered Blake, as Figgins and Kerr came down the passage. The two New House juniors went out sedately into the quadrangle.

"No; they can't have guessed anything," said Tom Merry reflectively. "But I'm rather suspicious of Kerr; he's awfully keen. But they can't know anything. Mind they don't get hold of Gussy again."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" "I'm taking care of that," said Blake grimly. "He's not going out of my sight till we've started."

"I wufuse to be wegarded as unwelliable."

"Oh, rats!"

And Blake walked away with Arthur Augustus, and persistently bestowed his company upon him till the bell rang for dinner, and then went in to dinner with him. There was no danger of Figgins & Co. extracting any more information from the swell of St. Jim's, and the caravanners did not anticipate danger from any other quarter. Figgins & Co., indeed, seemed to have given up their efforts to penetrate the mystery. They had gone into their House, and remained there.

They remained there until dinner-time. When Tom Merry & Co. were

safe inside the dining-room of the School House, Figgins & Co. came out of the New House, secure from observation.

They came out smiling. Fatty Wynn had consoled himself with sandwiches. And the prospect of a feed as soon as the caravan was captured comforted him for the loss of his dinner. Figgins & Co. were in funds, and they had borrowed extensively among the New House juniors, too; and Kerr had done a tremendous amount of shopping while the rest of the Fourth were in the Form-room at last lesson.

Each of the trio carried a large bundle out of the New House. They hurried down to the gates, and Taggles looked at them.

"Bell's gone for dinner, Master Figgins."

"Missing it," said Figgins cheerfully. "It's all right, Taggy, we've got leave."

And the three juniors walked out and took their way down the lane towards Rylcombe. They were in good time for the train, and when it steamed out of the little country station Figgins & Co. were comfortably seated in it, smiling.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. were having dinner in the School House without the slightest suspicion that the rival juniors were not similarly occupied in the New House.

After dinner, the School House fellows made their final preparations for the expedition. Arthur Augustus had packed a large bag, and the other fellows also had things to take with them. But D'Arcy's bag was of a tremendous size. The things that Arthur Augustus needed for a week-end caravanning were innumerable.

Blake chuckled as he looked at the bag.

"How are you going to get that to the station?" he asked.

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that! It's wathah too heavy for me to cawwy."

"Leave it here," suggested Digby.

"Wats! You can give me a hand with it."

"I've got my own bag to carry, fathead!"

"I wufuse to be called a fathead. As your things are in Dig's bag, Hewwies, old man, you can help me cawwy this."

"I've got Towser to look after."

"Towsah!" said Arthur Augustus, with great emphasis. "Towsah!"

"Yes, ass; Towser!"

"But Towsah isn't comin'."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Hewwies, I have already stated my objection to the pwesence of that wotten bulldog."

"Br-r-r-r-r!" said Herries. And he went to fetch Towser.

"Come on," said Blake, as Tom Merry's voice was heard calling in the passage. "The Shell chaps are ready."

"But what about my bag, deah boy?"

"Blow your bag!"

Blake and Digby followed Herries, and Arthur Augustus was left alone with his bag in a state of considerable dismay. He ran to the study window. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were crossing the quad, each with a bag in his hand. Arthur Augustus called to them, but they did not seem to hear. They disappeared out of the school gates.

"Bai Jove!"

A few minutes later Herries was seen going out to his bulldog. Evidently the redoubtable Towser was to form one of the party after all. Digby strolled out next, with a bag in his hand.

"You coming, Gussy?" Jack Blake called up to the study window.

"Yaas, wathah! But my bag—"

"Come on, then. You'll lose the train if you don't buck up."

"But my bag—"

Jack Blake did not seem to hear. He walked away towards the gate, whistling carelessly. Arthur Augustus shouted frantically from the window.

"Blake, deah boy! I cannot cawwy this bag alone! Oh, you awful wottah! Blake, you wotten beast!"

Blake passed out of the school gates and vanished.

The whole party, with the exception of the swell of St. Jim's, had started now. Arthur Augustus looked at his watch. The time was getting on.

"Bai Jove! What am I goin' to do? It is weally too utterly wotten of those wottahs to desert me in this wotten way? I suppose I shall have to pack a smallah bag, bai Jove!"

There was evidently no help for it. Arthur Augustus yanked out the contents of the big bag, and packed a small one with hurried hands. He looked at his watch again, and jumped. He had barely time to get to the station. Jamming hard, the swell of St. Jim's slammed the bag shut, and tore from the study.

Arthur Augustus was usually the neatest and tidiest of youths. But on this occasion he left the study carpet strewn with shirts and ties and silk socks, and rushed out of the House into the midst of a crowd of juniors in flannels bound for the cricket field.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Talbot of the Shell. "I thought you were going with the party."

D'Arcy gasped.

"So I am! Good-bye!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Run for it!" yelled Kangaroo. "Your train's going!"

"Hop it, Gussy!"

"Put it on!"

Arthur Augustus did not need telling to put it on. He fairly flew across the quad, with his bag swinging in his hand. He rushed out of the gates and dashed down the road. If Figgins & Co. had been anywhere about they would certainly have spotted that striking departure. But Figgins & Co. were not to be seen.

Arthur Augustus glared along the lane. Tom Merry & Co. were already out of sight. He dashed on. Down the lane he went, breathing fury and dust, the perspiration pouring down his aristocratic brow. The village came in sight, but not his comrades. They were already at the station.

The half-hour chimed from the village church. The train was due. Arthur Augustus panted, and put on a spurt, and went up the High Street of Rylcombe as if he had been on the cinder path.

He collided with Grimes, the grocer's boy, and Grimes roared as D'Arcy's bag banged on his basket, and there was a scattering of Sands' choice coffee and special dairy butter and new-laid eggs.

"You hassa!" yelled Grimes.

But Arthur Augustus did not pause. "Sowwy!" he gasped, and tore on.

In his haste he had not fastened his bag very securely, and the collision with Grimes' basket had knocked it open. Arthur Augustus was in too great a haste even to notice that the bag was swinging open in his hand. He rushed up to the station, leaving a white shirt and three or four black silk socks behind him like a trail.

He dashed into the station.

"Twain in?" he gasped.

Old Trumble, the porter, nodded.

"Yessir. Master Merry 'as your ticket. They're hon the platform. 'Urry up, sir! Train's jest goin' to start."

Arthur Augustus tore on to the platform. He tore across it to the train. Tom Merry & Co. yelled to him from a crowded carriage.

"Buck up, Gussy!"

"Get a move on!"

D'Arcy rushed to the carriage, leaving a perfect shower of socks, shirts, neckties, and underwear behind him as he ran.

"Stand back there!" shouted the guard, who was already signalling.

But Arthur Augustus did not stand back. Tom Merry held the door open, and D'Arcy bolted head-first into the carriage, and collapsed among the feet of the juniors. His bag rolled over on the floor.

"Done it!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The guard slammed the door: the train was starting. Tom Merry & Co. yelled with merriment. Across the platform lay a trail of shirts, socks, neckties, sweaters, slippers, collars, and other articles. Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet as the train glided out of the station, gasping for breath.

"Jolly nearly missed it, deah boys! I had to wun like anythin'! But it's all wight!"

"What did you stop behind for, you ass?"

"I had to stop and pack a smallah bag. I couldn't cawwy the large one, as

you wottahs wouldn't lend me a beastly hand. But I've brougnt my bag all wight."

"And what on earth did you want to bring an empty bag with you for?" demanded Monty Lowther. "What's the use of an empty bag in a caravan? We shall have enough empty bags."

"Weally, Lowthah, I do not quite undahstand you. You are talkin' out of the back of your neck, deah boy. My bag is packed."

"Looks like it!" howled Blake.

He held the bag up to view. Arthur Augustus looked at it. Then he jammed his eyeglass into his eye and looked again. The bag was perfectly empty. Not a single article remained of all that the swell of St. Jim's had crammed into it.

"Gweat Scott! I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the wotten bag must have come open, bai Jove, and I nevah noticed it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gweat Scott! All my things will be lost. I shall nevah wecovah them—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses! There is nothin' to cackle at—"

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

And for ten minutes at least nothing was heard from the crowded carriage but yells of merriment; while Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat and regarded the

empty bag through his eyeglass with blank dismay. And the expression on his noble countenance was, as Monty Lowther remarked, worth a guinea a box.

CHAPTER 7.

Capturing the Caravan!

FIGGINS descended from the train at Abbotsford Station, and the Co. followed him. It was a quarter to two, and the chums of the New House had three-quarters of an hour before them, ample time to stroll to Abbotsford Common twice over before half-past two.

Fatty Wynn, who never lost an opportunity of improving the shining hour in his own peculiar way, stopped at the station refreshment-room. He had been eating sandwiches most of the time in the train, but he still missed his dinner.

"Come on!" said Kerr.

"Hold on!" said Fatty. "We've got lots of time, and I remember that they have jolly good pork pies here. Have some?"

"May as well have a snack," said Figgins. "After all, we've missed dinner."

And the three juniors did full justice to the pork pies of Abbotsford. They made a good meal, in fact, and were



"Buck up, Gussy!" yelled Tom Merry & Co. from the open carriage as Arthur Augustus tore on to the platform. D'Arcy rushed to the carriage, leaving a perfect shower of shirts, socks, and underwear behind him as he ran. He was in too much of a hurry to notice that his bag was swinging open in his hand!

finished by two o'clock. At all events, Figgins and Kerr were finished. Fatty Wynn could have gone on till further orders. But he received his orders from his two chums, and they marched him out of the station.

The Co., carrying their bundles and bags, walked down the street on the way to the common outside the town. They knew that long before this Tom Merry & Co. must be in the train for Abbotsford, booked to arrive at two-forty. It would not do to risk being late.

The van would be there half an hour ahead of the School House party at the most, and it would take some time to get off. Tom Merry & Co., on arriving, might walk quickly to the rendezvous to wait there for the van to be ready at three. Figgins & Co., with all their clever arranging, were cutting it very fine—they had no choice about that. But, at all events, they could be on the spot early.

Outside the old town of Abbotsford the green common stretched far and wide, bounded on one side by the river, on the other by the high road. The New House juniors reached the common outside the town and scanned the broad expanse, but there was no sign of a caravan.

"Not due here for fifteen minutes," Kerr remarked.

"Might have stayed for another pork pie," said Fatty Wynn.

"Oh rats! Lemme see! As the horse is to be harnessed to the caravan here, most likely the man Thompson will take the horse to the station and let him pull it here," Kerr remarked. "That's the simplest way of getting it here."

"Most likely," assented Figgins.

They looked out on the road for a caravan coming from the station.

Half-past two chimed once somewhere, but the van was not in sight. Figgins & Co. began to feel very anxious. It was the time promised for the caravan to be ready, but it was not yet to be seen.

Mr. Hooker had promised it "absolutely," but it was probable that his man Thompson was not hurrying himself on a hot afternoon. The man Thompson, of course, did not know what was at stake.

Figgins & Co. grew almost feverish as the minutes passed.

At two-forty Tom Merry & Co. would be in Abbotsford, and if they hurried, as they might, they would be on the common soon afterwards. And if the van was much later—

"Blow that silly Hooker!" grunted Figgins. "Why couldn't he arrange to have the silly van here at two?"

"Blow this man Thompson!" growled Kerr. "What is the beast late for? Why didn't his parents teach him that unpunctuality is the thief of time?"

"And punctuality is the politeness of princes," said Fatty Wynn. "But Thompson isn't a prince. He's a beast! He's a slacker! He's a—"

"Hurrah! Here comes the van!"

It was the caravan at last.

At all events, it was a caravan—and Figgins & Co. had no doubt it was theirs. They fully regarded Tom Merry's caravan as theirs by this time.

It was a large and handsome caravan, too; and it was drawn by a powerful horse, as Tom Merry had arranged with Mr. Hooker for the best he could provide, regardless of expense, and Mr. Hooker had "done" him well. Horse and caravan were all that could be desired.

A man with a horsey look and a stubby chin was driving the caravan.

He brought it to a halt by the common-side, glancing at the juniors. It was two-forty-two, and by that time Tom Merry's train was in Abbotsford. The New House juniors had just done it—if they were off in time.

They ran towards the caravan. The horsey man touched his hat. He did not know any of the juniors of St. Jim's by sight; but he had been told to hand over the caravan to a party of school-boys, who would know his name, and one of whom would give the name of Tom Merry.

"That our caravan?" asked Figgins.

"Yes, sir. You Master Merry?"

"I'm from St. Jim's," Figgins explained. "Tom Merry will be here in a few minutes. You're Thompson, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Hooker told you to meet us here," said Kerr.

"That's right, sir." The driver dismounted from his seat. "Very 'ot, drivin' in this 'ere 'ot weather. Makes a man thirsty."

Figgins pressed a half-crown into the hand of Thompson. He felt much more inclined to punch his head for being late, but he was only too glad to see the caravan at all. And that liberal tip enlisted all the sympathies of the van-man at once. He took a friendly interest in the juniors and their excursion.

"About the 'orse—" he began.

"Yes—yes, that's all right!"

"His fodder is in the van," said the driver. "You'll take care of that 'orse, young gentleman. E's a good 'orse. Wasn't there goin' to be a party of you 'ere?"

"The others are coming," explained Figgins, climbing into the driver's seat. "Get into the van, you chaps."

Kerr and Wynn tumbled into the van. They threw in their bags and bundles. They were in feverish haste to be off.

Thompson scratched his stubby chin. The half-crown had made him Figgins' friend for life, but he was perplexed.

"I was hordered to 'and that van to Master Merry," he said. "If Master Merry ain't 'ere yet—"

"He's coming."

"But you're startin' without 'im—"

"Oh, he'll come after us!" said Figgins, with a grin. There was not really much doubt that Tom Merry would come after him.

The horse had begun to crop the grass along the road. Figgins pulled him out into the high road and took up the whip.

"Look 'ere, young gentlemen, p'r'aps you'd better wait till Master Merry comes. 'Ere come some young gentlemen along the road," said the vanman, shading his eyes with his hands and looking towards Abbotsford.

Figgins stood up and looked over the van. A number of boyish figures had come into sight, most of them carrying bags.

Figgins' heart beat fast.

They were too far off for him to recognise them, but he knew well enough that they were Tom Merry & Co. There were seven of them.

Undoubtedly they had seen the van in the distance already. There was not a moment to lose. Figgins paid no heed to the vanman. He cracked the whip, and the horse moved on.

"Ere, sir!" called out Thompson. "I say—"

"Tell Tom Merry we're gone on!" called back Figgins.

"Yes, but—"

"Tell him I'm driving. My name's George Figgins—he'll understand."

"But—"

The vanman's voice died away as Figgins gave the horse a flick of the whip, and the powerful animal broke into a sharp trot. The caravan rumbled down the road at a good rate, the vanman staring after it and scratching his head.

CHAPTER 8.

Dished!

TOM MERRY & CO. reached Abbotsford at two-forty, and they left the station at once and walked away to the common.

The van was not to be there till three, according to the arrangement with Mr. Hooker—since altered by Kerr on the telephone; but the School House fellows did not know that. But it was just as well to be on the spot in plenty of time, and they made for the common at once.

As they came out of the town Tom Merry uttered an exclamation.

"There's the van!"

There it was, in the distance, plainly visible on the white high road amid the green expanse of the common.

"Good!" said Blake. "Hooker has been better than his word. He said it would be ready at three, and it's barely ten to three now."

"Hallo! The van's going on!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in surprise. "What the deuce is Thompson going on for?"

The juniors stared after the van. There was no doubt that it was going on. It went down the road at a quick trot.

"The duffer!" said Digby. "I suppose he hasn't seen us and he's giving the horse some exercise. Give him a yell!"

"That looks like the driver by the roadside," said Manners. "The horse must have bolted."

"Bai Jove!"

"Put it on," said Tom Merry, and he broke into a run.

The juniors ran hard. Something seemed to have gone wrong. The horsey-looking man standing in the road, staring after the departing caravan, was evidently the driver of it. But if the caravan was running away, why did he make no effort to stop the horse? It was very odd.

The juniors ran fast, but the caravan was going faster. It disappeared round a bend in the road, and the trees hid it from sight.

A couple of minutes later the juniors came up, panting. Thompson turned his head and looked at them.

"You are Thompson?" asked Tom Merry at once.

"Yes, sir."

"I'm Tom Merry! Is that our van?"

"That's it, sir."

"Has the horse run away?" demanded Blake.

"Oh, no, sir! That's a good 'orse, sir. You can depend on him not to run away," said Thompson.

"Then where's the van gone?" asked Tom Merry, in amazement. "Who's driving it?"

"Your friend, sir."

"M-m-my friend?"

"Yes, sir."

"But—but my friends are with me here!" exclaimed Tom. "What do you mean? You don't mean to say that you've handed over the van to somebody else by mistake?"

"No mistake, sir. It's your friend that's taken it," said Thompson. "He told me you would go after him."

The School House juniors looked at one another quickly. A dreadful suspicion had risen in their minds. It seemed impossible—yet the thought of

Figgins & Co. came into their minds at once.

"How many of them were there?" gasped Blake.

"Three, sir."

"Three! My only hat! What were they like?" shouted Blake excitedly.

"A tall chap, sir, and a fat young gentleman, and—"

Tom Merry gave a yell.

"Figgins & Co.!"

Thompson nodded.

"That's the name, sir—Master Figgins. Which 'e told me to tell you that Figgins was drivin', and he says as 'ow you would nnderstand."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The villain!"

"The burglar!"

"Figgins!"

"They've got our caravan!"

It was a chorus of dismay and fury. Thompson stared at the excited juniors.

"I asked the young gentleman if he'd wait for you, Master Merry. I told 'im it would be better, as I was hordered to 'and over the van to you—"

"Oh, you ass! You've let them take our van!"

"How did they get on the track?" howled Blake. "What silly idiot told them about it?"

"Bai Jove! One of you duffahs must have let out the secwet."

The juniors stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. If anybody had let out the secret they had no doubt as to whom it was.

"You frabjous ass!" roared Blake.

"You've told them!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"That idiot, Gussy—"

"That crasc ass, Gussy—"

"Bump him!"

"Scalp him!"

"Slaughter him!"

The juniors were in a state of boiling fury, and they needed a victim. They had no doubt that it was the swell of St. Jim's who had somehow or other let out the secret. They closed round the alarmed Arthur Augustus.

"Hold on, deah boys—I mean, don't hold on! Weally, you know, I have not said a word. That ass Blake has been watchin' me all the time!"

"Yes, hold on," said Blake. "I'm blessed if I see how Gussy could have let it out, unless he got up in the middle of the night to do it."

"Scmebody did it!" shouted Herries.

"Some silly ass—"

"They screwed it out of him in Figgins' study yesterday, of course!" howled Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"They didn't know it last night," he said. "They were tracking me down last night to find it out."

"Bai Jove! That accounts! They must weally have twacked you down, deah boy, and they only pwetended to be taken in by that hat twick."

"Oh, rats! Look here, how came it that the van was early?" asked Tom Merry.

"Locks as if those rotters wangled it somehow. How was it you got here early with the van, Thompson?"

Thompson, who had been listening to the excited exclamations in stolid surprise, did not know how to make head or tail of the matter.

"Which we was phoned from Wayland this mornin', sir," he said. "Mr. Hooker phoned that they 'ad telephoned 'im from the school, askin' 'im to 'ave the van 'ere by two o'clock. He promised it for 'arf-past two."

"Phoned from St. Jim's!"

"Yes, sir."

"I didn't phone!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. must have done it. They got on to the little game, and phoned to Hooker. They must have cut dinner to get over here before us. Oh, crumbs!"

"But how—"

"Oh, what does it matter how? We're wasting time," said Tom Merry. That, apparently, had only just occurred to him. "While we're jawing here, they're getting away with the van."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you are doin' most of the jawin'—"

"Ring off, Gussy, for goodness' sake! Come on, you fellows, we've got to get hold of that van somehow, and slaughter those villains!"

"Old on, sir," said Thompson. "If them young fellers 'ave stole the van, I'll go at once to the police station."

"No, you won't," said Tom Merry. "It's all right. They—they're friends of ours, and they've done it for a joke. It's all right. We'll look after it ourselves."

"Very well, sir; if you takes responsibility—"

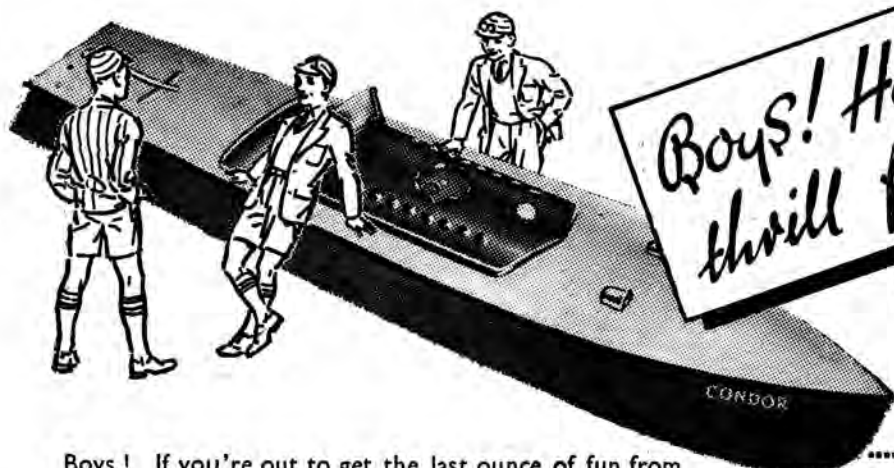
"Yes, yes!"

The stolid Thompson took his way back to Abbotsford. It was no business of his, so long as he was relieved of responsibility.

But he could not help wondering at hearing Figgins & Co. described as "friends" after the way the juniors had been referring to them. He was not aware of the peculiar state of affairs existing between the rival juniors of the two Houses at St. Jim's.

The party went down the road at a run. Some time had been lost, but

(Continued on the next page.)



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they hoped to sight the van. It was a big caravan, and the horse could hardly proceed at a gallop. If they could overtake it, there were enough of them to make mincemeat of Figgins & Co. and retake possession of the caravan.

They breathed vengeance as they ran. After all their great care to keep the secret from the rivals of the New House—in anticipation of just some jape as this—Figgins & Co. had spotted the whole scheme after all, and had "dished" them in the most thorough manner possible. Never in all the history of the rivalry between the two Houses at St. Jim's had there been such a tremendous score—if Figgins & Co. succeeded in getting away with the caravan.

But they shouldn't succeed; it wasn't to be thought of.

So the exasperated juniors said to themselves. But unfortunately it had to be thought of. For the caravan was out of sight. The afternoon was hot, and the road dusty, and the bags were heavy to carry at a run. The furious pace soon slackened down.

Of all the party, Towser was the only one who did not grow fatigued. And they came at a slackened pace to four crossroads, with nothing to indicate which way the caravan had gone.

There they halted. "Bai Jove, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dismally, setting down his empty bag and sitting upon it, and gasping. "Bai Jove! It looks to me as if we are weally done."

"We're not done yet!" growled Blake. Tom Merry set his teeth.

"We've got to get that caravan back!"

"How?" said several despondent voices.

But to that question the captain of the Shell could make no reply. He was determined to recapture the caravan; but how was another matter. Tom Merry sat down by the roadside and put his hands to his head, with his elbows on his knees, for a deep think.

Figgins drove on cheerfully. The powerful horse covered the ground at a good rate, and Figgins did not allow him to slacken till a good three miles had been covered.

That Tom Merry & Co. would follow, Figgins had not the slightest doubt; but that they would overtake the caravan he doubted very much.

He took many turnings right and left, and Abbotsford was left far behind. He followed in a general way the direction of the distant coast. On the dusty high road the van left no tracks to be distinguished.

When a safe distance had been placed between the caravan and Abbotsford, Figgins allowed the horse to drop to a walk.

Kerr and Wynn jumped out, and Figgins descended from his seat, and they walked beside the horse in the style of the true caravanners.

"Looks like a score for the New House," grinned Figgins.

And the Co. chorried.

"What ho!"

"Ripping country, this!" said Kerr, looking round over the green and glowing lanes and meadows and woods that surrounded them. "Some parts of Sussex are equal to Scotland—they are, really!"

"Go hon!" said Figgins sarcastically.

"When are we going to stop for tea?" asked Fatty Wynn.

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"We're going to stop for tea in about three hours," said Figgins.

"Oh, Figgy!"

"Caravanning doesn't consist entirely of gorging, my fat tulip. We're going to do a jolly good walk this afternoon, and have tea at sunset. Then we'll go on again in the dusk and camp somewhere near the sea for the night." Figgins mapped out the programme cheerfully. "To-morrow we'll have a day by the giddy seaside—what?"

"Ripping!"

"I wonder what those fellows are doing!" chuckled Figgins. "If they hurry back to St. Jim's, they'll be in time to play in the House match. Better than nothing."

And Figgins & Co. tramped on cheerfully in the golden afternoon beside the caravan, as it rumbled down the long white roads and through shady lanes. The schoolboy caravanners had never felt quite so satisfied with themselves.

CHAPTER 9.

A Hot Chase!

TOM MERRY grunted. It was a grunt expressive of the most complete exasperation. He had had a big think. The other fellows had also had big thinks; but the result was nil. Only Herries looked as if he had thought of anything useful.

"It's N.G.!" said Blake.

"U.P.!" remarked Digby.

"We're dished!"

"Stranded!"

"Done to the wide!"

"The only thing I can think of is bumping Gussy," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewws—"

"How these rotters bowled us out, I don't know. But they got the first hint from Gussy when they pumped him."

"You ass!" said D'Arcy. "We were talkin' on that occasion simply on the subject of solos—"

"Bumping Gussy," went on Tom Merry, unheeding, "would be some solace, but it wouldn't help us to get the caravan back."

"They're miles away by this time," said Blake. "They couldn't keep on the run; the horse couldn't stand it. But you can bet that Figgy wouldn't slow down till he was at a safe distance. And he may have taken any one of these roads. Most likely he'll be making for the seaside, as we were going to do; but he would keep off the main roads, and where—"

"Oh, where and oh, where can he be?" sighed Lowther. "Echo answers where!"

"Haven't any of you fellows got a suggestion to make?" said Tom Merry despairingly.

"I have," said Herries.

"Pile in! I don't suppose it's any good, but pile in!"

"As Blake has just said, Figgy will have to slacken down. Caravans go at a walking pace," said Herries. "If we keep on in the right direction we can

depend on tracking down the villains in the long run."

"Jolly long run, I expect. But how on earth are we to get the right direction? That's what we're trying to think out, isn't it, fathead?"

"My dog Towser—"

"Eh?"

"Now you see how jolly lucky it is that I brought Towser with me, after all," said Herries. "You know what a splendid tracker he is. Show him something belonging to those bounders, and he'll track them down like a bloodhound."

There was a general howl from the juniors. They had no belief whatever in Towser's powers of tracking down anything but an old bone or a dog-biscuit.

"Cheese it!"

"Ring off!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Rats!"

"Well, can any of you make a better suggestion?" demanded Herries defiantly. "Let Towser smell something belonging to them, and he'll lead us straight on their track. Find something for him to smell—that's all that's needed. Then he'll go straight on, and we can follow him and come up with them sooner or later."

"Come up with your sainted grandmother!" growled Blake. "For goodness' sake don't talk about Towser now! I'm fed-up with Towser!"

"Yes, ring off!" said Manners. "The question is—what's going to be done?"

"We are!" growled Lowther.

"What about hiring some bikes in Abbotsford?" said Digby, very hopefully.

"You know what hired bikes are—puncture collectors," said Blake. "Besides, it's an hour's walk back to Abbotsford from here. Goodness knows where Figgins & Co. will be by that time!"



As the taxi came round a bend in the lane Tom Merry gave a c and beside it three juniors were walking. "Figgins & Co ripping!" Their riv



“A chirrup of joy. Ahead of them on the road appeared a caravan, & Co.!” exclaimed the pursuing party. “Our caravan! Oh, rivals were run down at last.”

“Bai Jove! I’ve got it!” exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

“Oh, you’ve got it, have you?” growled Blake, not at all impressed. “What have you got—the collywobbles?”

“Weally, Blake—”

“If you’ve got an idea, chuck it off your chest!” said Tom Merry. “‘Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—’”

“I wefuse to be wegarded as a babe and sucklin’!” exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. “I wegard the term as extremely dispawagin’! I have thought of a dodge—”

“Out with it, then!” yelled Blake.

“What about a motor-cah?”

“A whic?”

“A motor-cah. Suppose we twot back to Abbotsford, hire a motor-cah, and scouah the country all woud?”

“No good!” said Herries promptly.

“Why not, Hewwies?”

“Towser couldn’t keep up with a motor-car.”

“Wats! You could put the beast inside.”

“But inside he couldn’t follow their track. Even Towser couldn’t follow a track inside a car. He has to be on the ground—”

“Will you give Towser a rest?” roared Blake. “By Jove, if you talk about Towser any more, I—I’ll brain Towser!”

“Look here, you thundering ass—”

“Pway wing off, Hewwies. My ideah is to scouah the country. We can waise the money to hire a cah. The only difficulty is that we shouldn’t be able to start at once. I suppose it would be an hour before we could get started.”

“Even if we found a car all ready at the garage!” growled Tom Merry. “And most likely we’d have to wait for one. Scat!”

Arthur Augustus.

“Oh!” said the driver again. “Well, one of you could ride beside me, and six inside. Bags on top. Where do you want to go?”

“We’re looking for a caravan,” Tom Merry explained. “Some—some friends of ours have gone off in our caravan and left us behind. We want to hunt for it round about and up and down, you know. If you find it, we’ll pay double the amount registered on the taximeter.”

“Yaas, wathah!”

The taximan looked businesslike at once.

“I’m your man, sir. What was the caravan like? Might be the one that passed me on the Bunchester Road.”

“Hurrah! You’ve passed a caravan?”

“Yes; about four miles from ‘ere, as I was coming back from Bunchester. Three young fellows with it.”

The juniors gave a whoop of joy. Their luck had been out—very much out—but the fickle goddess Fortune seemed to be smiling upon them once again. They had little doubt that a caravan with three young fellows with it was the caravan of which they were in search.

“One of them a fat chap?” asked Blake.

“Yes; very fat, one of them.”

“And one a long-legged bounder, with a face like a kite?”

“One of them suttlingly ‘as long legs, sir.”

“That’s it. We’re on the track.”

“Yaas, wathah! Hawwah!”

“Pile in!” said Tom Merry. “Double fare if you run it down!”

“Right-ho, sir!”

The bags were piled on the top of the taxicab, and the juniors piled inside. Tom Merry took a seat beside the driver. The taxicab turned and sped back the way it had come. The driver was as keen as the juniors to

“There are taxicabs in Abbotsford, you know. We could cwam ourselves into a taxicab at a pinch.”

Hoot-loot-toot!

“Bai Jove, you know, talk of angels, and you hear the wustle of their wings!” exclaimed D’Arcy excitedly. “Look at that!”

From the direction of Bunchester came a taxicab, scooting along the road towards Abbotsford. The juniors looked at it. It was empty, evidently returning from a journey. Tom Merry’s eyes gleamed. He jumped out into the road and waved his hand, without stopping to think.

“Hi!”

The taxicab slowed down.

“Have you passed a caravan on the road?”

The chauffeur glared.

“My ‘at! ‘Ave you stopped me to inquire after a blessed caravan?” he demanded wrathfully.

Tom Merry laughed.

“Not quite! We want your cab, too.”

“Oh! ‘Ow many of you?”

“The whole family,” said Blake.

“Seven in a taxicab!” said the driver. “Can’t be done, sir.”

“Oh wats! Ten shillings for the extwabs!” said Arthur Augustus.

“Oh!” said the driver again. “Well, one of you could ride beside me, and six inside. Bags on top. Where do you want to go?”

“We’re looking for a caravan,” Tom Merry explained. “Some—some friends of ours have gone off in our caravan and left us behind. We want to hunt for it round about and up and down, you know. If you find it, we’ll pay double the amount registered on the taximeter.”

“Yaas, wathah!”

The taximan looked businesslike at once.

“I’m your man, sir. What was the caravan like? Might be the one that passed me on the Bunchester Road.”

“Hurrah! You’ve passed a caravan?”

“Yes; about four miles from ‘ere, as I was coming back from Bunchester. Three young fellows with it.”

The juniors gave a whoop of joy. Their luck had been out—very much out—but the fickle goddess Fortune seemed to be smiling upon them once again. They had little doubt that a caravan with three young fellows with it was the caravan of which they were in search.

“One of them a fat chap?” asked Blake.

“Yes; very fat, one of them.”

“And one a long-legged bounder, with a face like a kite?”

“One of them suttlingly ‘as long legs, sir.”

“That’s it. We’re on the track.”

“Yaas, wathah! Hawwah!”

“Pile in!” said Tom Merry. “Double fare if you run it down!”

“Right-ho, sir!”

The bags were piled on the top of the taxicab, and the juniors piled inside. Tom Merry took a seat beside the driver. The taxicab turned and sped back the way it had come. The driver was as keen as the juniors to

run down the caravan. Double fare and ten shillings for extras quite sufficed to arouse his keenness.

The juniors felt their spirits rise as the taxicab sped away. They were on the track, and they were going at a speed that the caravan could never equal if they once sighted it. Once the caravan was in sight, all was well.

Only Herries was a little dissatisfied. He sat with Towser snuggled against his knees, frowning. Herries would have preferred to trust to Towser’s sagacity for tracking down the caravan. But Herries was quite alone in his opinion on that point.

The taxi simply ate up the ground. It went along at a fine speed, and in a very short space of time the juniors were on the spot where the chauffeur had passed the caravan. As the caravan had been going at a walking pace, it was not likely to be very far away. It was only a question of finding the right direction.

Tom Merry scanned the countryside anxiously. But they were in wooded country now, and the view was short.

But again their luck held good. A country policeman was resting against a stile near at hand, and the chauffeur inquired of him. The policeman had seen the caravan—in fact, one of the caravanners had asked him which was the shortest route towards the coast. He had advised him to take the Hamley Road, and they had taken it.

“Oh, good!” said Tom Merry. “What luck!”

The taxicab sprang forward again, buzzing off in the direction of the little town of Hamley. Hamley was eight miles away, and if the caravanners were going there, they had most likely not reached it yet.

Miles flew under the wheels of the taxi. The juniors’ hearts were beating hard. Even if they did not sight the caravan before they reached the village, they could make further inquiries there. But it was not likely that Figgins & Co. had covered the eight miles yet.

Tom Merry watched the road with gleaming eyes. It was a wooded lane, shaded by big trees most of the way, with many windings. As they came round a bend in the lane Tom gave a sudden chirrup of joy.

“Hurrah!”

Ahead of them on the road appeared a caravan, and beside it three juniors were walking and chatting cheerfully.

“Figgins & Co.!”

“Our caravan!”

“Oh, ripping!”

“Hurrah!”

CHAPTER 10.

Tom Merry & Co.’s Triumph!

F IGGINS turned his head as he heard the sound of a car on the road behind. Figgins was not thinking of the School House juniors—not at all. He had not the slightest belief that Tom Merry & Co. would succeed in seeing anything of him until he turned up for lessons at St. Jim’s on Monday morning. Figgins grinned at the idea of the juniors scouring the countryside in search of the caravan. They might as well have searched for the proverbial needle in a haystack, in Figgy’s opinion. He simply glanced back as he heard a car behind—carelessly, without the slightest suspicion of what he was going to see.

He looked at the taxicab, and then his eyes fell upon the junior who was seated beside the driver.

Figgins almost fell down.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"What's the matter, Figgins?" asked Kerr.

"Tom Merry!" yelled Figgins.

"T-T-Tom M-M-Merry!" stuttered Fatty Wynn.

"My hat!"

"They—they're here!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The taxicab was not a hundred yards away, and it was coming on with a rush. Figgins cast an almost despairing glance round. Flight was impossible, with the caravan. The big horse vehicle at its best speed would have been run down in a few minutes at the outside. It was useless to think of flight. Indeed, before the New House juniors could think of flight or anything else the taxicab was on the spot.

"That there the caravan, sir?" asked the chauffeur.

"That's it!" said Tom, with a chuckle.

The taxi stopped. Tom Merry jumped down, and the six juniors inside came pouring out in hot excitement.

"Line up!" muttered Figgins desperately.

The New House juniors lined up. But it wasn't much use lining up. There were seven against three, and the odds were hopeless. But Figgins & Co. did not mean to relinquish their prize without a struggle.

"Caught!" shouted Tom Merry gleefully.

"Yaas, wathah! Captuahed, you boundahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is where the New House gets it in the neck!" chortled Blake. "Collar the cads!"

"Jump on them!"

The chauffeur sat in his seat, looking on in amazement at the excited scene that followed. Figgins & Co. had simply no chance, but they would not surrender. There was a terrific struggle for a couple of minutes.

It ended with Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn lying on their backs in the road, with the School House juniors sitting on them.

The caravan was stopped.

The horse calmly cropped the grass. The chauffeur stared. The School House juniors gave a whoop of triumph.

"Hurrah! Hip-hip-hurrah!"

"Bwao!"

Tom Merry collected cash from his comrades, and the somewhat expensive fare of the taxicab was "whacked" out. The chauffeur, still in a state of great surprise, was quite satisfied, and he drove away, grinning.

The taxicab vanished down the lane, and then Tom Merry turned back to the captured raiders.

"Figgins, old man—"

"Yow! Gerroff my chest, Lowther, you beast!" gasped Figgins.

"Thanks! I'm quite comfy!" said Lowther. "Take it calmly!"

"Groogh! I—I'll—"

"Figgins, old man, this is where you sing small! Who's Cock House at St. Jim's—what?"

"School House!" chorused the victors.

"Who gets it in the neck?"

"Figgins!"

"You've given us quite a run, Figgy. But all's well that ends well. I'm afraid you'll have rather a long walk home."

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But these things will happen if you borrow other people's caravans. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How—how did you run us down, you rotters?" gasped Kerr.

Tom Merry smiled loftily.

"My dear chap, you surely didn't think you could do the School House, did you?" he asked in surprise.

"Oh, rats! We did you—did you brown," said Kerr. "It was sheer luck your getting on to us again—fool's luck!"

Tom Merry looked into the caravan. He grinned at the sight of Figgins & Co.'s bags and the handsome supply of tuck the Co. had already stacked in its place. Figgins & Co. were well supplied for the trip, so far as provisions went. In the circumstances, Figgins & Co.'s provisions were the spoils of war. "This was really kind of you, Figgy," said Tom Merry. "We have plenty of

nearly as much as Tom Merry had paid the taximan.

"You—you can't have our grub!" moaned Fatty Wynn. "I say, that's rotten—"

"As rotten as collaring another chap's caravan?" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are we going to do with these bounders?" asked Manners. "I'm getting tired of sitting on Kerr. He's rather bony."

"Shove 'em in the ditch?" suggested Herries.

"Bump them!"

"Rag them bald-headed!"

"No," said Tom Merry, generous in the hour of victory. "We've done them brown. We won't rag the poor little chaps—"

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just tie them back to back," said Tom. "It will give them a pleasant occupation for an hour or so getting loose. They can walk back to Abbotsford. It isn't more than ten or twelve miles. They can catch the evening train home, and tell all St. Jim's that they've got it in the neck."

"Oh, you rotters!" gasped Kerr.

The New House juniors struggled again, but their struggles were in vain. Tom Merry took a cord from the van, and tied their wrists together in a bunch, back to back. Then they were allowed to rise, and they stood gasping with exhaustion and rage, and quite helpless. The School House juniors, chuckling with glee, started off with the caravan. They waved their hands to Figgins & Co. as they went merrily down the road.

"Good-bye, Figgy!"

"Au vevoir, deah boy!"

"Pleasant walk home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The caravan and the School House juniors turned a bend in the lane, keeping on towards Hamley. Caravan and caravanners disappeared from sight. Figgins & Co., tied in

a group, stood in the lane, watching the caravanners till they disappeared. Then they looked at one another. Their feelings were almost too deep for words.

"What fearful luck!" said Figgins at last.

"It was just luck," said Kerr. "We did them brown! But we couldn't help this. It was blind luck!"

"But we dished them, all the same." Fatty Wynn groaned.

"All the grub's gone! Ow!"

Figgins snorted.

"Blow the grub!" he said savagely. "We're dished—that's what's the matter! They've got our caravan!"

"Theirs now," grunted Kerr. "Blow the rotten luck! Let's get this blessed cord off, for goodness' sake! I feel inclined to kick somebody."

The juniors set to work on the cord. But it was nearly half an hour before they had their hands loose.

"Well, what are we going to do?" said Figgins.

"Jolly long walk to Abbotsford," said Fatty Wynn. "But we can get something to eat in some village we pass through."

(Continued, at foot of next page.)



The Editor's Chair

Let the Editor be your pal.
Drop him a line to-day,
addressing your letters:
The Editor, The GEM,
Fleetway House, Farring-
don Street, London, E.C.4.



HALLO, Chums! Here we are again, after a week's absence from my usual place. There was such a big demand on space in the GEM last week that yours truly had to take a back seat. I never like cutting down the length of stories, because, after all, that's what readers buy the paper for. Quality and quantity in the GEM is my motto. So when I've got to get twenty-nine pages of matter into twenty-eight, I have to delete myself from the pages.

As a matter of fact, I haven't much space this week, so I must get down to business—which is next Wednesday's grand programme. Martin Clifford has certainly hit the high spots with his next St. Jim's yarn. It's called:

"TOM MERRY'S MINOR!"

"Tom Merry's minor?" I can imagine readers repeating. "But Tom hasn't got a brother." You're right! Tom's minor happens to be Mike, a monkey, which the Shell skipper rescues from its brutal owner. He takes it to St. Jim's, and Mike is promptly christened Tom Merry minor. But Mike turns out to be a real terror, and the fun and trouble he causes will compel your keenest interest throughout this tip-top yarn. Make a date with Tom Merry's minor next Wednesday.

"THE JOKER OF THE REMOVE!"

Since Wun Lung arrived at Greyfriars he has certainly been in the limelight. But so far he hasn't shown the humorous side of his nature. In Frank Richards' next lively yarn, however, the Chinese comes right out of his shell, and

proves himself to be something new in practical jokers. He makes Greyfriars sit up and take notice when he plays his first jape! I won't spoil your appetite for this story by telling you about it, but, believe me, you'll roar with laughter when you read how Wun Lung gives his Form-fellows the scare of their lives.

If you haven't a standing order for the GEM take my tip and see that your copy is reserved for you. It's much too good to miss.

REPLIES TO READERS.

Owing to my absence from the GEM last week I have fallen a bit behind in dealing with my correspondence. So I must make full use of my remaining space.

J. Foster (Kemsing, Kent).—Levison was at Greyfriars about two terms before he was expelled. The story of his expulsion will be coming along soon.

R. Foskett (Dulwich, S.E.21).—No, Frank Richards doesn't live at Broadstairs. I cannot disclose his address, but he lives not far from the Kent coast. The first "Magnet" story was called "The Making of Harry Wharton." The story ran to fourteen pages, and had two illustrations. The price of the "Magnet" then was a halfpenny. The first story of Tom Merry at St. Jim's was entitled; "Tom Merry's School-days." The GEM was a penny in those days, and the St. Jim's story filled 24 pages, with six illustrations. I am

sorry I cannot tell you how many different brands of matches there are in England.

F. Austin (Birmingham).—Yes, you may have the autographs of Martin Clifford and Frank Richards. Do you want them added to your album? I have no further news yet of the Greyfriars film. Mr. Lascelles is sports master at Greyfriars.

Miss M. Orrett (Prescot).—Sorry I am so late in replying to you. I was interested to see how you and your friends voted on the best stories and the most popular characters. Thanks for your effort. I will make a note of your suggestion.

E. Baker (Ontario, Canada).—The most valuable stamp in the world is the Mauritius twopenny blue, which is worth ten thousand pounds.

L. Hayden (Petersfield, Hants).—Johnny Bull doesn't arrive at Greyfriars for some considerable time yet. Your question about Carberry will be answered in future stories. A camping and hiking yarn appears in this number. You will read in due course about the arrival of the various well-known Greyfriars characters.

R. Martin (Bournemouth).—The wealthiest schoolboys at Greyfriars and St. Jim's are Lord Mauleverer and D'Arcy respectively. The colours of Rylcombe Grammar School are yellow and black.

A. Grimshaw (Brockley, S.E.4).—I'm sorry, but the old issues of the GEM and "Magnet" that you want cannot be supplied. Your joke was published in the old paper some time ago. Try again!

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS COUPON
7-8-37

Figgins gave him a ferocious glare. "If you talk about eating again, you fat idiot, I—I'll punch your fat head! We're not going back to Abbotsford!" Kerr whistled.

"I don't see what else is to be done, Figg. The caravan's gone. And there are seven of the beasts, even if we could get up to it."

"We're not going back," said Figgins resolutely. "The Head's given us leave for the week-end, and we should look silly idiots going back to-night. And we should be laughed to death for mucking up a good jape like this."

"But—"
"We're going to follow the caravan!" said Figgins fiercely. "Anyway, I'm going to. You fellows can sneak off home if you want to. I'm going on."

He started on. The Co. followed him at once.

"Well, in for a penny, in for a pound," said Kerr philosophically.

"We may be able to turn the tables on them yet—with luck. After all, we're not beaten yet."

"Things might be worse," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "It's awfully lucky that I've got a packet of sandwiches in my pocket, isn't it?"

Figgins only snorted in reply. He tramped on, frowning; and the Co. tramped on. And Fatty Wynn's cheerfulness returned to some extent as he munched the sandwiches.

CHAPTER 11.

No Objection!

TOM MERRY & CO. smiled cheerfully as they walked on with the caravan.

All was going well at last. They had had a narrow escape of losing the caravan.

But luck had befriended them, and now, as Blake remarked, everything in

the garden was lovely. Indeed, now that all was serene, they were not sorry for the little tussle with their old rivals of the New House—not at all. The triumph over the foe gave an added zest to their enjoyment.

And caravanning was certainly enjoyable. The weather was perfect. It was a golden afternoon, and the sun was setting in a blaze in the west. The surrounding country was beautiful; the smell of flowers and the hay was very sweet. The horse pulled contentedly at the caravan, and the caravanners walked on with equal contentment.

A good many miles lay behind them now, since they had left Figgins & Co. in the road. They concluded that the defeated New House juniors had gone back to St. Jim's. They did not see that there was anything else for them to do. And they dismissed Figgins & Co. from their minds, and gave all their thoughts to caravanning.

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"Bettah look out for a suitable spot to camp, deah boys," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, as the sun sank lower. "I'm gettin' wathah tired, you know."

"Not going to camp till sundown," said Tom Merry. "All fellows who crack up on the march can get into the van."

"I have not cwacked up," said D'Arcy indignantly. "I would undah-take to walk you off your beastly legs, Tom Mewwy!"

"Keep it up, then!" grinned Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus walked on determinedly. He would have walked till his aristocratic legs fell off before he would have admitted that he had cracked up.

Tom Merry was keeping his eyes open for a suitable spot for camping. Towser, who didn't mind admitting that he had cracked up, sat in the van and blinked sleepily at the landscape. The sun sank lower in the golden west.

"One of us might scout ahead. And look out for a camp," Jack Blake remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy immediately. "Bettah leave it to me. We have to be wathah particulah where we camp, and you can't do bettah than wely on a fellow with judgment."

And, without waiting for his opinion to be endorsed, Arthur Augustus walked briskly ahead.

Tom Merry smiled.

"I expect Gussy will select a spot with a stagnant pool, or marsh, or something," he remarked. "Keep your eyes open."

Arthur Augustus walked on ahead. As a matter of fact, he had a tired feeling in his noble legs, and he was anxious to camp. He walked on sharply, however, scanning the country through his eyeglass. He was some distance ahead of the caravan when he spotted a site that was eminently suitable.

"Bai Jove, that would be wippin'!" he exclaimed.

A wooden gate gave access to a wide lawn sloping down to a rippling stream. In the distance, over the trees, the roof of a large mansion could be seen. The lawn was evidently part of the grounds of a very large estate. It was an excellent spot for camping—dry and high, with a supply of water near at hand, and a slope for drainage in case of rain. But as it was evidently private land, Arthur Augustus realised it would be necessary to obtain permission before camping there.

A young man in shooting costume was leaning on the wooden gate, with a gun in the hollow of his arm. Arthur Augustus saluted him politely, and the young man gave him a nod.

"Lovely evenin'!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Lovely!" assented the sportsman.

"We're cavavamin'," said Arthur Augustus.

"Sure, it's a fine sport," said the young man, with an accent which seemed to hint that he originally hailed from Ireland.

"Yaas, wathah! Lookin' for a camp, you know. That looks a weally wippin' spot for a camp."

"Faith, it does!"

"It would suit us down to the gound. Any objection to our campin' there?"

"Not that I am aware of. Looks a splendid place."

"You have no objection?"

"Not at all."

"You are vewy kind."

"Oh, don't mensh!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,533.

"You are sure you do not mind?"

The young man shook his head, with a most agreeable smile.

"Not in the least! Faith, I should think you couldn't find a better spot; and as for me, I haven't the least objection in the world!"

"Thank you vewy much! Pewwaps it would do some damage if we lighted a fire—"

"Pooh! The grass would grow again."

"Then you do not object to our lightin' a fire?"

"Certainly not!"

"Bai Jove! That is wippin'! All cawavannahs don't have this luck," said Arthur Augustus jubilantly. "Pewwaps you would honah us by shawin' our suppah?"

"Thanks! I should be glad, but I have to get in to dinner. Much obliged, all the same. Make yourself at home here, and if you do a little damage, I don't mind in the least. I've been a caravanner myself, you know. Good-evenin'!"

"Good-evenin', my deah sir, and thank you vewy much!"

The young man raised his cap slightly and walked away, still with that genial smile upon his face.

Arthur Augustus, with great satisfaction, opened the wooden gate wide for the passage of the caravan, which was rumbling down the lane near at hand now. Arthur Augustus waved his hand to the juniors.

"This way, deah boys!"

"By Jove," said Blake, looking in at the gates, "that's a ripping spot for camping! But I don't suppose the owner would want caravanners camping here."

"I've seen the ownah, deah boy, and he has given me permish in the most agreeable mannah imaginable."

"That's ripping!" said Tom Merry. "Gee-up! Come on!" The caravan turned in the wide gateway. "I suppose we can't very well light a fire?"

"There's a spirit-stove—"

"On the contrary, deah boy, we can light a fire. The ownah said we could. I asked him. He says he has been a cawavannah himself."

"Jolly lucky to drop on an old caravanner!" said Tom Merry, with great satisfaction. "Still, we shall be careful not to do any damage. He must be a very good-natured chap. Halt!"

The caravan halted, and the horse was at once taken out of the shafts and tethered. Then the juniors proceeded to camp out.

Two or three big trees afforded a pleasant shade against the red glow of the setting sun.

In their shirtsleeves, the juniors prepared the camp.

They had had a good deal of experience in camping-out as Boy Scouts, and they knew how to make themselves comfortable.

Cooking utensils and provisions were brought out of the van. Wood was gathered along the lane for a fire, the campers considerably sparing the trees that adorned the lawn they had camped on.

Stones were brought from the brook for a fireplace, and a wood fire was soon burning away cheerfully, and a pot slung over it, gipsy fashion, sent out an appetising odour—very appetising indeed to the hungry campers.

Jack Blake, who prided himself upon his abilities as a cook, soon took charge of the pot, announcing that he was going to produce an Irish stew that would beat Banagher.

Meanwhile, the kettle was boiling on the spirit-stove. Plates and cups and saucers, and knives and forks galore were set out, and even serviettes were not forgotten. All, as Tom Merry cheerfully observed, was calm and bright.

The calmness and brightness, however, was destined to be interrupted. Blake had just announced that the famous Irish stew was ready, when a stout man, with a face that seemed transfigured with rage, came striding on the scene from the direction of the distant manor.

He came up to the caravanners, and gazed at them speechlessly. His face was so red that it really looked as if all his blood had been pumped into it. He had a riding-whip in his hand, and his grasp closed on it till his knuckles were white.

The juniors looked at him and rose to their feet. It looked like trouble; but as they had full permission to camp there, they did not see what the old gentleman was angry about. But he was certainly angry, not to say infuriated. There was no doubt whatever upon that point.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Good—good evening, sir!"

The man found his speech at last.

"You—you trespassing scoundrels! How dare you camp here with your blackguardly caravan, by Jove! I'll have you arrested! Here, John—George—William! Where are you, you fools? Let the dogs loose!"

CHAPTER 12. Camping Out!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked dismayed.

The fury of the old gentleman, evidently the owner of the land the caravanners had camped on, was extremely disconcerting.

"I—I say, we had permission to camp here!" stammered Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus recovered his dignity. "My deah sir, pway calm yourself. You should not fly into such a wage—it is weally dangewous at your age!"

The remark of the swell of St. Jim's had no perceptible effect in diminishing the rage of the old gentleman. He waved his riding-whip in the air in a frantic sort of way. He seemed on the point of exploding. Two or three men came from the direction of the house, apparently the George, John and William whom the old gentleman was summoning in such stentorian tones.

"Turn them out!"

"My deah sir—"

"Seize them! Thrash them! Arrest them, by Jove!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry quietly. "Don't lay hands here, my men—you'll get hurt if you do. We had permission to camp here."

"Nonsense! Seize them!"

"Are you the owner of the land?" demanded Tom Merry.

"You know I am, you young black-guard—"

"I didn't know! But—but somebody gave us permission. Who was it gave you permission to camp here, Gussy? It wasn't this chap?"

"No; I have nevah seen him before, deah boy. And I should certainly not have asked a favah of a person like that—"

"You—you—you—"

"And I, for one, decline to go until this person pwoves that he has a wight to turn us off," said Arthur Augustus.

firmly. "I was given permission to camp here by a vewy agreeable young man who was leamin' on the gate. He said there was no objection whatever to our campin' here—I mean, he said he had no objection."

Blake gasped.

"Oh, my hat! Did he say he was the owner of the land?"

"No, deah boy; but I natuwall took it for gwantend as he said he had no objection to our campin' here."

"You—you ass!" shrieked Tom Merry. "It was somebody pulling your silly leg—somebody who had no right to give you permission to camp here at all."

"Bai Jove!"

"Turn them off!" roared the old gentleman. "Lighting a fire on my lawn, by Jove! Ruining my lawn! A dirty gang of tramps camping on my ground! By Jove! I'll have them prosecuted as vagrants! Turn them out!"

John and George and William looked doubtfully at the juniors. Seven sturdy fellows were not easy to turn out unless they chose to go quietly.

"You'd better go, young gentlemen," murmured George. "This 'ere land belongs to Mr. Gumpey, and 'e don't allow no trespassers 'ere."

"Go!" roared Mr. Gumpey. "Do you hear? Go! Men, take that caravan! It shall be detained! Probably these young rascals have stolen it! Take the horse!"

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"There has been a mistake," he explained. "One of us was given permission to camp here, and it turns out to be a joke. But—"

"Nonsense! I don't believe a word of it! Go!"

"Weally, sir," said Arthur Augustus, jamming his eyeglass into his eye, and turning a severe glance upon the infuriated Mr. Gumpey. "You have no wight whatever to cast doubt upon my friend's statement."

"Silence! Go!"

"I wepeat, you are actin' like a wottah, sir, and but for my respect for your age, sir, I should give you a feahful thwashin'. Pewwaps we had bettah go, deah boys. I decline to remain on that unpleasant person's gwound any longah."

"Take that caravan away, men!"

"Hold on," said Tom Merry; "we're going! If you touch our property, you'll get knocked into the stream. Hands off!"

Blake and Herries put the horse into the shafts again. The rest of the juniors began packing up their property. It took some time, and while they were occupied the irate Mr. Gumpey raved and threatened, and ordered his men to seize the trespassers. But John and George and William had no disposition to do anything of the kind.

Tom Merry stamped out the fire, and Mr. Gumpey went off into a fresh explosion at the sight of the blackened patch on the lawn. Doubtless it was annoying. The caravan was put into motion, and the horse pulled it out through the gateway again into the lane.

Mr. Gumpey followed it with infuriated gestures and observations. John and George and William grinned when their master's back was turned, but their faces became grave and sedate when he looked round. Mr. Gumpey brandished his riding-whip after the juniors as they went out with the caravan.

"Trespassers! Scoundrels! Ruffians!"

Mr. Gumpey's furious voice died away behind as the caravan rolled on down the lane in the thickening dusk of the evening.

"My hat," murmured Blake, "what a giddy adventure! I suppose the old boy would be annoyed at finding us camping there without leave."

"Ha, ha, ha! Perhaps!"

"He had no wight to apply such opprobrious expressions to us!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I wegard him as bein' an extremely wude and unpleasant person. The young man who gave me permish to camp there was a much more polite person, and vewy gentlemanly in evewy way."

"I'd like to fall in with that gentlemanly young man," murmured Blake. "I'd give him something in return for his giddy permission to camp on some-

state of his intellect; and Gussy's offer to go ahead and select a suitable spot for camping was greeted with a yell of wrath.

"Here's a place!" Tom Merry exclaimed at last. "We must have somewhere. We shan't find a better place than this after dark."

It was a wide common, closed by a thick wood in the distance. There was a stream at hand. It was not so favourable a spot as Mr. Gumpey's lawn, certainly; but it fulfilled the requirements of the caravanners. The caravan was drawn off the road, and the horse taken out and tethered to crop the grass. Once more sticks were gathered and a camp-fire lighted, and the juniors prepared supper.

This time there was no interruption.

As they sat round the camp-fire, enjoying a substantial supper, the good spirits of the caravanners returned.



Silently Figgins led Tom Merry & Co.'s horse away into the darkness, towards the bushes where his chums were concealed. "What price this?" he murmured. "Good egg!" exclaimed Kerr. "We've done them now!"

body else's land. If you hadn't been a howling idiot, you'd have asked him whether it was his land."

"Weally, deah boy, I natuwall took that for gwantend when he gave me permish to camp there. I suppose he was a wotten pwactical jokah."

The caravanners would have been very glad to meet that humorous young man again. But they did not see him as they walked on; probably he was careful not to fall in their way. He would certainly have received some treatment from the exasperated caravanners which would have diminished his humorousness.

Tired and hungry, the caravanners tramped on, looking for a suitable place to camp. Darkness had now fallen, and it was not so easy to select a place. Blake's lovely Irish stew was getting cold in the van. But they passed the time by telling Arthur Augustus what they thought of the

Round them was darkness, a few stars only gleaming in the sky overhead. There was no town in sight, only a slight glow in the sky at a great distance hinting of habitation there.

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus, as he settled down comfortably in the grass after the meal, "this is all wight, deah boys! Not quite so good a place for campin' as the one I found; still, you have not done so vewy badly, Tom Mewwy."

"Ass!" said Tom Merry.

"I wonder where Figgins & Co. are?" chuckled Blake. "What's the time—past nine? Just thinking of going to bed at St. Jim's."

"Poor old Figgins! Ha, ha, ha!"

Little did the caravanners dream how near the New House juniors were to them at that moment.

"Bai Jove, I'm wathah tired!" said

Arthur Augustus. "I suppose some of us are going to keep watch, dear boys?"

"Towser will do that," said Herries. "Yes, Towser's good for that, if for nothing else," said Tom Merry. "He can keep watch. We don't want to risk having the horse stolen in the night. Towser will wake us fast enough if tramps are around."

"Didn't I tell you—" began Herries triumphantly.

"Yes, you did. Don't tell us again!" yawned Blake. "I say, do we wash-up after a meal, or before the next? I'm fagged!"

"Well, we wash-up immediately after a meal, that's the rule," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "But, as it's late—ahem!—we'll leave the washing-up till to-morrow. But we've got to get going pretty early. We've promised the Head not to miss morning service to-morrow, and we have got to get to some place that's civilised enough to have a church. But there'll be time for washing-up before we start. Let's see about bed. That will take some time."

"It won't take long to get the annex rigged up to the caravan," said Blake. He looked up at the sky. "It's not likely to rain; but it might."

"Yaas, wathah! No good pwovidin' a covah-if we don't sleep undah it."

"Pile in!" said Tom Merry.

The canvas annex was soon rigged up to the caravan. Then the juniors turned in, some of them in the caravan, and some of them under the shelter of the annex. The horse was tethered close at hand, and Towser remained loose on guard. Towser did not like strangers, and it was not likely that he would let any stranger approach the camp without giving the alarm. For the first time in history, as Blake remarked, Towser was coming in useful.

And in a few minutes after they had lain down, the schoolboy caravanners were sleeping the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER 13.

The Amateur Horse Thief!

"SHUSH!"

Figgins & Co. whispered the word cautiously.

Darkness lay upon the wide common, broken only by the fitful gleam of the stars overhead; and a dull glow from the remnant of the camp-fire.

The camp of the schoolboy caravanners was buried in silence and slumber. But the enemy were at hand.

Figgins & Co. were on the track. Ever since the recapture of the caravan by the School House juniors, Figgins & Co. had been on the track. As the caravan had proceeded at a walking pace, it had been quite easy. The caravanners had a start, but the New House trio had soon sighted them again; and after that they seldom lost sight of the caravan for more than a few minutes at a time. It was large enough to be seen at a considerable distance; and, besides, it was easy to get news of it in the villages they passed and from pedestrians in the lanes.

Figgins & Co. did not venture too near. They did not want the caravanners to suspect that they were on the track.

Figgins & Co. had watched from a distance with great enjoyment the scene at Mr. Gumpey's gate. Then they had followed the turned-out caravanners to the wide common where the final camp had been made.

The trio were pretty well tired out by this time; but they were quite keen. They had made purchases of provisions

in a village as they came on, and eaten as they walked. But Fatty Wynn was thinking, with a heavy heart, of the excellent things they had packed in the caravan for the benefit of the caravanners, and he was ready for almost anything to recover the spoils of war.

Figgins led the chase with undiminished determination. Exactly what Figgins intended to do the Co. did not know, for it was hardly feasible to attack seven with a force of three. Figgys had said something vaguely about a night attack, and with that the Co. had to be satisfied.

Now they were watching the sleeping camp from a clump of bushes within twenty yards of the dying camp-fire.

It was half-past ten now, and the caravanners had long been in bed, and were undoubtedly fast asleep.

The Co. waited for instructions. They could not quite see the use of a night attack themselves; for the caravanners would certainly wake up as soon as they were attacked, and then the odds of seven to three would be irresistible. But Figgins was the leader, and the Co. followed the great Figgins loyally.

"They're all fast asleep," whispered Figgins.

"Looks like it."

"Then now's our chance."

"But," murmured Kerr, "when they wake up they'll down us, Figgys. They're more than two to one, you know."

"It's all right," murmured Fatty Wynn. "I know what Figgys's thinking of. We are to make a sudden rush and capture the grub and be off with it before they can tackle us. It's a jolly good idea, Figgys!"

"Oh, is it?" growled Figgins.

"H'm! Isn't that the idea, then?"

"No, it isn't!"

"But the grub—"

"Hang the grub!"

"I know I'm hungry," said Fatty Wynn plaintively. "I've had nothing to eat since we started, excepting a few sausages and a pie and some bread and cheese and a cake and—"

"Shut up! Look here," whispered Figgins, "they're all asleep. I've been spotting all their arrangements, and we can work this all right."

"There's the dog," said Kerr. "If they haven't left anybody on watch, it's because they rely on that blessed bulldog."

Figgins chuckled softly.

"Exactly! Towser would keep guard all right against strangers, but he knows us. He won't give the alarm on our account. I'm jolly good friends with Towser. He won't even blink if I go into the camp. And they're all asleep in the van, or in the annex, and they won't hear me; I shall take good care of that. You fellows stay here—"

"Here!" ejaculated Kerr.

"Shush! I'm going alone."

"But I say, Figgys," murmured Fatty Wynn, "you won't be able to carry much of the grub alone. It's as much as the three of us can do—"

"Will you shut up, you gormandising cannibal?" said Figgins in a ferocious whisper. "I'm not going to capture the grub. But the grub! I'm going to steal the horse."

"The—the—the horse!"

"Yes, fathead!"

"B-b-but we can't eat the horse!"

"Shurrup! Don't you see?" muttered Figgins. "They're miles from anywhere on this common. It would take them pretty nearly all to-morrow to find a new horse from somewhere. What good is a caravan without a gee-gee? They

can't pull it along themselves. If they have the van and we have the horse, it's honours divided. They can't go caravanning without a horse—"

"Can we go horsing without a caravan?" murmured Kerr.

Figgins frowned.

"Don't be funny! We shall have them nicely when we've got hold of their gee-gee. We shall clear off with it, and when they wake up in the morning they'll find it clean gone. Then we can make terms with the bounders."

"But—"

"Nuff said!" said Figgins. "You chaps stay here, and I'm going to try my luck as a horse thief. I think I can keep Towser quiet. Don't say a word."

Figgins crept away as he finished speaking. Kerr and Wynn remained in cover in the bushes, looking anxiously towards the caravan camp.

Exactly what terms Figgins intended to make with the caravanners they could not guess, but evidently it all depended on the possession of the horse. Certainly without the valuable animal the caravan would not be of much use to the caravanners. At least, the New House chums would be able to "muck up" the trip, as their own trip had been mucked up. That was something!

Figgins crept cautiously towards the sleeping camp. Dimly, in the starlight and the faint glow of a few red embers, the caravan and the annex loomed into view. The horse, with a long tether, was lying in the grass close by the wheels of the caravan. There was a rustle in the grass, and two bright eyes gleamed upon Figgins. He started for a moment, but recovered himself instantly.

"Towser!" he whispered. "Towser, old boy! Good old Towser! You know your old pal, don't you, Towser?"

Figgins, who was fond of animals and always kind to them, was on friendly terms with Herries' bulldog. It was fortunate for his plans at this moment. Towser rubbed his big nose against Figgins' leg, and the junior stroked him gently, and Towser lay down again quite contented. Figgins chuckled softly. From the annex of the caravan came a sound of deep and regular breathing.

Figgins stooped and cut the tether with his pocket-knife and pulled upon the horse gently. The animal rose, and the amateur horse thief led it away into the darkness. The hoofs made hardly a sound in the thick grass.

Figgins reached the bushes where his chums were concealed.

"What price this?" he murmured.

"Good egg!" exclaimed Kerr. "We've done them now!"

"You—you didn't manage to get any of the grub?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Br-r-r-r!"

"I say, I think I'll have a cut at it," whispered Fatty. "I could make a sudden rush, you know, and—Leggo my collar, Figgys!"

"You'll make a sudden rush along with me, my son," said Figgins grimly. "We're going to clear off now. Never mind the grub. We've got to get this gee-gee to a safe distance before any of those bounders wake up. Come on!"

"Yes, but—"

"Come on, you fat cannibal!"

Fatty Wynn sighed and gave in. With cautious tread Figgins & Co. vanished into the darkness. Figgins leading the captured horse. And in the camp of the caravanners seven juniors continued to sleep peacefully—dreaming of many things, but never dreaming for a moment that the enemy had been within the gates.

CHAPTER 14.

Honours Easy!

TOM MERRY awoke and yawned.

The sun was streaming down upon the wide moorland, and it glimmered into the interstices of the annex attached to the caravan.

Tom Merry left his blankets, and looked at his watch.

"Half-past seven!" he exclaimed. "We're late! Up with you, you fellows—no slacking allowed in this caravan!"

And the chums of the School House turned out. The morning sunshine was streaming down upon the wide common.

Herries patted Towser's head, as the bulldog came up to greet him.

"Well, and hasn't old Towser kept watch all right?" said Herries. "Shouldn't wonder if half a dozen tramps have been round here during the night. Good old Towser!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly. "Where's the horse?"

"My hat!"

"Gweat Scott! The gee-gee's gone!"

There was a chorus of dismayed exclamations. The juniors rushed to the spot where the horse had been tethered. Most of the rope was there, but the horse was conspicuous by its absence. The juniors gazed at the vacant spot in utter dismay.

Tom Merry swept the common anxiously with his eyes, under the impression that the horse had wandered away and might be grazing in sight. But the animal was not to be seen. Unless he was hidden from view by the bushes in the distance, he was not upon the wide common at all.

"Well, what rotten luck!" growled Lowther. "I must say you might have tied him up safely overnight."

"The rope's been cut," said Digby, lifting the loose end. "Look here!"

"Phew!"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry took the end of the rope. There was not the slightest doubt that it had been cut. The clean cut of the knife was only too plain.

"Stolen!" said Blake.

"Can't have been stolen," said Herries, with a shake of the head. "Must have jerked the rope and broken it somehow. Can't have been cut."

"It was cut, ass—look at it!"

"Impossible! Couldn't have been cut without somebody cutting it, I suppose? And nobody has been here in the night. Towser would have given the alarm."

"Towser!" snorted Blake. "The silly brute! About as good for keeping watch as a stuffed monkey. Towser! The silly idiot's been asleep, and let the horse be stolen under his silly nose."

"Rot!"

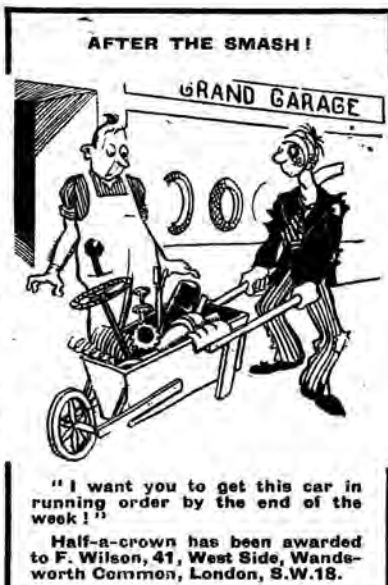
"Well, it's been stolen," said Tom Merry. "And the question is, what are we going to do? We must get it back somehow. I suppose we can follow the tracks; but it must have been done hours ago."

"May be sold by this time!" groaned Lowther.

"Bai Jove! It's quite poss! Follow the twacks, deah boys!"

It was easy enough for the juniors to follow the tracks in the grass. They followed them for a couple of hundred yards, and were led to the high road. There, on the hard high road, the track ceased. Evidently the stolen horse had been taken along the road, but to follow the track farther was impossible.

The caravanners returned disconsolately to the camp. They were stranded.



"Well, it's no good crying over spilt milk," said Tom Merry, with enforced cheerfulness. "We shall have to walk to a village somewhere, and see if we can hire a horse anywhere, to drag the van as far as a railway station!"

"Nice way to spend the day!" growled Blake.

"Yaas; we weally ought to have kept watch. We'll keep watch next time."

"Yes; let's lock the stable door after the horse is stolen," said Monty Lowther, with doleful humour. "Stick to custom!"

"That wotten bulldog ought to be bawined!"

"It would be some comfort to drown Towser," said Blake ferociously.

"Let's pay Herries his value—twopence—and drown him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A suggestion to which Herries replied at great length, and in a very uncomplimentary strain. Herries still held that the horse could not have possibly been stolen, or Towser would have given the alarm. Nothing could alter Herries' fixed opinion on that point.

"Well, we'd better have brekker, anyway," said Tom Merry. "We'll see what we can do after that."

"Plenty of time for washing-up, anyway, if we're done caravanning!" groaned Blake.

The juniors relighted the camp-fire, and cheered up a little under the influence of tea and hot rashers and eggs. They were just beginning breakfast, when Blake gave a sudden yell.

Three boyish forms had appeared from a clump of bushes at a distance; but, distant as they were, they were easily recognisable.

"Figgins & Co.!" yelled Blake.

"Bai Jove! The New House boundahs!"

"They've collared our horse!" roared Tom Merry, a flood of light breaking upon his mind at once.

"My hat!"

The three New House juniors were advancing towards the camp with smiling faces. Each of them held a stick aloft, and to each of the sticks floated a more or less white handkerchief. The colour of the handkerchiefs might be a little doubtful, but there was no doubt as to what they represented—flags of truce.

Tom Merry & Co. were on their feet at once. They were astonished to see Figgins & Co., and glad, too. For it was a great relief to discover that the loss of the horse was only a jape, and that its recovery was possible.

"Good-morning!" said Figgins politely, as he walked up to the camp.

"Good-morning!" smiled Kerr.

"Good-morning!" chortled Fatty Wynn.

Tom Merry & Co. glared at them. But for the white flag the New House trio would have been seized and bumped hard on the spot.

"Flag of truce!" said Figgins. "We've come for a little talk."

"You've collared our horse?"

Figgins smiled.

"Have you missed a horse?" he asked pleasantly.

"You know we have, you spoofer!"

"It's an odd coincidence," said Figgins blandly, "because we've got a horse to dispose of, you know."

"It's our horse, you wottah!"

"I say, you might ask a chap if he's hungry," said Fatty Wynn, eyeing the eggs and bacon with a ravenous eye.

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"You've done us this time, Figgy. Sit down to brekker!"

"But where's our horse?" demanded Blake. "We're jolly well going to have our horse back again!"

Figgins grinned.

"I'm going to make a proposition to you," he explained. "We started out caravanning, and so did you. Let's combine resources, and go it together. We're willing to bury the hatchet, if you are. We've stood our whack in the supplies, and we'll stand our whack in paying the exes of the caravan. That's a fair offer."

Tom Merry laughed.

"It's a go, Figgy. No reason why we shouldn't have a jolly time together. And there's plenty of room in the annex, if not in the van. It's a go!"

"Good egg!" said Kerr, grinning. "With your van and our horse, we shall be able to get along all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, these rashers are ripping!" said Fatty Wynn, who had started already. "Try 'em, Figgy, old man."

"Pile in!" said Tom Merry.

And the deadly rivals of St. Jim's joined one another round the camp-fire on the best of terms. The rival caravanners had buried the hatchet, and, during the caravan trip, at all events, School House and New House were shoulder to shoulder.

And after breakfast Figgins & Co. hurried away for the horse, which was concealed in a hollow at some distance, the schoolboy caravanners started on their route once more.

The horse was harnessed, and the caravan pulled out into the road, and the schoolboy caravanners started on their route once more. In the bright morning sunshine ten merry juniors tramped along with the caravan with smiling and contented faces. The hatchet was buried deep. And in all the smiling countryside the sun did not shine upon a merrier party than the rival caravanners.

(Next Wednesday: "TOM MERRY'S MINOR!"—telling how Mike, an unusual newcomer to St. Jim's, causes a riot of fun, excitement and mystery. Look out for this great yarn.)

WUN LUNG TAKES UP FOOTBALL IN MORE SENSES THAN ONE—AND SCORES A GREAT "TRY" FOR HIS SIDE!

THE GREYFRIARS CHINEE!

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

Wun Lung, the Chinese new boy in the Greyfriars Remove, receives an unexpected visit from his uncle, the Mandarin Yen Hai. The object of his visit is unknown to Harry Wharton & Co., but angry words pass between nephew and uncle before the latter departs.

That night in the dormitory Bulstrode, the Remove bully, tries to rag Wun Lung, but the Chinese proves one too many for him, and Bulstrode is made to look very foolish before all his Form-fellows. Seething with anger, the bully seeks revenge when everyone is asleep in the dormitory. He gets out of bed with the intention of drenching Wun Lung with water, but in the darkness he runs into an unknown person!

Bulstrode is scared out of his wits, and he shrieks with terror, awakening all the juniors and bringing Mr. Quelch to the room. But the unknown has disappeared. After Bulstrode has explained what happened, Mr. Quelch and the prefects search the school. The Remove are excitedly discussing the amazing happening when their Form-master returns to the dormitory.

(Now read on.)

The Unknown!

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove at Greyfriars, was very grave as he entered the Remove dormitory. The juniors, as they looked at him, could see that there had been some discovery. "Have you found him, sir?" broke out Bulstrode eagerly.

"No," said Mr. Quelch, "he has not been found. But it appears that the house has been entered by someone, and I must, therefore, regard your story as quite correct."

There was a buzz of excited muttering among the juniors.

Bulstrode looked relieved. He had almost begun to believe himself that he had been misled by a disordered fancy.

"A window has been found unfastened," said the Remove master dryly. "It had been forced from the outside, and the scoundrel, whoever he was, has apparently effected his escape at the same point. Wingate and the other prefects are looking in the Close, but it is not likely that he will be found now. It is clear that it was a burglar who frightened you here, Bulstrode, but there is no occasion for any further uneasiness. He must have come into the Remove dormitory by mistake, as there are few valuables here to tempt a thief."

Mr. Quelch turned to the door.

"You may go to sleep again quite securely," he said. "If you like, I will leave the light for the remainder of the night."

"Oh, no, sir!" said Wharton quickly. "We're not afraid. Besides, the man is gone now."

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch.

"Good-night, boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The Remove tumbled quickly into bed. The light was switched off, and the dormitory plunged once more into darkness.

"Queer business," Bob Cherry

By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

remarked, as he settled his head on his pillow. "If any of us had run into the boulder, instead of that duffer Bulstrode, he might have been collared and laid by the heels."

"The ratherfulness is terrific," purred the sleepy voice of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I don't know," Wharton remarked. "It must have been a rotten shock for Bulstrode—though I can't say I'm very sorry for him. He was going to play a cowardly trick on Wun Lung."

There was a sound in the gloom, and Wharton started as a shadow fell blacker beside his bed. But next moment the soft voice of Wun Lung reassured him.

"No flaiddee," murmured the Celestial

"Why are you out of bed, Wun Lung?"

"Me flaiddee."

"It's all right, kid," said Harry, in a low, reassuring voice. "The burglar won't come back."

"You tinkee he burglar?"

"Why, yes. What else could he have been?"

"Why he come to this dolmitoy?"

What is the object of the midnight marauder who breaks into Greyfriars? The answer comes sensationally—Wun Lung is kidnapped!

"Wandered in here by mistake, I suppose. He wouldn't know his way about the house, would he?"

"No, p'laps not. Me flaiddee."

"What are you afraid of?"

The Chinese boy was silent. But Harry Wharton could hear his quick, nervous breathing in the darkness.

"Buck up, Wun Lung!" murmured Bob Cherry drowsily. "There's nothing to be flaiddee of. Gettee into beddee, sleepes jolly quicke. Savvy?"

The Celestial did not move.

"Me tinkee man might come back," he said.

"What makes you think that, Wun Lung?" asked Harry Wharton.

The Chinese junior made no reply. Wharton was puzzled by the nervousness of the new boy.

"Go back to bed," he said. "You can't stay up all night. You'll be quite safe. The burglar's not likely to return after the alarm he's raised."

"Allee light," murmured the Chinese junior reluctantly.

Wharton heard him return to his bed. In a few moments more Harry was fast asleep.

But it was long before the eyes of

the Chinese junior closed. For a long time the dark eyes were wide open, staring into darkness. Had the Chinese boy a cause for fear, unknown to his schoolfellows, that he could not explain to the English boys?

Bulstrode Catches It!

THE next morning there was only one topic at Greyfriars—the curious happening of the night.

The fact that a window had been forced proved that the house had been entered, but otherwise there was no trace of the thief. Nothing had been taken, and no traces of him were discovered in the grounds.

The police at Friardale were communicated with, and the inspector came over to the school. But he discovered little that was not already known.

He examined the forced window and pronounced that it had been done by a clumsy hand—not at all that of a professional burglar. This circumstance suggested that some tramp had made the attempt at robbery. If so, the man had doubtless passed on his road after the failure, and there was but slight chance of identifying him.

The inspector promised to do his best and left. But everyone supposed that the matter was at an end. If it was a tramp who had broken into the school, he would not be likely to linger after his unsuccessful exploit. The chances were that he was already twenty miles away from Greyfriars. That was the general opinion.

In the midst of the almost endless discussion among the Removites, Wun Lung was silent. There was a shade on the usually cheerful face of the Chinese boy, but he did not explain its cause. Wharton, who remembered his fear of the night before, thought that the matter was still weighing on his mind. It did not occur to him then that the Chinese junior might have a secret cause for uneasiness.

The ragging of Wun Lung seemed to have been quite given up, as far as the Form was concerned. Bulstrode retained some animosity, but the rest seemed inclined to let the "heathen" alone, save for some occasional chipping. Wun Lung was so soft and gentle that few could have disliked him, and his bland smile was very disarming.

Bulstrode had not forgotten, however. He had been chipped considerably on the subject of his fright. In the broad daylight it appeared rather ridiculous, even to himself. He rather unreasonably attributed it all to Wun Lung, who certainly had not wanted him to get out of bed that night. But Bulstrode was smarting, and he wanted to be even with somebody.

Wun Lung was placed next to Harry Wharton in the class-room. In spite of the peculiarity of his English, his education had been good for his years. His Chinese pronunciation was a national peculiarity he was never likely to lose, but otherwise he was on level terms with most of the fellows in the Remove.

It was curious to hear the Chinese construing Latin. His Latin, so far as reading and writing went, was quite up

FRANK RICHARDS IS AT HIS BEST IN THIS HUMOROUS AND THRILLING STORY OF HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S EARLY ADVENTURES.

to the Remove average, but when he was construing aloud, his pronunciation had the effect of turning Virgil into a humorist.

The first time the Remove heard him on the *Aeneid* there was a general chuckle.

Mr. Quelch, with some doubt in his mind, pointed to Wun Lung, who rose to construe with a sweet, submissive smile. He proceeded in this wise:

"Tles notusee ableptasee in saxa latentiasee tolquetee — Saxa vocantee Italee mediisee quae in flustibusee, Alas, Dolsum immanee malce summo."

And a very audible smile swept through the Remove.

Mr. Quelch tried to keep his countenance; but it was of no use; he had to smile with his Form, and the smile became a laugh.

Wun Lung assumed an expression of innocent wonder. Apparently he did not know what was the cause of the merriment.

But a portentous frown from the Form-master restored the gravity of the Remove, and the lessons proceeded.

Later, when Mr. Quelch was busy with the blackboard, Bulstrode leaned over from his desk towards the Chinese junior. He was sitting in the second row, just behind Wun Lung—having changed places with a fellow to get there.

Harry Wharton happened to glance over his shoulder, and Bulstrode suddenly drew back.

Wharton looked at him sharply. He knew that Bulstrode had been going to play some trick on Wun Lung, and that he had stopped him only just in time.

The Remove bully gave him a defiant look.

"Better be careful!" muttered Wharton.

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"What's the little game?" murmured

Levison, who was sitting next to the bully of the Remove.

Bulstrode grinned.

"Look!"

He had a long pin in his hand.

Levison whistled audibly.

"I say, you'd better draw it mild," he muttered. "That chap would wake the House up if you stuck that pin in him."

"I don't care. Who's to prove I did it?"

"Wharton would guess."

"He couldn't give me away. I'll make that young beggar jump!"

"Well, he'll jump if he gets that in his leg, and no mistake!" chuckled Levison.

Bulstrode waited for an opportunity. It came a little later. The master of the Upper Fourth, Mr. Capper, came to the Form-room door to speak to Mr. Quelch. While the Form-master's back was turned Bulstrode leaned cautiously over the desk. Then the pin was jabbed spitefully into the plump leg of Wun Lung.

The Chinese boy did not yell or jump. He gave a slight start, and turned his head, and looked Bulstrode in the face.

There was a bland smile on his lips.

Bulstrode nearly fell over the desk. He gazed in blank amazement at the Chinese. He had stuck the sharp pin with all his force into the Celestial's leg, but apparently the "heathen" was insensible to pain.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Bulstrode.

He drew the pin away. It was red at the point.

Wun Lung smiled sweetly.

"No hurtee muchee," he remarked.

"Chinee leggee not soffee likee you. Savvy?"

"M-m-my hat!"

Mr. Quelch looked quickly round as Mr. Capper departed. He saw the pin in Bulstrode's hand, and the look of

amazement on his face. He stepped quickly towards the class, a dark frown on his brow.

"Bulstrode!"

The bully of the Remove jumped as the master rapped out his name.

"Ye-es, sir."

"Give me that pin!"

"That—that pin, sir. What—what pin?"

"The one you had in your hand a moment ago."

There was no trifling with Mr. Quelch. Bulstrode handed over the pin.

"You stuck this pin into Wun Lung, Bulstrode?"

"I—I—"

"Yes or no."

"Ye-es, sir," stammered Bulstrode.

"Did it hurt you, Wun Lung?"

"Not muchee. Chinee not soffee."

"Stand out before the class, Bulstrode."

The Oriental insensibility to pain had saved Wun Lung from being much hurt, but Bulstrode's action called for punishment, all the same. He stepped out reluctantly before the class. Mr. Quelch took up his pointer.

"Hold out your hand!" he ordered.

Bulstrode wriggled nervously. The pointer was far more dreaded than the cane by the Removites. But there was no help for it. He held out one hand and then the other, and had a cut on each that nearly doubled him up.

"Now go back to your seat," said Mr. Quelch sternly, "and let that be a lesson to you not to play brutal tricks on an inoffensive boy."

Bulstrode went back to his place without a word. But he was furious, and the looks he gave the Chinese junior boded ill for that youth when Bulstrode's time should come.

When the class was dismissed, the chums of Study No. 1 hurried off at once to the football field. Wun Lung was



"Let that ball alone!" yelled the footballers as Wun Lung seized the leather. "Keep off the grass!" But the Chinese did not heed. Claspings the ball in his arms, he went down the field like a Rugby three-quarter racing for goal, leaving the juniors staring in amazement.

following them when a savage grasp fell on his shoulder.

"No, you don't," said an unpleasant voice. And Bulstrode's strong grip dragged the Celestial into the shadow of the porch, where they could not be seen by the fellows in the Close.

Wun Lung looked at the bully of the Remove with a sweet smile.

"Likee talker?" he asked. "Me happy talker to Bulstrode."

Bulstrode smiled grimly.

"You won't be happy when I've finished with you!" he remarked. "It's no good looking round; Wharton isn't here now, you yellow-skinned rotter!"

"No savvy."

"You got me into a row with Quelch, you young cad!"

"No savvy."

"And now I'm going to make you sit up for it!"

"No sittee up. No savvy."

"I'll make you savvy!" grinned Bulstrode. "Take that—and that!"

Two blows landed on the Chinese junior. Then suddenly Wun Lung seemed to curl like an eel round his bulky assailant, and Bulstrode felt himself going. He made a desperate effort to save himself, but quite in vain. The next moment he was lying on his back on the cold stone, with an ache in his head where it had come into contact with the ground. Wun Lung was strolling quietly down to the football field.

Wun Lung the Footballer!

AFTER morning lessons most of the Remove had gone down to the football field for practice. There was time for a good half-hour before the juniors' midday meal; and Harry Wharton, the football captain of the Remove, had the responsibility of keeping the Form team up to the mark, and he did not spare them.

A Form match with the Upper Fourth was coming off shortly, and after that there were two important fixtures close at hand—with Redclyffe and St. Jim's. It was Harry Wharton's ambition to make the Remove team superior to that of the Upper Fourth—a difficult task in the nature of things—the higher Form, of course, consisting mainly of older and bigger fellows. But Wharton hoped to "pull it off."

Wharton & Co. had hastily formed up a scratch match with six aside to get some practice, and they were in the thick of it when Wun Lung arrived on the ground. The Chinese junior took a great interest in football. He had never seen the game till he came to England—and he had not been long in England. The rules of the game were a totally unknown quantity to him. He knew that the boys were struggling for the possession of the ball.

Nugent had come off the field, having had an accidental kick on the ankle, which made him limp painfully. He was standing by the ropes with a coat round him, occasionally rubbing his ankle, when Wun Lung came up.

"Playee football, my friend?" asked the Chinese.

Nugent looked round with a grin.

"Yes," he said, "that's football."

"Why you not playee?"

"Knock on the ankle."

"Me savvy. You hurtie?"

"A little bit. Have to be careful, you know, with the Form match coming off."

"How many playee?"

"There should be eleven aside," explained Nugent. "This is Association football, you know." The Chinese junior nodded, though the explanation

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was so much Greek to him. "But this is only a scratch match for practice, and we've knocked up six aside. I'm out of it, and there are only five with Wharton against six with Bob."

"Me savvy."

Wun Lung looked on earnestly. Bob Cherry, Hurree Singh, Russell, Skinner, Hazeldene, and Levison were playing on one side; and Harry Wharton, Trevor, Desmond, Rawlings, and Morgan on the other. Wharton's side were holding their ground. But their six opponents were pressing them hard, and Hazeldene, who was keeping goal for Bob Cherry, had come out from between the posts.

"You watch," said Nugent. "Harry will start an attack when he gets the ball."

"He is tlying to get the ballee?"

"Of course."

"Whatee he do with it?"

Nugent laughed.

"He's got to shove it through goal—those posts, you know."

"Why not through those postee behind him?"

"Ha, ha! That's his own goal. If it goes through there it counts a goal against him, you see whoever puts it through."

"Me savvy. Why he not pickee up ballee?"

"That's Rugby."

The reply left Wun Lung as wise as it found him. He watched the game earnestly, and his expression grew anxious as he saw Wharton and his team being hard pressed. Bob Cherry's side were playing up well, and the struggle was now all in their opponents' half.

"Suppose me playee?" suggested Wun Lung.

Nugent gave a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! You'd make a ripping footballer! What you want is a thorough knowledge of the game—and I can see you have that!"

"Me playee in your place," said the Chinese. "Helpee Wharton. Me playee."

"You can't. Wharton's all right."

"Not allee lightee. Me helpee."

"Here, hold on, you young ass! Come back!" bawled Nugent.

Wun Lung had hopped over the rope, and was making for the scene of action. Nugent's shout was in vain. The Chinese junior meant to help Wharton. With his weird and wonderful ideas of the game his aid was likely to cause some trouble in the field.

Wun Lung ran very swiftly, his pig-tail streaming behind him. The ball had been kicked into touch on the side nearest Wun Lung, and the Chinese was on the ball in a twinkling. He stooped and seized the leather, and there was a yell from the footballers.

"Let that ball alone!"

"Keep off the grass!"

But Wun Lung did not heed. Claspings the ball in his arms, he made a break for goal.

The players stopped still and stared at him in blank amazement. To see a Chinese playing Rugby on an Association ground was rather a novelty.

Wun Lung had a good turn of speed. He went down the field like a Rugger three-quarter racing for goal. Hazeldene had advanced so far from his posts that he had no chance of stopping the Chinese—but he would not have been able to, anyway. He held his sides and roared, and the other footballers, passing from amazement to merriment, roared also.

But Wun Lung raced on right up to goal and slipped between the posts and

came down on his face with the ball under him.

Then he sat up and looked triumphantly round, having not the slightest doubt that he had scored a goal for his friend Wharton. He seemed surprised to see the whole field yelling hysterically.

"Goal!" shrieked Nugent. "Oh, my only autt! Goal!"

"Goalee!" chirped Wun Lung.

The players came up. Wharton held on to a goalpost, gasping. Wun Lung rose to his feet, the ball still in his hands.

"Me score goalee," he said blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Wharton.

"Why laughee? Me score goalee."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes. "Hand over that ball and go and bury yourself somewhere."

"Me score goalee for Wharton."

"Ha, ha, ha! Are you going to count that goal, Wharton?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No savvy," said Wun Lung. "Why laughee?"

"It would take too long to explain, Wun Lung. But you don't play Rugby in Association games, and outsiders aren't allowed to join a football team at their own sweet will. You don't play a ball in touch, and you'd better go and eat coke, anyway. Hand over that ball and bunk!"

Wun Lung looked inquiringly at Harry Wharton.

"Me playee," he said. "Me likee football. Me score more goalee."

Harry Wharton wiped his eyes.

"You'll have to learn the game first, kid," he said. "Lucky for you this is only a practice match. If you interrupted a real match like that, you would get it in the neck."

"Why in the neckee?"

"Oh, run along now, and I'll tell you later! Buzz off!"

"You not wishee me playee?"

"Not till you've learned the difference between football and dominoes!"

"No savvy!"

But Wun Lung gave up the ball and trotted obediently off the field. He did not know why his goal was not acceptable, but Wharton's word was law to him. The play was resumed, but every now and then one of the players would burst into a roar of laughter, which would be taken up by the rest. They went off the field at last, still chuckling.

"Who winnee?" asked Wun Lung, as he joined Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove had the ball under his arm.

"Nobody," said Wharton, smiling.

"No goal on either side."

"But me score one goalee for you!"

"I'm afraid that wouldn't be allowed to count," said Wharton, laughing.

The Chinese junior looked puzzled.

"No savvy."

"I'll tell you what, Wun Lung," said Wharton. "If you like to take up the game, I'll give you some instruction, and see whether I can make a footballer of you. You were very funny just now, but I noticed that you had a good turn of speed."

The Chinese junior's eyes sparkled eagerly.

"Me likee," he said. "Me likee playee. Me learnee quicke."

"Then it's settled."

"Wun Lung velly grateful."

"Oh, rats! That's all right!"

And after dinner the Chinese chum had his first lesson in the grand old game.

A Visit to Yen Hai!

"I'll walk down to the village with you, Harry," Bob Cherry remarked.

Wharton shook his head.

"No, Bob. You get to practice. I'll run down alone—or, rather, I'll take Wun Lung with me. He ought to be shown round a bit."

"Right you are."

The chums of the Remove, and most of the eleven, were soon at work on the junior ground, while Harry Wharton looked round for Wun Lung. He found the Chinese boy sitting under an elm, reading a curious-looking volume written in Chinese characters. He looked up with a smile, and rose to his feet as Wharton stopped.

"Like a walk to the village?" asked Wharton. "I'm going there. You haven't been through Friardale yet, I believe."

"Velly true. Me likee come."

Wun Lung fetched his cap and they walked down to the gates. Some curious glances followed them.

Hurree Singh, the other Oriental at Greyfriars, dressed in ordinary European garb, but his dusky complexion often drew personal remarks from thoughtless boys outside Greyfriars. What effect the garb of a Chinaman, to say nothing of the pigtail, was likely to have on the youth of Friardale was a question that occurred to a good many. Wharton did not seem to care much.

They strolled down the lane. They entered the village, and passed along the old-fashioned High Street. Half a dozen little urchins immediately spotted Wun Lung, and set up a yell.

"Get your hair cut!"

Wharton frowned angrily. But the Chinese boy smiled blandly, and seemed unperturbed to the remarks of the village youths.

"When did yer get off the tea-caddy?" demanded one youth.

"What a guy!"

The Removites marched straight on. The way lay past the Red Cow, an old-fashioned hostelry lying back from the road, with a long garden behind it stretching away to the fields. On the balcony, covered with creepers, a little old man sat. As Wun Lung's glance fell on him he gave a start. Harry glanced round and recognised Yen Hai, the mandarin, Wun Lung's uncle.

The old Chinaman saw them, and his eyes scintillated. He gave no other sign of having observed them, and went on smoking his pipe stolidly. Wun Lung made a timid sign of recognition, which passed unacknowledged. There was a cloud on the face of the Chinese junior as they walked on now. He coloured a little as his eyes met Wharton's.

"My uncle bad fiends now," he explained. "He not likee me comee to this county. He old Chinaman—not likee foleign devil."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Then why is he here?"

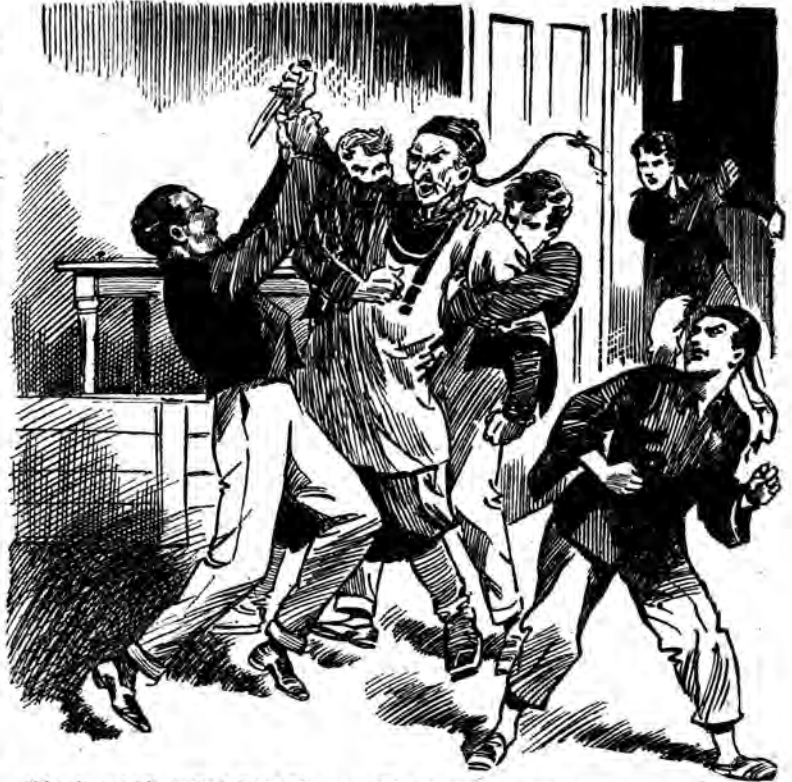
"He comee tly makee me go backee."

"Oh, I see!"

"My fathel speakee English—likee English—likee me learnee English, and be English," said Wun Lung simply. "He give me in charge of Major Newcome to bling to England. My uncle not likee. Me not goee backee, not till me grown up."

"I see."

Wharton understood clearly enough the difference between the Chinaman of the generation that was going out and the Chinaman of the generation



"Look out!" yelled Bob Cherry. The mandarin was tumbling under his loose coat, and his hand came out gripping a dagger. Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton hurled themselves on Yen Hai and grasped him. At the same moment Hurree Singh clutched at the Chinaman's wrist.

that was coming in. He could understand the prejudices of the old mandarin, his horror of his nephew living and receiving his education in the midst of the foreign devils.

The old fellow must have had his good points. It was no light thing to undertake a journey round the globe for the sake of the boy whom he supposed to be learning to forsake and despise the ways of his fathers.

They entered Crump's shop, and Harry found that the new football which he had ordered was ready, and he paid for it. A dozen or more urchins followed Wun Lung when he came out, and they walked towards Greyfriars again. Wharton's brows knitted angrily. He was greatly inclined to charge into the crowd and knock them flying right and left. Wun Lung probably read his thoughts in his face, for he laid his hand gently on Harry's arm.

"Not gettee angly," he said. "Wun Lung no care."

As they passed the Red Cow again Wun Lung hesitated and glanced at Wharton. The figure of the old Chinaman had disappeared from the balcony.

"You'd like to go in to speak to your uncle?" said Wharton, guessing Wun Lung's thoughts.

"Will you comee?"

"Would you like me to come with you?"

"Me feel more safee."

"More safee? You don't think the old gentleman would hurt you, do you, Wun Lung?"

"Me no savvy. Me likee you comee."

"I'll come, with pleasure."

The host of the Red Cow, a red-faced old fellow, grinned genially at Wun Lung when they entered.

"You want to see your dad?" he asked.

"Me wantee see uncle."

"Oh, uncle, is it? You'll have to go round by the garden then. He's a queer old gentleman, he is. He's locked up his door in the house and always goes into his room from the garden. That's the way you'll have to go."

The juniors went down the path beside the inn into the long, wide garden sheltered by old trees. At the bottom of the garden a path through an orchard led down to the banks of the Sark. At the back of the house a flight of steps led to a small veranda, upon which a door opened. In the doorway an old Chinaman was sitting. He was smoking a long pipe, as when the juniors had seen him last, and did not observe them.

Wun Lung ascended the steps. The old Chinaman caught sight of him then, and laid down his pipe. He turned towards the Chinese junior, his old, wizened, yellow face strangely lighting up.

Harry Wharton did not understand a word of the sentences he began to utter, but he guessed the thought that was in the old mandarin's mind. He fancied that Wun Lung had changed his mind and had come back to him.

The Chinese boy looked sad and troubled.

He waited for the old man to cease, and then shook his head and spoke in a low voice.

The expression of the old parchment face changed.

The mandarin made a furious gesture and sat down again and took up his pipe. Wun Lung went on in a pleading voice, but a second savage gesture more decided than the first stopped him. He slowly descended the wooden steps and rejoined Wharton who was waiting for him below.

"Comee long," he said briefly.

His face was shadowed as he walked homeward beside Wharton. They were nearly at the gates of Greyfriars before Wun Lung spoke.

"Me tly makee fiend," he said. "No goodee. Yen Hai nevel folgive me; he tinkee me go back to China, or he culse me. He no savvy."

"His curses won't hurt you, Wun Lung," said Harry. "Try not to think about it. He may come to a more sensible frame of mind in time."

Wun Lung nodded, but the shadow did not leave his face.

Bunter on the Borrow!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Thus Billy Bunter, greeting Harry Wharton and Wun Lung as they came in. There was a discontented look on Bunter's fat face.

"Tea ready?" asked Harry, laughing.

"No," said Bunter, blinking through his glasses, "tea isn't ready. Blessed if I know how you expect me to get tea ready when there isn't anything for tea. I was thinking—"

"Thinking how to get it ready?"

"Yes, in a way. Wun Lung is a new kid in the Remove—"

"What about that?"

"Don't you think his arrival ought to be celebrated by a bit of a feed?"

"Certainly. No objection to your standing a bit of a feed."

"Oh, don't be funny! Wun Lung will have to stand it, of course."

"Oh, shut up, you greedy cormorant! I believe you'd cadge with your last breath!" exclaimed Wharton in disgust.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I think that Wun Lung could stand a feed in our

study if he liked, and come to it himself. He couldn't have one in his own study without a lot of greedy chaps wanting to wire in, too. Blessed if I know what you're giggling at. But if you don't like the idea, I was thinking you might advance me something off my—"

"Oh, draw it mild with the postal order!"

"I wasn't going to speak of the postal order. I'm going to have a pound a week shortly, and I could pay up everything out of that."

Harry Wharton stared at the fat junior.

"Where are you going to get a pound a week from? Off your rocker?"

"Certainly not. It's for six months and it will mount up. I shall get quite clear of all my outstanding debts, and start fresh with some capital in hand. Then I shall be able to square up fully the ten bob you lend me now."

"But where are you going to get a pound a week for six months from?" demanded Harry in amazement.

"It's the prize, you know, in 'Answers' football competition."

"You utter ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! It's a genuine and really intelligent sort of competition and the editor says plainly that the prize will be awarded to the entrant giving the correct names of the footballers. As I'm practically certain of being right in every instance, I don't see how I can possibly fail to rope in the pound a week. You see, when a fellow of my intelligence starts on a thing, something is bound to happen."

"If the answers you've sent in are like those you've shown me, I'm afraid

somebody else will get the pound a week."

"Well, you're not much of a judge, you know. About that ten bob—"

"What ten bob?"

"The ten shillings you were going to lend me."

"But I'm not going to lend you ten shillings. I haven't got it, as a matter of fact."

"I don't mind taking five. You can have it back out of my next postal order, or out of the prize in 'Answers' competition, whichever you like."

"Rats!" said Wharton cheerfully. And he gave the Owl a gentle push which sent him rolling to the ground. Harry walked on and went to look for Nugent.

"Hallo, Skinner!" said Bunter, groping about for his spectacles. "Help me find my glasses."

"It's not Skinner," chuckled Bob Cherry, grinning at the perspiring and dishevelled Owl of the Remove. "What have you been up to? Dusting the floor with yourself?"

"I think you might give a fellow a hand-up, Bob Cherry, instead of standing there grinning like a Cheshire cat! Ow! Don't jerk me so suddenly, you beast!"

"What do you mean by amusing yourself rolling about a dusty floor?" said Bob severely.

"You ass! I wasn't amusing myself. I—"

"And I want you to come and do some cooking."

Bunter's face lighted up at once.

"Certainly, Cherry; I'll be very pleased. Who's standing feed?"

"Nugent's had a remittance. Will you come, Wun Lung?"

"Me likee muchee."

"I don't see the use of having the heathen there," objected Billy Bunter.

"No use in having you there, for that matter," said Bob cheerfully.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Are you going to cut off and do the cooking or not?"

"Oh, certainly!"

And Billy Bunter cut off to prepare the feed—at which, as usual, he distinguished himself by the amount of food he put away.

Missing!

BOOM! A single stroke from the clock tower.

Harry Wharton awoke. He hardly knew what made him wake. He lay in the darkness, wondering. It might have been the boom of the clock, sounding through the dim night, or was it some sound in the dormitory?

The room was very dark. As he lay there, wide awake, every sense on the alert, it was only natural that the scare of the previous night should flash into his mind—that he should remember the undiscovered visitant who had entered the Remove dormitory in the small hours of the night.

He lay and listened. The single boom was followed by complete silence. It was one o'clock in the morning. Greyfriars slept.

Wharton gave a sudden start and sat up in bed.

A slight sound had caught his ears—a sound from below. What it was he did not know.

At the same time he became aware of a strange and pungent odour in the dormitory. It seemed to proceed from the bed next to him—the bed where Wun Lung slept. It was a faint, lingering perfume, and it seemed to

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The old gentleman, his face red with rage, came up to the caravanners and gazed at them speechlessly. It looked like trouble for Tom Merry & Co. "Good—good-evening, sir!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "You—you trespassing scoundrels!" roared the man, finding his voice. "How dare you camp here with your blackguardly caravan! I'll have you arrested!"

CHAPTER 1.

Gussy Keeps It Dark!

FIGGINS of the Fourth frowned darkly.

For ten minutes at least there had been a worried look on the brow of the great Figgins.

He was sprawling in the armchair in his study in the New House at St. Jim's. His long legs were stretched out, his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets, and his brow was corrugated.

Figgins seemed to be struggling with some mental problem—and struggling in vain.

And his studymates were not helping him in the least. Fatty Wynn was seated at the study table devoting his whole attention to a pie. Kerr was standing before the looking-glass, trying on artificial moustaches. Fatty Wynn was thinking of nothing but the pie—which was certainly a very nice pie, and worthy of Fatty's devotion. Kerr was thinking of nothing but his part in the

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forthcoming performance by the New House Amateur Dramatic Society. Figgins wrestled unaided with his mental problem, whatever it was.

Hence the dark and reproachful frown which Figgins turned upon the Co., and the reproachful tone of his voice when he spoke.

"Talk about Julius Cæsar!"

"Who's talking about Julius Cæsar?" asked Kerr in surprise.

Figgins sniffed.

"You fellows remind me of him," he grunted.

"Blessed if I know why we should remind you of Julius Cæsar!" said Kerr in surprise.

"Here am I trying to think it out!" said Figgins bitterly. "Cudgelling my brains to work out what they're up to—"

"Who?"

"Those bounders!" snapped Figgins. "The School House bounders, of course! Here am I trying to think it out, and all you fellows are thinking of is rotten

pies and amateur theatricals! Talk about Julius Cæsar fiddling while Rome was burning. He wasn't in it with you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, where does the cackle come in?" demanded Figgins morosely.

"Ha, ha, ha! It wasn't Julius Cæsar!" chuckled Kerr. "It was Nero!"

Figgins sniffed more emphatically than before.

"I don't care a twopenny rap whether it was Julius Cæsar or Nero!" he said. "He was fiddling while Rome was burning, anyway. And that's what you fellows are doing."

Kerr grinned and took off the moustache. As a matter of fact, it was the canny Scots junior who did most of the thinking that was done in Figgins' study. He put away his moustaches very carefully and closed the property-box and composed his face seriously.

"Let's have it, Figgys!" he said. "What's the trouble?"

"They're up to something," said Figgins, still morose. "But don't you

creaked a little. The others followed him as quietly as they could.

The door leading from the little veranda was partly open, and a bar of light fell upon the gloom without. It was clear that the old Chinaman had only just gone in. But it was to the window that Harry Wharton quickly moved. As he looked into the room he saw that he had been right in his surmise.

Yen Hai was standing by the table, breathing heavily. On the table lay a form wrapped in a blanket, evidently just as it had been lifted from a bed. The face, pale and set, was visible. It was Wun Lung!

Even as Harry looked in, Wun Lung stirred and woke.

Exit the Mandarin!

WUN LUNG sat up on the table. The blanket fell aside and showed the diminutive Chinese in his blue silken pyjamas. His almond eyes opened wide and stared about him. They fell upon the wizened, gnome-like face of the old Chinaman.

"Yen Hai!"

The old man nodded grimly.

Wun Lung slipped from the table. His head was swimming, and he held on to the table for support. Yen Hai, with a quick, tigerish movement, placed himself between the boy and the door on the veranda. The other door of the room was locked and the key removed.

Wun Lung began to speak. He spoke in Chinese, and the chums of the Remoye heard the murmur of his voice without understanding a word. The old man pointed to a pad lying on the table, from which a pungent scent still came. It was a mute explanation. Then he interrupted the boy, speaking harshly in Chinese. Wun Lung shook his head. An expression of ironic grimace came over the wizened face. The lean hand of the old Chinaman pointed to the chloroform rag again.

Harry Wharton could guess what it all meant. If the Chinese junior did not go quietly with his uncle, he was to be drugged again and carried off insensible. The lean finger pointed to a large packing-case in a corner of the room, and Wun Lung evidently understood. He cast a hunted glance towards the door.

Wharton looked round for his chums. They were close behind him.

"Are you ready?" he muttered.

"Yes, rather!"

"Collar him, but don't hit him, if it can be helped."

Harry Wharton stepped to the door and pushed it open.

Yen Hai gave a violent start and stared in blank amazement at the chums of the Remoye as they sprang into the room. Wun Lung gave a cry of joy.

"Look out!" yelled Bob Cherry.

The lean hand of the Chinaman was fumbling under his loose coat. Bob Cherry guessed what that action meant, and he hurried himself on the mandarin. Wharton gripped him at the same moment. The lean hand came out, gripping a dagger. But in a second Harree Singh had wrenched it away and flung it through the open door.

The old man struggled, his face convulsed with fury. His strength was wonderful for a man of his age, but a

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A couple of sturdy Removites were enough to hold him. He was pinioned, and Nugent, tearing the table-cover into strips, tied his skinny wrists behind his back. Then the old man's resistance ceased.

"I fancy the police station is about the only place for this amiable old gentleman," Nugent remarked.

"He is my uncle," said Wun Lung in a low voice.

"Well, old chap, he can't be allowed loose after this."

"You won't be safe, Wun Lung," said Harry Wharton. "It's not safe for you to let Yen Hai go after what he's done."

"I will speak to him," said Wun Lung. "He shall promise me to leave the committee, and if make a promise he will keep it."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Have your way, old chap."

Wun Lung began to speak to the mandarin in Chinese.

The old man nodded his head eagerly as the junior proceeded. When he

spoke it was in a low and broken voice. Wun Lung turned to his chums.

"He has promised to leave England by the next boat to Canton, and to keep away from Gleyfials (ill then)," he said. "He will keep his word."

"Good! Then let him go."

Wun Lung unfasted the old mandarin's bonds. He spoke to him in farewell, but the old man did not answer. They left him still in the same position—silent, sullen, crushed.

The juniors borrowed the cart standing in the inn yard for the return to Greyfriars. Glad enough was Dr. Locke to see them again. The Head's brow was stern when he saw them, but as Wharton explained it cleared, and when the junior had finished, Dr. Locke shook him warmly by the hand.

"I am sorry we had to bolt off without permission, sir," Harry concluded, "but I thought there was no time to lose."

"And you were doubtless quite right," Wharton said the Head. "You are fully excused. I am glad, too, that anything like a scandal has been avoided. It is much better for that foolish old man to leave the country quietly, than for the papers to be filled with the case, as would happen if he were sent to prison. If you can be assured that he will go, Wun Lung—"

"He never bleakes wold," said the Celestial.

"Good! If he keeps his word, all will be well. I will give a hint to the inspector in Friardale to keep an eye on him till he goes. Now, my lads, you may go to bed. I am very grateful to you for all you have done."

And the Removites went back to bed very well satisfied with themselves.

The mandarin did keep his word. There was no need to watch him. At daylight Yen Hai left Friardale, and the train bore him to London, and, as he had undertaken, the next liner to Canton carried the mandarin as a passenger.

Wun Lung breathed more freely when he knew it. The next day there was no more cheerful countenance in the school than that of the Greyfriars Chinese.

(Another grand yarn of Wun Lung next week. Make sure you don't miss "THE JOKER OF THE REMOY!" Order your GEM in advance.)

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