

FRANK RICHARDS' SCHOOLDAYS IN CANADA! THRILLING SERIES
JUST STARTED.

The **GEM** 2^D



THE PRISONER of the CARAVAN!

—an amusing scene from
“SEVEN IN THE SOUP!” the
sparkling holiday story of
Tom Merry & Co.—inside.

★ FINAL STAMP PRIZES GOING—CLAIM NOW!

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LOOK! This is your final opportunity of winning a Prize in our Great Armaments Race. We are now going to give away the remaining "Hercules" Bicycles and at least 2,000 of the other Super Prizes—they are waiting to be sent off to the readers who have collected the highest number of two kinds of stamps—TANKS and BATTLESHIPS. So lose no time! Get out all the stamps you have been collecting each week, and add to them those given in this issue (five on this page, and eleven more on Page 55). Sort them out carefully and then count up how many Tank and Battleship Stamps you have altogether. No other stamps are wanted this month!

Having found your total, write it clearly in ink on the coupon given here, remembering that no allowance will be made for incorrect totals. Add your name and full address also, and fill in at the foot of the coupon which of the following prizes you would like in the event of your being a second-prize winner:

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When you have completed the coupon in full, pin or clip your Tank and Battleship Stamps only together, and attach them to the coupon. Post, in a properly stamped envelope, to:

GEM "Armaments" (July),
1, Tallis House,
London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

This Month's Closing Date for Home Readers is TUESDAY, AUGUST 9th, 1938.

OVERSEAS READERS! Remember that you, too, are included in this scheme, and special awards are to be given for the highest collections from overseas readers. Send in your stamps according to the directions for home readers, but note that in your case the closing date is specially extended to Wednesday, November 16th, 1938.

N.B.—As you know, this great gift scheme is also appearing in other popular boys' papers like "Modern Boy," and "Magnet," and you will find more stamps in them to swell your total.

And here's a good tip, pals—this week's "Modern Boy" (issue dated July 30th) contains FOUR BONUS Battleship Stamps, making twenty stamps in all in that issue.

HUES. Five First Prizes of £4 7s. 6d. "Hercules" Cycles and at least 2,000 other prizes will be awarded in order of merit, as in previous months of the contest—i.e., to the readers declaring and sending the largest collections of the stamps called for. Cash value of any of the first prizes may be divided in case of a tie or ties for such prizes. Ties for any other prizes will be decided by the Editor.

All claims for prizes to be sent on the proper coupon (as given here); no allowance made for any coupon or stamps mutilated or lost or delayed in the post or otherwise. No correspondence. No one connected with this paper may enter, and the Editor's decision will be final and legally binding throughout.

You can also collect or swap Armaments Stamps with pals who read "Magnet," "Modern Boy," "Thriller," "Detective Weekly," "Triumph," "Champion," "Boy's Cinema," and "Sports Budget."

"The Gem"

ARMAMENTS RACE (July)

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In entering this competition, I agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and binding.

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THE TRAIL OF THEIR STOLEN CARAVAN LEADS TOM MERRY & CO.
INTO ALL SORTS OF TROUBLE!

SEVEN *in* the SOUP!



"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus, sitting down on his bike. "What did you push me ova for? Oh—ah—cwikey!" It was the bull! Gussy stared at it in petrified horror.

CHAPTER 1. In Camp!

"THIS is something like," George Figgins of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's made that remark in tones of the deepest satisfaction.

And Kerr and Wynn chimed in: "Hear, hear!"

Figgins & Co. were in clover. The last red gleam of the sunset glimmered on green woods and meadows.

Between the road and a thick, dark wood, was a stretch of grass, upon which a newly-painted caravan was drawn up.

The horse was cropping the grass with great contentment. Over a crackling fire of twigs and sticks swung an iron pot, from which proceeded a savoury odour.

The schoolboy caravanners were camping, and they were enjoying it.

Fatty Wynn presided over the cooking. What there was in the iron pot, only Fatty Wynn knew; but certainly it smelt very agreeable—especially to three hungry juniors.

Figgins and Kerr were taking their ease in the grass, after gathering brushwood for the fire.

"Nearly ready, Fatty?" asked Figgins.

"Nearly, Piggy."

"Buck up, you know! We're hungry," said Kerr.

"So am I," answered Fatty Wynn cheerfully. "I've had a snack or two—a few taters, and a saveloy, and some ham and cheese; but I'm ready for my supper, I can tell you. About another five minutes!"

"I wonder where those School House bounders are now?" remarked Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They'll be looking for us, of course," said Figgins, with a grin. "It was the biggest stunt of the term—bagging their caravan. I can fancy their faces when they were ready to start and found that their van had been bagged by the enemy."

And the chums of the New House chortled again.

It had not been Figgins & Co.'s intention to begin the summer vacation in a caravan. They were booked for a visit to Fatty Wynn's home in Wales. But the temptation had been too strong for them to "bag" the caravan engaged by Tom Merry & Co., their old rivals of the School House at St. Jim's.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,587.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Stranded on the road at midnight, with nowhere to sleep and no food to eat! In searching for their missing caravan and the New House raiders, Tom Merry & Co. are landed well in the soup!

Now they were a good twenty miles from St. Jim's, camping out; and they chortled as they wondered what their old rivals were doing.

It was pretty certain that Tom Merry & Co. would hunt for their missing caravan, but it did not seem likely that they would find it.

"They'll feel about as completely sold as any silly ass could feel!" continued Figgins. "They'll have to admit that we've beaten them this time. Of course, we'll let the poor chaps have their caravan back—when we've done with it!"

"Whst-ho!" grinned Kerr.

"But the fact is, I rather like caravanning, and I think we might keep it up for a week or two," smiled Figgins. "Besides, if they don't find us, I don't quite see how we can hand it over."

"I say, this is going to be a corking stew," said Fatty Wynn. "Lucky we thought of laying in supplies, when we stopped for our bags at Lexham, Figgy. Doesn't it smell nice?"

"Ripping!" said Figgins heartily.

"You're a treasure, Fatty!" said Kerr, laughing. "No caravan tour would be complete without you!"

"Well, I can cook," said Fatty Wynn modestly. "If there's one thing I can do, it's cooking. If those School House asses should drop on us, I hope it won't be before supper."

"Oh, they won't drop on us by the end of the year!" said Figgins. "We could keep the old bus till we get back to St. Jim's for the new term, if we like. I've a good mind to do it, too. Hallo, here comes somebody!"

Figgins glanced round at the sound of a footstep in the road.

It was quite dark now, save for the red glow and blaze of the camp-fire against the shadow of the trees.

For a moment Figgins half expected to see the enemy—otherwise Tom Merry & Co., of the School House. But it was not a St. Jim's junior who loomed up in the shadows.

A burly, thick-set man, in dusty attire, with a dingy cap jammed on his greasy hair, came into the radius of the light from the camp-fire, and stood staring at the three caravanners.

He was not a pleasant-looking customer, evidently being a tramp of a rough variety. There was a thick stick under his arm, and a leer on his stubbly face.

"Hallo!" said Figgins, rather curtly.

"Evenin', gents!" said the stranger. "Campin' 'ere—what?"

"Yes!"

"Caravannin', hey?" asked the newcomer, with a glance at the van and the horse.

"Yes!"

Figgins' replies were monosyllabic. He did not like the looks of the man.

"Rather a lonely place for youngsters to camp," remarked the vagrant, coming a little nearer.

"Oh, yes!"

"You feel safe 'ere—what?"

"Quite safe!"

"Course you do!" said the gentleman in the cap. "Who'd 'urt you? Not me. You can stand a bloke a supper, I suppose?"

Figgins and Kerr rose to their feet. Fatty Wynn was busy with his stew, and had no attention to bestow on the dusty stranger.

Figgins' brows were knitted a little. It was pretty plain that the man was looking for trouble—unless his demands were satisfied. And the chums of St. Jim's had no intention whatever of being bullied by a tramp.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,589.

"Somethin' nice in that there pot, hey?" asked the tramp.

"Yes!"

"Well, share and share alike—that's the rule of the road!" said the stranger. "I dare say there'll be something left for you young gents when I'm finished! I'm sure I 'ope so!"

"What?" ejaculated Kerr, and Fatty Wynn stared round from the fire.

"You 'ear me?" said the tramp, with a grin. "You 'and me that camp-stool—you with the long legs—and 'and me my supper and there won't be any trouble. I'm an easy-goin' cove."

"Well, my hat!" murmured Figgins.

Evidently camping in lonely spots had its drawbacks. The tramp had let his cudgel slide down into his hand, as if ready for use.

Figgins & Co. were sturdy youths, and they had plenty of pluck; but a tussle with a burly tramp, armed with a cudgel, was no joke. It was not a propitious beginning for their caravanning.

The tramp jerked away the camp-stool, and sat himself down on it. Then he called to Fatty Wynn.

"Urry up with that grub, young porker!"

"You cheeky rascal!" exclaimed Figgins, in great wrath. "You won't get any grub here! Get along!"

"What's that?"

"Get out of this—and sharp!" rapped out Figgins.

The ruffian rose to his feet again with a very ugly look on his stubbly face. He gripped his thick cudgel and came towards Figgins, who faced him with clenched fists.

"I'm goin' to 'ave my supper 'ere, and you're goin' to give me all I want, an' wait on me 'and an' foot!" said the tramp grimly. "Now, then, wot 'ave you got to say?"

Figgins made a step towards him, but Kerr caught his chum by the arm and pulled him back. It was evidently useless to tackle the ruffian's cudgel with empty hands.

"Hold on, Figgy!" murmured Kerr.

"That hulking brute isn't going to bully us, Kerr!" said Figgins, between his teeth.

"Go easy!" murmured Kerr. "More ways than one of killing a cat! You don't want to get your head cracked to begin the vacation, do you?"

Figgins gave a grunt, but he yielded to the Scots junior, as he generally did.

The tramp was eyeing them in a surly way.

"Well," he growled, "am I goin' to 'ave my supper, or is there goin' to be trouble first?"

"Sit down!" said Kerr politely. "Will you try the stew?"

"I reckon so!"

"I'll bring it to you."

"That's better!" grinned the tramp.

And he sat on the camp-stool again, with his cudgel on his knees, ready to have his wants attended to by the hapless caravanners.

CHAPTER 2.

Hop It!

FATTY WYNN blinked at Kerr as the Scots junior ladled out stew into a large plate.

Figgins looked on, with a grim brow. He was giving Kerr his head, so to speak, trusting to his sagacity, but he did not feel satisfied.

"I—I say, Kerr, old chap, you're not wasting that lovely stew on that dirty rascal!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"We can spare a plateful," said Kerr, with a smile.

"One plateful won't satisfy him, ass!"

"I think it will—the way he is going to get it!" murmured Kerr.

He glanced at the tramp out of the corner of his eye.

The man was grinning, evidently under the impression that he had scared the caravanners into submitting to his demands.

Kerr sank his voice to a whisper, so that the ruffian should not overhear.

"Keep ready, you fellows! We can't tackle the beast with that club in his hand! Watch me, and pile in as soon as I do!"

The big plate was filled with steaming stew to the brim.

Kerr gave his comrades a significant glance and turned from the fire with the plate in his hands.

He carried it very carefully towards the tramp. That gentleman grinned with satisfaction as he caught the savoury scent.

"That's orlright!" he remarked.

"I hope you'll like it," murmured Kerr.

"I'll like it orlright, if it's good and there's plenty of it!" grinned the tramp. "Put it on my knee there, an' gimme a spoon!"

Kerr stooped, as if to place the loaded plate on the ruffian's knee.

What happened next was like lightning.

Instead of placing the plate on the tramp's knee, Kerr jerked it suddenly forward, and the steaming contents splashed full into the stubbly face of the uninvited guest.

Splash!

"Gurrroggh!"

There was a wild yell from the ruffian as the hot stew smothered his face, blinding and choking him for a moment.

He tumbled backwards over the camp-stool, roaring.

The cudgel fell into the grass, and the next instant Kerr had grasped it.

The man struggled into a sitting position, gouging at the stew in his eyes and nose and mouth, and gasping and gurgling frantically.

"Well done!" yelled Figgins.

Like an arrow from a bow, Figgins rushed in and crashed on the gasping ruffian's chest.

Fatty trampled recklessly on his thrashing legs. Kerr took a grip on the ruffian's collar, and tapped him gently on his red nose with the cudgel.

"Go easy!" said Kerr, soft as the cooing dove.

"Go easy, unless you want your thick skull cracked, my man!"

"Groogh! Leggo! Ow!"

The ruffian was furious, and he made a fierce effort to throw off the three juniors.

Crack!

Kerr brought down the cudgel with a smart rap on the ruffian's head.

"Yah! Oh! O-oh!"

"Do you want another one?" asked Kerr.

"I'll smash yer!" shrieked the tramp.

Crack!

It was a harder rap this time; Kerr was not standing on ceremony with the ruffian.

"Will you be quiet?"

"Yow-ow! Yes! Anything! Ow! Ow!"

"Keep that club handy, Kerr!" chuckled Figgins. "If he wants any more, give it to him!"

"You bet!" said Kerr.

"Ow! Ow! Old on! I don't want any more!" gasped the tramp. "You let a man go! Oh, my eye! Ow! Ow!"

Figgins and Kerr chuckled. Kerr's stratagem had been successful, and the ruffian was reduced to submission—so long as he was held. But the fury in his stubbly face showed that he would be dangerous when he was released.

"Kick him out now!" said Figgins.

"Hold him!" answered Kerr quickly. "We're not letting the brute loose, Figgy! He could get another stick in the wood and come back!"

"We can't sit on him all night, old scout!"

"No need. I'll fix him up. He's going to be made safe," said Kerr. "Hold him while I get a rope—there's one in the van."

"Just as you like."

Kerr ran to the caravan, and disappeared within. He reappeared in a few moments with a coil of cord in his hand.

The ruffian eyed him apprehensively.

"You ain't goin' to tie a bloke up!" he gasped.

"You've got it!" answered Kerr cheerily.

"Look 'ere—"

"Dry up! Stick his fins together, Figgy!"

The tramp showed signs of resistance as Figgins dragged his wrists together. But Kerr

BLACK OUTLOOK!

Father (looking very cross after reading son's school report): "This is a bad report, Johnnie!"

Son: "Don't take it hard, pop—conditions are bad everywhere!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Leggs, 21, Kilvert Road, New Town, Wednesbury, Staffs.

took the cudgel and gave him a gentle rap as a reminder, and he submitted.

His wrists were bound together securely, the cord being wound round and round them, and knotted.

"You wait till I git a chance at you, that's all!" growled the ruffian.

"You won't have a chance in a hurry," smiled Kerr.

He cut off a length of the cord, and tied the end round one of the ruffian's ankles. Having tied it, he bent the man's legs up and tied the cord above his knees.

"Now let him go!" he said.

The tramp was released. With one leg tied up, he had only one for service, and he sat and glared at the chums of St. Jim's, a stream of lurid language pouring from his mouth.

"Shut up!" growled Figgins, and as the stream of eloquence did not dry up, he gave the ruffian a lunge with his foot. "Shut up, do you hear?"

The man shut up at last.

"Yank him up!" said Kerr.

The tramp was set upright—on one leg. He hopped furiously to keep his balance.

"Now you can travel," said Kerr coolly.

"Like that?" gasped Figgins.

"He won't be able to do any harm like that," answered Kerr. "I dare say he will get somebody to untie him later on. At present he's got to be kept from doing any damage."

"Do you think I'm goin' to 'op away like a blessed frog?" roared the tramp furiously.

"Please yourself!" said Kerr. "You'll get tapped with this cudgel till you start, so please yourself!"

Tap, tap!

"Yaroooh!"

The ruffian hopped frantically out of the way

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of the tapping cudgel. He hopped out of the caravanners' camp into the road, his eloquence restarting in a lurid stream.

"Travel!" grinned Figgins.

The tramp hopped off into the shadows of the road, leaving the juniors roaring with laughter.

It was a well-deserved punishment for the ruffian—and it kept him out of mischief, for the time, at least. His furious voice died away in the darkness, with the sound of his hopping boot.

"We can have supper now," remarked Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the three caravanners sat down to supper in great spirits.

CHAPTER 3.

D'Arcy Does It!

"WHERE'S that duffer?"

"Where's that ass?"

"Where's Gussy got to?"

Six cyclists were standing by their machines at the crossroads near the town of Lexham—making remarks.

They were six juniors of St. Jim's. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell, and Blake, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth Form.

They were all making remarks, and their remarks were all upon one subject—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the St. Jim's Fourth.

"Isn't it just like him?" exclaimed Jack Blake, in tones of exasperation.

"It is, it are!" groaned Monty Lowther.

"I dare say he's wandering off a dozen miles away!" remarked Tom Merry. "We may have to wait here all night for him!"

It was really an exasperating state of affairs.

The School House party, having left their baggage in Rylcombe to be sent after them, on demand, had started out on their bicycles to hunt down the captured caravan, and its captors.

They had made extensive inquiries for a caravan newly painted in dark red, picked out with green—quite a distinctive caravan, as Blake remarked. And they had fallen in luck's way—for a carter had positively seen the missing caravan on its way to Lexham.

To Lexham, therefore, seven cyclists went at scorching speed.

At Lexham there was further news of the red and green caravan. It had been seen there. An inquiry at the railway station—suggested by Manners—brought to light the fact that three schoolboys had called there for baggage. Tom Merry and his comrades could not doubt that, so far, they were on the track of Figgins & Co.

They picked up the information that the caravan had been seen leaving the town on the western road late in the afternoon. From that moment all news was lacking.

As Monty Lowther remarked, the caravan was somewhere between Lexham and New York, and it only remained to find it.

At the crossroads a mile out of the town, there was a halt, and the caravan-hunters separated, to inquire in different directions, arranging to reassemble at the crossroads in an hour's time.

Six had assembled. One was still absent, though an hour and a half had elapsed. That one, of course, was Arthur Augustus.

The six had obtained no information whatever. They did not suppose that D'Arcy had obtained any, either. Probably he was still in search of

some. Meanwhile, they kicked their heels at the crossroads, and waited, making remarks that would have made Arthur Augustus' hair curl if he had heard them.

"While we're sticking here," remarked Herries, "the caravan is going on—somewhere!"

"Farther and farther away, while we're waiting for Gussy," remarked Digby. "Why didn't we shove him into a lunatic asylum before we started?"

"Echo answers why!" sighed Lowther.

It was quite dark now, and the moon had not yet risen. The juniors had lit their lamps, ready for a start, when Arthur Augustus returned.

"Those New House bounders must have gone on by the high road," said Tom. "If they'd turned off, we should have heard something of them. We've asked about fifty people, I think."

"Nearer a hundred!" grunted Herries. "I wish I'd brought Towser along with us."

"Blow Towser!"

"I wasn't quite satisfied with leaving him at the school," said Herries, shaking his head.

"Taggles has promised to take special care of him, and I've made it worth his while. But—"

"Give Towser a rest, old chap!"

"But he would have come in useful just now," said Herries, unheeding. "He would have tracked down Figgins."

"Oh, my hat!"

"It would simply have been necessary to show him something of Figgy's, you know, and then—"

"And then he would have gone to sleep," grunted Blake.

"Look here, Blake—"

"Hallo! Here comes somebody! Gussy, at last!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

There was a buzz of a bicycle in a shadowy side lane, and a lamp gleamed out of the shadows.

An elegant youth pedalled up and jumped off his machine.

"Waitin' for me, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus cheerily.

"Fathead!"

"Eh?"

"We've waited three-quarters of an hour!" bawled Blake.

"I twust, Blake, that you are capable of waitin' three-quarters of an hour without forgettin' your mannahs," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"Ass!"

"I weally wish, Blake, that you would not woah at me. It thwows me into quite a fluttah when a fellow woahs at me!"

"Idiot!"

"I wefuse to be called an idiot, Blake!"

"Oh, let's get on!" said Manners impatiently. "We may as well keep up the hunt for an hour or so longer. We can put up at an inn somewhere, if we don't find those New House rotters and the caravan."

"Pway wait a minute—"

"We've waited long enough—"

"Yaas; but I was goin' to wemak—"

"Life's too short for all your remarks, Gussy! Come on!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy can follow when he's tired of wagging his chin."

"Bai Jove!"

Six impatient juniors mounted their machines, and started on the high road.

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass in his eye, and looked after them in surprise.

"Bai Jove! The fellows seem wathah excited about somethin'!" he murmured. "I say, Blake, where are you goin'?"

"Up the road!"

"But that is the w'ong way!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "The cawavan has not gone that way, you know!"

"Wha-a-t?"

Tom Merry & Co. slackened down. They wheeled their machines round, and rode back to Arthur Augustus, who was standing by his jigger at the crossroads. For the first time it occurred to them that Arthur Augustus had been more successful than themselves in his quest for news.

"Does that mean that you've heard news of the caravan?" demanded Blake.

"Certainly!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors dismounted.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon them in surprise.

"I weally do not quite compwehend you fellows," he said. "We sepawated here to wide round and inquiah aftah the cawavan, didn't we?"

"Yes, you ass; but we never expected you to find out anything!"

"Not likely!" grunted Herries.

"Have you fellows found out anythin' about the cawavan?"

"Nothing!"

"Then it is wathah fortunate that I have had bottah luck," said Arthur Augustus placidly. "I

have found out a gweat deal. I can lead you to the pweccise spot where Figgins & Co. are camped."

"Well, my hat!"

Six juniors uttered that ejaculation in amazement. Arthur Augustus smiled benignantly. The impatient six had been properly impressed at last.

CHAPTER 4.

A Night Attack!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY polished his eyeglass sedately, and replaced it in his eye.

He seemed in no hurry to impart his valuable information.

Tom Merry & Co. surrounded him eagerly.

"You've got news of our caravan?" Blake exclaimed at last.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You know where it is?" exclaimed Lowther.

"Oh, yaas!"

"Well, if you've spotted Figgins & Co., where are they?" demanded Tom Merry. "Give us our bearings, Gussy."

"I met a man about a mile fwom here who saw the cawavan pass," explained Arthur Augustus—"a cawavan painted wed—"

"Ours is red," agreed Blake.

"With a boy dwivin'—"

"That looks like ours, too. Figgins or Kerr or Wynn would be driving," said Tom Merry.

"The chap called out to him," pursued Arthur



Instead of placing the plate of stew on the tramp's knee, Kerr suddenly jerked it forward, and the steaming contents splashed full into the stubbly face of the uninvited guest! "Gurrrgh!" yelled the ruffian, tumbling backwards over the camp-stool.

Augustus, evidently greatly satisfied with his success. "He asked him if it was wight for Little Muddlington—"

"Little Muddlington? Is that a village?"

"Yaas; the man told me it was a village about three miles up that lane. There is a common there where gipsies camp sometimes with their cawavans. So I watah think that Figgins meant to camp there—see?"

"Very likely," said Tom Merry. "It sounds as if it may be the caravan we're looking for."

"That is quite certain, deah boy. I described our cawavan to the man, and he said it was just like the one that passed him on the woad to Little Muddlington."

"Good!" said Blake. "And now where the merry thump is Little Muddlington?"

"Stwaight up this lane, deah boy. But I have not told you all yet," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

Blake put his leg over his machine. He withdrew it.

"What else is there, fathead?" he asked.

"Don't be so long-winded!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Will you come to the point?" breathed Blake.

"I am comin' to that as fast as I can, Blake, considewin' how I am bein' intewwupted! Aftah learnin' about the cawavan fwom the man, I considahed whethah to return here for you fellows or to wide on and make sure that it was our cawavan. I decided that it would not mattah if you waited a little, as your time is weally not of much value—"

"Oh!"

"So I wode on towards Little Muddlington," continued Arthur Augustus. "I went as far as

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the top of the hill on this side and looked across the common. There was a camp-fire there and a cawavan camped. I saw it quite plainly by the camp-fire."

"Was it our caravan?"

"Yaas."

"Sure?" asked Tom.

"I twust, 'om Mewwy, that I can be weliid upon to know our cawavan when I see it!"

"You can be relied on to wag your chin all night, anyway!" answered Tom. "This looks like a clear case, you fellows. Let's get on to Little Muddlington."

"Come on!" said Blake.

"Pway follow my lead, deah boys!"

"Bow-wow!"

Tom Merry & Co. rode into the lane from which Arthur Augustus had appeared, and the swell of St. Jim's mounted and followed them.

The cyclists put on a good speed. They had done a good deal of riding that day, but the prospect of recapturing the red caravan and dealing drastically with Figgins & Co. spurred them on, and they were almost unconscious of fatigue.

"Blake!" called out Arthur Augustus, from the rear.

"Oh, come on!" answered Blake, over his shoulder.

"Yaas; but—"

"Scoreh!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Even Gussy will have to shut up if he has to put his beef into it to keep up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But, I say—" shouted Arthur Augustus.

The juniors did not heed. They bent over their handlebars and scorched, and Arthur Augustus' voice died away behind.

For a couple of miles the six juniors rushed on at great speed, with Arthur Augustus labouring behind to overtake them.

But Tom Merry slowed down at last as a thought struck him.

"Steady, you chaps!" he called out.

"What's up?"

"Slack a bit. Gussy said something about getting to the top of the hill near the village. We're riding on the level."

"Oh, my hat!"

The riders slowed down, and Arthur Augustus came whizzing up from behind at last, with a crimson and excited face.

"You uttah asses!" he gasped.

"Is this the right road?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Certainly not! You passed the wight turnin' a couple of turnings back!" howled Arthur Augustus.

"And you let us!" shrieked Monty Lowther.

"I woahed aftah you, didn't I?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great wrath and indignation. "You wefused to listen to me! I wegard you as a set of asses!"

The feelings of Tom Merry & Co. were almost too deep for words as they wheeled their machines round in the lane.

"Pewwaps you will follow my lead now," suggested Arthur Augustus mildly.

"Show us the way!" said Blake in a sulphurous voice.

"Certainly, deah boys!"

For once Arthur Augustus was allowed to take the lead. It was really rather unfortunate that he had not taken the lead earlier.

The juniors rode back to the turning they had missed, and Arthur Augustus led the way into

a rutty, narrow lane, deep in the shadow between high hedges.

"Sure this is right?" growled Blake.

"Wely on me, deah boy!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"I do not wegard that as intelligent, Blake!"

"Lead on, ass!"

"If you persist in applyin' appwobvious epithets to me, Blake—"

Arthur Augustus had no time to finish; he pedalled on quickly, in time to keep his rear wheel from a collision with Blake's front wheel. He gave a sniff of indignation as he led the way up the shadowy lane.

The road was rising before the cyclists, and they had to slacken speed. It was hard work riding along the rutty lane, after the hard cycling they had already done. The silver crescent of the moon was peeping out from the clouds as the juniors arrived at the top of the rise. They were glad enough to find themselves there.

"Now where's the blessed camp-fire you spoke of?" asked Tom Merry, staring ahead in the darkness.

"Blessed if I can see it!" grunted Blake.

"Pwobably it has been put out," said Arthur Augustus. "Pwobably they would not keep the fiah goin' aftah suppah simply to guide you, you know. That is weally not to be expected."

"Oh, come on!" grunted Herries.

"You can fwee-wheel here, deah boys, as far as the common."

"Mind you don't miss the camp," said Tom Merry. "Is the caravan far off the road, Gussy?"

"Not more than a hundwed yards, I think."

"Then we shall see it all right; there's moonlight enough for that."

The seven juniors free-wheeled down the road. In a few minutes more there was an open and breezy common on their right, and they kept their eyes well open for the camp of the caravanners.

Tom Merry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"There it is! Halt!"

The juniors jumped off their machines. Above the gorse on the common could be seen the roof of a caravan in the distance.

When they had stopped, in the silence they could hear the faint sound of a horse cropping grass.

Tom Merry pushed his machine against a tree by the roadside.

"Leave the bikes here," he said. "They'll be safe enough. Now for those New House bounders!"

The seven machines were stacked against the tree in the shadow, and Tom Merry & Co. entered the gorse on foot.

The moonlight was dim, and they could barely make out the form of the caravan in the distance. As they drew nearer they observed a tent standing within a few yards of the vehicle.

"Our tent!" murmured Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Blessed if I can see why they should put up the tent!" said Tom Merry. "There's room for three in the caravan. They're making themselves comfortable, the cheeky bounders!"

"Quiet!" murmured Lowther. "We'll take the rotters by surprise and bring down the tent on top of them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush!"

The School House juniors were quite restored to good-humour now. It was admitted that Gussy deserved well of his country. The enemy was

tracked down at last, and vengeance was about to fall upon the devoted heads of the New House raiders.

Stepping lightly, the seven juniors approached the caravan camp in the pale glimmer of the rising moon. Evidently the caravanners had retired for the night. As they came nearer to the tent a deep and sonorous sound reached their ears from within.

It was a powerful snore.

Tom Merry suppressed a chuckle.

"That's Fatty Wynn!" he murmured. "He's done too well at supper, I should think, by that row!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chortled Arthur Augustus. "Dweamin' of the pork pies, wewy likely. We'll give that fat boundah pork pies!"

"Quiet!" whispered Tom. "Get round the tent and unfasten the pegs without making a row. Let all the ropes go when I whistle, and I rather think Figgins & Co. will wake up suddenly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush!"

Tom Merry's masterly directions were carried out with great caution.

While the snore resounded from the tent, reverberating in the stillness of the night, the School

PRIVATE!

Magistrate: "Prisoner, you are accused of striking this post office clerk. What have you to say for yourself?"

Prisoner: "Well, sir, I 'ands 'im a telegram for me gal, and 'e starts reading it, so I ups and gives 'im one!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Sagger, 30, Manor Way, Barnehurst, Kent.

House juniors surrounded the canvas silently, and dealt with the tent ropes. In the silence the signal whistle was heard.

"Let go all!"

Crash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter as the tent collapsed, answered by quite a different roar from under the tumbling, flapping canvas.

CHAPTER 5.

A Slight Mistake!

"HA, ha, ha!"

"That's for you, Figgy!"

"Come out, you New House bounders! Crawl out!"

Tom Merry & Co. roared. From within the flapping canvas came wild ejaculations, muffled and furious. Then a voice was heard, a deep bass voice, that made the juniors jump as they heard it.

"That dashed tent is down again! I told you how it would be."

"Rot!" boomed another voice. "I know how to put up a tent, William Jackson."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

The laughter of the St. Jim's juniors died away. Certainly, the forms that could be discerned wriggling under the canvas were not those of Figgins & Co., of the New House of St. Jim's.

The voices were not the voices of schoolboys, that was certain.

"Who—who are they?" gasped Blake.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,589.

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry stared round at the caravan. On the assurance of Arthur Augustus that he had actually seen the van in the light of the camp-fire, the Co. had taken the matter for granted.

But caravans, after all, looked much alike, and it was quite possible that Gussy had made a mistake; indeed, by this time, it was pretty certain.

The caravan was painted a dark red, but the red was not picked out with green, on a closer inspection. It was not the caravan Tom Merry & Co. had hired in Wayland.

That dreadful fact dawned upon the juniors all at once.

Arthur Augustus' aristocratic face was a study. He realised with awful distinctness how fearfully he had put his noble foot in it.

"Oh cwumbs!" he murmured. "Oh—oh cwikey!"

"You ass!" stuttered Blake. "You champion ass! It isn't our caravan; it's not our tent; it's not the party we're looking for at all! We—we—we've brought down somebody's tent on his napper!"

"Who, I wonder?" murmured Monty Lowther. "Sounds like a man with a rather peppery temper!"

"Can't you help me to get this dashed canvas off, Jackson?" came a roaring voice. "Can't you move? Have you any sense?"

"Too much sense to put up a tent like this, anyhow, major!" came another excited and partly muffled voice. "Take your boots out of my ribs, you ass!"

"Hang your ribs! The tent never came down of its own accord!" roared the major. "It's a trick!"

"Rot!"

"I tell you I heard somebody laughing!"

"Enough to make somebody laugh, the way you put up a tent, major!"

"They're losing their little tempers," remarked Monty Lowther. "Don't you chaps think it would be wise to take a walk before the major and Mr. Jackson get out?"

There was a general assent to the eminently practical proposal. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head.

"Bettah lend them a hand," he said. "They're wollin' themselves up in that canvas. Pway lend a hand!"

"Come on, Gussy!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, we are wespensible for this catastwophe, and it is up to us to lend them a hand."

Blake caught hold of the swell of St. Jim's by the shoulders.

"Can't you hear that they're as mad as hatters?" he exclaimed. "They'll start on us if we're here when they get out. We didn't come here for a dog-fight!"

"We are wespensible—"

"You are responsible, you mean, you silly ass!" exclaimed Herries. "You told us it was Figgins & Co. camping here!"

"I was undah the impressioun—"

"You'll be under the major's paws if you hang on here much longer!" snapped Blake. "Come on, you chump!"

"Let's get back to the bikes, for goodness' sake!" said Dig.

"Come on, Gussy!"

"I hear you!" came a muffled roar from under the tangled canvas. "Practical jokers, as I told

you, Jackson. You scoundrels, wait till I get out of this! I'll give you practical jokes!"

"The gentleman is undah a misapprehension, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "We are bound to wendah assistance, and apologise for the mistake."

"Will you come on?" roared Blake.

"In the circs—"

"Kim on, ass! They're getting out!"

A long leg, clad in pyjamas, appeared from under the canvas.

Either the major or Mr. Jackson was struggling out into liberty and open air.

Blake dragged on Arthur Augustus.

The rest of the juniors were already fleeing for the road and the bicycles. They would willingly have rendered assistance and apologised for the mistake, but it was only too clear that the major was not likely to listen to any explanation. He was breathing blood-curdling threats as he wriggled and struggled out. But Arthur Augustus was quite convinced that, as usual, he knew the right and proper thing to do. "Noblesse oblige" was a motto Arthur Augustus lived up to—sometimes with painful results.

He jerked his shoulder out of Blake's grasp, and ran towards the tumbling canvas.

"Will you come away?" shrieked Blake, glaring after him.

"Not at pwesent, Blake. I'm goin' to explain—"

"Fathead!"

Blake ran after the rest of the party, and vanished into the gorse. If Arthur Augustus insisted on explaining to an infuriated major, he could conduct the explanation on his own. Blake was not in the least desirous of interviewing, at close quarters, the excited gentleman whose pyjamas were now coming into view.

Arthur Augustus caught hold of the tangling canvas, and lent his aid.

A fat and red-faced man rolled into view, and sat in the grass, gasping for breath, and blinking at the junior.

"Thunder!" he gasped.

"My deah sir—"

The fat gentleman leaped up and grasped Arthur Augustus by the collar.

"Quick, Jackson! I've got one of them!" he roared.

"I'm coming, major!"

"Bai Jove! Pway welease me, sir—"

"You young rascal!" thundered the major. "You impudent young scoundrel!"

"I wufuse to be called a scoundwel, sir!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "A most unfortunate mistake has been made—yawwooh!"

Boxing the noble ears of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was really an unheard-of proceeding. Arthur Augustus had certainly not contemplated that.

But the major was doing it. There was no doubt at all that he was doing it—and with tremendous vigour, too. A grip of iron held Gussy by the collar, while a huge, red hand that seemed like a flail boxed his ears, right and left.

Smack, smack, smack!

"Yawwooh!"

Smack, smack!

"You howdid wuffian!" roared Arthur Augustus, struggling wildly in the major's muscular grasp. "Welease me at once! It was simply a mistake—yoop!"

Smack!

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

Who was it said be nice to people until you make a million; after that, people will be nice to you?

Then there was the lion-tamer who got so swollen-headed over his Press notices that he couldn't get his head into the lion's mouth!

I hear a famous film star had a killing time coming over from America. Mal de murder?

A reader has just written me a long letter in defence of skunks. Not to be sniffed at!

New motto for Hollywood Yes-men: "I came, I saw, I concurred!"

"Dearer Loaf," runs a headline. The wise men of the yeast are raising the dough!

Baggy Trimble spent a short spell in sunny after eating too much. "And how is Trimble to-day?" asked the doctor. "Oh, he can't complain, doctor," replied the nurse. "Good gracious," exclaimed the doctor, "I didn't know he was as bad as all that!"

After a cricket victory, Gussy stood up at the festive board. "Now I'll give you a song," he said. "What shall I sing about?" "Oh," yawned Blake, "sing about a minute, and then stop!"

Reminds me of the music-hall artiste who made a fortune with his voice. The neighbours paid him hush-money!

The actor presented himself to the manager of the pierrot troupe with a testimonial. It read: "This man is very talented, and can play Macbeth, Hamlet, Shylock, and billiards. He plays billiards best!"

"But my new poem will make your heart miss a beat," said Skimpole, to the Editor of the "Wayland Gazette." "Take it away," snapped the editor. "I don't want anything that will ruin the circulation!"

Keep in the swim, chaps. Swimming stops that sinking feeling!

"Get me the whip, Jackson!" roared the major, as another man scrambled out from under the collapsed tent. "The whip—quick! The other young rascals have got away, but I'll make an example of this young villain!"

Smack, smack!

"You uttah wuffian!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I wufese to explain now! Yawooh! I shall certainly not—yoop!—wendah an apology! I regard you with uttah—yow!—ow!—ow!—contempt! Help! Wescue! Yawooh!"

"Quick with that whip, Jackson! The young scoundrel's head is making my fingers ache!"

Arthur Augustus, roused to wrath quite as great as the major's, hit out, and the fat gentleman gave a gasp.

Gussy did not look where he was hitting in the excitement of the moment. As a matter of fact, he landed on the major's waist, where the circumference was largest, and the fat gentleman sat down with surprising suddenness, quite winded.

"Grooogh!" came from him in an expiring gasp.

"Oh cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"You young rascal!"

Mr. Jackson was making for the swell of St. Jim's, whip in hand, and Arthur Augustus had to dodge.

"Keep off! You wottah—yawooh!"

Crack!

The whip curled round Gussy's leg, and he yelled. Even Arthur Augustus was not thinking of making any further attempt at explanation and apology. He started for the road at a run, putting on a burst of speed that surprised himself.

"Stop, you young villain!" roared the gentleman with the whip, pursuing him and making wild lashes.

Arthur Augustus was not likely to stop. He fled for his life, with Mr. Jackson close at hand, cutting at him with the whip. But Mr. Jackson halted suddenly, with a fiendish shriek. His feet were bare, and apparently he had discovered thorns.

Arthur Augustus glanced back, and discerned the unfortunate gentleman hopping on one foot, and claspng the other with both hands. And, tender-hearted as he was, he did not even feel sorry for the hapless gentleman.

He rushed on, and came out on the road, gasping.

Tom Merry & Co. had their bicycles on the road by that time, and were ready to mount.

Blake held Arthur Augustus' machine.

"Here you are, you ass!" he growled.

"Oh cwikey! I have been tweeked with the wossst diswespect and bwutality—"

"Are you coming?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Fathead! There's your jigger! We're off!"

Arthur Augustus caught his bike, and the Co. rode down the road.

The swell of St. Jim's mounted and followed, heedless of a booming voice from the gorse behind.

"Stop, you young scoundrel! I'll thrash you within an inch of your life! Stop!"

Arthur Augustus bent over the handlebars, and rode as if he were on the cycle track riding for a wager.

CHAPTER 6.

The Tramp!

"O H dear!"
 "Oh crumbs!"
 "Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry & Co. uttered those ejaculations in breathless tones, but not until they were a good mile from Little Muddington Common, and the enraged major.

Until a good mile had been covered they had put all their energy and all their breath into pedalling.

They slowed down now, feeling safe from pursuit, and dismounted to rest after their exertion. The moon was fully up by this time, and silver light shone down upon seven panting juniors.

"What shall we do to him?" said Blake, in measured tones, when he had recovered his breath at last.

"Weally, Blake, I considah that we ought to ovahlook the conduct of the fat old boundah, as he was vewy much exaspewated. He tweated me with gwoss wudeness; but in the circs, I am wathah inclined to forgive him," said Arthur Augustus magnanimously.

Blake snorted.

"I'm not speaking of the major, whoever the major is, you silly fathead! I'm speaking of you!"

"Weally, you know——"

"You thumping ass, you led us on the wrong track and landed us into a row with perfect strangers! You howling idiot——"

"I wefuse to be called a howlin' idiot, Blake!"

"What shall we do with him?" said Blake.

"He ought to be boiled in oil at least!"

"Wats! I do not wegard myself as bein' to blame in any way," said Arthur Augustus. "We were lookin' for a wed cawavan. The man said there was a boy dwivin' it. Naturally I supposed it was Figgins or Kerr or Wynn——"

"A boy those two fat bounders had to look after their horse, I expect," said Tom Merry. "We might have known better than to take any advice from our champion idiot. When he said that he had found the caravan, we ought to have known that he hadn't, and looked somewhere else!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"It's our own fault!" growled Blake. "Can't be helped now, anyway. We ought to have brought a muzzle and chain with us for Gussy!"

"You uttah ass——"

"Can't be helped!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Why grouse? We know what to expect of Gussy; and, really, he never disappoints us——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I wegard that remark——"

"After all, it was funny!" remarked Monty Lowther. "Still, we don't want it to happen again, so we'll let Gussy take a back seat."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Where the thump are we now?" asked Manners. "We rode through a village when we cleared off. I suppose that was Little Muddington. Anybody know what the time is?"

Tom Merry turned his bike lamp on his watch.

"Half-past ten," he said.

"Oh, my hat! We shall be sleepy pretty soon!" said Manners. "I suppose we can't hunt for Figgy

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,589.

any more to-night. We'd better look for somewhere to put up till morning. I want some supper for one!"

"That is not a bad idea, Mannahs! We can start fwesh in the mornin', and I will undahtake to twack down those New House boundahs——"

"Or another fat major!" grunted Herries.

"Wats! That was a vewy natuwal mistake, as we were lookin' for a wed cawavan, and that was a wed cawavan."

"We're not going to commit assault and battery on every caravanner in the country who's got a red caravan," said Blake. "Give your chin a rest, Gussy, old scout! Let's look for an inn. There must be an inn somewhere. Can anybody see an inn?"

"Blessed if I can see anything but fields and trees," said Tom Merry, looking round. "Charming view, in the merry moonlight, but I'd rather see some sausages and chips now!"

"Bai Jove! What is that?" ejaculated D'Arcy suddenly.

"What's what, fathead?"

"I heard a peculiar sound on the woad. There it is again. Pway listen, deah boys!"

The juniors listened.

Before them was a dark lane, shadowed by trees, leading they did not know whither. From the shadows on the road came a sound that certainly was peculiar, as Arthur Augustus declared.

Thud, thud, thud!

In the night silence, the thudding on the hard road came clearly to their ears, growing clearer and clearer as it approached.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another in amazement.

"What the thump is it?" murmured Blake.

Thud, thud!

"Sounds like a man hopping on one leg," said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! A twavellah would not be likely to come along hoppin' on one leg, Tom Mewwy!"

"I suppose not; but that's what it sounds like."

The noise came nearer now. Seven pairs of eyes were turned in the direction of it, in astonishment and some uneasiness.

The strange sound was eerie enough in the silence and solitude of the deep lane.

Thud, thud!

"It is a man hopping!" said Tom Merry, with conviction. "I'll bet my hat on that! Must be potty, I should think!"

"Nice place to meet a lunatic!" murmured Lowther.

"Hallo! There he is!"

The juniors watched breathlessly as a strange figure loomed up from the shadows. It came hopping out of the darkness into a patch of moonlight between the trees.

Undoubtedly it was a man hopping on one leg—amazing as such a sight was. A man in ragged, dusty attire came into view, with his hands behind his back, and one leg curled up, hopping on the other.

Tom Merry & Co. watched him spellbound. Unless he was a lunatic, they could imagine no reason why he should be travelling through the dusky lane in this extraordinary manner.

The man caught sight of them in the glimmer of the moon, and hopped on towards them, gasping for breath.

"Lend a bloke a 'and!" he gasped.

Arthur Augustus jumped back.

"Bai Jove! Pway keep your distance if you're potty!" he exclaimed.

"My hat! He's tied up!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in astonishment.

"Great Scott!"

The dusty gentleman stood on one leg before the astonished juniors, hopping to keep his balance.

"Lend a cove a 'and!" he spluttered. "Get me untied, will yer? I tell yer, I'm about done!"

"We'll help you, certainly," said Tom.

Blake and Herries caught hold of the man to steady him, and Tom opened his penknife. He cut through the cord which tied up the tramp's

"Bai Jove! It is wathah hard cheese!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "I pwesume it was a pwactical joke."

"I'll joke 'em!" said the tramp, gritting his yellow, uneven teeth. "I'll joke the young 'ounds! they ain't fur away. I ain't 'opped it more'n a mile, lookin' for somebody to untie me. 'Cause why? I've 'ad to rest every few minutes, what with a bloomin' ache in my leg, 'oppin' it like this 'ere. I tell yer, my leg is fair done in with 'oppin'!"

"But what was it done for?" asked Tom.

"'Cause a man asked for a supper!" said the man indignantly. "And I'll bet they 'ad plenty



Arthur Augustus caught his foot in a trailing branch as he scrambled through the hedge. "Oh cwumbs!" he gasped as he fell headlong. Next moment he landed on his hands and knees in six inches of mud and water.

legs; and the man, with a gasp of relief, let his foot drop to the ground.

"Oh, strike me pink!" he gasped. "That's better. Strike me blue! Now cut my 'ands loose, young gentlemen!"

"Certainly!" said Tom, in wonder.

In a minute more, the tramp's wrists were released, and he rubbed his dirty hands together. The juniors stood round him, gazing at him in wondering inquiry.

"How on earth did you get like that?" asked Dig.

The man muttered an oath.

"I've been tied up!" he said. "I've been assaulted and battered, and 'it with me own stick, and tied up! 'Ang them! Lettin' a man loose on the road like this 'ere! Why, it's agin the law, 'andlin' a man like that!"

in that caravan, too. That fat cove with the stew looked as if 'e'd 'ad enough to eat, you can lay yer 'at on that! But I'm goin' back to look for 'em, you bet!"

The juniors exchanged a quick glance. The mention of a caravan, and a "fat cove," was enough to excite their interest.

"A caravan?" repeated Tom Merry. "Some caravanning chaps—what?"

"Yus!" growled the tramp, still rubbing his wrists.

"Bai Jove! Was it a wed cavavan?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"P'raps you know 'em, hey?" said the man, blinking surlily at the juniors. "It was a red caravan with green lines on it, if you want to know!"

"My hat! Were there three in the party?" exclaimed Tom.

"There was!"

"One of them long-legged?" exclaimed Blake.

"That was the cove who knelt on me," said the tramp.

"Figgins, and no mistake," said Tom Merry.

"And one of them was fat?"

"The cove that was cooking," said the man.

"Fatty Wynn or his ghost!" said Monty Lowther.

"And the other," asked Tom Merry—"was he rather a good-looking, sandy-coloured chap?"

"I dessay he was. That was the bloke what bunged the stew in my dial!" said the newcomer.

"I'll smash him for it yet!"

"We've found them!" said Tom, with great satisfaction. "It's Figgins & Co., and no mistake! Look here, my man, we're looking for that caravan. Can you guide us to where you left those fellows?"

The tramp scowled.

"They treated me like this 'ere!" he said. "I'm goin' back to bash 'em, now I've got me 'ands free!"

"You're jolly well not!" answered Tom Merry very decidedly. "I dare say you asked for it, or Figgins wouldn't have done it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll stand you five bob to guide us to the caravan," said Tom. "We want to meet those fellows. Is it a go?"

The tramp hesitated. He did not know what to make of the party of schoolboys whom he had met in so lonely a spot at so late an hour. But there were evidently too many of them for his ruffianly tactics to be of any use.

"Friends of yours?" he asked at length.

"Yes, in a way, though we're jolly well going to wallop them when we meet them!" said Tom, with a smile. "They've borrowed our caravan without permission, and we want it back."

"Oh!" said the man.

"Well, will you guide us?" asked Blake.

"Five bob—hey?"

"Yes, as soon as we see the caravan."

"And you won't interfere if I bash 'em?" asked the ruffian, with a suspicious leer at the chums of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah, you wuffian!"

"If you begin bashing anybody, my man, you'll get stopped so suddenly that it will make your head swim!" said Manners.

"Then it ain't a go!" said the tramp doggedly.

"I'm goin' to bash the young 'ounds proper for tyin' a man up like that 'ere!"

"We've untied this chap a bit too soon," remarked Blake. "Best thing we can do is to tie him up again!"

"Ere, 'ands off!" exclaimed the ruffian, in alarm.

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"You can take your choice about guiding us or being tied up again!" he said. "Now, then, sharp's the word! Which is it to be?"

The juniors closed round the tramp. They could see by this time that he was a ruffianly rascal, and they were not disposed to stand on ceremony with him.

The man gave them a surly look.

"You let a bloke alone!" he snarled.

"Where's that rope?"

"It's all right! I'll guide yer!" said the tramp hastily.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,589.

"Get a move on, then!"

And the ruffian sulkily got a move on, surrounded by the junförs, wheeling their bicycles.

CHAPTER 7.

Stranded!

TOM MERRY & CO. were feeling pleased with themselves and things generally as they started down the shadowy lane with the tramp in their midst.

Under the lead of the great Gussy they had followed one false scent; but it was certain that they were on the right track at last.

The meeting of the tramp had been a stroke of luck.

The chums of the School House were fatigued and growing sleepy, but there was rest and refreshment ahead—at Figgins' camp. And they looked forward to the meeting with their rivals of the road with great glee.

Tom Merry and Blake walked on either side of the tramp, keeping a wary eye on him. It was pretty clear that the ruffian's keen desire was to bash the caravanners who had sent him hopping, and the Co. had not the slightest intention of allowing him to carry out that amiable desire.

The tramp was evidently a gentleman who would need watching.

"Turn to the left 'ere!" growled their guide, as the party came to a narrow, dark turning amid high trees.

"Left wheel!" said Tom.

The juniors turned into a narrow, rutty lane, over which the bicycles bumped and clattered.

There were thick trees and hedges along the lane, through which the moonlight struggled faintly in patches. From the fields came the sound of cattle bleating and mooing.

"My hat! This is a rocky road, and no mistake!" grunted Blake. "Is there much more of this, my man?"

"About 'arf a mile!"

"Can't be helped," said Tom Merry cheerily.

"Why grouse? There's supper at the end."

"By Jupiter! I'm ready for it, too!" mumbled Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Don't run your bike into my back, Gussy!"

"Weally, Mannahs, I wish you would keep your silly bike out of the way of my bike!"

"Ass!"

"Wats!"

"Order!" murmured Tom Merry. "Why grouse?"

There was some grouching, however, as the juniors pushed on.

The rutty lane narrowed and turned into a cart-track, hard as iron under their feet from the summer heat. The trees were behind now, and the moonlight glimmered on a wide expanse of meadow. The lowing of cattle came from various directions.

There was an evil expression on the tramp's face as he tramped on.

Arthur Augustus halted suddenly.

"Bai Jove! What is that?"

A huge form loomed up in the gloom from a bunch of willows, and two red eyes gleamed at the party.

"A bull!" yelled Blake.

"Keep back!"

"Oh crikey!"

A deep roar came from the bull, probably as startled as the St. Jim's fellows by the sudden



Detective Kerr Investigates

No. 2.

The Tuckshop Burglary!

DAME TAGGLES, having to visit a sick friend at the Cottage Hospital, locked up the school tuckshop one half-holiday and left it. When she returned in the evening she found a window at the back had been forced, and a quantity of tuck removed. A five-shilling postal order had been left on the counter—not enough to pay for nearly ten shillings' worth of tuck, however. Dame Taggles accused Baggy Trimble, who had been asking for tuck on "tick" that morning. Appealed to by Trimble, "Detective" Kerr made inquiries.

KERR: You say you know nothing whatever about the tuckshop being broken into, Trimble?

TRIMBLE: Not a thing, Kerr. I hadn't a bean that afternoon.

KERR: You hadn't a bean; yet you offered to stand Glyn a seat at the picture palace at Wayland, Glyn tells me.

TRIMBLE: Well, yes. But I knew he wouldn't come. Glyn was busy on another new invention.

KERR: But why did you offer to stand treat, anyway, if you were broke?

TRIMBLE: That's my business. Glyn is a pal of mine.

KERR: Glyn says otherwise.

TRIMBLE: Well, he's going to have me with him in the vac; his pater is a millionaire, you know.

KERR: So you were just making up to him. Glyn says you had a pound note. Not bad for a chap who was broke!

TRIMBLE: Well, it jolly well wasn't me who broke into the tuckshop. It might have been Grundy.

KERR: Why Grundy?

TRIMBLE: I happen to know he gave a big spread in his study yesterday. He had his Uncle George to visit him.

KERR: But Grundy knows you are accused, Trimble. If it had been him, he isn't the chap to lie low and let you take the blame. However, I'll see Grundy.

GRUNDY: As I told you before, Wilkins, my memory never fails. I always keep postal orders in the left flap of my wallet, and notes in the right flap—

KERR (interrupting): Heard about Trimble, Grundy? It looks quite serious for him.

GRUNDY: I never bother my head about the fat microbe!

KERR: Do you think he did it?

GRUNDY: Actually I happen to know he didn't.

KERR: Well, my hat! If you know Trimble is innocent, why don't you tell the Beak?

GRUNDY: There's ratf. more to it than that. I happen to know Trimble is a thief as well!

KERR: Not exactly a thief, Grundy. Whoever broke in left a five-bob postal order to pay for the damage. Perhaps he meant to pay the rest later.

GRUNDY: Listen, Kerr. Suppose a chap gave a chap who was pestering him a five-bob postal order—

KERR: Yes?

GRUNDY: And then, later, the chap who had given the other chap the postal order had his uncle come to tea unexpectedly. Suppose this chap, determined to give his uncle a good spread, got into the tuckshop by the window at the back—and left a pound note to square the damage. And suppose it came out afterwards that the other chap—Trimble, for instance—had got in the same way, taken the pound note, and left the five-bob postal order instead. Wouldn't that make Trimble a thief?

KERR: So you gave Trimble a postal order, Grundy?

GRUNDY: Now do you understand why I haven't explained to the Beak?

KERR: You're perfectly certain you didn't make any mistakes? You might have given Trimble the pound note and kept the postal order yourself.

GRUNDY: My memory never fails. As I was telling Wilkins just now, I always keep notes in the left flap of my wallet, and postal orders in the right.

(*Did Trimble steal the pound note? See solution on page 53.*)

encounter. There was a wild clattering as the juniors backed away with their machines.

For the moment the tramp was unregarded, and he did not lose his opportunity. Quick footsteps thudded in the grass as the rascal fled into the shadows.

"Look out!"

"Is he coming?"

"He's going!"

"Bai Jove! I'm glad that howwid bull is goin'—"

"Fathead! It's the tramp that's going!" yelled Tom Merry. "He's bunked! After him!"

"Look out!" yelled Herries. "The bull!"

There was a deep, vibrating roar from the startled bull. A great head with scintillating

eyes loomed over the juniors, and they scattered in alarm, the bikes bumping and clattering.

Arthur Augustus' bike curled up and lay down, and Arthur Augustus dragged at it frantically.

Something heavy and soft touched him behind, and he sprawled over his machine with a howl.

"You uttah ass! What are you pushin' me ovah for?" he roared, staring round in great wrath. "Oh—ah—cwikey!"

It was the bull!

Arthur Augustus sat on his fallen bike, and stared at the bull in petrified horror. It was the animal's muzzle that had pushed him over. Fortunately, the bull was not savage, or the swell of St. Jim's might have received its horns.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,589.

The bull blinked at Arthur Augustus, and snuffed and trotted away.

"Oh cwumbs!" mumbled Arthur Augustus faintly.

"Gussy!" shouted Blake.

"Here I am, deah boy!"

Blake ran to help his chum.

Arthur Augustus staggered up, panting for breath. Blake dragged up his bicycle.

"Not hurt?" he ejaculated.

"Yaas, I have barked my shin——"

"Blow your shin!" snapped Blake. "I was afraid the bull had tossed you, you silly ass!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Come on!" called out Tom Merry. "Let's get out of this, for goodness' sake! Come on!"

"Where's that villain?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Clean gone!" howled Herries. "He's led us into this dashed field to get rid of us, of course. He knew he was leading us into a herd of cattle, the beast!"

Three or four dim forms loomed up in the shadowy moonlight.

The juniors hastily gathered together, and ran their clattering bicycles back the way they had come. They were not thinking of the caravan, or of the tramp just then, but only of getting out of the unpleasant quarters into which the cunning ruffian had landed them.

But in the haste and dimness, it was not easy to discern the way they had come. They had missed the cart-track, and there was no other guide. A gate loomed up in a fence before them.

"That isn't the way we came!" gasped Digby.

"We didn't come through a gate——"

"We'd better go through one, though, now we've got the chance," said Tom Merry. "I don't like bulls in the dark."

"Wathah not!"

"Where the thump is that track we came by?"

"Goodness knows! Let's get out of this!"

Tom Merry opened the gate, and the hapless caravan hunters passed through with their machines. The gate clanged shut again.

"Now, where the merry thunder are we?" growled Herries.

"There's somethin' movin'——"

"Only a sheep!" said Manners.

"Bai Jove! I am vewy glad it is not a bull. That fearful beast thwew me into quite a fluttah, you know."

"Sheep!" said Tom Merry. "No end of them! Oh, my hat!"

The field seemed populated by sheep. The footsteps and the gleaming of the bike lamps startled them, and there was a movement on all sides, and an incessant sound of bleating. Old sheep, young sheep, and middle-aged sheep surrounded the hapless juniors, bleating and blinking at them.

"Oh dear!" groaned Blake. "If I come across that rascal again, I'll pulverise him!"

"There must be a road, or a lane, or something somewhere!" exclaimed Tom Merry desperately.

"Look for it, for goodness' sake!"

"Here's a hedge!" said Lowther.

The juniors halted by the hedge, and Tom Merry examined it with his bike lamp.

"There's a lane on the other side!" he exclaimed, in great relief. "We shall have to

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,589.

get through the hedge somehow. Look out for a gap!"

"Come on!" snorted Herries.

The unfortunate seven wheeled their machines along, looking for a gap in the hedge. But there was no gap to be found. The hedge was high and thick, with a ditch separating it from the lane on the other side.

Tom Merry halted again at last.

"It looks a bit thinner here," he said. "We shall have to shove through somehow."

"Not so jolly easy!" growled Blake.

"Well, we can't stay here all night."

"Oh, let's try!"

Shoving through the hedge was certainly not an easy task. But Tom Merry succeeded in forcing a way through, dragging boughs and branches recklessly aside. There was water and mud in the ditch without, so it was necessary to be very careful.

One after another the juniors squeezed through the lane, Arthur Augustus remaining behind to hand out the bikes after them.

"Now shove out the jiggers, Gussy!" gasped Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The passage of the juniors had made a pretty open gap in the hedge, and the bikes came through fairly easily. They were taken by Blake, one after another, and handed to Tom Merry to pass them across the ditch to the other fellows in the lane.

"That's the lot, deah boys!"

"Come along, then!"

Tom Merry and Blake jumped across the ditch into the road, and Arthur Augustus came scrambling through the gap in the hedge. He caught his foot in a trailing branch, and rolled.

"Oh cwumbs!"

Splash!

"Gussy—he's in!"

"Yawwoop!" came in a wail of anguish from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cacklin' asses, lend me a hand!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's was on his hands and knees in the ditch. Fortunately there was not more than six inches of mud and water. Six inches, however, was quite enough for Arthur Augustus.

His chums grasped him, and dragged him out into the lane, squelching mud. Arthur Augustus collapsed in the grass by the road, and gasped.

"Oh deah! Oh cwumbs! Look at my twousahs!"

"Blow your silly trousers!"

"I am smothahed with mud!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "My twousahs are in a feahful state!"

"Chuck 'em away!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"You uttah ass, I haven't a change of twousahs with me!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Owin' to you wottahs leavin' my baggage at St. Jim's——"

"Are we staying here all night to listen to Gussy's chin-music?" inquired Manners, in a tone of polite and patient inquiry.

"Come on! Somebody will be ratty about that hedge being burst through when it's found out!" remarked Lowther. "We don't want to interview the farmer. Gussy can stay there and sing a dirge over his trousers by himself."

"Wait for me, you wottahs!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled up. Somewhere in the distance a hoarse voice was calling out, and a light flashed.

It looked as if the alarm had been given.

Tom Merry & Co. mounted their machines and pedalled away up the lane—whither they knew not. But it was evidently not judicious to remain there and interview the enraged farmer.

"Here's a road, at any rate!" gasped Tom Merry, as they came to the end of the lane.

The juniors dismounted in the road. Tom looked at his watch. It was past midnight. The road was lonely; not a habitation appeared in sight, and there was not a glimmer of light to be seen.

The juniors looked at one another with eloquent looks.

"What a night!" murmured Lowther.

"I—I suppose we—we'd better get on to—somewhere," murmured Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! I don't believe there's anywhere to get on to. I am feahfully sleepy, deah boys."

There was a deep yawn from Blake.

"I don't think I could get on much farther if there was anywhere to go to," he said. "After all, it's a warm night, and the grass is as dry as toast. Let's rest here till morning."

The suggestion was a very welcome one to the fatigued juniors. Looking for a caravan was evidently a hopeless task. It was somewhere, and they were somewhere—that was all they knew, and that was a little too vague.

"Good egg!" said Tom. "It gets light early, and we can be up at dawn, and very likely find somebody who can tell us about the caravan. It can't be far away, from what that tramp told us."

"Might be only a hundred yards," grunted Blake.

"Or a dozen miles," said Lowther.

"Oh, let's camp out—and blow the caravan!"

"I'm jolly hungry!" remarked Herries.

"Plenty of grass, if you feel inclined to under-study Nebuchadnezzar!" yawned Monty Lowther.

"Otherwise, you'd better take it out in sleep."

"It will be wathah wuff on our clobber—"

"Bless your clobber!"

"Wats!"

There was nothing more to be done. The bicycles were wheeled off the road into the grass and stacked against a tree; then the juniors lay down to rest in the grass, and in a few minutes they were sound asleep.

But the adventures of that exciting night were not yet over, as they were destined to discover before they had reposed long in the arms of Morpheus.

CHAPTER 8.

Peppery!

GEORGE FIGGINS yawned. Fatty Wynn, blinking at the dying embers of the camp-fire, was already half-asleep.

Kerr was looking to the horse, to make sure that the animal was secure from wandering during the night.

"Better turn in, I suppose. Yaw-aw-aw!" said Figgins.

Fatty Wynn started out of his doze.

"Eh? Good idea!" he said. "I'm rather sleepy. I say, that was a jolly good supper, Figgys!"



PROFESSOR SKIMPOLE'S HOROSCOPE

This Week:

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy

HAVING listened to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth making a speech on world affairs in the junior Common-room—the speech, I regret to say, being interrupted by much laughter—I felt I would like to cast D'Arcy's horoscope. "Certainly, deah boy," was D'Arcy's polite reply, and he furnished me with the necessary data forthwith.

I find D'Arcy was born under the zodiacal sign of Sagittarius, the Archer (all birthdays from November 23rd to December 21st), and under the influence of the planet Venus. D'Arcy undoubtedly possesses an artistic and romantic temperament. Whatever he does he has complete faith in, and he usually makes a lasting impression. He has a fine intellect and is gifted with some eloquence, when stirred. Though worried and at times heckled, he achieves a power and a dignity entirely owing to the fact that his will is firm and cannot be broken. D'Arcy has perhaps a tendency to do things sometimes that he afterwards regrets, due to his slightly diffusive line of thought. He is often too sympathetic with rogues.

When I showed this delineation to D'Arcy, he said gravely: "Thank you vewy much, Skimpy, deah boy. But weally, I am sure it is much too flattewin'. I do hope, howevah, that some of the awwows I loosed duwin' my speech on world peace may have hit the mark!"

"Tip-top!" said Figgins. "Is the gee-gee safe, Kerr?"

"Safe as houses!" answered Kerr, coming back to the camp-fire. "You fellows feel ready for bed?"

"What-ho!"

Kerr stamped out the remaining red embers of the fire. Figgins rose and stretched himself.

"It's been a jolly day," he remarked.

"Yes, rather!"

"I wonder where those School House bounders are now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hunting for the caravan, unless they've given it up for the night!" chuckled Figgins. "I suppose we'd better sleep in the van. No need to rig up the tent. There's three bunks in the caravan."

"And we'll fasten the door, in case that tramp comes back," said Kerr prudently.

"We tied him up pretty well."

"He may have got loose by this time; anybody would untie him that he met on the road. Come on!" said Kerr.

The three New House juniors adjourned to the caravan.

It was a roomy vehicle, and there were three bunks in it, arranged one above the other—just, as Figgins remarked, as if Gussy had specially selected it for them.

The night was warm, and the juniors would have preferred to leave the door open, but Kerr's suggestion was evidently prudent. The window was sufficient for ventilation. The door was secured, and Figgins & Co. turned in, very sleepy and very contented.

In about a minute they were sound asleep.

Silence lay upon the caravan camp in the glimmer of the moonlight.

Figgins & Co. slept peacefully and dreamed of

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the old school they had left behind—the tuckshop figuring prominently in Fatty Wynn's dreams.

Kerr was the first to wake.

The Scots junior was the lightest sleeper of the three, and a slight sound at the door of the caravan was sufficient to arouse him.

He sat up in bed and bumped his head and suppressed an exclamation.

From the bunk above came Figgy's deep breathing, and from the one below the melodious snore of Fatty Wynn. And from the door came the sound of someone trying the handle from outside, and a muttered curse as the door refused to open.

"The tramp!" murmured Kerr.

He slipped quietly from the bunk and touched Figgins on the head.

Figgins started and awoke.

"Gr-r-r-r!" he murmured. "Wharrer marrer? 'Tain't rising-bell yet!"

"Shurrup, fathead! There's somebody fumbling at the door!" murmured Kerr. "I think it's that rotter come back!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Figgins sat up quickly.

"Mind your head!"

Bump!

The warning came too late.

"Ow, ow!" roared Figgins.

"Hallo! What's matter?" came a drowsy voice from below as Figgins' yell awakened Fatty Wynn. "What the—?"

Bump!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Fatty Wynn.

He, too, had sat up rather too quickly. There were drawbacks in caravanning until a fellow got used to the surroundings. Figgins & Co. were finding them out.

A harsh, savage voice was audible outside as the exclamations of the juniors broke the silence.

"Oh, awake, are yer, you young 'ounds? Open this 'ere door! Do you 'ear?"

"That ruffian!" said Fatty Wynn, as he rubbed his head. "The rotter! He's made me bang my napper!"

"I'll jolly well bang his napper, the cheeky cad!" exclaimed Figgins, scrambling out of the bunk.

"Yoop!"

"Eh—what? What's that my foot's on?"

"Yaroooooh! My nose, you thumping ass! Gerroff!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Sorry, old chap! I didn't know you were getting out—"

"Owl! Wow!"

"Better get a light!" grinned Kerr.

He groped for his electric lamp and turned it on.

Fatty Wynn was rubbing his head with one hand, and his nose with the other, and he seemed busy. Figgins and Kerr scrambled into their clothes, while the door rattled and shook, and the threatening voice of the tramp sounded outside.

"I tells yer, open this 'ere door! I'll smash in the thunderin' thing if you don't open it! You 'ear me?"

"Wait a bit, you rotter!" muttered Figgins.

He sought in the little pantry of the van and found the rolling-pin. It had not been used hitherto, and Figgins had found a new use for it. It was intended to come into contact with the hard head of the ruffian outside. Figgins took a businesslike grip on it.

"Now we'll open the door!" he said.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,589.

"Wait till I get my bags on!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Buck up, then, por'poise!"

"Crash!"

The caravan shook and shivered, as a terrific concussion came on the door. The tramp outside was wielding a huge stone.

"My hat! The door won't stand much of that!" said Figgins. "We don't want the van damaged, you chaps! We've got to tackle the brute!"

"Get hold of something, Fatty!" said Kerr, taking up a frying-pan. "We shall have a tussle!"

"Right-ho! I've got a saucepan. If he gets this saucepan on his napper, he won't want it twice!"

"Ready?" asked Figgins.

"Quite!"

Crash!

There was another concussion on the door. Then a bump, as the heavy stone rolled under the van, escaping from the ruffian's grasp. It was not a light matter to venture out and tackle the hulking ruffian, who was evidently in a savage and revengeful mood, and freed from all restraints by the loneliness of the spot. But Figgins & Co. did not hesitate. It was, in fact, useless to remain in the shelter of the caravan, for the vehicle would certainly not have resisted the savage onslaught from without. It was not built to stand an assault of that kind.

Figgins unfastened the door and threw it open. In the moonlight outside the tramp was seen, his sullen face dark with rage.

He uttered an oath as the door opened and he saw the three juniors.



As the seven juniors came round a bunch of trees at a run, a cawavan!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Our horse

"Now, then!" he said, between his teeth.

Whiz!

Fatty Wynn's saucepan flew through the air and smote the ruffian full on his stubby chin.

The tramp uttered a fiendish yell and staggered back.

There was a heavy bludgeon in the ruffian's hand—with which he evidently intended to do serious damage, if he came to close quarters. But that was what Figgins & Co. intended to avoid, if they could.

As the ruffian staggered back, Figgins leaped from the van and ran to him with the rolling-pin uplifted.

"Come on!" he panted.

The man nearly fell, but he righted himself and came at Figgins, the bludgeon sweeping through the air.

Figgins dodged back and warded off the blow with his weapon; but the shock sent the rolling-pin flying from his hand.

Kerr rushed in just in time, hitting out with the frying-pan, and catching the tramp on the side of the head.

The bludgeon just missed Figgins as Kerr's blow landed.

Whiz!

Fatty Wynn had another missile in his hand. It was a large pepper-pot. He hurled it with unerring aim, and it struck the ruffian on the nose as he staggered under the swipe of the frying-pan.

The lid came off the pepper-pot with the concussion, and a flood of pepper swamped over the tramp's stubby face.



...ing scene burst upon them in the moonlight. "Our
gaped Blake. "Figgins & Co.! And the tramp!"

There was something like a volcanic eruption from the hapless ruffian.

"Ooooooch! Atishoooo! Oooooop!"

"Got him!" yelled Fatty Wynn triumphantly.

Figgins was springing for the rolling-pin. He recaptured it, and turned on his enemy; but it was not needed. The tramp had dropped his bludgeon, and was staggering drunkenly, with both hands to his face, spluttering and coughing and sneezing frantically.

"Oh! Oooch! Atchoo—atchoo—choo—choo!"

"He's got the pepper!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"Atchoo—choo—choo—och!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr caught up the ruffian's bludgeon. The tramp did not even look at him. He was blinded for the moment, and sneezing to such an extent that he hardly knew where he was. He gouged at his eyes and nose, and sneezed and spluttered, heedless of the juniors.

Figgins & Co. looked on—ready to handle him if required; but it was clear that the tramp required no more handling. He had come there to make a savage attack on the caravanners; but he had had enough already, owing to Fatty Wynn's masterly stroke.

The hapless rascal was fairly doubled up with volcanic sneezing.

"Atchooh! Ooch! Aach—atchooh!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Figgins, and he sneezed, too, as he caught a whiff of the pepper "Oh dear! Aachoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow-wow-wow-wow!" came in tones of anguish from the tramp. "Ow! Wow! Oooooch! Groogh! Aachoo—atchoo—atchooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins & Co.

Then suddenly, like an echo of their laughter, came a merry shout from the shadows of the trees.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. spun round.

CHAPTER 9.

Victory!

TOM MERRY awoke suddenly.

The captain of the Shell had been sleeping quite comfortably in the thick grass on the border of the wood by the roadside.

The night was warm, almost sultry, and the grass dry and thick. Overhead, the moon glimmered down between leafy branches.

Something had awakened the St. Jim's junior and he sat up, rubbing his eyes and wondering what it was.

Crash!

"My hat! What on earth's that?"

Tom Merry sprang to his feet.

His comrades were awakened now, and they sat up in the grass, rubbing their eyes and blinking.

"Bai Jove! What's that fearful wow?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I weally twust it is not that howvid bull aftah us!"

"It's something up the road," said Tom Merry. "Sounds like someone trying to break in a door."

"There are no houses near here," said Blake.

"Well, there's something doing, that's certain. Sounds like a row going on, farther up the road," said Tom.

The School House juniors were all on their feet now, staring in the direction of the startling sounds.

The grassy belt which lay between the roadside

and the wood was packed with trees and bushes, which prevented them from seeing more than a dozen yards of so. Beyond the bushes something was going on, that was certain. They could hear the sounds of conflict.

"Better see what's the matter," said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Seven startled juniors ran down the road in the direction of the unseen fight. As they drew nearer the spot, they were astonished to hear the sound of terrific sneezing and spluttering. They came round a bunch of trees at a run, and a startling scene burst upon them in the moonlight.

"Our cawavan!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Our horse!" gasped Blake.

"Figgins! My hat!"

"And the tramp!"

"Great Scott!"

Tom Merry & Co. halted, almost petrified with astonishment. There, right under their eyes, were the caravan and the New House raiders. They had settled down for the night within a hundred

AW-AW-AWKWARD!

Stutterer to passer-by: "C-c-could you t-t-tell m-m-me the t-t-time, p-p-please?"

The passer-by made no reply.

Second Passer-by to first: "Why didn't you tell him?"

First Passer-by: "D-d-do you th-th-think I want a b-b-black eye?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Carter, 79, Tonfield Road, Sutton, Surrey.

yards of Figgins & Co.'s camp—all unconscious of its proximity.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "This weally does take the cake!"

"It do—it does!" exclaimed Herries. "Our caravan, by Jove! We've found it!"

The School House juniors were within a few yards of the enemy; but Figgins & Co. had their backs to them, and had not seen them yet. As for the tramp, he was busy with the pepper, and could not see anything.

Figgins & Co.'s yell of laughter came to them, and the chums of the School House burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn turned as if electrified. They forgot the tramp. The ruffian sneezed and spluttered unheeded. The New House juniors stared blankly at Tom Merry & Co.

"You!" ejaculated Figgins.

The School House juniors ran forward in great glee.

"Little us!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"We've found you!" grinned Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! We've wun you down, you feahful boundahs!" chort'ed Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Kerr.

Figgins & Co. drew together. They had defeated the tramp ignominiously; but the noise of the conflict had drawn an enemy to the spot whom they could not hope to defeat. The game was up, as the caravan raiders realised at once.

"Fairly caught!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've been hunting for you ever since we left St. Jim's, you rotters! Now we've got you!"

"And the caravan!" said Blake.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,589.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins laughed rather ruefully.

"Well, you've got us," he said. "Blessed if I know how you got here!"

"We've twacked you down, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "Fortunately, these fellows had sense enough to wely on me, and——"

"And you led us on a false scent!" growled Herries.

"Weally, Herries, you can hardly deny that we have wun down these New House boundahs. I pwesume?" said Arthur Augustus warmly.

"That was the tramp's doing, not ours, you ass!" said Digby.

"Weally, Dig——"

"Collar them!" said Monty Lowther. "Now we've found them, we're going to make an example of them!"

"Yes, rather!"

Seven grinning juniors surrounded Figgins & Co. The tramp was slouching away now, with water streaming from his eyes, still puffing and spluttering and sneezing. He went unheeded. The ruffian was not likely to look for further trouble till he had recovered from the pepper, which was likely to be some time yet.

His volcanic sneezes died away in the distance.

"Surrender, you New House bounders!" commanded Tom Merry.

"I—I say, we'll make it pax, if you like," said Figgins. "You can have your silly old caravan!"

"We're jolly well going to have it!" retorted Tom Merry. "And you're going to have a jolly good ragging!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Collar them!" exclaimed Blake.

There was a rush.

Figgins & Co. promptly put up their hands, but the odds were too great. Three hapless youths bumped in the grass, and were sat upon and pinned there.

"Hurrah!"

"Victowy, deah boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus, sitting on Figgins' head and waving his eyeglass in great excitement.

"Groogh! Gerroff!" came a muffled voice under Arthur Augustus.

"Wats!"

"Groogh! Ow! Gerroff!"

"Victowy, deah boys—— Yawwooh!" yelled Arthur Augustus, jumping up suddenly like a jack-in-the-box. "Yoop!"

"What on earth's the matter with you?" exclaimed Blake.

"Yawwooh! I'm bitten! Oooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That feahful wuffian Figgins has bitten me! Ow! Wow!"

"You should have got off!" gasped Figgins, sitting up dazedly. "Here—— Leggo! Leggo my neck, Blake, you rotter! Oh, my hat!"

"Keep 'em safe!" said Tom Merry, chuckling. "There ought to be some rope in the caravan! We'll tie them up till the morning!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ow!"

"Hold on!" gasped Kerr, struggling under the weight of Herries and Dig. "Go easy! We give in!"

"You own up you're licked?" demanded Tom Merry.

Kerr gasped.

"There isn't much doubt about it, is there, fat-head?" he said. "We could knock out any four or five of you——"

"Bow-wow!"

"But seven's too many, and we own up. Pax!"

"Pax it is!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Let the bounders get up, you fellows. They're licked to the wide, and the caravan's ours! Hurrah!"

Figgins & Co., dusty and breathless, scrambled to their feet. They looked at one another very ruefully. The captured caravan had been recaptured, and Tom Merry & Co. had come into their own again. But the chums of the New House took their defeat philosophically.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose to the occasion. He had been bitten, but he was magnanimous.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we have defeated these cheeky boundahs, and wecaptuashed our cawayan. We have demonstwatod once more that the School House is Cock House at St. Jim's—"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's up to us to be generous in the hour of victory," said Arthur Augustus. "I pwopose that we invite these cheeky boundahs to be our guests for to-night, and stand them some bwckkah before we kick them out in the morning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's a good offer!" said Figgins, with a grin. "We accept the kind invitation of the most noble and magnanimous Aubrey Gustavus, and we'll jolly well get back to bed. As we're your guests, we'll have the bunks in the van—"

"Oh!"

"You are vewy welcome, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus.

"All serene!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

And Figgins & Co. returned to the caravan, and the School House juniors camped round it in the grass—in a mood of the most complete satisfaction.

CHAPTER 10.

Bagged Bags!

TOM MERRY & Co. were up with the early summer dawn.

They had started their vacation with some rather trying experiences, but they were feeling very merry and bright as they turned out.

Figgins & Co. accepted the situation good-humouredly.

Pax having been declared, the rivals of the road were on quite good terms with one another, and bygonos were allowed to be bygonos.

All the juniors lent a hand at gathering brushwood and building a fire to cook breakfast, Fatty Wynn taking the cooking in hand.

Figgins & Co. had laid in provisions for some days—for three, and the whole supply was drawn upon to furnish breakfast for ten. It was a case of the spoils to the victors.

After breakfast Blake was dispatched on his bike to Rylcombe to hire a conveyance there to bring on the School House party's baggage to the camp. The rest of the party remained with the caravan.

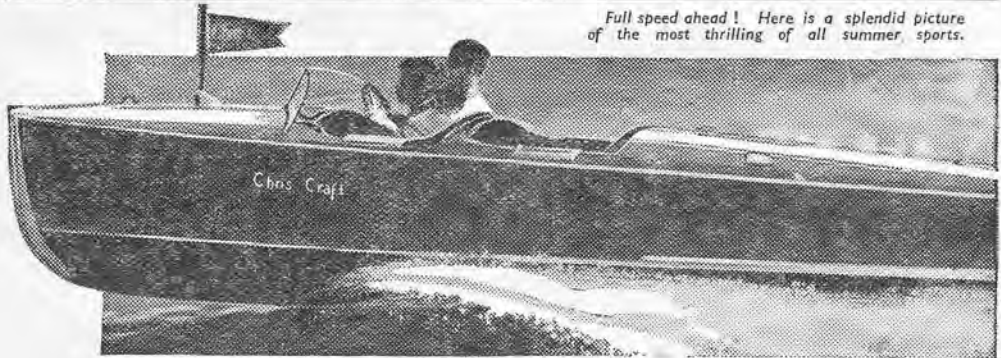
Figgins & Co., good-humouredly, though a little rueful, packed their bags in the van.

A passing wagon gave them a lift to town, where they were able to take to the railway.

Their caravanning had been cut suddenly short. But Figgins was not thinking about that.

"We may see you bounders on the road again," he remarked, as the bags were pitched into the wagon. "We're booked to stay at Fatty's place for a couple of weeks. After that, I rather think we shall get a caravan and start on the road. So if you come west, you may fall in with us, and

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then we'll give you the licking you've been asking for."

"We'll be glad to meet you, and take all the lickings you can give us!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "If we come across you, figgy, we shall bag your caravan, I warn you!"

"Yaas, wathah! Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, you know!"

"Bow-wow!" was Figgins' reply. And the wagon rolled away with the New House chums.

"Now we're ready to start, when Blake gets back with our traps," remarked Tom Merry. "Wherefore that wrinkle in your noble brow, Gustavus?"

"I have been thinkin' Tom Mewwy, and——"

"With what?" asked Monty Lowther, in surprise.

"Weally, Lowthah! I was thinkin' about my baggage!"

"That's all right! Blake will get a car or something to bring our bags here."

"Yaas, I was thinkin'——"

"About the bikes? We can roll them along to the next town, and send them home by railway."

"I was not thinkin' about the bikes!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I feah that you are delibewately misundahstandin' me, Tom Mewwy. You are perfectly well aware that my baggage was left at St. Jim's, owin' to some wotah lockin' it up in a study when we were startin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' whatevah to laugh at in that uttably asinine treament of my baggage!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I have not even a bag with me—afah packin' two twunks!"

"My dear man, there's no room in a caravan for trunks and things."

"I pwesume that I shall wequiah a change of clobber acaasionally. Tom Mewwy. Now my ideah is——"

"Oh, you have an idea?" asked Tom Merry, in surprise.

"Yaas, you ass!"

"Good! This is the second time you've had an idea since you came to St. Jim's. Let's hear it."

"Pway, do not be a funny ass, Tom Mewwy. My ideah is that we go wound by St. Jim's and call for my baggage."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I wequiah a change of clobber alweady. My twousahs got feahfully muddy last night in that howwid ditch. Look at them!" said Arthur Augustus plaintively. "They will have to be sent to the cleanah's. What am I goin' to do while they are gone to the cleanah's?"

"No fig leaves growing about here," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Wats! I insist on goin' wound by St. Jim's and callin' for my baggage. Or you can remain here while I cut off on my bike, and I will hire a cab to bwing my luggage here."

"Now, look here, Gussy——"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I have made up my mind!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I wefuse to leave this spot without my baggage!"

"Hallo! Here comes Blake."

A car drove up, with Blake and the baggage in it. The discussion had to cease while the bags were transferred to the caravan, and the car was dismissed. Then Arthur Augustus took up the case again.

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"What's the row?" asked Blake.

"I wequiah you fellows to wemain here while I bike to St. Jim's and fetch my baggage in a car."

"Rats!" said Blake promptly.

"I wefuse to stir without it!"

Blake closed one eye at his comrades.

"If Gussy refuses, that settles it," he said. "But you can't show up at St. Jim's in those muddy trousers, Gussy. Get into the caravan and chuck 'em out, and we'll clean them for you!"

"Bai Jove! That is a vewy happy thought, Blake!"

"I'm the chap for happy thoughts," answered Blake cheerily. "Get a move on, and we'll make the bags look as good as new!"

"Wight-ho!"

Arthur Augustus hopped into the caravan, and in a few minutes the trousers were handed out.

Blake took them.

"I'll brush them, as agreed!" he said. "Must keep an agreement. You fellows put the horse to the van while I do it."

"But——"

"We're going on, you see!" explained Blake

"But Gussy——"

"If he likes to go to St. Jim's without his bags he can, of course. He won't go with them—while I've got them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter.

Tom Merry & Co. led the horse to the van and harnessed him. The rattle of the harness brought Arthur Augustus' head out of the window.

"Bai Jove! What are you fellows up to?" he exclaimed.

"Just starting!" answered Blake.

"But I am goin' to St. Jim's first!" yelled Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"Your mistake—you're not!"

"Give me my twousahs!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Bow-wow!"

"Blake, if you do not hand me my twousahs at once, I will give you a feahful thwashin'!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Start!" yelled Blake.

The caravan lurched and jolted through the grass to the road.

Tom Merry led the horse, and the other fellows wheeled their bikes.

Jack Blake walked with Arthur Augustus' trousers over his arm, smiling.

The caravan door opened, and Arthur Augustus appeared, with a towel round his noble form.

"Blake, you feahful wotah! Give me my twousahs!"

"Bow-wow!"

"If you do not giye me my twousahs, Blake, I shall wisk everythin' and come out for them!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Hallo! Here are some lady cyclists coming up the road!" remarked Lowther.

Bang!

The caravan door shut hurriedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The caravan rumbled on up the road, in the merry summer sunlight, the cheery juniors whistling as they tramped.

From the window came the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in an untiring stream of eloquence. But the swell of St. Jim's was answered only by chortles from the caravanners.

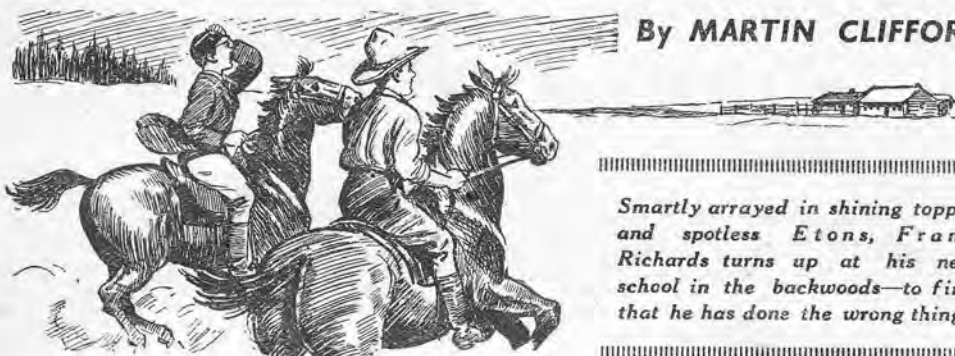
THE END

Next Wednesday: "THE REBEL CARAVANNER!"

IN THIS GREAT STORY OF HIS SCHOOLDAYS FRANK RICHARDS PROVES AN EASY VICTIM FOR HIS CANADIAN COUSIN'S PRACTICAL JOKES!

An Innocent in the Backwoods!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Smartly arrayed in shining topper and spotless Etons, Frank Richards turns up at his new school in the backwoods—to find that he has done the wrong thing!

Taking the Tenderfoot In!

"SCHOOL to-day," said Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards looked up. Frank was doing full justice to a substantial breakfast of fresh salmon, corncakes, and honey. He had been several days at the Lawless Ranch now, and he was getting used to his new surroundings.

He had confided several times to his Cousin Bob that he liked Canada. It was a huge change after life at St. Kit's, in far-off England, but he was of an age when change itself is a pleasure.

And the fresh, breezy life of the British Columbian ranch was pure enjoyment to him.

He was not specially pleased to hear Bob's announcement.

Riding out with Bob in the mornings, visiting the fruit farm with Mr. Lawless, chatting with the Kootenay herdsmen, canoeing on the river, or roaming in the scented woods, had filled in every hour very pleasantly, and he was not anxious for school.

"School!" he repeated. "Has your pater settled for us to go to school to-day?"

"My what?"

Frank coloured slightly at Bob's quizzical look. Unconsciously he used the expression he had been accustomed to.

"Your father, Bob. You know what I mean."

"Do they talk Latin in the Old Country?" asked Bob.

"Of course they don't, duffer! But we generally say mator and pater."

"And we sometimes say popper and mopper," grinned Bob. "That isn't Latin; that's American. I hope you're well up in Latin, Frank, or you'll cause disappointment at our school."

"I don't know about being well up," said Frank. "I wasn't an ornament to the Fourth at St. Kit's. I suppose the Head won't be hard on a new chap?"

"The what?"

"The Head—the headmaster, you know," said Frank rather warmly. "Don't you call your blessed headmaster the Head?"

Bob Lawless chuckled explosively, but he did not reply to the question.

"Is the school far away?" asked Frank.

"Only a step or two," said Bob. "We shall ride there."

"Eh? How long is the step?" asked Frank. He was beginning to have some knowledge of Canadian distances.

"About twelve miles."

"Oh!" Frank paused. "Are we coming back here?"

"Do you want to camp out on the floor of the school-room?" asked Bob.

"Nunno! I mean—"

"Oh, it's not a boarding school!" said Bob, with a smile. "We go in the morning, and we come home at night, and we get dinner there."

"I see."

"Not much like the St. Kit's you've told me about," added Bob. "We rough it a bit out West, you know."

"I like roughing it," said Frank. "I'm ready for anything. What about school books? I brought mine from England with me."

"Lemme see. What are they?"

"'Principia Latina'—"

"Good!"

"Caesar's 'Gallie War,'"

"In Latin?" asked Bob, with a glimmer in his eyes.

"Yes; 'De Bello Gallico,' you know."

"Famous!"

"And the usual other Lower Form books," said Frank, somewhat puzzled by his cousin's humorous expression. "I suppose they're much the same in all schools?"

"Naturally," said Bob. "Your books will do first rate, especially the 'Principia Latina' and the 'Gallo Bellico.'"

"'De Bello Gallico,'" said Frank.

"Yes; that's what I mean. Any Greek?" asked Bob blandly.

"I didn't take Greek at St. Kit's," said Frank. "Some of the fellows did; I didn't. If Greek's compulsory here, I suppose I can take it. I know the alphabet, anyway."

"You'll find that useful," said Bob. "It will save the Head—ahem!—no end of trouble if you know the Greek alphabet, to begin with."

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"Good!"

"Now, what about duds?" asked Bob, "Did you bring your school rags?"

"Yes, I thought I'd better, as the pater said I should be sent to school here by Uncle Lawless," said Frank. "I've got two suits of Etons. I—I only brought one topper."

"One which?"

"Topper."

Bob Lawless seemed to be suffering from internal convulsions. Frank Richards looked at him rather suspiciously.

"Look here, Bob——"

"Famous!" said Bob. "You see, I thought you might have forgotten that, and it's rather important. The Head likes a fellow to be decently dressed."

"I'd rather go in a cowboy hat, of course," said Frank. "But if the Head's particular——"

"Awfully!"

"Then it will have to be the topper."

Bob Lawless rose from the breakfast table.

"Better run up to your room and change," he said. "It's time we were off. Mustn't be late, or the Head will jaw us."

"Right you are!"

Frank Richards hurried upstairs to his room. It did not take him long to change into his English Public school clothes.

He found Bob waiting for him outside the porch, where a Kootenay stableman held two ponies.

The Indian stared at Frank Richards.

It was certainly the first time the ranchman's eyes had fallen on an English Public schoolboy in Etons and a topper.

Bob Lawless surveyed him and gave a nod of approval. Bob himself was clad in homespun, with a shady hat over his sunburnt face.

"Ready?" asked Frank.

"You bet!"

"You're not going to change?"

"I keep my glad raiment in the gilt-edged trunk at school," explained Bob gravely. "The topper especially is apt to get a bit knocked about riding under trees. You'll have to be very careful. Up you get!"

"Shan't we see your pater and mater again before we go—I mean popper and mopper?" said Frank, with a smile.

"Mater's at the dairy farm, and pater's in the orchard," said Bob. "Won't be back for hours. Come on!"

The cousins jumped on their ponies and started at a canter down the trail.

Potting the Plug-hat!

FRANK RICHARDS enjoyed that canter in the sunny, breezy morning.

But certainly he would have enjoyed it more if he had been clad like his Cousin Bob.

He realised as he rode on that Etons and a topper must be a very uncommon sight on the Canadian ranch lands.

Every hand they passed—whether Canadian, or Kootenay, or negro—ceased whatever work he was engaged upon to stare at the English boy with a broad grin; even the Chinese cook came out of the cookhouse to stare.

Frank's cheeks began to burn, as he felt himself the cynosure of all eyes. He glanced at Bob

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several times, but Bob Lawless seemed unconscious of the broad grins and stares.

Frank was glad when the ranch was left behind, and they cantered down the trail under the big trees through the forest.

For several miles they rode on the forest trail, without passing anyone or anything alive save a stray gopher.

But suddenly from another trail two horsemen rode into the path, and came trotting towards the two boys.

They were big, loose-limbed fellows, with slouch hats and tanned faces, and Frank, who was already learning to distinguish, decided that they were cattlemen.

As their eyes fell upon Frank Richards they fairly started in their saddles. Both of them reined in their horses in the middle of the trail, as if thunderstruck.

Frank and Bob slowed down.

The big trees encroached on the trail on either side, and they could not pass the two horsemen planted in the middle of the path till they moved aside.

"Waal, carry me hum to die!" ejaculated one of the cattlemen.

"Search me!" exclaimed the other.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards felt his cheeks burning again. The cattlemen were staring at his Etons and the shining silk hat with astounded looks.

"Wot is it, Hank?" inquired the first speaker.

"Search me!" repeated Hank.

Frank glanced at Bob.

"Those duffers are blocking the way!" he said.

"Slow down," said Bob.

The two had to stop.

"Skuse me, gents!" said the cattlemen blandly. "May a galoot inquire wot it is?"

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Frank Richards. "Why don't you let us pass?"

"It's a rip-snorter from Ripsnortersville!" said Hank. "It's a galoot in a plug-hat. Stranger, don't you know that plug-hats are condemned to sudden death on this side of the Rockies?"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the other.

"This ain't a larfing matter, Bill!" said Hank. "This hyer is serious. Hyer's a galoot in a plug-hat. There's a dooty to be done. Stranger, aire you ready to pass in your checks?"

Frank Richards started as each of the cattlemen drew a revolver from his belt.

Before the English boy could make a movement, the revolvers came up to a level and two loud reports sounded as one.

Crack-ack!

Frank Richards had already heard from his Canadian cousin stories of the "bad men" and "border ruffians," but this was a surprise. His first impression was that the two men were firing at him.

He realised his mistake as the top hat, struck by two bullets at the same time, soared off his head and sailed away.

There was a roar of laughter from the two cattlemen, and they set their horses in motion.

Frank Richards, dazed by the sudden occurrence, sat motionless and bareheaded on his pony; but Bob drew his steed back behind Frank's to allow the cattlemen to pass.

They rode on, still roaring with laughter, and fired several more shots at the hapless topper as it reposed in the grass.

Then they disappeared down the trail, still roaring with laughter.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Frank Richards.

It was only a rough joke of the cattlemen, and he realised that they were good shots, and that he had been in no danger. But the bullets had passed so close, that one had clipped a lock of hair from his head. It was some minutes before he recovered from the shock.

Bob is Too Funny!

BOB LAWLESS slid to the ground and picked up the topper.

With a serious face he handed it up to his cousin.

That handsome topper, which had come all the way from England in safety, and had survived the perils of the Atlantic and the Canadian Pacific Railway, was in a parlous state.

There were half a dozen bullet holes in it, and the contact with the rough grass had not improved the nap.

"Better brush it a bit!" remarked Bob gravely.

"I can't brush the holes out of it!" said Frank.

"If the Head's as particular as you say, he's bound to notice that."

"Can't be helped," said Bob. "It was unlucky meeting those two chaps. I hadn't reckoned on that."

The topper was carefully brushed, and Frank set it on his head again, fervently hoping that he would meet no more humorous cattlemen on the way to school.

Fortunately, there was no one else on the lonely trail that morning.

The forest trail was left behind, and they rode up the bank of the creek, and now buildings were in sight in the distance.

"Is that the school, Bob?" asked Frank.

"That's it."

Frank Richards scanned the school curiously as they drew nearer.

He saw a large, log-built structure, surrounded by a fence that enclosed a good space of ground.

He had not expected to see a reproduction of the grey old walls and ivied buttresses of St. Kit's; but the "lumber school" was a surprise to him.

Bob looked at him rather oddly, but Frank did not allow his thoughts to appear in his face.

"Like what you expected?" asked Bob.

"I didn't know what to expect, Bob."

"Here are some of the pupils," said Bob, with a wave of his riding whip.

Frank looked at them.

There were fellows of all ages, from nine to sixteen. Some of them were riding up from different directions, but the majority were on foot. Two or three came in canoes on the creek.

To Frank's surprise, there was a good sprinkling of girls among them.

"Girls and boys both here, Bob?" he asked.

"Oh, yes! You see, this is the only school for fifty or sixty miles around," explained Bob.

"This is the wild and woolly West. East you'd find schools like the one you're used to."

"What is it called?"

"It's the national school."

"Oh, I see!"

"Everybody comes," said Bob. "Look at that bow-legged fellow in the canoe. He's the son of a rich rancher who could buy up my dad and never miss the money. That stumpy kid in the canoe with him is the son of his stableman. That fellow with the nose is the son of a machine-man who's settled in the district. He puts on no end of side. His name's Eben Hacke. Hallo! They seem to be interested in us."

There was no doubt at all about that.

As the two riders came up to the open gateway in the fence, every pupil of the lumber school seemed to become rooted to the ground, and his or her eyes fastened on Frank Richards as if fascinated.

Some of the girls smiled or giggled, some of the boys chorried, and some seemed stricken dumb with surprise.

Frank noticed that nobody was in Etons, and that nobody wore a silk hat.

All were clad in the plain and serviceable garb of the frontier, and did not look much like school-boys to Frank Richards' English eyes.

"Leave your pony here," said Bob Lawless, jumping down.

"Tethered?" asked Frank.

"No need; they won't wander away."

Frank unhitched his bag of school books, and the cousins entered the enclosure, Frank's cheeks burning as he met stares and grins on all sides.

He remembered his cousin's propensity for practical joking, and he began to suspect that Etons and a topper were not the thing at a British Columbian national school.

He gave Bob a sharp look, but Bob's face was quite unconscious.

"I—I say, Bob—" Frank began.

"This way!" said Bob. "Hallo, Chunky! This is Chunky Todgers, Franky! My Cousin Frank, Chunky!"

Chunky Todgers, a plump youth, grinned widely, showing a splendid set of teeth.

"Where does he come from, Bob?" he gasped.

"England."

"I guessed so! But what—"

"Is that Canadian good manners, Chunky?" demanded Bob severely.

Todgers held out a fat hand to Frank, still grinning, and the English schoolboy shook hands with him.

"Glad to meet you, you know," said Chunky. "But what the thunder—"

"Come on!" said Bob, dragging his cousin's arm. "You've got to see the Head!"

Bob Lawless marched his cousin into the log schoolhouse. Behind them they left the playground in a chorus of laughter and giggles.

Frank Richards was feeling very restive by this time. There was something wrong somewhere—he knew that. This could not be the normal way of greeting a new pupil at the lumber school.

"Look here, Bob—" he began again.

"Ah, here's the Head!"

Frank Richards jumped.

As they entered the wooden porch a trim young lady, with bright eyes and a very pleasant face, appeared in the big doorway.

Frank took off his hat at once.

"Good-morning, Miss Meadows!" said Bob cheerfully. "This is my Cousin Frank from England. I've brought him along to school."

Frank stammered helplessly.

"Bob, you—you said—"

Bob grinned.

"Miss Meadows is the Head!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Frank.

First Day at School!

MISS MEADOWS gave the new boy a kind smile and nod.

She was undoubtedly astonished by his get up, but naturally, had a little more restraint

than the schoolboys and schoolgirls outside, and she did not allow her astonishment to appear in her looks.

"I am glad to see you," she said, pleasantly. "Mr. Lawless mentioned that his nephew, Frank Richards, was coming—"

"I—I—" stammered Frank. He floundered helplessly as he realised that he was the victim of another of Bob's practical jokes. "I—I—Ma'am, is it the rule here for new boys to wear Etons and toppers?"

"Good gracious, no!"

"Bob, you rotter—"

"I didn't say it was, did I?" said Bob, in an injured tone.

"I thought from what you said—"

Miss Meadows smiled.

"You should not play jokes on a newcomer, Lawless. It would be advisable to change your clothes to-morrow, Richards, but for to-day it does not matter. Something a little stronger and more serviceable is required in this district."

"Yes, ma'am."

Miss Meadows disappeared in the school-house. The silk topper and the Etons in the backwoods school, at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, were almost too much for the gravity even of the "school-marm."

Frank Richards gave his humorous cousin a ferocious look.

"Bob, you beast, I'll jolly well punch your nose for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Bob. "We don't call Miss Meadows the Head. We generally call her the school-marm."

"And—and this clobber—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The unrepentant Bob seemed on the verge of hysterics. Frank glowered at him, quite unable at present to appreciate the joke.

The thought that he had to go through the whole day conspicuous in Etons, with the grinning glances of the whole school upon him, and to ride home after school in a "plug hat," almost made him wish that the earth would open and swallow him up.

He shook his fist under Bob's nose, at which the merry Canadian only laughed the more.

"You silly ass!" shouted Frank.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see any joke, you fathead!"

"Everybody else does! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came the nasal twang from Eben Hacke.

"And a plug hat!" chortled Chunky Todgers. "A plug hat! He's come to school in a plug hat! What a tenderfoot! Ha, ha, ha!"

A bell clanged out from somewhere above, and the boys and girls began to troop into the schoolhouse.

They hung caps and hats on pegs in the hall, and there was another gust of laughter at the sight of the silk topper prominent among them.

Frank's face was crimson as he went into the school-room with Bob Lawless. He had never been troubled with self-consciousness, but he was troubled with it now.

Bob pressed his arm.

"Sorry, old chap!" he murmured. "It was rather steep, I know; but I couldn't resist it. You were so jolly green, you know."

"Oh, rats!" said Frank.

"Don't be mad, old fellow!"

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Frank grinned in his turn.

"All serene, fathead!" he said. "But what a thumping guy I shall look all day!"

"Never mind. You look very nice, you know. You're a credit to the school," chuckled Bob. "All the girls are admiring your clothes, anyway."

"Oh, rats!"

"Here's your desk, next to mine."

After the rough outward aspect of the lumber school, Frank was a little surprised to see the well-made rows of desks, with their ink-wells and flaps.

Everything was devoted to use, and little to ornament; but everything that was needed was there. It was evident, even to a stranger's eye, that the Canadian Government had a very keen eye on the education of the Canadian youth.

The schoolmistress had not yet come in, but a tall, slim young man, with somewhat watery eyes and gold-rimmed glasses perched upon the bridge of a long, thin nose, entered, and Frank's glance fell upon him.

"Is that a Form-master?" he whispered to Bob.

"We don't call him that," grinned Bob. "That's Slimmey, the assistant master. Miss Meadows is head cook and bottle-washer."

"And the other masters?"

"I guess you've seen the lot now."

"What Form are we in?" asked Frank.

"You're not in a Form at all, my innocent, un instructed youth," said Bob. "Of course, you can call it a Form if you like. There's us and the kids, that's all."

Mr. Slimmey was evidently in charge of the younger class. He seemed a tired, patient, and somewhat overworked young man.

"Fellow-countryman of yours, Franky," said Bob. "He was as green as you are when he turned up here a year ago. He's a good sort, and forgives the chaps who play tricks on him. Lots of them do. Eben Hacke lassoed him one day."

"My hat!" murmured Frank. "I'd like to see a chap lasso my Form-master at St. Kit's. There would be an earthquake."

"He's spoons on Miss Meadows," Bob further confided to his cousin. "She stands him quite good-temperedly. She's a good sort. Hallo! Here she comes. This is where we dry up chin-wag."

There was evidently great respect in the lumber school for Miss Meadows. Even Eben Hacke did not look impertinent. The schoolmistress gave her class a kind smile, and came towards the new boy.

"Have you your books, Richards?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," said Frank.

"Let me see them."

Frank showed his books, and Miss Meadows' charming blue eyes opened wide at the sight of the Principia Latina, and De Bello Gallico.

She gave Bob Lawless a very severe glance.

"Did you advise your cousin to bring these books, Lawless?"

"Ahem!" murmured Bob. "I—I told him they were ripping, ma'am. And—and so they are!"

"Silence!" said Miss Meadows, frowning. "Richards, I am afraid these books are useless to you here, as Latin is not one of our subjects. Lawless will bring you the books we use."

Frank gave Bob another ferocious look. A

fresh cackle had swept through the class at the sight of the Latin school-books.

Bob followed the schoolmistress to her desk, and brought back the new books for his cousin. "There you are, old son!" he said. "I dare say you will be glad to give De Gallo Bellico—I mean, De Bello Gallico—a rest."

"You ass!" growled Frank.

Bob grinned and took his seat.

Frank soon found that he could deal quite easily with the school work. It was of a more serviceable nature than school work at St. Kit's, and it was decidedly easier.

Morning lessons passed off very well.

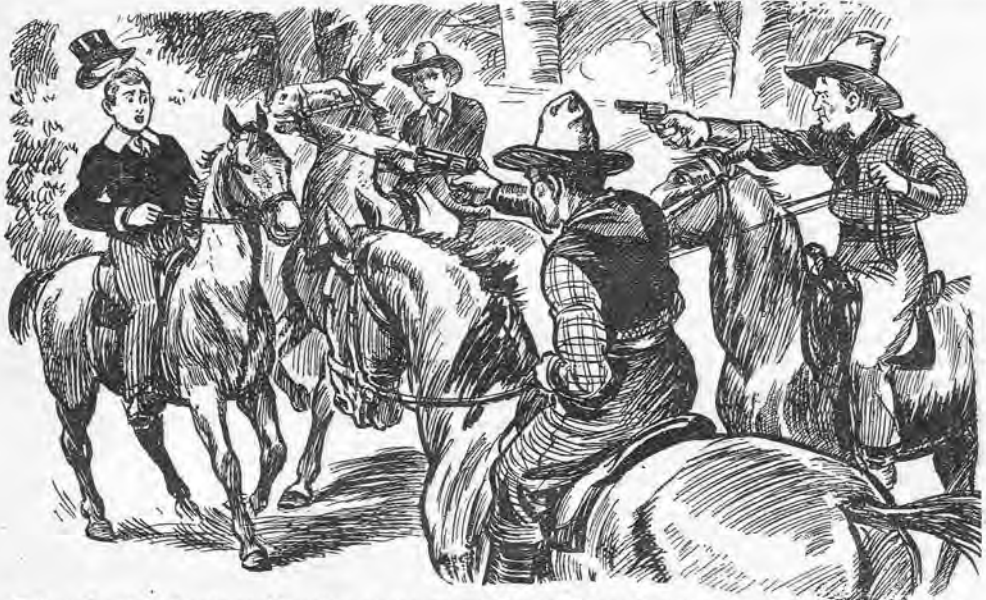
When school was dismissed Frank Richards marched out with the rest. Those of the pupils whose homes were near the lumber school went

solid-looking homesteads in the distance, the great mountain-tops far away on the horizon.

He also made the acquaintance of a good many of his future school-fellows, and he found most of them good-natured fellows enough, though still tickled by his Etons and the celebrated plug-hat.

He was made acquainted with some of the schoolgirls, too, and found them very agreeable; and upon that point he was inclined to pronounce a verdict in favour of the lumber school as compared with St. Kit's.

There was only one fellow who gave Frank unpleasant looks, and that was Eben Hacke, who seemed to have taken a dislike to him, for some reason best known to himself; perhaps because he suspected the English lad of putting on "side." It was a very unjust suspicion; but to that motive



Before Frank Richards could make any movement the cattlemen's revolvers came up to a level, and two loud reports sounded as one. Crack—ack! Struck by the bullets, Frank's topper soared off his head and sailed away.

home to dinner; the rest dined with Miss Meadows and Mr. Slimmey in a large room with windows looking out on the shining creek.

As he sat at the long table, with Bob on one side of him and a smiling girl on the other, Frank Richards found himself feeling quite at home, only still a little discomposed by the grins that went round the table and whispered remarks concerning his "duds" and the "plug-hat" that was still hanging in the hall.

It looked as if it would be a long time before the school recovered from the effect of the plug-hat.

A Fight to a Finish!

AFTER dinner Bob led his English cousin out to see the "sights." The sights were of a familiar kind to Frank now—the clearings, the big trees, the creek, the canoes, one or two

Master Hacke chose to attribute the Etons and the white collar and the topper.

Several times the sharp-nosed Eben Hacke bore down towards Frank, but each time Bob Lawless succeeded in steering his chum clear, and Frank noticed it after a while.

"What are we keeping out of that fellow's way for, Bob?" he asked.

"He's looking for trouble, I guess," said Bob.

"With me?"

"You bet!"

"Why should he?" asked Frank.

"He's a rather quarrelsome beast," explained Bob. "A good bit of a bully. He gets into a dust-up once a week, as a rule."

Frank's eyes gleamed.

"And you're keeping me out of hamm's way?" he exclaimed.

"That's it."

"Thanks! But there's no need to bother. If Hacke's looking for trouble there's no reason why he shouldn't find it."

"All serene!" said Bob. "I'll talk to him. I've licked the beast already, and I can do it!"

"And I think I can," said Frank. "At all events, I'm going to try if he bothers me."

Bob looked uneasy.

"Look here, Frank," he said, "he's nearly a head taller than you are, and he's as hard as nails; and he's plucky in his way, though he's rather a beast. I'd rather you let him alone."

"Rats!"

Eben Hacke hove in sight just then, and Bob Lawless linked his arm in Frank's to lead him along the creek. Frank Richards jerked his arm away and walked directly towards Eben Hacke.

Hacke grinned and stood awaiting him. Just then the bell clanged out, and footsteps on all sides were turned towards the schoolhouse.

Bob looked relieved. The "trouble" was inevitably postponed for the time.

"I calculate I'll see you again after school!" Hacke remarked.

"I'll wait for you," said Frank coolly.

And he went to his desk.

During afternoon lessons Hacke contrived to spill ink on Frank's trousers, and squeezed a chunk of maple-sugar down the back of the Eton jacket.

These kind attentions made Frank all the more determined to "wait" for the obstreperous Eben after school, in spite of Bob's evident misgivings.

He was glad when Miss Meadows dismissed school for the day.

The red sun was in the west, and the cool evening breeze waved the long grass, when Frank and Bob came out of the lumber school. Bob hurried his chum out of the gate, but he had to leave him standing there while he fetched the ponies.

By the time Bob came back with the ponies Eben Hacke had joined Frank Richards, with a very disagreeable look on his sharp face.

"Waiting for me—hey?" he inquired.

"Quite ready for you if you like," said Frank.

"Put 'em up," said Eben laconically.

Frank stepped back.

"Not in sight of the girls," he said. "Come along the trail a bit."

"Look here, Hacke, you clear off!" growled Bob Lawless, coming up with the ponies. "What are you kicking up a shindy now for, you lanky hobo?"

"I guess this fellah ain't going to hide behind you, you galoot!" said Hacke. "I always climb over chaps of this sort—that's my rule. Where will you have it, you mugwump?"

"Come along the trail, and don't gas," remarked Frank.

Bob Lawless led the ponies, and Frank walked by his side, and the lanky, muscular Hacke slouched along with them. Chunky Todgers at once joined the party, scenting what was on, and half a dozen other fellows speedily joined up.

The party walked down the trail as far as the trees, which hid them from the sight of the schoolhouse and the scholars going homeward.

There Bob hitched the ponies, and the school-boys stepped aside from the trail to a level spot under the big trees. Eben Hacke took off his jacket with a swaggering grin.

It was evident that the lanky youth intended to "air" himself, as it were, by displaying his

fistical prowess before the eyes of his school-fellows, and it was equally evident that he regarded the English lad as "soft" and an easy victim.

But Frank was not quite so soft as Eben judged him. He had fought many a terrific scrap in the Fourth Form at St. Kit's, and he had not lost his skill.

He peeled off his Eton jacket and removed his collar.

"Gloves?" he asked.

Hacke burst into a roar.

"Didn't you bring boxing gloves along with your plug-hat and your Latin grammar?" he yelled.

"No."

"I'm afraid we've no gloves here, Frank," said Bob Lawless uneasily.

"All the same to me," said Frank. "I was only asking. We usually used gloves at St. Kit's. I'm ready."

Frank did not inquire whether there were to be rounds and rests. He realised that it was to be a rough-and-tumble encounter. He faced Hacke with perfect coolness, somewhat to Eben's surprise.

"Go it!" growled Bob.

Hacke gave a vaunting look round and rushed in to finish the fight at one fell swoop.

But it did not happen like that.

Instead of the slim English lad being swept off his feet by the bigger fellow's rush, he stood his ground like a rock. His right and left came out in swift succession, and then his right again. And Eben Hacke had the impression that he had suddenly run up against a stone wall.

He staggered backwards, and fairly rolled in the grass.

"Jerusalem crickets!" he ejaculated breathlessly.

"Bravo!" roared Bob, in great surprise.

There was a fat chirrup from Chunky Todgers, and he removed a chunk of maple sugar from his capacious mouth to cheer.

"Bravo! Well hit!"

Eben Hacke sat up dizzily.

"By gum!" he gasped.

Then he scrambled to his feet and came on.

There were no more blind rushes after that, and Hacke was much more cautious.

Frank's turn came to go down in the grass, and he went down heavily. Hacke grinned over him, and stood ready to knock him down as soon as he rose. But Frank gained his feet with great agility, fending off his bulky antagonist, and the fight was resumed.

Hammer and tongs they went at it now.

Eben was the bigger and the stronger of the two, but he had little knowledge of the scientific part of the game. To his great surprise, Frank Richards held his ground well.

Most of Hacke's thrashing blows saved the air, and Frank's fists came home again and again upon his rugged face and his sharp nose.

Hacke's nose was not looking so sharp now; it was growing bulbous. One of his eyes was closed, and he blinked with the other.

Frank found difficulty in seeing out of his left eye, which was darkening to an art shade in purple. But he kept on coolly.

All Hacke's hot attacks were stalled off, and all the time punishment was being given and taken, but the burly Eben got the lion's share of it. He was beginning to look decidedly groggy, and the Canadian boys were grinning with delight. The



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bully of the lumber school was getting a little of what he had wanted for a long time, in their opinion.

But Hacke was not finished yet by any means. The fight was hard and fast, harder and more prolonged than Frank's old schoolboy encounters at St. Kit's. And as bare knuckles were used, there was plenty of damage on both sides.

Frank's left eye was quite closed now, and his nose was streaming crimson. But Hacke's face was a curious study in damages. He could hardly see, but kept on as long as he could keep his feet.

"Hurrah!" jerked out Chunky every few minutes. "Hurrah! Go it, my tulip! One for his nob! Hurrah!"

Crash!
Eben Hacke went down more heavily than before, and lay on his back in the grass, blinking up at Frank Richards.

Frank stood panting.
"Oh Jerusalem!" grunted Hacke. "Oh, holy smoke! Ow!"

"Better call it off, Hackey!" said Bob Lawless. "The tenderfoot is too good for you!"

Hacke glared out of his closing eyes.

"I guess he's not!" he gasped. "I guess I'm going to make shavings of him! I guess a tenderfoot can't walk over me!"

Frank Richards grinned.

It was rather a twisted grin, for his face was very damaged by this time, and he felt as if there were not an inch of it left without a bruise.

He waited for the lanky youth to rise. There was no "counting out" in that tussle, or Eben Hacke could have been counted out twice over.

The burly Western youth made an effort at last and lumbered to his feet, panting. Frank could have sent him flying as he did so, but he stood back, with his hands dropped. He would not hit a fellow who could not defend himself.

Hacke noticed it, and his bruised face assumed a feeble grin.

"You ain't a bad sort, tenderfoot!" he gasped. "But I'm going to lick you, all the same, you bet your boots on that!"

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B. Sharrow, 42, Clonaig Street, Brighton East, S.6, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia; age 8-11; stamp collecting and topics of interest.

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PEN PALS COUPON

30-7-38

Hacke came on again, though it was quite clear that it cost him an effort to keep his footing. The schoolboys looked on with intense interest now. If iron determination could win the fight, Eben Hacke had a chance of success. But Frank's determination was as grim as his adversary's, and he was outlasting the Western youth.

Hacke made a last furious attack, and before his heavy rush Frank Richards gave ground a little.

Hacke followed him up fast. But it was only a flash in the pan. Frank suddenly stiffened up and stood firm, and Hacke's sagging drives were knocked aside, and the English lad's knuckles came with a crash on his jaw.

Hacke staggered a couple of paces and fell with a grunt.

"Holy smoke! What a sockdologer!" ejaculated Chunky Todgers, in great admiration.

Eben Hacke made one effort to rise, and sank back in the grass with a gasp.

"I guess that's the finish," he said faintly. "Oh, great snakes! I feel rotten! Ow!"

"So do I," gasped Frank. Frank was very near the end of his tether, but he could have gone on. Eben Hacke was quite "done"—indeed, Chunky Todgers remarked that he looked overdone.

"Whipped!" muttered Hacke. "Whipped by a pesky dude! Oh, thunder!"

Chunky Todgers helped him to his feet. Hacke stood unsteadily, leaning on the fat youth.

"Stranger," he gasped, "you're a more hefty galoot than I thought. You've licked me fair and square! Shake!"

He held out his hand, and Frank Richards took it cheerfully enough. Then Bob helped him on with his jacket, at the same time thumping him on the back in delight.

"Good old Franky!" he chuckled. "Who'd have thought it? Can you ride home now?"

"Well, I couldn't walk!" gasped Frank.

"Here's your plug-hat!" roared Chunky Todgers.

(Continued on page 36.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,589.

**POWERFUL YARN OF A ONE-TIME WEALTHY PLAYBOY WHO KEEPS IT
A SECRET AT SCHOOL THAT HE'S NOW POVERTY-STRICKEN!**

The Floating School!

By OWEN CONQUEST.



Old Coot, the porter, touched his hat to the juniors as they arrived at the Benbow. "We're early," said Daubeny. "Head turned up?" "Not yet, sir," replied the porter.

A New Chum!

"THIS right for Kingsford Junction?" Jack Drake started.

The St. Winifred's junior had been plunged in deep and gloomy thought as the train rattled on. He had had the carriage to himself so far, and he had hardly noticed that the train had stopped at a station. The carriage door was opened, and a boy in Etons was looking in.

Drake glanced at him, not overpleased by the interruption to his thoughts, gloomy as they were. "Yes!" he grunted.

"Thanks!"

The newcomer stepped into the carriage, closing the door after him. The train moved on.

He sat down in the corner seat opposite Jack Drake. The latter regarded him rather curiously. It was the opening day of the term at St. Winifred's, and St. Winny's fellows were converging on Kingsford Junction from all points of the compass. Drake wondered whether the stranger was a new fellow for the school on the river.

He was a fellow about Drake's own age, with a rather handsome and slightly sunburnt face, good-natured in its expression. He was very neatly and carefully dressed, but Drake, who was one of the best-dressed fellows at St. Winny's, did not need telling that his clothes had not been made by a London tailor. And he was wearing a cap—quite a contrast to Drake's own glossy topper. Toppers were not much worn at the school on the river, but it was invariable for a fellow to turn up on the first day of term in a topper.

Perhaps Drake had had, after all, enough of his own gloomy reflections, for he found himself

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interested in his companion, as the train ran on towards Kingsford. The lad opposite glanced up, met his eyes, and smiled.

"I dare say you're going to St. Winifred's, too," he remarked.

Drake nodded.

"So you're going there?" he asked.

"Yes; you are a new boy, too?"

"No fear! I was at St. Winny's before it was shifted to the old ship in the Chadway," said Drake. "I started there in the Second Form. I'm in the Fourth now."

"I'm going into the Fourth. My name's Rodney—Dick Rodney."

"Mine's Drake."

"Jolly curious thing, a school on a ship, isn't it?" said Rodney, cheerfully disposed for conversation.

"It's a bit out of the common," said Drake.

Returning to the old Benbow, the school on the river, for the new term, Jack Drake is determined to turn over a new leaf for the sake of his mother. But an irresolute nature and the force of old associations are big handicaps to overcome!

"They found out that the foundations at St. Winifred's were unsafe, and the school had to be shifted in a hurry. Some of us expected a long holiday, but we didn't get it. The Head lost no time in getting new quarters. Know anybody at St. Winny's?"

Rodney shook his head.

"No; what's the name of the ship?"

"The Benbow. Old wooden warship, you know," explained Drake. "A good bit more than a hundred years old, but as sound as a bell. It went through a lot of sea-fights in Nelson's time. It was used once as a training-ship; but it was going to be broken up, and the Head snapped it for us. The old cabins are turned into masters' studies, and there's no end of new studies rigged up between decks. It's a jolly place—"

Drake paused, and his brow clouded. St. Winny's was not likely to be very jolly for him now, in his changed circumstances. He was going back there to work—to work hard for the first

time in his life. He had promised to work his hardest to win the Foundation Scholarship. He did not regret the promise, but it weighed on his mind.

In a short time now he would find himself among his old comrades—Daubeny of the Shell, and his merry set.

How was he going to face them—to let them know the truth—that he was now one of the poorest fellows on board the Benbow—as poor as Turkey Toodles, or that rank outsider Raik?

His cheeks flushed at the thought.

"Oh, it's rotten!" he muttered aloud. "It's rotten! I—" He broke off again as he met Rodney's surprised glance, and his flush deepened. "What's rotten?" asked Rodney. "You were saying just now that it was jolly."

"Oh, nothing!"

"Seems to me it's ripping!" said Rodney. "I was jolly glad when I heard that the school was on a ship. My father was a sailor!"

"Was?" repeated Drake

"He was killed during an air-raid in China," said Rodney, very quietly, and then changed the subject immediately. "I suppose there are all sorts at St. Winifred's—poor as well as rich?"

"Oh, yes!" said Drake. "I'm one of the former sort."

"You!" ejaculated Rodney, in astonishment. "You don't look it by any means. I dare say I do; but you certainly don't!"

"I haven't exhausted my old wardrobe yet, you see," said Drake, in a bitter, sardonic tone. "When I have I shall look the part as well as live it. So you're poor, too, are you?"

"Quite!" answered the newcomer, with a smile. "I'm being taken at St. Winny's at half fees, as the son of an officer who lost his life in the Service. But for that I couldn't be taken at all. It's a glorious chance for me; I'm going to make the most of it."

"Oh, you like work?"

"Not exactly—but I can work. I know I'm going to work hard enough to stop being a burden on the mater's pension," answered Rodney cheerfully. "If I can manage that by burning the midnight oil, I shan't spare it. It won't be all games for me at St. Winny's!"

"And you feel cheery about it?"

"Why not?"

"Well, I don't!"

Dick Rodney gave the elegant, well-dressed, handsome junior of St. Winifred's a very curious look.

"But surely you're pulling my leg!" he exclaimed. "I should have taken you for a chap who's never known the need of money."

"You'd have been right up to yesterday," said Drake miserably. "Only yesterday I was chucking quids away—never dreaming I'd ever be short of tin. And then— Oh, it's rotten!"

He stared bitterly out of the window, his brows knitted.

"I'm sorry," said Rodney. "It must be a bit of a change for you."

"A bit of a change!" echoed Drake satirically. "It's more than that. I wonder what the fellows will say—chip me, very likely, some of them. What will Daub and the rest say when they know my father's a ruined man? Turn their backs on me as likely as not! Oh, it's rotten!"

"It does seem rough."

Drake glanced sharply at the new junior; but he read only kindness and sympathy in his look. The fellow was a stranger to him, but he could sympathise; and Drake more than doubted

whether he would get anything but patronising commiseration, if not the cut direct, from the "Bucks" of St. Winifred's, his old comrades. In his lonely despondency, he felt his heart warm towards the poorly dressed, sunburnt lad opposite.

"By gad!" he said. "You're going to work, Rodney—and I've got to work now, whether I like it or not. I can't keep on with that gang of slackers if I'm going to sap, even if they wanted me to. Look here, if we could dig together—that's a good idea—we could keep each other up to the mark, what?"

"I'd like nothing better!" said Rodney cheerily. "Good man!"

The two juniors shook hands. There was something in Rodney's frank face that inspired confidence. Half-unconsciously Jack Drake found himself telling his new friend of what had happened to him—of the crushing blow that had fallen upon his father, and upon his own prospects. Of his promise to his mother, and his determination to keep it, come what might. And his determination to keep that promise grew stronger as he talked.

Instinctively he realised that this quiet, resolute lad was the friend he needed at St. Winifred's—the fellow whose association and example would keep him up to the mark, and help him to keep his word.

And the two juniors were chatting away cordially, as if they had known one another for whole terms, when the train stopped at last, and a porter's hoarse voice rang out.

"Kingsford Junction!"

Back to School!

THERE was a crowd on the platform at the junction.

St. Winifred's fellows of all sorts and sizes crowded the station, waiting for the local train that was to bear them to the school.

Drake looked out as he threw open the carriage door, exchanging smiles and nods with fellows he knew.

"Here's the St. Winny's crowd, Rodney," he said. "Hallo, Toodles! So you've turned up again, as slovenly as ever!"

"Hallo, Drake, dear old boy!" said Tuckey Toodles affectionately. "Let me give you a hand down, my dear old chap!"

And a youth with a spotted collar and baggy knees came scudding up to the carriage door. Evidently that youth thought a great deal of Jack Drake, and regarded him as a fellow whom it was delightful to honour. He extended a decidedly grubby hand to him.

"I've missed you awfully in the vac, old fellow," he said. "You can't imagine how pleased I am to see you again."

"Never mind. Your pleasure won't last long, Toodles."

"Won't it?"

"No. I'm stony!"

"You stony?" ejaculated Toodles.

"Quite."

"You've been backing horses in the vac," said Toodles, with a shake of the head. "Never mind. Rely on me! I'll see you through!"

"But I mean it!" grunted Drake. "Stony! Don't you catch on?"

Toodles gave him a sharp, searching look. Then he appeared to realise that Drake was speaking in earnest.

"Excuse me, I'm looking for dear old Daub!" he exclaimed hurriedly.

And the slovenly youth melted away in the crowd.

Jack Drake laughed—a bitter laugh.

"Who's that chap?" asked Rodney.

"That's Toodles of the Fourth," said Drake. "He shares my study on the Benbow."

He jumped from the carriage, followed by Rodney. There was a surge in the well-dressed crowd, and three elegant youths came to join Drake—Daubeny & Co. of the Shell.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Daubeny. "Lookin' for you, Drake!"

"Here we are again!" grinned Torrence.

"The car's waiting, old boy," remarked Egan.

"The car?" repeated Drake.

Daubeny of the Shell nodded and smiled.

"Yaas; we're not goin' by the local train. Too jolly slow. We had to wait for you, old top, so I improved the shinin' hour by telephonin' for a car. Thoughtful of me—what? Come on!"

"But—" began Drake.

"Oh, come on!"

"I've got a friend here," said Drake—"a new chap, Rodney—"

The Bucks of St. Winifred's glanced carelessly at Dick Rodney. Daubeny jammed his eyeglass a little more tightly in his eye, as if to take a better survey of him. Rodney coloured a little. He was aware that these wealthy, well-dressed fellows "sized him up" at a single glance, and were surprised—and not pleased—to find that Drake had made friends with him. There certainly was no room for a poor scholar in Daub's expensive set at St. Winifred's.

"Awf'ly sorry! There's only room for four in the car, and we're four," drawled Daubeny. "I'm sure your—ahem!—friend will excuse us, Drake. This way, dear boy!"

"But—"

"We can talk in the car, you know; dashed crowd here. Let's get out of this."

Vernon Daubeny took Drake's arm and Egan took the other arm. Rodney did not speak or stir.

Drake gave him an irresolute glance.

"You'll excuse me, Rodney?" he muttered.

"Certainly!"

The next moment Rodney was lost in the crowd. Jack Drake was marched out of the station by his affectionate chums.

His cheeks were burning. He was aware that he had treated Rodney shabbily; and after that friendly talk in the train the new fellow had probably expected Drake to stand by him, and help him through his first day at a strange school. It had been Drake's intention to do so, and to make arrangements for Rodney to "dig" with him on the Benbow.

And here he was, walking out of the station with his laughing companions, and Dick Rodney already lost to sight. Drake hesitated, but his chums did not even notice his hesitation; they walked him on. And all the time Drake knew, rather than suspected, that his greeting would have been very different if Daub & Co. had only known the facts. They would have left him to Rodney's society willingly enough then.

Outside the station in the sunlight a big car was waiting, with a chauffeur standing by. Drake paused.

"I—" he began.

"Jump in, old top!"

"That chap Rodney—"

"Now, my dear fellow," said Vernon Daubeny, "don't be funny! Have you been cultivatin' a

new and remarkable sense of humour in the vac? You haven't made friends with that fellow?"

"But I have—"

"Who the merry thump is he?" said Egan. "Some poor rotter showing himself into the school on a scholarship?"

"Looks like it," said Torrence. "What's St. Winny's coming to? Dash it all, Drake, don't play the goat! Think of your friends before you chum up with a pushing outsider like that!"

"But—"

"The dear old boy is soft!" said Daubeny. "Always was! Just the sort of good-natured ass a pushin' boulder would fasten on to, poor old chap! But we're goin' to rescue him."

"Hear, hear!"

"Look here—" began Drake hotly.

Daubeny waved his hand.

"All serene, Drake! We're rescuin' you from undesirable acquaintances! Jump in!"

Half-resisting, Drake was helped into the car. He cast a glance towards the station, but Rodney was not to be seen. Jack settled down on the soft cushions of the car. After all, it couldn't be helped. He would see Rodney later and explain. The chauffeur was at the wheel, and the big car glided away. There was a pounding of footsteps in the road, and a crimson-faced junior rushed in pursuit.

"Hold on, Daub! Stop for me!" bawled Tuckey Toodles. "I've been looking for you everywhere!"

"Look again, old top!" replied Daubeny, with a chuckle.

"Room for one more, old fellow?"

"Scat!"

The car put on speed, leaving the unfortunate Toodles hopelessly behind. He stood in the road and shook a grubby fist.

"Yah! Snob!" he howled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The car glided on, and turned into a country road. In the distance ahead a gleam of the river could be caught now and then—the silvery Chadway, rippling on its way to the sea. Jack Drake felt his spirits rise as the big car rushed on. For the last time he felt himself his old self—one of the best set at St. Winifred's.

And in the car there was the opportunity he wanted of explaining to his old chums the change in his fortunes. He had to tell them sooner or later, and he had been feeling an anxious impatience to tell them and get it over. What reception the news would get he could hardly imagine, but he had an instinctive feeling that the cordial smiles would fade away and the cheery atmosphere would take on a freezing temperature. But it had to be!

But the task was difficult—unpleasant. His companions were chatting away in the old style, talking of their exploits in the vacation, evidently never dreaming that Jack Drake was no longer one of themselves.

Drake was silent.

He was waiting for an opportunity, he told himself—a favourable opportunity. But when opportunities came he did not take them.

After all—A new thought came into his mind. He was ashamed of it, but it lingered. After all, why need they know?

He was not called upon to make his private affairs the talk and tattle of the Benbow. They knew nothing yet. Why need they know? Without telling anyone of his changed circumstances, he could work—work hard—and keep the promise

he had made at home. He could do that without ceasing to be "somebody" in the Lower School.

Why need he explain?

He could dodge expensive stunts. Somehow the plea of work could cover all that.

He did not confess to himself that he dreaded the cold stares, the ironic smiles and shrugs of the "Bucks" of the Benbow. Perhaps they were good pals, after all, and if they weren't, why should he put them to the test and expose himself to cool insolence? After all, the least said the soonest mended. Already he was bitterly regretting that he had talked freely to Dick Rodney in the train. But Rodney did not look like the tattling sort; he would keep his mouth shut—especially if he was asked.

"Penny for 'em, old nut," said Daubeny, with a grin.

Drake started and flushed.

"I—I was thinking—"

"Don't!" said Torrence solemnly.

"I'm going to work this term," said Drake feebly. "I—I'm thinking of going in for a scholarship."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean it!" exclaimed Drake.

"Poor old Jacky!" said Daubeny, with deep commiseration. "The old folks at home—what? Roman parent, and all that. I understand; I've been there. But it will wear off, Drake, in a day or two. The giddy stern parent's out of sight now—out of sight, out of mind, you know. Cheer up!"

"We'll help you forget all about it, old boy," said Torrence.

"Depend on us!" grinned Egan. "We'll stand by you, Jack. We'll see that you don't injure your health fagging after disgusting scholarships! Leave them to rank outsiders like Estcourt."

"But—"

"Light up, dear boys!" said Daubeny, producing his cigarette-case. "No danger of bein' spotted by the beaks here. Hallo, Drake! Aren't you smokin'?"

"N-no!"

"What rot! Light up!"

And the four juniors were smoking as the car ran on. The cigarettes were pitched away at last, as they came in sight of the tall mainmast of the Benbow showing over the trees.

Straight From the Shoulder!

DAUBENY & CO. were the first of the St. Winifred's crowd to arrive. They turned out of the car, where the lane ended on the open bank of the Chadway. Green woods shut in the view on all sides. Over the trees in the distance there was a blur of smoke from the village of Chade, where the local train stopped. Before the juniors lay the shining Chadway, glimmering in the sun. On either side the eye followed long silvery reaches between the wooded banks. Close ahead of them lay the old Benbow at her moorings.

Changed as the old ship was from the old days when she had swept the seas under Nelson's flag, she was a noble vessel. The great masts still stood, with most of the spars, though the canvas was no longer there. Where the guns had looked out in former days were now the windows of schoolboy studies, tier over tier.

Jack Drake's face lighted up as he looked at the ship. He was glad to be back at St. Winifred's again—at the school on the river.

He breathed more deeply as he caught the salt flavour in the wind up—the river, from the distant sea.

"After all, it's jolly," he said.

"Oh, yaas!" assented Daubeny. "Jolly enough. We're goin' to have some good times this term, my boy. There are difficulties here we never had at old St. Winny's—not so jolly easy to get out after lights out—but where there's a will there's a way."

"Oh, quite!" yawned Torrence.

"That won't bother me, Daub. I'm not going to break bounds this term."

Daubeny smiled.

"Wait and see!" he answered.

They passed the sports ground on the river-bank, and sauntered on to the big gangway that gave admittance to the Benbow. The gangway was a permanent construction from the bank to the lower deck of the Benbow. There was a gate at the entrance, and a timber cottage, where the old porter of St. Winifred's had his dwelling. The gate stood wide open now, and old Coote, the porter, was leaning against it, smoking his pipe. He touched his hat to the juniors as they came up. Vernon Daubeny waved a gloved hand to him.

"Anybody arrived yet, Coote?" he asked. "We're early. Head turned up?"

"Not yet, sir. Mrs. Tweedie's on board, and Mr. Packe."

"Good old Packe!" said Daubeny. "I suppose we had better go and pay our respects to Packey."

"Oh, yaas!" said Egan.

The juniors walked on board.

They found Mr. Packe on the main deck. That gentleman was master of the Fourth Form of St. Winifred's. The juniors saluted him very respectfully, and Mr. Packe signed to Drake as his companions walked on. The Fourth Former dropped behind, with a sulky look already growing on his face. Mr. Packe had on what the juniors called his lecturing look.

"I am glad to see you are looking so well, Drake," said Mr. Packe. "I have heard from your father. It appears that you are entering for the Foundation Scholarship this term. Your name is down."

"Yes, sir."

"I trust, Drake, that you will make a very different showing this term from last. I was surprised when I found that your name was entered. But if you really intend to work, my boy, you have my best wishes, and you can count on any assistance I can render. I hope this means a new start, Drake—a new and better one."

DETECTIVE KERR INVESTIGATES.

Solution :

KERR: Luckily, I was able to convince Grundy that his memory was far from perfect. He had said first to Wilkins that he kept postal orders in the left flap and notes in the right, and changed this over unknowingly when he repeated it to me. Of course, he had given Trimble the pound note instead of the postal order. I had Glyn's statement that Trimble had a pound note. But I'm sure, now I've explained, that Grundy will set the matter right with the Beak—and get Trimble off!

"Oh!" said Drake, rather surprised by that kindness from the usually cold and self-contained Form-master. "I—I'm very much obliged to you, sir. I'm going to do my best."

"I am glad to hear it, Drake. I believe you have every chance of success if you do that."

"Thank you, sir!"

Drake followed his companions. The juniors found Mrs. Tweedie, the matron, in her room at the after end of the lower deck, where they delivered the usual doctors' certificates for inspection, and left their bags. Then they strolled along to Vernon Daubeny's quarters.

The Shell studies were forward on the lower deck, and the Shell went three or four to a study—there was no room to waste on the Benbow. The old portholes had been enlarged to windows, and the rooms were well lighted. Daubeny & Co. shared Study No. 3, and Jack Drake, the previous term, had spent as much time there as in his own quarters in the Fourth.

Wooden bulkheads divided the rooms, and the bulkheads in Daubeny's room were adorned with pictures, mostly of a rather sporting variety. There was an expensive carpet on the floor, and a gilt-framed mirror over a dressing-table. Daubeny glanced round the room with some satisfaction.

Then he called down the passage:

"Boy!"

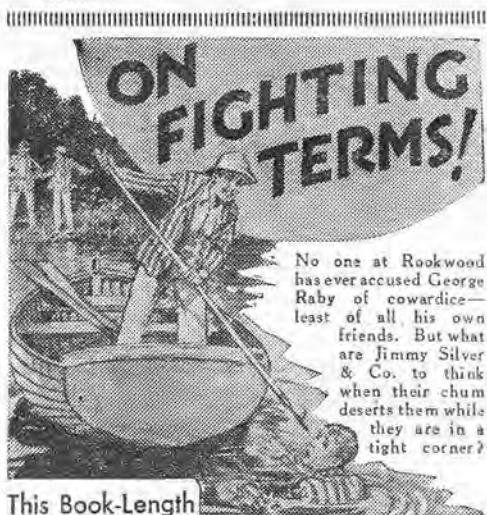
A grinning youth in buttons answered the call.

"I see you've been looking after my quarters," said Daubeny. "Good man! Have you got what I told you?"

"It's in the locker, sir."

"Good! You can cut, Tony!"

"Yessir!"



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"What's Tony been laying in for you, Daub?" asked Egan.

"Only a few smokes, and some luck. Hallo! There comes the giddy mob!"

There was a sound of buzzing voices on the bank, and the tramping of feet on the gangway. St. Winifred's had arrived—at least, a good contingent of them.

"Sit down, Drake!" said Daubeny. "Callin'-over won't be for some time. The whole mob isn't here yet."

"I—I was thinking of that new chap—"

"That shabby bouncer at the station? Never mind him!"

"He may be shabby, but he's not a bouncer," said Drake, colouring. "The fact is, I think I'll get along to my quarters."

"No hurry for that."

"I'm going to get Rodney into my study, you see," explained Drake. "We've arranged to dig together this term."

"By gad! Has the blessed outsider fastened on to you to that extent?"

"It's not like that—"

Vernon Daubeny waved his hand.

"It is like that—just like that, dear boy," he interrupted. "We can't have this. My advice is to give the bouncer a wide berth."

"I can't. I don't want to, either. We're going to work together."

"You—sap?"

"Yes, if you like to call it that."

"Old man, we were looking forward to such good times this term," said Egan, quite pathetically. "You're not going back on your old pals?"

"But—you see—" It was on Drake's lips to tell his old pals the reason why he was going back on them. But he did not. The longer he put off that difficult task, the more difficult he found it to face.

Daubeny closed one eye at Egan.

"Leave him to me," he said. "I'll tell you what I'll do, Drake. You squat down here, and I'll go and find your new chum and bring him here. We'll make much of him, and make him one of ourselves."

"You're a good sort, Daub," said Drake gratefully, much relieved.

"Don't metch, old fellow. You come with me, Egan. You others look in the locker and get out what's in there."

Daubeny and Egan left the study. In the corridor without, Egan looked at his companion very dubiously.

"I suppose you're spoofing," he remarked. "You're not going to ask that shabby outsider into our quarters, Daub?"

Daubeny's lip curled contemptuously.

"Hardly," he answered. "Drake's soft, that's all. That shabby cad has fastened on to him—I know the kind he is. We're not goin' to let Drake fall under bad influences!"

"Bad!" murmured Egan.

"That's the word. Come on, we've got to find that fellow Rodney."

"Not going to ask him to the study?"

"I fancy he wouldn't care to come to the study, after what I'm goin' to say to him."

Egan chuckled, and followed his comrade up to the main deck.

They found themselves in the midst of a crowd of buzzing St. Winifred's fellows. There were friendly calls to Daubeny on all sides—Vernon Daubeny was a great man in the Lower School. He received some nods, too, from the Fifth and

Sixth Form fellows. But Daubeny did not heed his friends; he was looking for Dick Rodney.

He found the new junior at last, in company with Tuckey Toodles; for whose company, however, he did not seem to be showing any great yearning.

"I'll show you the way, Rodney, dear old boy," Toodles was remarking. "You come down here—these steps—to the stewards' quarters—"

"But I don't want to see the steward." "That's where you get the tuck—the canteen, we call it," explained Toodles. "I'll tell you what to get, and what to pay for it."

"Thanks! I don't want—"

"Oh, here you are!" said Daubeny, tapping Dick Rodney lightly on the shoulder.

Rodney glanced round, looking at him inquiringly.

"Well?" he said.

"I want to speak to you, kid," said Daubeny. "Come along with me a minute or two, will you? Egan, dear boy, will you kick Toodles down the steps?"

Tuckey Toodles scudded off without waiting to be kicked. Rodney, in some surprise, allowed Daubeny to lead him along to the Form-rooms. The junior Form-rooms were aft, on the main deck, and that part of the Benbow was quite deserted.

In the Form-room passage, out of sight of the St. Winifred's crowd, Vernon Daubeny stopped. He turned his eyeglass upon the surprised face of the new boy, with so insolent an expression that Rodney flushed angrily under his gaze.

"What do you want with me?" rapped out Rodney.

"Just a word or two, my fine fellow," said Daubeny, in a drawing tone. "I find that you've glued yourself on to a friend of mine. You needn't trouble to tell me who you are—I've sized you up. I know your sort. I've no doubt it suits your book to tie yourself on to one of the wealthiest fellows in the school, takin' advantage of his good nature. I've got a warnin' for you. It won't work."

Rodney's face was crimson.

"You cheeky cad!" he burst out. "What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say," answered Daubeny coolly. "It won't work! I'm not havin' my pal Drake plundered by a shabby outsider, my fine fellow. I tell you I know your game. You'll keep your distance. You squeezed some sort of a promise out of Drake to take you up, and let you into his study, and all that. Drake's ashamed to own up, but I've seen how the matter stands—"

"Ashamed!" exclaimed Rodney.

"Ashamed of havin' made friends with a sneakin', shabby cad!" said Daubeny deliberately. "He's asked me to let you know you can't dig with him. I'm lettin' you know—and statin' my own opinion at the same time."

Rodney's eyes blazed.

"If Drake gave you that message, he's as big

11 MORE STAMPS!

See page 2.



as big as you are!" he exclaimed. "But I don't believe it. You're lying!"

"What!" shouted Daubeny.

"Lying!" said Rodney quietly.

Daubeny's eyes blazed. He let his eyeglass drop to the end of its cord, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Listen to me, you shabby cad," he said, between his teeth, "you've got to let Drake alone, do you understand?"

"That's for Drake to decide," said Rodney disdainfully. "I certainly shan't take any orders from you."

"That's enough! Back up, Egan—we'll give the cad a raggin' to begin with, to teach him manners."

"Oh, quite!" chuckled Egan.

"So that's why you got me here?" Rodney exclaimed scornfully.

"Mind he doesn't cut, Egan—"

"I'm not going to cut," said Rodney. His hands went up as Vernon Daubeny made a rush at him. "Would you?"

Daubeny found his blows knocked aside, and something that seemed like a lump of iron—but which was Rodney's clenched fist—came on his nose with a terrific impact.

Daubeny of the Shell staggered back, with a red spurt from his noble nose.

"Ow! Ooooh!"

Rodney, his hands still up, eyed him warily. Daubeny dabbed his nose with a cambric handkerchief, which came away crimson. His eyes were burning with rage.

"Back up, Egan, you ass!" he muttered.

"I'm with you, Daub."

And the two "Bucks" of St. Winifred's rushed on Rodney together. The new junior backed away a couple of paces, his hands up, his eyes watchful. There was a squeak from the end of the passage. It came from Tuckey Toodles.

"Hallo! My hat! Go for him, Daub, dear old boy! Shall I help you? I'll see you through."

Crash! Bump! Rodney had stopped backing.

and his fists were in rapid play. Two to one, the angry "Bucks" should certainly have succeeded in downing the new boy. But it did not happen. The sailor's son was made of sterner stuff than the elegant "Bucks."

His fist came home on Daubeny's already injured nose, and the great Daub uttered a howl of anguish as he went headlong to the floor. At the same moment Rodney received a drive from Egan—hardly noticing it. He returned it with a hot attack; and in a few seconds Egan was sprawling beside his leader.

"Want any more?" asked Rodney grimly.

"Ow! Ow! Gerraway! Ow!"

"Gerraway, you hooligan! Ow!"

Dick Rodney shrugged his shoulders and walked away up the passage—and Tuckey Toodles melted away as he came. And Rodney, with a smile on his face, strolled back to the main deck.

(Next Week: "The 'Sap' of St. Winifred's!")

"How do you feel, Franky?" grinned Bob, as they trotted along the forest trail in the red sunset.

Frank made a grimace.

"Rotten!" he said. "How do I look?"

"Rotten!" chuckled Bob. "You've got a black eye, and the other a beautiful pink, and a swollen nose, and a cut lip—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Altogether, you wouldn't take a prize in a beauty show. But you've made a friend of Eben Hacke, if that's any consolation."

"I—I say," gasped Frank, "what will your father think, Bob?"

"He'll think you've enjoyed your first day at the school in the backwoods!" roared Bob. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And Frank Richards laughed, too, as he rode on to the ranch.

(Next Wednesday: "A Grizzly at Cedar Creek!")

AN INNOCENT IN THE BACKWOODS!

(Continued from page 29.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And—and I ain't smashed it!" gasped Eben Hacke. "I was going to jump on that plug-hat and make a concertina of it. I guess I won't now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can to-morrow," said Frank, laughing. "You won't see me in a plug-hat again while I'm this side of the Rockies."

Bob helped his cousin up on his pony. Once in the saddle, Frank rode away on his homeward trail, sitting firmly enough. The perforated topper adorned his head for the last time in British Columbia.

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