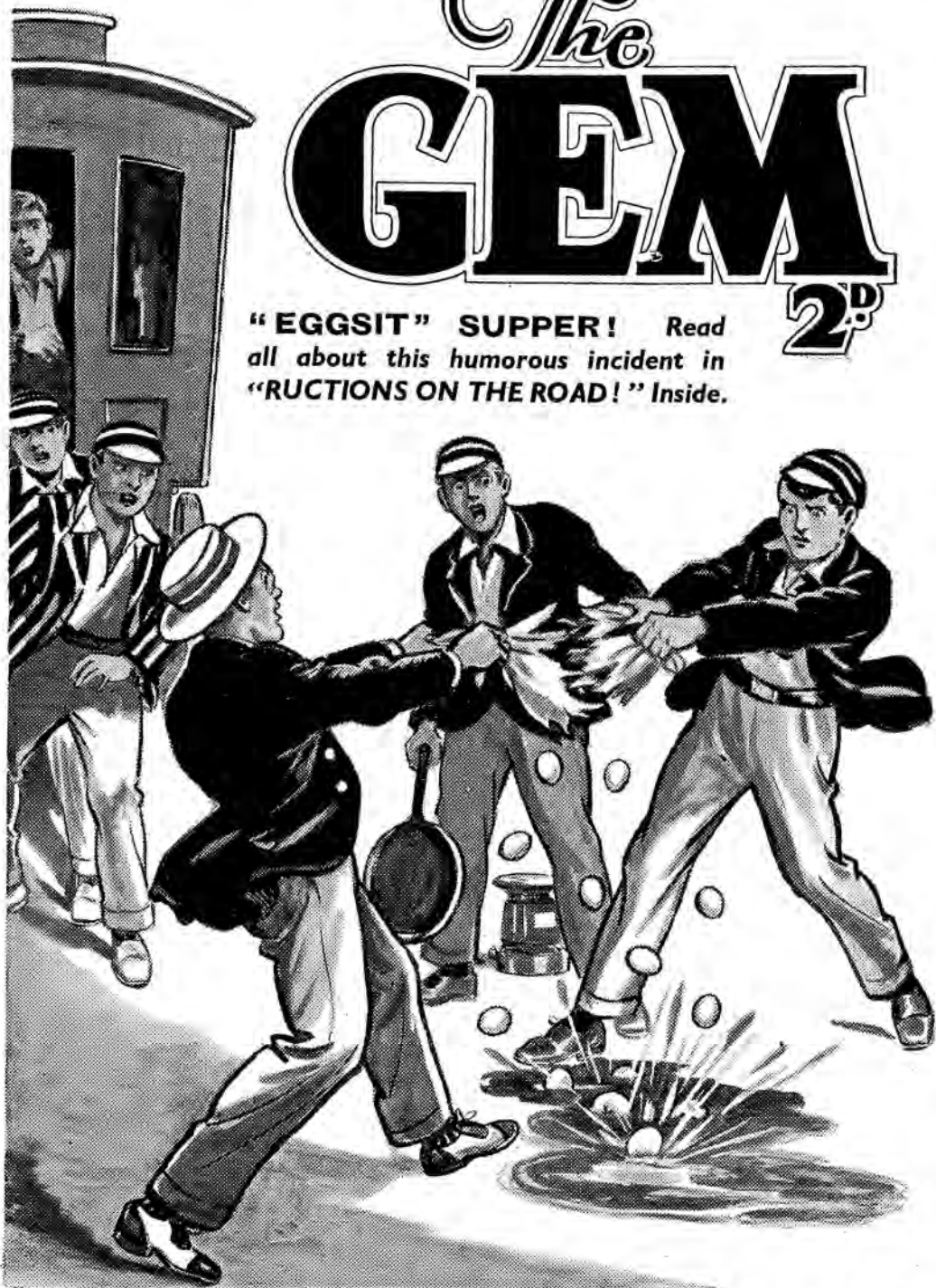


FOOTBALLS FOR GOALSCORERS!

SEE OUR GREAT FREE
OFFER ON PAGE 2.

The **GEM** 2^D

"EGGSIT" SUPPER! Read
all about this humorous incident in
"RUCTIONS ON THE ROAD!" Inside.



OUR NEW STAMP-COLLECTING SCHEME!

JOIN IN
TO-DAY!



1000 FREE FOOTBALLS

for Scoring "Goals" with FOOTER-STAMPS

ARE you collecting FOOTER-STAMPS? They're all the rage, and you really must be in this wonderful scheme!

This is what to do: Every week in GEM we are giving "Footer-Stamps"—pictures of six different actions on the football field—the object of this great stamp-game being to score as many "goals" as possible in time for the first prize-giving next week, when the first 250 footballs are to be awarded.

**TO SCORE A "GOAL" you must collect a complete set of six stamps (they're numbered 1 to 6), made up of the following movements:
KICK-OFF — DRIBBLE — TACKLE — HEADER — SHOT — GOAL.**

Easy, isn't it? The more stamps you collect the more "goals" you can score. (Note that the "goal" stamp by itself does NOT count as a "goal"; you must get a set of the stamps 1 to 6 each time.)

We give ten more stamps this week—five below and five others on Page 35. Cut them out and try to "score a goal"; then keep all your stamps until you get some more in our next issue.

If you want to score some other quick "goals," remember that "Footer-Stamps" are also appearing in "Modern Boy" and "Magnet." There are more goals waiting in those papers!

Keep at it, pals, because the August contest will close next week, and we shall then ask you how many "goals" you have scored. Up to 250 of the FREE footballs are going to be awarded then—to readers scoring the highest number of "goals" with "Footer-Stamps" for the month. More footballs will be given in the next month, and so on.

Don't send any stamps until we tell you how and where next week, when the closing date will be announced.

FIVE "FOOTER-STAMPS" HERE—FIVE MORE ON PAGE 35!



A MEETING WITH CUTTS & CO. ADDS NOT A LITTLE EXCITEMENT TO THE TOUR OF THE ST. JIM'S CARAVANNERS!

Ructions on the Road!



Six sturdy juniors had their grasp on Cutts, and he was rolled in the dust. Wild howls came from the Fifth Former as he rolled. But the caravanners had no mercy on him.

CHAPTER 1.

An Old Acquaintance!

"KEEP to the left!" sang out Tom Merry. The St. Jim's caravan was rolling along a chalky road in Bucks.

Study No. 6 were sitting on the caravan. The Terrible Three were walking with the horse. They were taking it easy, proceeding at a very leisurely pace while looking out for a suitable camp.

The beautiful county of Buckinghamshire was looking its best in the glorious summer weather, and the seven caravanners of St. Jim's were enjoying themselves.

Arthur Augustus had a map spread out on his knees, studying the roads. Nearly every turning that the caravan passed Arthur Augustus announced was "wight for Aylesbuwy," but Tom Merry kept on with the horse. He did not trust to Gussy's judgment in the matter of maps.

The caravan was approaching a sharp turning when the roar of a motor-cycle was heard approaching round the corner.

Jack Blake gave a jerk on the rein, and Circumstances, the horse, swerved in to the left, to give the motor-cyclist plenty of room to come round the corner.

A thick bunch of oaks at the corner hid the approaching motor-cyclist from view, and the St. Jim's juniors could only hear his engine.

"Bai Jove! That uttah ass is on the w'ong side."

Arthur Augustus uttered that startled exclamation as the motor-cyclist came in sight, whirling round the corner on the wrong side of the road.

Blake dragged at the reins. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther all caught the horse's head at the same moment. The caravan halted.

Round the corner came the motor-bike at a great speed, with a rather handsome, reckless-looking youth mounted upon it.

It looked for a moment as if a collision was inevitable.

Tom Merry caught his breath, in expectation of seeing the reckless rider crash headlong into either the horse or the caravan.

"Oh!"

"Look out!"

The motor-cyclist saw his danger, however, and swerved just-in time, so closely that he nearly grazed the van.

The motor-bike wobbled and tottered, and the next instant crashed into the hedge.

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By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

When the St. Jim's holiday party falls foul of Cutts & Co., who are old enemies, trouble soon follows. But it takes a more serious turn than Tom Merry & Co. expect!

"Gweat Scott!"

"That's done it!" said Blake.

"The careless ass!" growled Herries.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther left the horse and ran towards the hapless rider.

The motor-bike was roaring in the hedge, but the rider had been tossed off into the grass beside the road, and was sprawling there. He sat up as the chums of St. Jim's reached him. He blinked at them dazedly.

Then there was an exclamation from all three Shell fellows at once.

"Cutts!"

It was Gerald Cutts of the Fifth Form at St. Jim's—quite an old acquaintance of the juniors, though not a friendly one.

"Not hurt, Cutts?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh!" gasped Cutts.

"Let's give him a hand up, anyhow," said Manners.

"Hang you!"

"Eh?"

Cutts of the Fifth staggered to his feet. He

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### GIVE OTHER READERS A LAUGH—AND WIN SOME POCKET-MONEY!

Half-a-crown is awarded to every reader who has a joke published in The GEM. Try your luck to-day. Send your joke on a postcard to The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

~~~~~

did not seem to be hurt, beyond a shaking, but he was certainly very angry.

"Confound you and your fool van!" he gasped.

"What the thump did you get that contraption in the way for?"

"Your own fault," answered Tom Merry quietly. "You should look where you're going."

"Have you bought up all the roads in Buckinghamshire, by any chance, Cutts?" inquired Monty Lowther blandly.

"Hang your cheek!" gasped Cutts. "You might have broken my neck!"

"You might have broken it yourself, certainly," agreed Tom Merry. "If it's any value, I shouldn't risk it like that."

"Probably it isn't," observed Lowther.

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy jumped down from the van and came up to the spot.

The angry Fifth Former looked as if trouble was coming, and Study No. 6 were ready to give him all the trouble he wanted.

"I must remark that you are wathah an un-reasonable chap, Cutts!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "You might have injahed our horse by wunnin' into it. I considah that the accident has turned out vewy luckly. Only you and your bike have been injahed."

"You young idiot!"

"Weally, Cutts—"

The Fifth Former glared at the juniors, and looked for a moment or two inclined to rush upon them. But probably it occurred to him that for one to rush on seven was rather too large an order. He muttered something under his breath, which it was just as well the juniors did not hear, and

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turned to his unfortunate motor-bike and dragged it from the hedge.

"Can we help you?" inquired Tom Merry, rather politely.

Gruft from Cutts.

"Yaas, wathah! I certainly wegard you as a weckless ass. But we should be quite willin' to wendah help."

"Oh, shut up!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Cutts—"

"Hold your tongue!"

Arthur Augustus' eye glinted behind his eyeglass. He pushed back his cuffs, and Jack Blake grabbed his arm.

"Well, what's the game?" Blake demanded.

"I am goin' to give Cutts a feahful thwashin', Blake!"

"Bow-wow! Come on!"

"This way to the van, as Cutts doesn't want our help," said Tom Merry. "We've got to find a camp before dark."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Yank him along by the ears," said Manners.

"I wefuse to be yanked along by the yahs, Mannahs. I wegard the suggestion as utahly widiculous. Howevah, if you fellows are in a huwwy, I will not waste time thwashin' Cutts."

It did not occur to Gussy that he might have found considerable difficulty in thrashing the big Fifth Former of St. Jim's. However, he gave up his warlike intentions, and walked back to the van with his comrades.

Circumstances was cropping the rich grass by the roadside, and seemed loth to give up that agreeable occupation; but Tom Merry persuaded him to turn into the road again.

"We'll get on the van now," remarked Tom. "You fags can walk a bit."

"Whom are you calling fags?" inquired Jack Blake.

"My mistake!" said Tom. "I mean you estimable young gentlemen of the Fourth Form."

"Oh, let's get ahead!" said Herries. "I'm hungry!"

The Terrible Three climbed on the van, and Blake & Co. walked with Circumstances—heading that somewhat determined animal off the grass every time he started for it. There was no reason why Circumstances shouldn't wait for his supper till the caravanners had theirs, but he did not seem to see it.

The van was swinging on cheerily in the sunset once more, when there was a sound of running feet behind, and a voice shouted:

"Hold on! Stop!"

Cutts of the Fifth came up breathlessly.

CHAPTER 2.

Cutts Asks for It!

TOM MERRY pulled in the horse. "Well, what's wanted, Cutts?" he asked. Gerald Cutts breathed hard. He was still looking angry, but at the same time forcing himself to be civil.

"Which way are you kids going?" he asked.

"We're going to camp a bit nearer Aylesbury," answered Tom Merry.

"You are not keeping on to the Chilterns?"

"To-morrow," answered Tom, "we intend to go on through Wendover."

"Oh!" said Cutts, and he paused.

"Anything else?" asked the captain of the Shell politely. He did not quite see what Cutts was driving at.

"Well, my bike's smashed up," said the Fifth Former. "I can't ride it again."

"Sorry!"

"Yaas, wathah! I assuah you of my sympathy, Cutts, though it was weally your own fault, you know."

Cutts sniffed.

Arthur Augustus' sympathy did not seem of much use to him.

"I want a lift," he said.

"Oh!" said Tom. "A lift for you—that's easy enough, but I don't know about sticking the motor-bike on the caravan."

"Couldn't be done," said Herries.

"It would be vewy liable to scwatch the paint, I think. The push-bike we have hangin' on is wathah a wovvy sometimes, Cutts."

"I can't leave the motor-bike by the roadside!" growled the dandy of the Fifth.

"I suppose not." Tom Merry hesitated, and looked at his chums inquiringly. "What do you fellows say?"

"Rot!" was Herries' opinion.

"Well, the chap's stranded," said Manners. "It's his own fault; but he's stranded. After all, he's a St. Jim's chap!"

"I suppose we could manage it," said Tom slowly. "It won't be much of a lift, though, Cutts; we're not going all the way to Aylesbury."

"I don't want to go to Aylesbury."

"That's all right, then."

"I'm bound for a house on the Chilterns—past Wendover," explained Cutts. "I want a lift in that direction."

"We're not going Wendover way to-day," said Tom.

"Well, I want you to!"

"Eh?"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm bound for St. Leger's place, near Wendover," grunted Cutts. "It's past Wendover—right on the Chiltern Hills. You may have heard of it—St. Leger Lodge!"

"Never heard of it," said Tom Merry. "I fancy you'll have to use Shanks' pony, Cutts. We're not going that way."

"It's only about a mile past Wendover."

"And Wendover's five miles farther than we intend to go to-day," said Tom. "We've done a good distance already, Cutts, and we're looking for a camp. I doubt if our horse could do it—if we wanted to."

"And we don't want to!" exclaimed Blake warmly. "Blessed if I ever heard of such a nerve!"

"Cheek!" said Digby.

Tom Merry was keeping patient; but the other fellows were showing very visible signs of impatience.

Cutts' request was really too cool. It was no joke to give a lift to a damaged motor-bike and its owner—a fellow with whom they were on bad terms at school. But to go six miles out of their way, at the end of the day's tramp, was a little too much.

"Look here, St. Leger's expecting me to dinner," said Cutts surlily. "You know St. Leger of the Fifth—he's got a little party there on his own while his pater's away. I'm not going to miss it. I should have been nearly there by now if you hadn't come along with your dashed van."

"If you hadn't run into the hedge like a clumsy owl, you mean!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Really, Cutts, you know——" murmured Tom Merry, not quite knowing what to say.

"Will you do it?"

"Can't be done!"

"Look here, I'll pay you for your trouble," said Cutts roughly. "I'll stand you a quid. Now, get the bike on!"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry's eyes glistened.

"That's enough, Cutts!" he said. "Gee-up, old hoss!" The latter remark was addressed to Circumstances.

The caravan moved.

"You refuse my offer?" snapped Cutts.

"Oh, don't be a fool! Do you think we want your money?" snapped Blake.

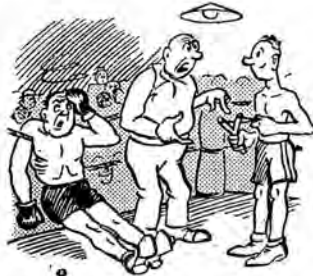
"I'll make it a couple of quids, you greedy young rascals!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry. He was at the end of his patience.

"Yaas, wathah! Dwy up, you uttah wottah!"

Cutts stared after the caravanners as they moved on. He strode after them and rejoined the party.

"Look here, Tom Merry——" he recommenced.



"Maybe your name is David, but you can't bring that thing in here!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to "A Reader," 35, Westcliffe Road, West Derby, Liverpool 12.

"No good talking—go and eat coke!" answered Tom.

"Run away and play, old top!" said Digby.

"I've got to get to St. Leger Lodge——"

"Walk!" suggested Herries. "You can push your bike along, you know. Or take it under your arm."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A sudden backhander from Cutts caught George Herries on the ear, and the Fourth Former staggered across the road.

"That's for your cheek!" growled Cutts.

"Now——"

Herries staggered for a moment, and then he whirled round on Cutts. His eyes blazed as he rushed at the Fifth Former.

Blake, Digby and D'Arcy rushed after him.

"Stand back!" roared Cutts. "I— Take that! Oh——"

A fierce drive from Cutts sent Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was nearest, spinning.

The next moment Gerald Cutts himself was spinning, with three pairs of hands on him. He went down into the dusty road with a crash.

Arthur Augustus sat up dazedly.

"Collar him, deah boys!" he gasped. "Oh cwumbs! Wag him!"

Blake & Co. were ragging Cutts fast enough, without waiting for Gussy's bidding.

The Terrible Three jumped down from the van to lend a hand. Six sturdy juniors had their grasp on Cutts, and he was rolled in the dust till he looked nearly all dust from head to foot.

Wild howls and ejaculations came from the Fifth Former as he rolled. But the juniors had no mercy on him. Boxing Fourth Form ears was quite unpardonable. Herries had both hands fastened on Cutts' collar, and he was rubbing the Fifth Former's nose vengefully in the chalk dust on the road.

A motor-car booted by, the occupants staring blankly at the strange scene as they passed.

The juniors did not heed. Gerald Cutts had asked for a lesson, and they meant to give him one.

And Gerald Cutts of the Fifth had it—there was no doubt about that. He was breathless, gasping, and smothered with chalky dust when the juniors finally rolled him into the ditch by the roadside.

There was not much water in the ditch, but there were plenty of nettles.

Cutts roared and raged as he sprawled in them. "There, I think that will do!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He hasn't had enough!" howled Herries.

Cutts essayed to crawl out of the ditch, and Herries rushed on him and hurled him back.

The Fifth Former sprawled in the nettles again, yelling.

Tom Merry & Co., chuckling, seized Herries and dragged him away.

"Enough's as good as a feast, old chap!" chuckled Blake.

"Look at my ear!" roared Herries.

"It's a thing of beauty!" remarked Monty Lowther. "A beautiful crimson, old scout! It beats the merry sunset!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme gerrat him——"

"I weally think he has had enough, Hewwies, to judge by his wemarks. Let us wethah."

The caravanners dragged Herries away, and Cutts was left to sort himself out of the bed of nettles at his leisure.

The caravan rolled on along the road, Herries rubbing his ear and still snorting.

Farther along the white road, the caravanners looked back, in time to see Gerald Cutts crawl out of the ditch and shake a furious fist after them.

"Cutts looked wathah watty," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wathah think he will be late for dinnah with St. Leger of the Fifth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The caravanners chuckled, and walked on.

CHAPTER 3.

The Mystery of Aylesbury!

"THIS looks all right for a camp."

"Yes, rather! Halt!"

Circumstances willingly came to a halt on the green stretch of grass beside the road. He began cropping the grass at once, without waiting to be taken out of harness.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spread out his map on the horse's neck and blinked at it carefully. He announced that the caravanners were about a mile from Aylesbury, and that what looked like a big whale's back on the horizon was the Chiltern Hills.

"I will wun into Aylesbuwy on the bike and do some shoppin'," he said. "You fellows can camp while I'm gone."

The bike was taken down, and Gussy looked to the tyres.

Herries gave a grunt.

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"Not much good Gussy going shopping," he said. "You know how he manages it."

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Oh, let him go!" said Blake. "He won't be in the way while we're camping if he buzzes off to Aylesbury. I'll get along to the farm yonder and see if there's any milk to be had, and cheese."

"You've got the list of things, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry. "We're out of nearly everything."

"Wely on me, deah boy!"

"There's no need to go as far as Aylesbury," remarked Manners. "There's a village round the corner yonder; I can see the chimneys."

"Bettah go to town, deah boy. It's only a mile, and I shall do that in a few minutes on the bike."

And Arthur Augustus threw an elegant leg over the bicycle and started.

Tom Merry & Co. proceeded with the duties of camping.

Monty Lowther brought out the Primus stove and put in the paraffin, carefully straining it in—a detail which the great Gussy sometimes overlooked when he was in charge of the stove. Then the methylated spirit was poured into the spirit cup and lighted, and in a minute the stove was buzzing away merrily.

Digby had filled the kettle at a neighbouring stream, and it was jammed on the stove.

Herries was disposing of the horse, tethering him on the grass beside the road, after giving him a drink.

Tom Merry was grinding coffee, and Blake was washing plates and pans. Manners was regarding the sunset with a critical eye, mentally debating whether the light was suitable for taking photographs.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was wheeling away cheerfully on the dusty road to Aylesbury, with a long list of goods in his pocket which were to be purchased in the town.

On the road he came in sight of a dusty youth wheeling a damaged motor-bike, and recognised Cutts of the Fifth.

Cutts was inquiring his way of a passer-by, who was answering him as Gussy wheeled by.

"Keep on to the signpost, and take the turning there for Western Turville, and that takes you into the road for Wendover——"

"How far?" interrupted Cutts.

"About four miles."

"Oh gad!"

Cutts had his back to the road as Gussy wheeled by, and he had not observed the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus reached out and playfully tipped Cutts' cap over his eyes as he passed. Cutts spun round, with an enraged exclamation.

Arthur Augustus pedalled on, smiling, and Cutts, recognising him, rushed in savage pursuit, leaving the motor-bike against a tree. His heavy footsteps rang on the hard road behind Arthur Augustus, who glanced over his shoulder and grinned.

"Wace you to Aylesbuwy, Cutts!" he called back.

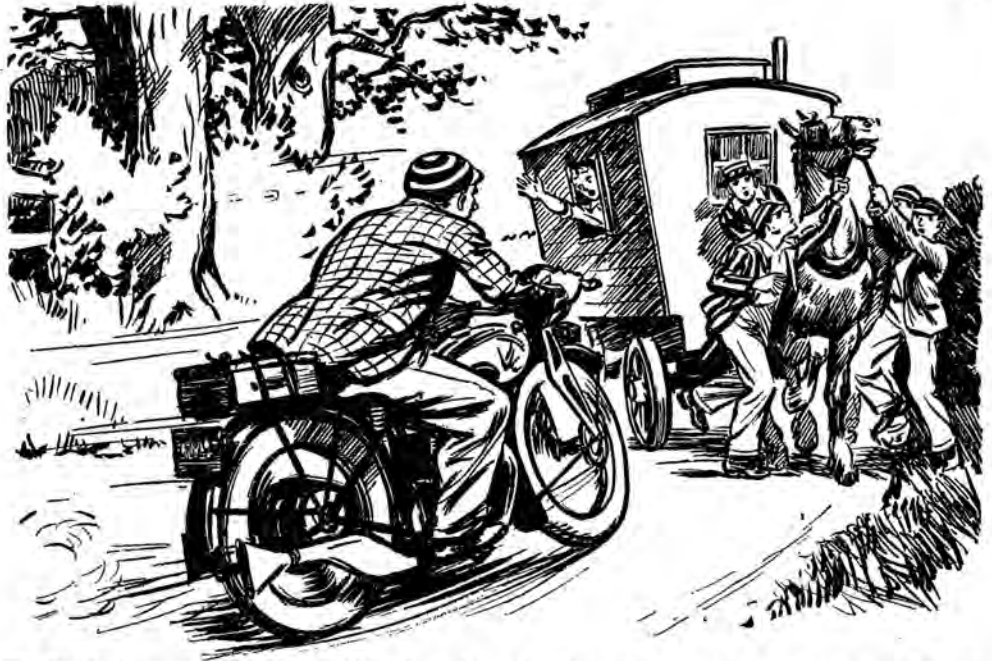
"You young scoundrel!" panted Cutts. "I'll smash you!"

"Wats!"

Cutts was running hard, anxious for vengeance upon any member of the St. Jim's caravan party, but he had not much chance against a bicycle.

He gave it up at last, and stood in the road, shaking his fist furiously, as Arthur Augustus pedalled on merrily to Aylesbury.

"Cutts is wathah an ass!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as he looked back again.



The St. Jim's caravanners all caught the horse's head at the same moment as the motor cyclist took the corner on the wrong side of the road. The caravan halted—but it seemed as if a collision was inevitable.

The dandy of the Fifth was striding back to where he had left his motor-bike. Arthur Augustus pedalled on, and was soon riding into Aylesbury.

He looked about him for the shops, but was rather dismayed to find that they were closed. He rode on into the market square, and found the shops there all closed. He jumped off his machine at last, looking round him in puzzled dismay.

There was a plump policeman in the square, and Arthur Augustus tackled him.

"Anythin' happened here, officah?" he inquired. "The shops appear to be shut up."

The policeman looked at him.

"Thursday!" he said.

"Yes, I am aware that it is Thursday," answered Arthur Augustus, rather surprised at being given that apparently superfluous information. "But I was speakin' about the shops. Do they usually close so early in the day?"

"No."

"But they all appear to be closed now."

"Thursday!"

"Eh?"

"Thursday!"

And the policeman walked on, leaving Arthur Augustus blinking after him over his bike.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "That is a vewy wemarkable policeman! Instead of givin' a chap information, he simply repeats the name of the day of the week like a pawvot! I wondah if he is potty!"

Arthur Augustus wheeled his machine on, and halted to address a ruddy-complexioned native who was smoking his pipe in the square.

"Pway excuse me," he said politely, "but can you tell me if there are any shops open in Aylesbury?"

"No, sir."

"All closed?"

"Thursday!" said the agricultural gentleman.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was perfectly aware that it was Thursday. The information really seemed a little superfluous. He walked on, and tackled another inhabitant.

"Pway can you tell me where there is a gwocah's shop open?" he asked.

The man shook his head.

"Thursday!" he answered.

"Oh ewikey!"

In answer to the most simple of questions, everyone in Aylesbury seemed to be able only to repeat the name of the day. It was really extraordinary.

Arthur Augustus gave up seeking information about that. He looked round for a grocer's shop, and found one, which was closed like the rest; but he observed that the upper part of the house was used as a dwelling-place, and decided that the grocer was probably at home. So he knocked on the door.

He knocked for some time, unheeded; but finally a window above was opened, and a fat face and a bald head came into view. The fat face was not looking good-tempered.

"What do you want?" demanded the owner of the face.

"I want to do some shopping—"

"Nonsense!"

"But, weally, I have come here to do some

shoppin', and it is wathah disconcertin' to find all the shops closed," protested Arthur Augustus warmly. "Pway why are the shops closed?"

"Thursday!"

"Eh?"

"Thursday!"

Slam!

The window closed.

Arthur Augustus blinked up at the window in amazement.

"This is vewy remarkable," he murmured. "I weally seem to have dwopped into a lunatic asylum. Instead of answevin' my questions, ewevybody wepeats the name of the day like a beastly pawwot. Eithah the people in Aylesbury are a set of vewy odd pwactical jokahs, or else they are potty. I weally think I had bettah cleah off."

And Arthur Augustus cleared off. Evidently there was nothing doing in Aylesbury that afternoon, whatever the mysterious reason was.

CHAPTER 4.

Short Commons!

"WELL?"

Tom Merry & Co. surrounded Arthur Augustus as he rode up to the caravan camp in the leafy lane.

The carrier of his bike was empty, and his pockets were not bulging, and the juniors wondered where the supplies were.

Arthur Augustus dismounted.

"I have had a vewy remarkable expewience," he said breathlessly.

"Have you got the grub?" demanded Herries.

"I have not got the gwub, Hewwies."

"Ass!"

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by Eric Roche

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"I wefuse to be called an ass!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "It is not my fault that Aylesbury seems to have gone potty. I have had a vewy remarkable expewience indeed. I found all the shops closed—"

"Well?"

"And ewevyone I inquired of made an uttably iwvelevant weply. Instead of wepylin' to my questions, the people there all wepeated like pawwots the same word."

Tom Merry & Co. stared at Arthur Augustus. His statement was so very remarkable that they could not help being astonished.

"Been asleep on your bike and dreaming?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I have not been dweamin', you ass!"

"Well, what's happened, then?"

"I asked no end of people for a shop, and they all weplied in the same way, without any welevance in their remarks at all," said Arthur Augustus. "They all wepeated the same word like pawwots."

"My hat!"

"And what was the word?" asked Blake, utterly mystified.

"Ewvry chap I asked simply said 'Thursday'—just as if that had anythin' to do with the mattah."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I do not see anythin' to laugh at in this remarkable conduct of the inhabitants of Aylesbury."

"Oh, you ass!" gasped Tom Merry. "I suppose Thursday is early closing day in Aylesbury, that's all."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Haven't you heard of early closing days, ass?"

"Yaas, now I come to think of it, I certainly have. Tom Mewwy; but I don't see why—"

"Well, fathead, it looks as if Thursday is early closing day in Aylesbury, and as to-day's Thursday, it's not specially mysterious to find the shops closed there. Got that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus reflected.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that," he confessed. "But, weally, you know, they might have explained—"

"Perhaps they thought that your brain-powers were equal to figuring it out," suggested Monty Lowther. "They couldn't know, of course, that you belong to a noble family, unless you mentioned it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus.

But the swell of St. Jim's was feeling quite relieved. The explanation was a simple one, though it had not occurred to Gussy's mighty brain.

"And now, as Gussy chooses early closing days for shopping, what are we going to have for supper?" inquired Herries.

"I weally did not choose an early closin' day, Hewwies—"

"We've bagged some eggs at the farm," remarked Jack Blake. "We can manage with them; I've got some lettuces, too."

"Lettuce cook the eggs, then," said Monty Lowther, feeling that this was a chance too good to be missed.

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as a wotten pun, Lowtah. Howevah, I will cook the eggs, if you have got the stove goin'—"

"You jolly well won't!" answered Herries,

with emphasis. "We've got only the eggs between us and famine, and you're jolly well not going to monkey about with them."

"If you mean to imply that I cannot cook eggs, Hewwies—"

"Bow-wow!"

"In the circs, as Hewwies chooses to be imper-tinent, I shall insist upon cookin' the eggs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "I wegard all Hewwies' wemarks as bein' in the worst of taste."

"Rats!"

Herries picked up the bag of eggs to make sure of them; but Arthur Augustus was in earnest. He seized the bag firmly.

"Pway let go, Hewwies—"

"Let go, you ass!"

"I insist upon your weleasin' this bag at once, Hewwies—"

"You silly chump—"

"Don't break those eggs!" roared Blake. "I've just given four bob for them."

"You heah what Blake says, Hewwies. We-lease this bag."

"Do you want me to punch your silly nose, Gussy?"

"I should wefuse to have my nose punched, Hewwies, in any circs whatevah. I feel bound to insist upon cookin' the eggs—"

"Leggo!"

"Wats!"

"Look out!" shrieked Tom Merry.

There was a rending sound. The bag was made of paper, and it really was not designed for a tug of war. It parted in the middle.

When the bag parted in the middle, the law of gravitation did the rest.

The eggs crashed to the ground.

Smash!

"Oh crumbs!"

"Hewwies, you uttah ass—"

"Oh, you crass idiot!" yelled Herries.

"There goes our supper!" raved Blake. "Oh, you dummy! Bump him!"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"I weally considah that that obstinate ass Hewwies ought to be bumped! I— Yawwooh! Leggo! You uttah asses—"

Bump, bump!

It was Arthur Augustus who was bumped—much to his astonishment and indignation. He was bumped in the eggs. It was the only thing they were fit for now, as Lowther remarked.

Then the caravanners set about preparing a light—a very light—supper.

Arthur Augustus did not help them. He was engaged for an hour, at least, in scraping fragments of eggs from his trousers, and all the while he was making remarks to his comrades which ought to have withered them.

But they did not look at all withered. And they finished supper cheerily, while Gussy was still scraping his eggy bags.

CHAPTER 5.

The Right Turning!

"GEE-UP!"

In the sunny summer's morning the St. Jim's caravan turned into the old Roman road that ran northward from Aylesbury, and rolled merrily along.

The caravanners had breakfasted lightly upon bread-and-butter and lettuces—owing to Gussy's great success as a shopper.

They looked out for shops to renew their supplies as they progressed with the caravan.

That day they intended to be on the Chilterns, where the next camp was to be fixed.

They turned out of the Roman road into the lane to Western Turville, and in that village Tom Merry secured a supply of eggs and ham and milk—Gussy not being entrusted with the shopping this time.

Monty Lowther expressed a fear that places would close early if Gussy was seen coming along—attributing this to Gussy's features—remarks which only called forth a lofty sniff from Arthur Augustus.

"We turn to the wight here," announced Arthur Augustus, as the caravan rolled on through Western Turville.

"Left," said Tom Merry.

Circumstances turned into a lane to the left.



"Bloodhounds or no bloodhounds, I should have thought a bit before I jumped into this river to throw them off the scent."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to B. Butler, Doncaster Road, Kenilworth, Capetown, South Africa.

"I wemarked that it was wight, Tom Mewwy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Exactly!"

"Then why have you turned to the left?"

"Because you remarked that it was to the right, of course."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, if we are to get to Wendovah to-day—"

"Left is right in this case," explained Monty Lowther. "If we turned to the right we should get left."

"This is not a time for wotten puns, Lowthah, when Tom Mewwy is takin' the w'ong woad. Where do you expect to get, Tom Mewwy?"

"Wendover," answered the captain of the Shell, laughing.

"Vewy well. I weally twinst you will get to Wendovah, that's all," said Arthur Augustus, with deep sarcasm.

Arthur Augustus' trust seemed well-founded, sarcastic as it was, for the caravanners did get to Wendover.

Tom Merry gave him a cheery grin when they rolled into the old town.

"Well, Gussy?" he said.

"Is this Wendovah?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Pewwaps it is not Wendovah," suggested Arthur Augustus, looking round. "I do not see the name anywhere."

"Did you expect to see the place labelled?" grunted Herries.

"Not pwecisely, Hewwies. But I should not be at all surprised if it is not Wendovah."

Pwobably we have awwived at Buckingham, or Leighton."

"Fathead!"

"I will inqiah," said Arthur Augustus.

And he inquired of a policeman at the corner of the street.

The officer of the law, seemingly a little surprised by the question, assured him that it was actually Wendover.

Arthur Augustus seemed quite puzzled as he walked on.

"Well, are you satisfied that we haven't arrived in Glasgow or Dublin?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I wegard it as vevy cuwious that we should have awwived in Wendovah aftah Tom Mewwy insisted upon takin' the w'ong turnin'!"

"It was the right turning!" roared Tom Merry.

"Please do not woah at me, old chap! I have a vevy stwong dislike to bein' woahed at."

And Arthur Augustus shook his head several times as the caravan progressed through Wendover, still perplexed at the safe arrival after Tom Merry had taken the wrong turning.

"This looks like a rather nice inn," said Manners. "We can stick the bus in the yard, and have dinner indoors for cnce."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked at the inn. The caravan was through the town now, and the Green Lion was on the outskirts. It was an old-fashioned, red-tiled inn, with a rich green garden and trees and tables, and certainly looked very attractive.

Tom Merry nodded assent.

A plump, red-faced innkeeper greeted them politely. The van was stacked in the yard, and the horse taken away to be fed, and the St. Jim's juniors entered the garden of the inn to rest there while their dinner was prepared.

From an open french window, looking on the garden, came a click of billiards balls, and Arthur Augustus glanced at the room.

"They've got billiards here," he remarked. "We might have a game while we're waitin'. I'll give any of you fellows fifty in a hundwed."

Monty Lowther gave the swell of St. Jim's a look of portentous solemnity.

"Oh, Gussy!" he said.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"We couldn't possibly allow you to go to the bad during the vac," said Lowther, shaking his head. "Where shall we find a guide and model next term at St. Jim's, if you indulge in riotous living in the vac?"

"Oh, Gussy!" said Blake.

And there was a shocked chorus:

"Oh, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his celebrated monocle into his eye, and surveyed his shocked friends in deep indignation.

"You uttah asses—" he began.

"Oh, Gussy!"

"I am not suggestin' anythin' to which exception could be taken, you howlin' duffahs! There is no harm in a game of billiards in a wespectable place so long as there is no money on the game."

"Oh, Gussy!"

"We have a billiards-woom at home, you asses!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you— What are you gwinnin' at, Blake?"

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"At you, dear old top!" chuckled Blake. "Only pulling your noble leg, old duffer. Let's go in! Let's see—did you say you would give us a hundwed in fifty up?"

"I said I would give you fifty in a hundwed up."

"Nothing like neck!" remarked Monty Lowther. "Now, I'll tell you what I'll do, Gussy. I'll give you forty-nine in fifty up, and guarantee that you won't make a single stroke in the game. I begin, of course."

"I do not ccredit for a moment, Lowthah, that you could make a bweak of fifty," said Arthur Augustus, with a sniff. "I will take you on, just to show that you are swankin'."

"Done!" said Lowther.

The juniors entered through the french windows. There was no one in the room but the marker, who was knocking the balls about for his own amusement. There was only one table, and the juniors surrounded it as Monty Lowther took a cue from the marker and chalked it.

"You can't do it, Monty," said Manners. "If I were a betting chap, I'd bet quidlets that you don't run right out."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I said I'd give Gussy forty-nine in fifty and he wouldn't make a stroke in the game," answered Lowther.

"That's the same thing."

"Not quite."

Monty Lowther placed the ball, and there was a click. His ball rolled into the nearest pocket.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Call that a shot?" grinned Digby.

"Certainly," said Lowther cheerily. "I've done what I undertook to do. If Gussy had betted, I should have bagged the cash. I'm rather sorry now that I kept him to the straight path of rectitude."

"Bai Jove! You have simply potted your own ball!"

"Exactly. You've won!"

"Eh?"

"You take two for my potting my ball, don't you?"

"Yaas!"

"Two to forty-nine is fifty-one, and it was fifty up. The game is over, and you haven't played a stroke."

And Monty Lowther smiled and grounded his cue.

Arthur Augustus blinked at him. It took the great Gussy about two minutes to figure it out. Monty Lowther had certainly carried out his contract.

"You uttah ass!" said Arthur Augustus, while the juniors chuckled. "It was a catch!"

"Go hon!"

"You were pullin' my leg, you feahful duffah!"

"Well, isn't that what you were born for?" inquired Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! Now, I will give any chap fifty in a hundwed—"

Arthur Augustus was interrupted by the entrance of four newcomers from the garden.

Tom Merry & Co. glanced at them, and exchanged looks, as Gerald Cutts of the Fifth Form at St. Jim's strode in. He was followed by St. Leger, Prye, and Gilmore, also of the St. Jim's Fifth.

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

A reader writes to warn me he is sending me a giant postcard, ten feet long and six feet wide, bearing stamps to the value of half-a-crown. Thanks, old chap! I'll drop you a placard in reply.

I hear a reformed American crook has taken to tree-felling for a living. It is a fir, fir better thing he does now than he has ever done before!

Grundy thinks the appearance of strange humps after papering his study walls is a sign that the paste was too thick. Or possibly that he omitted to take down the pictures first.

Some commercial travellers, we read, turn out quite successful business men. The business men can get their own back, of course, by turning out commercial travellers!

Football season echo: Two school Rigger teams walked off the field in the middle of a match. Apparently they thought the referee had ordered a scam!

A film critic states that the best parts of a modern film are often left on the cutting-room floor. I wondered where they got to.

"I wonder how long I could live with-

CHAPTER 6.

A Little Scrap!

CUTTS started as he saw the juniors. A dark look came over his face and his eyes gleamed. Evidently he had not forgotten the unfortunate meeting of the day before.

"So you're here, you young sweeps!" he exclaimed.

"Weally, Cutts—"

"We're here, you old sweep!" said Lowther affably.

"These are the young rascals I told you I met yesterday," said Cutts to his companions. "I told you about their cheek."

"Oh, yaas!" said St. Leger.

"Did you tell them how we bumped you into a ditch?" snorted Herries. "We're ready to do it again, if you want any more, Cutts!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a hostile look between the two parties. Cutts & Co. were the leaders of the "fast set" at St. Jim's, and they had never been on good terms with Tom Merry & Co. They had followers and imitators among the juniors—fellows like Racke

out any brains?" asked Grundy thoughtfully. "Time will tell!" murmured his chum Wilkins.

Always choose the correct tool when gardening, and your work will be halved, says the Head's gardener. Right hoe!

As a very kind reader wrote to the Editor: "If I'd known Monty Lowther was going to be so funny, I'd have laughed on the way to the newsagent's!"

Topical Note: I see the Sports Department of Blankley's, in Wayland, are now selling gas masks. But I should say no real sportsman would use gas.

Good fellows are scarce, says a school-master. And bad fellows make themselves scarce.

"What have jazz composers done for music?" asks D'Arcy. Just "done" for it, that's all!

Overheard in a Rylcombe cafe: "You always seem to wear good hats," said one customer to another. "Yes," came the reply. "I always get them from the best restaurants."

A retired general has just published his life story, at a record price. But, of course, a general is justified in selling his life dearly!

Money goes farther than it did a year ago, says Blake. Maybe—but it never comes back!

Third Form flash: "His stories bring him in a tremendous income," said Wally D'Arcy. "Is he a famous author?" asked Jameson. "No," replied Wally; "just the landlord of a block of flats!"

Back next Wednesday, chaps!

and Crooke—but their number was few, and Tom Merry & Co. were not among them.

Cutts, as he looked over the junior crowd, was palpably meditating an attack; but perhaps he decided that it was more trouble than it was worth, for he did not begin.

He turned and spoke to his companions in a low voice, and then came towards the table again. "You fags can clear off!" he snapped. "You're not wanted here!"

"The same applies to you," remarked Tom Merry. "We're not clearing off at present, Cutts."

"I want that table!"

"You can go on wanting, dear boy," said Blake. "We've got the table at present, and we mean to keep it till we've done with it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Cutts set his lips.

"Clear those kids out of the room, marker!" he said. "We want to play."

The marker coughed.

"These young gentlemen have engaged the table, sir," he answered.

"Well, they can't have it!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Cutts—"

"Have you bought the place, Cutts?" inquired Monty Lowther suavely. "If not, I rather think we're sticking to this table!"

"We are certainly sticking to it, you cheeky wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.

Cutts gave the juniors an evil look.

"Marker, bring in two of champagne, and four glasses, and a box of cigars!" he said.

"Yessir!"

"Boozy bounders!" snorted Herries.

"Now," said Cutts, as the marker left the billiards-room, "you fags are to get out! If you don't go, you'll get put! And sharp's the word!"

"Rats!"

Cutts came nearer to the juniors, and Prye, Gilmore, and St. Leger followed him.

The four big Fifth Formers were probably a good match for seven juniors, but the latter were not disposed to yield their ground.

Tom Merry & Co. cared little about the billiards table, so far as that went, but they did not intend to be bullied by Cutts of the Fifth.

"Are you going?" snapped Cutts.

"No fear!"

"Wats!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Chuck them out!" exclaimed Cutts.

He led with a rush, his evil temper quite in the ascendant now. His comrades followed him fast enough. Seven juniors backed up as one man against the rush of the Fifth Formers.

Monty Lowther had thoughtfully retained his cue. He met Cutts with the butt-end of the cue on his waistcoat. Cutts gave a gasp, and staggered backwards, almost winded by the drive.

Lowther followed him up, jabbing at him actively. Cutts was a head taller than the Shell fellow, and Lowther felt entitled to use the cue against so disproportioned an adversary. And he used it with great effect.

St. Leger backed out of the scrap, nearly swallowing, in his haste, the cigarette he was smoking. Prye and Gilmore were collared by the juniors, and sent sprawling on the floor.

They roared as they sprawled.

Cutts made desperate efforts to dodge the jabbing cue and get at Lowther, but some smart taps on the head and hands stopped him. He yelled to St. Leger.

"Help me! Do you hear?"

"I'm not scrapping with fags, deah boy!" he answered. "What do you want to kick up a shindy for, by gad? Let the fags alone. It was their table, if they booked it!"

"Fool!"

"You're dashed polite, Cutts! Let it drop, I tell you!"

"I'll smash them!" roared Cutts.

St. Leger shrugged his shoulders.

"You can play the goat without my help, then," he remarked.

And he lighted another cigarette and lounged to the window.

Cutts made a furious spring at Lowther and caught the cue on his head—and then in his hand.

"Back up!" yelled Lowther.

Cutts tore the cue away, and then grasped Lowther at last.

But Prye and Gilmore were on the floor, out of the scrap, and the other juniors rushed to Lowther's aid.

Five or six pairs of hands seized Gerald Cutts

and sent him spinning back towards the door that led into the bar.

The door opened at the same moment.

A waiter came in with a tray, on which were set the champagne, glasses, and cigars ordered by the reckless blackguard of St. Jim's.

Cutts staggered fairly into him.

"Oh lor!" gasped the waiter, as the crash came.

Crash!

The tray went sailing, and landed on the floor with a terrific smashing of bottles and glasses.

Cutts bumped on the waiter. That gentleman staggered back through the doorway, and Cutts sat down.

"Oh ewikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts sat down dazed. Another waiter looked in through the garden door.

"Gentlemen, lunch is ready!"

"That's our lunch!" grinned Blake. "Cutts, old top, you can have the table now. Don't mind the champagne—it's healthier outside than inside!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. moved off as Cutts scrambled to his feet, white with rage. He had the champagne to pay for, as well as the breakages, and he was not at all consoled by the reflection that such a drink was better for the health outside than inside. He shouted to his companions and rushed furiously at the juniors.

St. Leger only gave a shrug, and Prye and Gilmore grunted. They had had enough of scrapping with fags. Cutts rushed on to the attack—alone. One fellow was not much use against seven juniors.

Gerald Cutts was seized on all sides and bumped on the floor. Once—twice—thrice he smote the floor and as he sat panting and spluttering, Monty Lowther playfully jammed a cue down his back.

Then Tom Merry & Co. went into the garden, chortling, leaving Cutts of the Fifth gasping and spluttering on the floor.

A table had been set in the garden under a big apple-tree, and the caravanners sat down very cheerfully to lunch there.

Gerald Cutts did not follow them out. Apparently, the dandy of the Fifth had had enough—for the present, at least.

CHAPTER 7.

Fallen Among Thieves!

"WHERE'S Gussy?"

The caravanners were asking that question about an hour later.

After lunch the chums of St. Jim's had strolled about the inn garden for a time, taking it easy, it being agreed that they were to have coffee under the trees before starting on the road again. Now the inn waiter had brought out the coffee, and the juniors had gathered to dispose of it; but Arthur Augustus had not turned up with the rest.

The Co. disposed of the coffee while they waited for Gussy to appear; but Gussy did not appear. Tom Merry called to the waiter at last and asked if he had seen the missing junior.

In the billiards-room, I think, sir!" was the unexpected reply.

"What is the duffer doing there?" grunted

Blake. "Can't be watching those Fifth Form cads rooking one another, I suppose?"
"Let's see!"

The juniors walked to the french windows of the billiards-room. They had intended to entertain themselves for a while there with knocking the balls about; but they had given up that intention after the arrival of Cutts & Co.

Cutts and his knutty friends had taken possession of the room, and were making the atmosphere smoky enough, and the juniors did not care to seek their shady society.

To the surprise of the six, there was Arthur Augustus, and he was not looking on at the game.

Arthur Augustus made another shot and missed, and Cutts came to the table. Arthur Augustus chalked his cue thoughtfully.

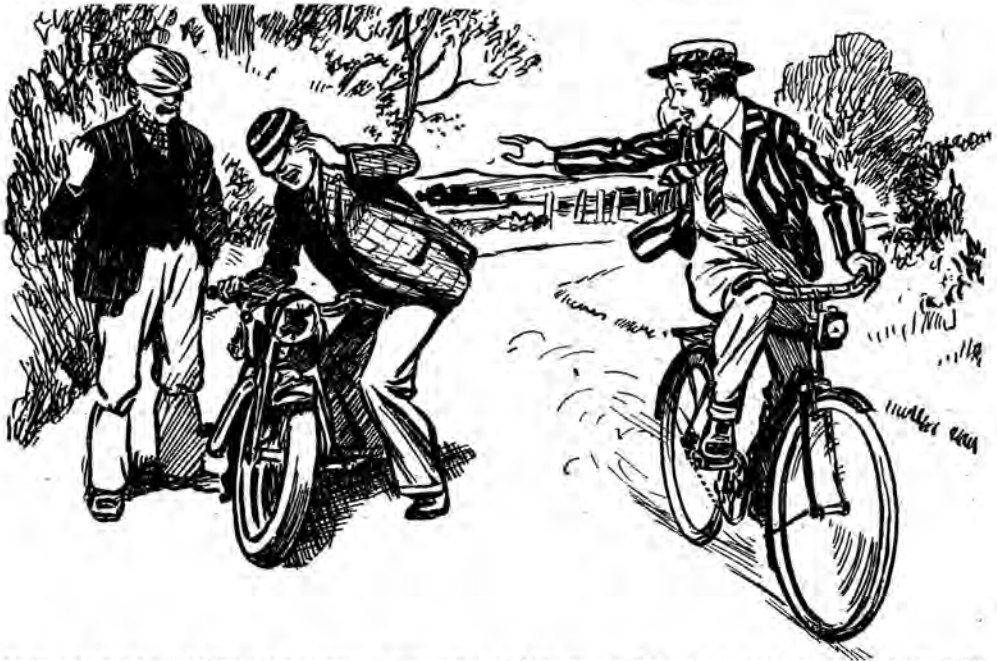
Tom Merry & Co. came into the room, puzzled and angry.

"What are you up to?" demanded Blake, jerking Arthur Augustus by the shoulder.

"Pway do not be a wuff ass, Blake! Cutts was swankin' that he could beat me at billiards, so I took him on!"

"And what's on the game?" growled Herries.

"Natuwally, Hewwies, we are playin' for love! I pwesume you do not suppose that I should play billiards for money?"



Cutts had his back to the road as Gussy cycled by, and the swell of St. Jim's reached out and playfully tipped his cap over his eyes. The Fifth Former let out an enraged exclamation, while Arthur Augustus cycled on, smiling.

He was playing, and his opponent was Gerald Cutts!

Tom Merry & Co. could only stare.

Cutts stood, cue in hand, resting it on the floor while he watched Arthur Augustus taking his shot. Prye and Gilmore were looking on with smiling faces, smoking cigarettes. St. Leger was lounging by a window, with a bored expression on his handsome face. St. Leger was the least blackguardly of the four, though under Cutts' influence he was not much better than the rest.

"Good shot, kid!" said Cutts approvingly, as the swell of St. Jim's made his stroke.

"Yaas, wathah, not so bad!"

"Gussy!" roared Blake wrathfully.

Arthur Augustus looked round.

"Bai Jovel! Coffee weady yet?"

"Your coffee's cold," said Tom Merry. "What are you doing here, you ass?"

"Pway do not intewwupt me!"

"Oh!" said Blake, rather taken aback.

It puzzled him that Gerald Cutts should take the trouble to play simply as a game of skill, for it was hardly in the Fifth Former's line. And he must have had some motive for assuming friendliness towards the swell of St. Jim's, after the tussle that had taken place in the billiards-room.

Blake could guess exactly how much friendliness the dandy of the Fifth felt.

"Well, we're ready to start!" said Tom Merry.

"Pway wait for a few minutes, deah boys! I am ninety, and Cutts is only fifty. I shall wun out when I play again."

"Blessed if I expected to find you pally with Cutts!" grunted Blake.

"I am not exactly pally with Cutts, Blake; but I don't see why I should not take him down a peg at billiards!"

"And there's nothing on the game?" said Manners.

"Of course not!"

Prye and Gilmore exchanged curious looks, and strolled away to join St. Leger at the window. Cutts did not seem to hear the remarks of the juniors. He was playing away in great style—playing so well, indeed, that it was remarkable that Gussy had got ahead of him at all.

Tom Merry & Co. stood looking on, waiting for the game to finish.

Cutts of the Fifth looked like running out with a break. The score was creeping up, and Arthur Augustus looked a little peculiar when Cutts passed his own figure of ninety. The Fifth Former kept on steadily, making a succession of easy cannons, leaving the balls placed for cannons with a skill which was evidence of a misspent youth. He ran out over the hundred without the slightest difficulty.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Who's been taken down a peg?" inquired Monty Lowther blandly.

"Ahem!"

Cutts looked at Arthur Augustus with a smile. "Try your luck again!" he said genially. "I'm willing to make it double or quits."

"I should be vewy pleased to twy again, Cutts, but these fellows are waitin' for me. I do not quite undahstand your wemark about double or quits!"

"I mean, make it a tenner on another game, instead of paying up the fiver you've lost on this game!"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"The—the what?" he ejaculated.

"The fiver."

"But I have not lost a fivah on this game, Cutts, as we were not playin' for money!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in perplexity. "I have not lost anythin' at all, you know!"

"Loser pays for the table," said Blake.

"Yaas! But Cutts was sayin'—"

Cutts put down his cue and fixed a very unpleasant glance upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"No rot!" he said. "If you don't care for another game, pay up, and let me get on! Prye's waiting for a game."

"But I do not owe you anythin', Cutts!"

"You owe me five pounds!"

"Nothin' of the kind!"

"Did you win the game, then?"

"No, you won the game, Cutts. It is wathah surpwisin', but it is certainly a fact. But we were not playin' for money. I wegard playin' for money as wotten bad form, and I should certainly nevah be guilty of it!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly.

Cutts gave a bitter sneer.

"Not quite such bad form as refusing to settle up when you lose!" he said. "You disgustin' young swindler!"

Arthur Augustus flushed crimson.

"How dare you call me a swindlah!" he exclaimed. "Nothin' whatevah was said about money on the game, and I should have wefused to play for money, Cutts."

"There was five pounds on the game."

"I appeal to the markah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Markah, was anythin' said about money on the game?"

"I was in the bar when you began playing, gents," said the marker, rubbing his nose. "I don't know nothing about it."

"Pwyee and Gilmore were here," said Arthur Augustus. "So were you, St. Leger. I demand your evidence on this point!"

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"Leave me out!" yawned St. Leger. "I know nothing about it—wasn't even looking at you!"

"You othah fellows—"

"Oh, what's the good of rottin'?" said Prye. "Pay up and look pleasant, as you've lost!"

"Be a sport!" advised Gilmore.

"I would certainly pay up if I had lost money, even on a wascally bet!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly. "But there was no bet—I should have wefused a bet."

"You appealed to Prye and Gilmore," said Cutts dryly. "I'll leave it to them. They were present."

"Well, I certainly understood that the game was for five pounds!" said Prye.

"I fail to see what can have given you that impression, Pwyee, as nothin' whatevah was said about money."

Tom Merry & Co. were silent. That Arthur Augustus would play for money they knew was highly improbable; and that he would repudiate a debt was impossible. It looked like a misunderstanding; but some of the juniors suspected that there was more of a swindle than a misunderstanding about it.

The guileless Gussy had fallen among thieves. Arthur Augustus looked excited and distressed. He turned to Gilmore, as his last hope, as it were.

"Gilmore! You know vewy well—"

"That game was for a fiver!" said Gilmore, with a nod. "Exactly. Cutts had just played with me for a fiver, and you agreed to play a game on the same terms."

"Cutts gave you forty in the hundwed," said Arthur Augustus. "He agweed to give me forty. They were the same terms I was alludin' to. I did not know that you were playin' for money!" Gilmore shrugged his shoulders.

"Any yarn is better than none if you don't want to pay up, I suppose," he said. "I'm surprised at this in you, though, D'Arcy! I should not have expected it."

"I tell you I was not aware you were playin' for money!"

"What the thump did you think we were playin' for, then?"

"For the game, of course!"

"Oh rot!"

"Well, are you goin' to square now that it's settled that you were playin' for a fiver, D'Arcy?" asked Cutts of the Fifth unpleasantly.

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath.

"It appeahs to be a misunderstandin'," he said. "I certainly nevah intended to play for money. But in the cires, as you appeah to have thought so, I will pay the fivah!"

A quick look was exchanged among Cutts, Gilmore, and Prye as Arthur Augustus' handsome little Russia-leather pocket-book came into sight.

They had not been mistaken in supposing that Lord Eastwood's son was well provided with cash on his holidays, and their little scheme for bagging some of the cash seemed to have succeeded perfectly.

But there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, as Cutts & Co. were destined to discover.

Jack Blake strode forward as Arthur Augustus was sorting out a five-pound note, and grasped him by the arm.

"Stop it!" he said curtly.

"Weally, Blake, I am goin' to pay Cutts—"

"You're not going to pay him anything. You're coming right out of here, and away from this gang of swindlers!" answered Blake steadily.



Detective Kerr Investigates

No. 5.

The Mystery of the Channel Boat!

WHILST a party of St. Jim's juniors were returning on a Channel steamer after a short stay in France, a hue-and-cry was raised. Apparently an absconding bank clerk had boarded the ship at Boulogne, but when the French police arrested him in his cabin the banknotes he was known to have carried had disappeared. As the thief had been seen trying to make conversation with several members of Tom Merry's party, each offered to be searched, as the police thought the man might have palmed the notes on one of them. The police being baffled, "Detective" Kerr decided to investigate.

KERR: So your charming new acquaintance turns out to be a bad lot, Gussy!

D'ARCY: Yaas, wathah! The Fwrench police say he is an expert pickpocket, as well as an abscondah, so he might easily have slipped the stolen notes in my pocket, f'winstance.

KERR: But the police are satisfied now that he didn't?

D'ARCY: Oh, yaas! I have submitted to a most thorough search. I feel as if I had been dwagged through a mangle.

KERR: Then you haven't got the notes, evidently. I'd like to speak to Trimble, though.

TRIMBLE: Look here, Kerr, you jolly well keep out of this! The French gendarmes, or whatever they oall themselves, are perfectly satisfied that I had nothing to do with this, and I don't want you shoving your oar in and proving that I stole the notes, instead of that sleek-haired foreigner. You're too jolly clever by half! See?

KERR: Keep cool, Trimble! My hat, is that your bag?

TRIMBLE: No. It's the one I borrowed from my pal Gussy for the trip, if you must know.

KERR: Nasty rip in the side, isn't there, Trimble?

TRIMBLE: What? You silly ass! That's only a scratch. For a moment I thought you meant the crook had hidden the notes in my bag! You'll get me twenty years in the Chateau D'If, Kerr, like the Count of Monte Christmas, or whoever it was. Do be careful, Kerr, there's a good chap—

KERR: I say, Merry! You're host, so you had the tickets.

MERRY: I've still got them, Kerr, old chap.

KERR: You showed them to an official as we came up the gangway, didn't you?

MERRY: Why, yes.

KERR: I noticed your wallet seemed very thick as you put it away.

MERRY: Well, it's rather crammed with papers and things at the moment—and I'm carrying a fair amount of cash, being on holiday—

KERR: Naturally. But when you showed the tickets for all eight of us, was your attention distracted for any reason?

MERRY: I don't think so. Oh, I did stumble, and glance round. Baggy Trimble was having an argument with somebody—Gussy, I think. He said Gussy had trodden on his foot, pushing past in a hurry.

KERR: Unlike Gussy to push past anybody. He's much too polite. Did you see him?

MERRY: No. I was busy with the ticket man. But I heard Trimble asking where his bag was. He'd put it down somewhere. Blake found it for him.

KERR: When the police searched you, Trimble, did you have your bag?

TRIMBLE: No. I gave it to Gussy to hold.

KERR: And you were the last of us to be searched?

TRIMBLE: Yes. Look here, if you're accusing me of anything, Kerr, I'll jolly well—

(Where were the banknotes concealed? See solution on page 33.)

CHAPTER 8.

Looking After Gussy!

"SWINDLERS!"

Gerald Cutts gasped out that unpleasant word, his face flushing scarlet. Cutts seemed to find the word more unpleasant than the fact, somehow.

"Swindlers!" shouted Prye. "You cheeky little cad—"

"You insultin' young blackguard!" roared Gilmore.

Jack Blake faced the three rascals with a flash in his eyes, his lip curling scornfully.

"Don't you like the word?" he said. "I'll say it again—swindlers! You'll get used to it—swindlers! Like it again? Swindlers!"

Jack Blake came from Yorkshire, and rather prided himself on directness of speech. Certainly his speech was direct enough now. There was no possibility of mistaking his meaning.

"Blake—" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Put your money away! Can't you see you've been diddled?" exclaimed Blake angrily. "The three of them are in the game together. They knew you wouldn't play for money, and they've fixed it up among them to get you into the game, and make out afterwards that there was money on it."

"Bai Jove!"

"It really does look like it," said Tom Merry slowly. "Cutts heard you tell us when we came in that there was nothing on the game. It wasn't finished then, and he could have stopped."

"I wasn't payin' attention to your chatter!" snapped Cutts.

"You heard it, all the same."

"And it doesn't alter the fact that D'Arcy has lost five pounds, and is swindling if he doesn't square!" exclaimed Cutts savagely.

"I am goin' to square, you uttah wottah! I

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half suspect that you have been diddlin' me, but I am goin' to pay."

"You're not!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Keep your money in your pocket, you ass!" said Digby. "It's plain enough that it was a put-up job from the beginning."

"Yes, rather!" said Monty Lowther emphatically.

"I dare say Cutts wants your money to pay for his booze and smokes," said Herries bitterly. "Well, he's not going to have it."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I agree with Blake," said Tom Merry. "You ought not to pay them, Gussy. It's a swindle!"

"A palpable swindle," said Manners. "Come on, Gussy, the horse is waiting with the caravan."

"Yaas, but—"

"Come on!" snapped Blake.

"Pway do not buwwy me, Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "There is no occasion to get excited. I feah that I have been dealin' with unscwupulous fellows, and I am ashamed to own them as St. Jim's chaps. But in the cires I feel bound to pay, givin' Cutts the benefit of the doubt."

"You can give him the benefit of as many doubts as you like, but you're not going to give him a five-pound note!" retorted Blake.

"Weally, you know—"

"I'm waitin'!" said Cutts disagreeably. "I don't usually have all this trouble in collecting a bet from a loser."

"I am goin' to pay you, Cutts—"

"You're not!" said Blake. "We won't let you, see?"

"I am sure you mean well, Blake, but I cannot allow you to ovahvide my decision," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "In the cires I am goin' to pay Cutts, at the same time expressin' the scorn I feel for him."

"This way!" was Blake's reply.

"Pway welease my arm, Blake!"

"When you're in the caravan—not before."

"I wefuse to go—"

"Come on, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "You're not going to pay Cutts anything. We can't see you swindled under our noses, you know."

"I insist—"

"Take hold of his ears!" said Blake.

"You uttah duffahs!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"I suppose I am my own mastah in this mattah?"

"Your mistake—you're not!" retorted Blake.

"You can look upon yourself as a tame lunatic, and us as your keepers."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the kind. I insist upon payin' Cutts. I shall not allow that wottah to be able to pwetend that I have welshed him."

"That's what you're tryin' to do!" sneered Cutts.

"You heah him, Blake? I insist upon payin' him."

"You silly ass! He's only trying to bully money out of you. Look here, are you coming?"

"Not till I have paid Cutts."

"Then you'll be yanked away! Lend a hand, you fellows!"

"Hear, hear!"

Cutts made a stride forward as Study No. 6 hustled Arthur Augustus, vainly resisting, to the door.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther faced round at him, and Cutts paused. The Terrible Three of the Shell were quite ready to handle him.

"Come on, if you like!" said Tom Merry contemptuously.

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"Gentlemen—gentlemen!" murmured the marker.

"So you're backin' up that young cad in welshing me?" sneered Cutts.

"That's a lie," said Monty Lowther cheerfully, "and you know it, Cutts! You're trying to swindle D'Arcy, and we're stopping you!"

"D'Arcy!" shouted Cutts.

Arthur Augustus was passing through the doorway into the garden, gently but firmly persuaded by the grasp of Blake & Co. He was resisting, but his chums were not to be argued with. Gussy had to go.

"I will pay you anothead time, Cutts!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You can see that these fellows are forcin' me—"

"A pretty scene!" sneered Cutts. "Got up for my benefit, of course. You young swindler!"

Arthur Augustus panted.

"You heah him, you fellows? I insist upon payin' him! Welease me!"

"Rats! Get him out!"

"Welshers!" jeered Cutts.

"Stop that cad's mouth, Tom Merry, you ass!" snapped Blake.

"What-ho!" said Tom.

The Terrible Three made a rush at Gerald Cutts.

The dandy of the Fifth put up his hands, calling to Gilmore and Prye for aid. But before his comrades could reach him, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had him over, and he was bumped on the floor.

The Terrible Three left him there, and followed the Fourth Formers into the garden. They covered the retreat, as it were, but there was no pursuit on the part of Cutts & Co. With a rather dishevelled appearance and a very flushed face, Arthur Augustus was escorted to the caravan.

The horse was harnessed, and all was ready for the start.

"You—you uttah wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I insist—"

"Come on!"

"I wefuse to come on! I—"

"Chuck him into the van!" growled Blake.

"I shall wefuse to stay in the van! I insist— Yawwooh!"

Arthur Augustus was lifted into the van, and Herries followed him in and sat upon him. And, with the swell of St. Jim's in that extremely uncomfortable situation, the caravanners started on the road.

CHAPTER 9.

A Hot Chase!

TOM MERRY & CO. were looking and feeling rather ruffled as the caravan rolled on its way.

The encounter with Cutts of the Fifth had left an unpleasant taste in their mouths. It had given them a glimpse, as it were, of a dingy side of life which had been quite absent from their minds while they tramped cheerily with the caravan along sunny roads and leafy lanes.

But the sunshine and the wind on the hills drove away the unpleasant taste at last. Not until the van was a mile out of Wendover was Arthur Augustus allowed his liberty. Then he looked out of the van, and for some time made crushing remarks to his comrades, to which they paid no heed. They were willing to let Gussy blow off steam, as Blake expressed it, as long as he liked.

Arthur Augustus dropped from the van at last,

and walked with the caravanners, with a frown upon his noble brow. He felt that he had been treated with disrespect, which, of course, was a serious matter to Gussy.

"Feeling better now you've given your chin some exercise, old scout?" asked Lowther affably. Arthur Augustus sniffed.

It was really too bad for his crushing remarks to be looked upon simply as chin exercise.

"Run ahead on the bike, and look out for a camp for us, Gussy," suggested Tom Merry. "We're camping right on the Chilterns to-night."

"Wats!"

"Ahem!"

"Look here, you fellows," said Arthur Augustus, with deep seriousness. "I wegard it as necessary for me to pay Cutts that fivah."

"Bosh!"

"I aggree that it is quite poss that those wogues were in a game togethah to spoof me, but it is quite poss that it was a misundahstandin'."

"Rot!"

"If you chawactewise my wemarks as wot, Blake—"

"Utter rot, old chap!"

"I wefuse to allow Cutts to have it in his powah to say that I was a losah who wouldn't pay up!"

"Never mind what Cutts says, old top. He's only a swindling blackguard, anyhow!"

"But I do mind, Blake!"

"Well you can mind, if you like; but you're not going to pay that shady blackguard a penny!"

"It is weally my own bisney, Blake."

"Not at all. Aren't we your keepers?" demanded Blake.

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus, in great wrath. "I wefuse to wegard you as my keepahs!"

"Don't roar at me, Gussy!"

"What?"

"It weally throws me into a fluttah, you know, when a fellow woahs at me," said Blake, with a delightful imitation of Arthur Augustus' own special accent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—uttah ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to continue this discuss, Blake!"

"Well, it's about time your lower jaw had a rest!" agreed Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed, and unhooked the bike from the van.

Tom Merry nodded approval.

"That's right, Gussy! Go ahead and pick out a camp," he said; "not in a farmyard, or on somebody's lawn! Go ahead!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus mounted the bike, and pushed on past the caravan. Then, to the surprise of his comrades, he circled round the van and pedalled back the way they had come.

"Where are you going?" roared Blake. "We're not going back that way!"

"Wats!"

"Where are you going, you ass?" roared Blake, running after the cyclist.

"Wendovah, deah boys!"

"Wh-what for?" gasped Blake.

"To pay Cutts!"

"Why, you—you—"

Jack Blake put on a desperate spurt to overtake the wily Gussy, but Arthur Augustus drove at his pedals, and shot ahead easily.

He looked back, waved his hand to his exasper-



PROFESSOR SKIMPOLE'S HOROSCOPE

This Week:

George Alfred Grundy.

FINDING George Alfred Grundy was not a very difficult task. His stentorian voice, echoing along the Shell passage, led me to his study. "Pray, Grundy, cease your angry declamation and tell me what day and hour you were born," I requested. Grundy stopped talking in sheer astonishment, much, I think, to the relief of Wilkins and Gunn, his studymates.

Supplied with Grundy's birth date, I cast his horoscope, and was not surprised to find him a subject of Aries, The Ram (March 21st to April 20th). Coming under the planet Uranus, Grundy's character is indicated as one of strength and daring. Full of energy, he often acts rashly, though he sometimes comes through with success by sheer bravery. His impatience threatens danger, however, and he will do well to restrain his feelings, however pressing they may be.

I tried to put this to Grundy, but he would not listen. "If you go around casting chaps' horoscopes, Skimpy," Grundy warned, "the only kind of stars you are likely to see are the sort that dance before your eyes. Mind your eye, that's all!" Really, to be warned myself—when I had intended to warn Grundy! How ill-starred!

He turned and smiled, and then whizzed away in the direction of Wendover at great speed.

The St. Jim's caravan stopped, and Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another in great exasperation.

Blake shook a wrathful fist after the vanishing cyclist.

"Pulling our legs, by Jove!" he exclaimed. "That's what he took the jigger down for. And we thought he was going ahead to pick out a camp. Why, I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Jack Blake.

"Who'd have suspected Gussy of being so deep?" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Can't be helped now."

"Fools and their money are soon parted!" remarked Manners sententiously.

Blake clenched his fists.

"He's not going to pay Cutts!" he exclaimed. "Why, it was a swindle that wouldn't have taken in a baby! Gussy's got more money than is good for him, but he's not going to waste it on Cutts. Won't those rascals chortle if they get a fiver out of Gussy!"

"Well, he's gone. We haven't another bike with us, and the van won't catch up a bike. We're done, Blake!"

Blake gave an angry growl.

"I'll stop him somehow."

"You can't, old top!" said Lowther, with a grin. "Hallo, here's another dashed car! Hold the gee!"

Hoot-toot!

A car came buzzing down the steep road, with a young man seated in it, driving.

Blake made a jump into the road and held up his hand. The man looked at him and slowed down.

"What's the matter?" he asked, evidently puzzled at being stopped on the road by a caravanner.

"Are you going to Wendover?"

"Yes."

"I want a lift."

"Hey?"

"Will you give me a lift to Wendover?" gasped Blake. "It's important—or I wouldn't ask you. I'm sorry to delay you. I know it's a cheek, but—"

The man in the car blinked at Blake, and then smiled and nodded.

"You deserve a lift for your nerve," he said.

"Jump in!"

"Thanks!" gasped Blake.

He jumped in, and the car whizzed on again.

Tom Merry & Co. blinked after him.

"Well, of all the nerve!" stuttered Tom.

"Nothing like cheek!" said Monty Lowther, laughing. "I suppose we'd better wait here for them."

"Not a bad idea," said Manners thoughtfully. "I can get one or two views of the Chilterns from here, and it's a good light."

And Manners of the Shell extracted his camera from the van.

Meanwhile, Blake was whizzing on back to Wendover at a rate that nearly took his breath away. Outside the town he passed a dusty cyclist, pedalling away industriously.

Arthur Augustus nearly fell off his bike at the sight of Jack Blake in the car.

"Bai Jove!" Blake heard him ejaculate as the car swept by.

The young man glanced round from the wheel "Where do you want me to drop you?"

"The Green Lion—there it is!"

The car slowed down and Blake alighted within a dozen yards of the inn. He thanked his benefactor, and then the car leaped forward again and vanished into Wendover.

Blake walked into the inn. He was waiting there, when a dusty cyclist rode up and dismounted.

"Hallo, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus gave his chum a freezing glance through his monocle.

"I weally fail to undahstand why you have followed me in this widiculous way, Blake," he said coldly.

"To stop you from playing the goat!" exclaimed Blake.

"I wufuse to be stopped—I mean, I am not thinkin' of playin' the goat, you ass! I am goin' to settle with Cutts—"

"You're jolly well not!" said Blake grimly.

"Wats! Waitah!" said Arthur Augustus, as the ruddy-complexioned waiter appeared in the offing. "Waitah, are those—ahem!—gentlemen still in the billiards-woom?"

"No, sir!"

"Where are they?"

"Gone, sir!"

"Eh?"

"Mr. St. Leger's car took them away about half an hour ago, sir," said the waiter.

"Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus stood nonplussed. Cutts & Co. were gone—whither, he knew not.

Jack Blake chuckled, and walked out of the inn yard to the bike.

While Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was still reflecting in perplexity, Jack Blake mounted the bike and rode away.

The whir of the machine attracted Gussy's attention, and he ran out.

"Blake—"

"Good-bye!"

"I am widin' back on that bike!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Your mistake, old top—I am!"

And he pedalled away cheerfully. And Arthur Augustus with feelings that were too deep for mere words, started on a tramp of two miles to rejoin the caravanners.

CHAPTER 10.

A Question of Dig!

"WHERE'S Gussy?"

Jack Blake rode up to the caravan and jumped off the bicycle.

"Gussy's following on," he explained. "I looked back and saw him. He's a bit dusty, and looks rather cross. I think it will very likely do him good."

"But what's happened?" inquired Dig.

Blake explained what had happened, and the caravanners roared.

Arthur Augustus' obstinacy had landed him with a two mile tramp on a dusty road, and the caravanners agreed that he deserved it.

They sat on the grassy bank beside the road, to wait for the swell of St. Jim's to come up.

Arthur Augustus appeared in sight at last. His noble face was red with exertion and warmth, and he certainly looked cross.

The road was a little steep; there was a blaze of sunshine, and there was plenty of dust turned up by passing cars, as well as a lingering smell



Gerald Cutts, staggering backwards in the grasp of Arthur Augustus, into the room with a tray on which were set champagne glasses. The tray was

of exhaust fumes along the road. Altogether, Arthur Augustus was not enjoying his walk.

He was gasping a little as he came limping up, and the perspiration was trickling down his noble countenance.

"You've kept us waiting, Gussy!" said Blake, in a tone of gentle reproach. "We shan't get far this afternoon at this rate."

"Wats!"

"I suppose Gussy is going to apologise for wasting our time like this?" remarked Manners.

"Wubbish!"

"Gussy is ratty!" said Tom Merry, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger.

"I am not waity, Tom Mewwy; but I am indignant and disgusted!" said Arthur Augustus hotly. "My personal fweedom has been intahfered with."

"Potty people are always kept under control!" murmured Lowther. "It's for their own good, you know."

"I wegard that remark as impertinent, Lowthah!"

"Fan me, somebody!" gasped Lowther. "I'm going to faint!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are pleased to be mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus, with a look of burning indignation at his comrades. "I see no cause whatevah for wibald mewwment. I have been tweated with gwoos diswespect."

"Ready?" asked Herries.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Hewwies."

Herries nodded.

"You have to be interrupted sooner or later, Gussy," he explained.

"I wegard you as a checky ass, Hewwies!"

"Good! Now let's get on."

Arthur Augustus did not move. He was fanning his face with his straw hat.

"I am not weady to get on yet," he said. "If you pwoceed now, you fellows will pwoceed without me."

"Eh?"

"I have to considah vevy sewiously whethah it is consistent with my dig for me to wemain a membah of this party."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I suppose we'd better make up our minds to camp here," said Jack Blake. "I can see that Gussy is wound up."

"Actually grumbling at his own pals for looking after him!" said Digby.

"I wefuse to be looked aftah. Before we go any farthah, I desiah it to be distinctly undahstood that I wefuse to be looked aftah. I twust," said Arthur Augustus warmly, "that I am capable of lookin' aftah myself. As a fellow of tact and judgment—the only one here, in fact—I have wegarded it as my duty to look aftah the west of the party. I wefuse most emphatically to have the posish weversed in this way. I wegard it as time for me to put my foot down."

"Can we start now?" asked Blake meekly.

"No. I have not finished yet."

"Oh crikey!"

"If you don't listen to my observations with sewiousness and wespect, you had bettah pwoceed, and I will wetiah fwom the party. If I wemain in charge of you—"

"In—in charge of us!" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I have wegarded myself as bein' in charge of this party, as the only fellow here with any bwains to speak of!"

"Phew!"

"Go on, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther encouragingly. "This beats the comic column in the 'Weekly' hollow. Sing on, sweet bird!"

"Wats! If I wemain in charge of this cawavannin' party, I insist upon bein' tweated with wespect; and I uttably wefuse to be looked aftah."

"Then you mustn't walk ahead of the van," said Lowther.

"Why not, pway?"

"Because if you do we can't help looking after you. We haven't our eyes in the back of our heads, you know."

"This is not a time for jokin', Lowthah!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"My mistake; I thought it was," said the humorist of the Shell blandly.

"Blessed if Gussy oughtn't to be in the House of Lords," said Herries. "He can talk for hours without a word of sense all the time!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Hadh't we better start?" inquired Manners.

"I am not yet weady to start. I feel bound, in the cires, to make some conditions. I wefuse to be tweated with diswespect. I uttably wefuse to be looked aftah. I insist upon payin' Cutts a fivah—"

"Rats!"

"And I will only pwoceed with you on one condition!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.

"Name it, old top!" smiled Blake.



ors, crashed fairly into the waiter as the man came eses and cigars. "Oh lor!" gasped the waiter, as ing.

"Cutts is stayin' with St. Leger at St. Leger Lodge, which is in the Chilterns somewhere—probably not far from here. I wequest you to head for St. Leger Lodge—"

"What on earth for?"

"So that I can see Cutts and settle with him," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

Six voices replied in chorus:

"Rats!"

"You wefuse my wequest?"

"Yes, rather! Don't be an ass, old chap!"

Arthur Augustus' eye gleamed through his eyeglass.

"Vewy well," he said. "I am sowwy to part company with you—"

"What?"

"I am vewy sowwy to leave you to your own weckless devices. But a fellow's personal dig comes first. Pway pwoceed, and I will we-main here."

"Going to camp out on the road on your lonely own?" asked Jack Blake sarcastically.

"You need not twouble your head about me, Blake. You may pwoceed!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"Look here, fathead—"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead, Blake."

"Ass, then!" said Blake. "Look here, ass! We're going on now, and you're coming along. See?"

"Will you pwoceed to St. Leger Lodge so that I can call on Cutts?"

"No!" roared Blake.

"Then I have the honah of wishin' you a vewy good aftahnoon!" said Arthur Augustus firmly.

The caravanners blinked at Arthur Augustus. Gussy was on the high horse now with a vengeance. It was probable that his wrath would not last very long—it seldom did—but for the present there was no doubt that the Honourable Arthur Augustus was very much on the high horse.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry at last.

"Oh, let's get on!" grunted Herries. "Gussy can walk after us, and join us when we camp, if he has a fancy for standing around here for a while."

"I shall not walk aftah you, Hewwies."

"Come on, Gussy!" urged Dig.

"I wefuse to come on, Dig!"

"Suppose we pitch him into the van?" suggested Lowther. "Herries can sit on him, the same as before."

The caravanners chuckled.

Arthur Augustus backed away and pushed up his cuffs.

"I warn you that there will be twouble!" he said.

"Oh, come on!" said Herries. "Gee-up, old hoss!"

Circumstances moved on, and the caravan rumbled after him. Herries did not take Gussy's lofty attitude very seriously.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another in perplexity. What was to be done was a mystery, as Gussy did not intend to come down from his high horse yet.

The caravan rumbling along the road settled the doubtful point.

"Well, Gussy, you follow us when you're tired of sulking," said Blake.

"You ntah ass, I am not sulkin'!"

"We'll camp a couple of miles farther on," said Tom Merry. "There's a wood there, according to the map. You will find us there."

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"I shall certainly not find you there!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

"We'll have supper ready for you, old scout!" called out Jack Blake.

And the caravanners tramped on after the van. Arthur Augustus remained standing in the road—alone in his glory.

CHAPTER 11.

The Spiders and the Fly!

"**B**AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath. The St. Jim's caravan had wound out of sight along the road, and his comrades had disappeared.

Arthur Augustus was still dignified; but a feeling of loneliness came over him. And a dreadful thought flashed into his mind—his baggage was in the van.

He was starting on his own—without even his pyjamas, or a change of collar, or a spare necktie. At that thought the swell of St. Jim's made a step after the van. But he halted again. Dignity came first; and even the baggage had to go.

"Oh cwumbs!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Hoot-toot!

A big green car came whizzing out of a side lane and rushed into the road, and Arthur Augustus jumped out of the way. There was an exclamation in the car as it buzzed past him.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "It's Cutts!"

Evidently it was St. Leger's car. Cutts, St. Leger, Prye, and Gilmore were in it, a liveried chauffeur driving.

Cutts of the Fifth rapped out a word to the driver, and the car slowed down in the road. It backed and turned, and came gliding back to where Arthur Augustus stood.

The swell of St. Jim's stood his ground. He half-anticipated trouble with the blades of the Fifth, but he would not so far depart from his lofty dignity as to retreat. Besides, he wanted to see Cutts, to settle the troublesome affair of the fiver. This chance meeting gave him the opportunity.

Gerald Cutts was whispering to St. Leger as the car glided back, and that bored youth nodded a lazy assent to his whispered remarks.

When the car stopped, Cutts jumped out and his look was not at all hostile.

Arthur Augustus eyed him rather warily, but Cutts wore a genial smile, and his nod was very friendly. Finding Arthur Augustus alone, away from the other caravanners, was rather a "catch" for Gerald Cutts.

"Hallo, kid!" he said cheerily. "On your own?"

"Yaas."

"Can we give you a lift?"

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"You are vewy kind, Cutts. But—"

"My dear kid, if you want a lift, say so, and it will be a pleasure to us," said the Fifth Former genially. He was watching Arthur Augustus' troubled countenance very keenly as he spoke, and it was not difficult for Cutts to read there that Gussy's present solitude was due to "trouble" among the caravanners.

Remembering the scene in the billiards-room at the inn, Cutts was at no loss to guess something very near the facts.

"Have you been left behind?"

"Yaas."

"Well, we'll run you after your caravan, if you like."

"Pleasure!" yawned St. Leger, who was taking his cue from Cutts.

"I—I am vewy much obliged to you, Cutts," said Arthur Augustus, colouring. "But—but I am not goin' to wejoin the cavavan."

Cutts nodded.

Gussy's reply confirmed his surmises.

"On your own, then?" he asked.

"Yaas." Arthur Augustus felt for his pocket-book. "I have the fivah here, Cutts, and I am weady to settle—"

Cutts shook his head.

"My dear chap, not the least in the world," he answered. "It was a misunderstandin' about that bet on the game, and I am sorry—truly sorry—that I spoke rather hastily at the inn. I shall not take it."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus blinked at the Fifth Former. Cutts had been keen enough on bagging the fiver at the inn. The unsuspecting Gussy could not guess that Cutts' plan had undergone a change, owing to his discovery that Gussy had parted with his comrades after "trouble." Gerald Cutts had more than a solitary fiver in his mind's eye now. Lord Eastwood's son was likely to be worth much more than that to him, if Cutts could manage him—and Cutts thought that he could.

"Put it away, old chap," said Cutts, with a wave of the hand. "You never intended to have a fiver on the game, you said—"

"Certainly not! But—"

"Then that settles it. You owe me nothin'."

"I—I would wathah—" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"Not at all! I refuse!" said Cutts. "Dash it all, we're men of honour, I suppose? Now, kid, it seems that you're on your own. St. Leger, you were sayin'—"

St. Leger was staring at the landscape, when Cutts spoke in a significant tone. The somewhat vacant-minded youth was called to order, as it were, by his master's voice.

"Yes, certainly!" he said, with a nod to Arthur Augustus. "Jump into the car, kid!"

"But—"

"You seem to be rather stranded," said St. Leger, with a smile. "Come along to my show for to-night."

"Bai Jove!"

"Dash it all, you're miles from everywhere!" said Cutts; "and you don't seem to have any baggage, either."

"I—I—it was left in the van."

"Well, we can lend you some things," said Cutts, smiling. "We'll all be jolly glad to have you at the lodge, D'Arcy!"

"Oh!"

"Of course, it's a bit quiet there," said Cutts, with a hidden wink at his comrades. "St. Leger's got a little party on his own—his pater's abroad, you know. Very quiet, but you won't mind that."

"Not at all," said Arthur Augustus, much relieved to hear that it was "very quiet" at St. Leger Lodge. "You—you are vewy kind. It would certainly be wathah uncomfy to put up at an inn without any baggage—"

"Dash it all, it would be insultin' to St. Leger if you put up at an inn, with his house only a mile away!" said Cutts warmly. "Jump in, old chap!"

"Yaas, do!" urged St. Leger.

(Continued on page 22.)



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PEN PALS COUPON

20-8-38

"Plenty of room!" said Gilmore.

Arthur Augustus hesitated, and it was said of old that he who hesitates is lost.

Cutts drew him towards the car while he still hesitated, and Arthur Augustus stepped in.

With great politeness the Fifth Formers made room for him.

"Home!" yawned St. Leger to the chauffeur.

The car buzzed on.

CHAPTER 12.

Gussy's Good-bye!

"**T**IME Gussy was here!"

Jack Blake made that remark a little uneasily.

The caravan was camped on the edge of a wood that bordered the road, and a fire of sticks and twigs cast a ruddy glare into the deepening shadows. Circumstances was cropping the grass at the end of his tether with great contentment. And supper was ready.

Not one of the caravanners doubted that Arthur Augustus, on reflection, would follow the van. Probably they would have been right, but for Gussy's unexpected meeting with Cutts and his party. Of that meeting, naturally, the juniors knew and suspected nothing.

It was really a nice supper that was ready—rashers and sausages and chips and fried cabbage and beautiful slices of ham and other delicacies.

It was a supper calculated to restore Gussy's good-humour when he came in, fatigued and hungry. And while they were preparing it the caravanners expected every moment to hear his footstep on the road.

But it did not come.

Supper was ready, and Blake went out into the darkened road to look for Gussy.

He came back with a rather sombre face.

"No sign of him!" he grunted.

"The ass!" said Dig.

"He'll come along when he's hungry enough," suggested Herries.

"Better have supper, anyway," was Manners' opinion. "We'll keep Gussy's hot for him."

The caravanners sat down round the fire to supper, but Blake was in rather a worried mood. He was beginning to wonder whether it was so certain, after all, that the offended swell of St. Jim's would follow the van.

Supper was finished, and the caravanners washed up, Gussy's supper still keeping hot by the fire.

Circumstances had lain down in the grass to sleep, and the caravanners were ready to follow his example; but they were thinking about their missing chum.

"Hallo," exclaimed Tom Merry, at last, "here he is!"

There was a footstep on the shadowed road, and it turned off into the grass by the roadside.

The caravanners jumped up to meet Arthur Augustus, but it was not Arthur Augustus.

It was a horsey-looking lad who came into the radius of light from the fire, and he touched his cap and blinked at the caravanners.

"Hallo, young shaver!" said Tom.

Blake gave a grunt of deep disappointment.

"Mr. Blake 'ere?" asked the newcomer.

"Yes, I'm Blake. What do you want?"

"I've got a letter for you, sir."

"Who the thump can have sent me a letter?" said Blake, in astonishment. "Hand it over, kid!"

The "kid" handed it over.

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"No answer, the gentleman said," he remarked; and he walked back to the road and disappeared in the darkness while Blake was opening the letter.

"Gussy's fist!" ejaculated Blake.

"What the dickens is he writing to you about?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in surprise. "He can't have been dummy enough to go home."

Blake gave a howl of wrath.

"Read it!"

He tossed the letter to Tom Merry. The captain of the Shell caught it, and the caravanners crowded round to read it in the light of the fire.

"Dear Blake,—Although it is impos- sible for me to overlook the disrespect I have received from you and the other fellows, I am sending you a line by a country lad so that you need not feel uneasy on my account. I have accepted St. Leger's hospitality, and shall be staying for a few days at St. Leger Lodge. I shall be obliged if you will send on my baggage from the next town you pass.

"Yours sincerely

"A. A. D'ARCY.

"P.S.—I trust you will all be in a better frame of mind when we meet next term at St. Jim's."

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at the letter and at one another.

The communication quite took their breath away.

Blake brandished a clenched fist in the air.

"Cutts has got hold of him," he said furiously, "and you can guess what he wants. The cads are after his money! They've inveigled him into St. Leger's place to diddle him into card-playing and gambling."

"Gussy won't."

"You know what a cunning brute Cutts is!" Blake breathed hard. "Didn't he diddle the fat-head in the same way only this afternoon? My hat! Next term at St. Jim's! He'll see us before next term at St. Jim's, the thumping ass! Send on his baggage! I don't think!"

Tom Merry looked at the letter again and shook his head.

"What the dickens are we going to do?" he asked. "We can't go on and leave Gussy among those gambling blackguards."

Blake gave a snort.

"We're going on, and Gussy's coming with us!" he said.

"But he's at St. Leger Lodge now," said Herries. "Anybody know where that is?"

"Only that it's in this part of the Chilterns," said Tom. "We can find it easily enough to-morrow, I suppose; but if—"

Blake set his lips.

"And we're going to find it to-morrow," he said. "We're going to start early, and make our first call at St. Leger Lodge. And Gussy's coming away with us, if we have to yank him away by his silly neck!"

"Hear, hear!" said the caravanners.

That was the programme for the morning.

And Tom Merry & Co. turned in, with the intention of turning out at the first gleam of dawn and marching to the rescue of the swell of St. Jim's.

And when the early summer sun glimmered on the Chilterns the St. Jim's caravanners were astir.

(Next Wednesday: "LOOKING AFTER GUSSY!")

ONE MINUTE THE SNOB OF CEDAR CREEK WAS LICKING HIS ENEMY,
THE NEXT HE WAS FACING DEATH TO SAVE HIM!

Loyal to His Enemy!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



In the hour of his triumph over
Bob Lawless, Vere Beauclerc
shows that beneath his snobbish
exterior beats a heart of gold!

Not Popular!

"**H**A, ha, ha!" Frank Richards sat up in the grass on the bank of the creek and looked round as he heard the sudden shout of laughter.

His cousin, Bob Lawless, was stretched on his back in the grass with his hands behind his head, staring lazily at the peaks of the Rockies, dim against the deep blue of the sky.

"Something's on, Bob," said Frank as he sat up. Bob did not trouble to move.

"Only that guy!" he said tersely.

"Who?" asked Frank.

"Beauclerc. The chaps are making fun of him as usual," yawned Bob Lawless. "Let him rip!"

But Frank Richards rose to his feet and looked quickly in the direction of the log schoolhouse of Cedar Creek.

It was close on time for afternoon lessons, and many of the fellows were making their way towards the schoolhouse. Vere Beauclerc, the new boy at Cedar Creek, was conspicuous among them. The slim, handsome lad, with his quiet, reserved manner and half-arrogant expression, would have been picked out at a glance among the cheery, sturdy sons of the Canadian settlers.

A fellow could hardly have looked more out of place than Vere Beauclerc looked at Cedar Creek School. Pride of birth and aristocratic loftiness were ludicrously out of place at the lumber school in the great Western land, where such prejudices were held in humorous scorn. And Beauclerc, with all his pride of race, was only the son of a remittance man, an idle waster, known as the hanger-on at all saloons in the district.

Frank Richards was probably the only fellow at Cedar Creek who felt anything but contemptuous dislike for the remittance man's son. But Frank could not help feeling a certain amount of interest in the lad who, like himself, had been born in the Old Country, but, unlike himself, had been unable to assimilate himself to the customs of a new and freer land.

Vere Beauclerc came and went day by day without exchanging a word with his school-fellows. Frank's one attempt at friendship had been rudely repulsed, and since then Frank had let him alone.

Frank grinned as he looked at Beauclerc now. Some humorous fellow had attached a label to his back, evidently unknown to Beauclerc. It was the lid of an old cardboard-box, and upon it was daubed in large letters:

"THE ONE AND ONLY!
GAZE AND ADMIRE!"

Quite unconscious of that label, Beauclerc walked towards the schoolhouse, looking neither to the right nor to the left. But the other fellows, as they sighted it, yelled with laughter.

"Gaze and admire!" yelled Eben Hacke. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"The one and only!" chortled Chunky Todgers. "He, he, he!"

It did not seem to occur to Beauclerc for some minutes that the outburst of merriment was connected with himself. As that fact dawned on him he looked round with a flashing glance. The black anger in his look only redoubled the merriment of the merry young Canadians.

Bob Lawless sat up.

"What's the joke?" he yawned. "Oh crumbs! Ha, ha, ha!"

Beauclerc gave the chums a fierce glance.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Eben Hacke. "Look at the only one—the one and only! Just escaped from the House of Lords! Haw, haw, haw!"

Beauclerc, with his brows knitted, strode up to Hacke. The big Westerner towered head and shoulders over him, though Beauclerc was tall for his age.

"What does this mean?" said Beauclerc.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

Beauclerc clenched his hands.

Frank Richards ran up hastily. He did not want to see Beauclerc's handsome face hammered by Hacke's huge fists.

"It's only a joke, Beauclerc," he said. "There's something on your back."

"Oh!"

"Let him alone!" growled Hacke. "What do you want to spoil a good joke for, you jay?" Beauclerc's flush deepened, and he groped behind him and jerked off the card. His eyes glittered as he looked at it. There was a fresh

burst of laughter from the schoolboys. Beauclerc's anger was nothing to them.

"Who fastened this on my back?" exclaimed Beauclerc furiously.

"Find out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Beauclerc's lips curled.

"If the fellow's afraid to own up——" he said scornfully.

"Oh, come off!" said Chunky Todgers. "I put it there!"

Beauclerc strode towards him. The fat little fellow was no match for him, but he stood his ground and put up his fat fists coolly.

"Come on, my lord!" he grinned.

Beauclerc, if he had been cooler, would not have thought of touching the fat schoolboy. A fight with Chunky Todgers was rather absurd, for one thing. But he was too angry to reflect now.

In another moment the humorist of Cedar Creek would have been knocked spinning, but in that moment Bob Lawless stepped between. Beauclerc's arm was knocked up at once.

"No, you don't," said Bob grimly. "If you're spoiling for a fight I'm your antelope!"

"Good man!" said Chunky cheerfully. "Give him a licking for me, Bobby. Why can't the silly chump take a joke?"

"Will you stand aside, Lawless?" said Beauclerc between his teeth.

"I guess not," said the Canadian schoolboy contemptuously. "I'm nearer your size than Chunky is."

"Beauclerc," muttered Frank, "don't be an ass! It was only a joke."

"I don't care for such jokes," said Beauclerc, "and I don't intend to allow them either."

"He don't intend!" chuckled Hacke. "Hark to his lordship! This is the way we talk to our serfs in the old baronial hall!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you clear off, Lawless?"

"Oh, no!"

Beauclerc said no more, but he advanced upon Bob, with his hands up and his eyes blazing.

"Boys!"

It was Miss Meadows' voice. The schoolmistress came out of the porch, her brows knitted.

"Cease this at once!" she said sharply. "Go into the school-room, both of you."

"Certainly, ma'am," said Bob Lawless. He walked into the log schoolhouse, and Beauclerc, after a second's hesitation, followed him. The fight was off, at least for the present.

When the fellows gathered in class, Beauclerc sat with a cold, grim face. But the rest of the class was grinning. Vere Beauclerc, poor and proud, wrapped himself in a cold reserve as in armour, but at the Cedar Creek School the pride of the remittance man's son was a standing joke.

The Hold-up!

FRANK RICHARDS joined his cousin immediately school was dismissed. He was anxious that the threatened affray should go no farther.

Frank, with his experience of Public school life in the Old Country, could make allowances for Beauclerc that the other fellows never thought of making. To the cheery young Canadians Beauclerc seemed nothing but a proud and snobbish duffer, but Frank knew that there was more in it than that.

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Frank had not forgotten how the remittance man's son had risked his life to pull him out of the river after he had been swept over the rapids.

"Where are you going, Bob?" asked Frank, catching his cousin's arm.

"I guess I'm going to speak to the cherub," said Bob. "Let me go, Franky. I've simply got to punch his nose!"

"Leave his nose alone and come home," said Frank.

"Oh bosh! He'll think I'm afraid of him."

"Bother him! Let's get off."

Bob Lawless shook his arm free.

"I'm going to punch his nose," he said. "I tell you, I can't stand the fellow, Frank, with his superior airs. What he wants is a jolly good hiding!"

"Lawless!"

"Yes, Miss Meadows?" said Bob, touching his hat to the schoolmistress.

"You seem to have quarrelled with Beauclerc, the new boy."

"Ye-es, ma'am!"

"Please do not let me see you carry the quarrel any further," said Miss Meadows severely. "I shall be very angry with you, Lawless."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"You may go home now," added Miss Meadows.

"Ye-es, ma'am."

Frank Richards grinned as he marched his cousin away to the gates. Bob looked crestfallen. The two chums caught their ponies and walked them down the path to the trail. Beauclerc was going the same way, and he paused as Bob and Frank came along.

"I waited for you, Lawless," he said, his well-cut lip curling.

Bob crimsoned.

"I can't hammer you here," he said. "Miss Meadows has put her foot down. She seems to think it would be a pity to spoil your beauty. I think it would do you good myself."

Beauclerc shrugged his shoulders.

"If that is all you have to say, I may as well go home," he said.

"Go home and be blowed to you!" said Bob.

"Miss Meadows is a good sort, and I'm not going to make her mad. But I'll pull your cheeky nose another time. To-morrow's a holiday, and if you care to come along where I can meet you, I guess I'll knock some of the insolence out of you fast enough!"

"Anywhere you like," said Beauclerc instantly.

"Come along to the Indian Ford to-morrow afternoon," said Bob. "You know the place. I guess you'll find me there."

"I shall be there."

Beauclerc turned away and marched into the wood, taking the shortest cut to the miserable shack on the creek that was his home.

Frank and Bob mounted their horses and rode away on the homeward trail. Bob's usually sunny face was clouded, and Frank did not look cheerful.

"Coming up with me to-morrow, Frank?" asked Lawless, after a long silence.

"Yes, I shall come," said Frank Richards. "I wish you weren't going to fight Beauclerc, all the same."

"You seem to feel very friendly towards the cad."

"Not exactly that," said Frank; "only I think I can understand him a bit. He's a bit of a snob, I'm afraid, but he doesn't mean to be. He can't

get used to being down in the world. He's so jolly touchy because he's so poor."

"Lots of the fellows are poor without being touchy."

"They've got more sense," said Frank. "Beaulere was brought up among rich people in England—titled people who fancy they are the salt of the earth. He's got all sorts of false ideas into his head, and he hasn't got them out again yet."

"I'll punch some of them out."

Frank laughed.

"I don't think punching will do him much good. You see, poor old Beaulere's got nothing left but his pride, and he sort of wraps himself in it."

"Then it's time he had some of it knocked out of him!" grunted Bob. "That sort of rot eats no ice in this country. I'll do my best to-morrow to knock some pride out and some sense in."

The subject dropped, and the cousins rode on in silence. They were following the forest trail, on which the shadows were deepening as the sun sank lower towards the far Pacific.

Overhead the branches of the big trees locked, forming a deep shade over the trail. In the deepest and narrowest part of the trail the two schoolboys slacked down, riding carefully to avoid the overhanging boughs, and suddenly from the thick larches, interlaced with creepers, beside the trail came a deep, sharp voice:

"Halt!"

A man sprang out into the trail. The two schoolboys drew in their horses at once, in amazement. They looked down at the man standing in the trail before them. He was a short, thick-set fellow, with curly black hair, a dark, bronzed face, and glittering, black eyes.

They did not need telling that he was not a Canadian. He was plainly a Mexican, and equally plainly what was known in Western parlance as a "bad man." His black eyes scintillated over a revolver in his dirty, dusky hand.

"Get down!" The Mexican spoke in English, with the soft Spanish accent in his voice. "Get down and pony up!"

"Why, you cheeky hound!" broke out Bob Lawless. "How dare you—"

"Get down!"

Bob eyed him savagely.

"You're in Canada now, my man, not Mexico. We keep a rope ready for your sort here. Clear aside and let us pass, or it will be the worse for you."

The Mexican's revolver came up to a level.

"Get down!" he repeated.

Frank looked at his cousin. He was prepared to follow Bob's lead, but the Canadian had slid from the pony. There was no arguing with a six-shooter in a reckless hand.

Frank followed his example, and they stood beside their ponies, while the Mexican came nearer.

The Rustler!

FRANK RICHARDS' heart was beating hard, though he was quite calm. Bob did not look scared in the least. His brows were knitted with anger.

The ruffian evidently intended robbing them, and it came as a surprise to the Canadian as much as to the English lad.

The Mexican had probably drunk his last dollar in one of the camp saloons, and taken to the trail to replenish his supplies of cash in a way that was not uncommon in his own country.

Whether the ruffian would venture to use his revolver in case of resistance was a question, but he looked brutal and reckless enough to do so. His black eyes glinted at the two boys over the barrel.

"I am sorry, senors," he said, with a mocking grin. "I must trouble you to pony up."

Bob gritted his teeth.

"Do you know what to expect for playing this game here?" he exclaimed.

The Mexican shrugged his thick shoulders.

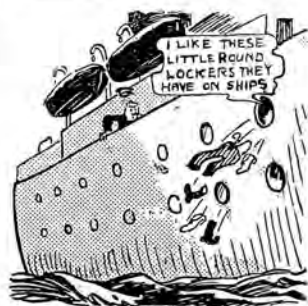
"Vaya! I am not here to talk, senior. Turn out your pockets!"

The chums hesitated, and the trigger rose a fraction under the pressure of a dirty finger.

"You will do better to make haste, senors," said the Mexican grimly.

Bob Lawless made up his mind and turned out what money he had, consisting of two silver dollars and some small change. Frank Richards, without a word, followed his example.

"It is little enough, senors, but the horses—they



Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Poole, 46, Overdale Road, Knighton, Leicester.

are worth something." The Mexican pointed down the trail. "Vamoose!"

There was no help for it. The chums walked on down the trail, leaving their ponies in the hands of the "rustler." Bob Lawless strode on with compressed lips and set teeth. As soon as the intervening trees hid them from the sight of the rustler, Bob stopped.

"Hold on, Franky," he whispered.

Frank halted.

"That greaser thinks we've lit out," whispered Bob. "Are you game to come back? I guess he's not going to walk off with our horses and leave us to sashay home on boot-leather. Goodness knows where he'll be by the time the Mounties get after him! Over the border, very likely, out of reach. Are you game?"

"Yes, rather!" said Frank, between his teeth.

Bob listened intently. There was a sound of whinnying from the direction where they had left the horse-thief with the ponies.

Bob opened his pocket-knife and cut a thick stick from the bush. He cut another for Frank.

"Now come on," he whispered. "And quiet!"

The Canadian plunged into the trees. Frank followed him, picking his way softly on Bob's track. Bob made no sound as he advanced. He paused once or twice to listen, and then pressed on again.

To the English lad the forest was trackless, and he could not even guess what was Bob's objective. But Bob led on with hardly a pause, evidently

with a fixed destination in view. He held up his hand at last. Frank halted.

"Look!" whispered Bob, pulling his cousin to his side behind the trunk of a big tree. Frank peered out from behind the tree, and to his surprise saw the trail before him.

"Don't you see?" Bob grinned, with rather a grim look in his eyes, however. "The greaser's going back the way we came with our horses, towards Cedar Creek. The trail winds round here. We've cut across the forest and got ahead of him. He will pass this place."

"Oh!" said Frank. He understood now. His grasp tightened upon his stick. He was quite ready to put up a fight for his property.

"Follow my lead, old chap!" whispered Bob. "He will shoot if he gets a chance. I guess we're not giving him a chance. Don't show yourself till I do."

"Right!" muttered Frank

There was a thud of hoofbeats on the trail. They were only a few minutes ahead of the rustler. Peering from behind the tree, they saw him coming up the trail, riding one pony and leading the other.

Bob's hand went up, with his stick in it, but he stood quite still, waiting. Frank made no sound.

Clatter, clatter! The horseman rode by. Whizz!

Just as he came abreast Bob's hand shot forward and the heavy stick whizzed through the air. Before the rider even knew that it was coming, it struck him upon the side of the head with a fearful thud.

"Caramba!" yelled the startled Mexican.

He rolled helplessly from the saddle, yelling with pain, and crashed into the grass of the trail. The startled horses reared and backed away, whinnying.

Bob Lawless rushed out into the trail like lightning, and Frank Richards was at his heels. As the dazed Mexican struggled up to a sitting posture, grasping wildly for his revolver, Frank's stick came down with a crash upon his head.

The blow smashed through the vaquero hat and the Mexican sank back with a groan. The next moment Bob Lawless' knee was on his chest and his revolver was wrenched away and tossed into the thickets.

Turning the Tables!

THE Mexican struggled feebly under Bob's gripping knee. His head was reeling from the blows he had received, and his black eyes were burning with rage.

"Caramba!" he muttered. "Madre de Dios! Ah!"

"Give me your stick, Frank!"

"Here you are!"

"Keep quiet, my merry greaser!" said Bob, flourishing the stick over the savage, upturned face. "We've got you nobbled, my pippin. Do you want your silly head caved in?"

"Mercy, señor!" gasped the terrified Mexican. "Oh, stop your howling!" said Bob contemptuously. "I guess I'm going to leave you for the hangman, some day. Put a turn of the trail rope round his paws, Frank, while I hold him."

"Right-ho!"

The two ponies, recognising their masters, had quieted down, and were cropping the grass by the trail. Frank cut a length from one of the

trail ropes and bound the dusky wrists of the Mexican together.

The man watched him with burning eyes, but with the thick stick flourishing over his head he did not venture to resist. Bob Lawless rose to his feet.

"I rather guess we're going to get our money back," he remarked. "Where have you shoved it, you black-jowled mongrel?"

"Caramba!"

"Speak up—sharp!"

Bob's boot clumped on the Mexican's ribs as a hint that time was being wasted.

The ruffian indicated the pocket, and Bob drew out the money. There were a Mexican peso and an American quarter there also, which Bob replaced. He handed Frank his money, and slipped his own into his pocket.

The Mexican, still lying in the grass, watched him with deadly hatred in his eyes. There was a big bruise under his thick, black hair, and blood was running down from a cut. Bitter hatred and revenge were in his looks, but his expression only drew a scornful smile from the Canadian lad.

"I guess you'd better chuck this game on this side of the border, my beauty," said Bob. "This isn't quite the same as Mexico or Arizona, you know." He picked a knife out of the Mexican's belt and snapped the blade under his heel. "You're better without that, I guess. Come on, Frank!"

"Caramba!" hissed the Mexican between his teeth. "If it shall be Pedro García's lot to meet you again, señor—"

"I shouldn't wonder!" grinned Bob. "I promise to come along and see you hanged if you stay in this section. If you know what's good for you you'll light out prompt. The Mounted Police will be after you as soon as we can send them word of your little game here."

The Mexican staggered to his feet, wrestling with his bonds, as the schoolboys remounted the recaptured ponies and cantered away. The ruffian, still muttering Spanish oaths, was left behind.

The chums of Cedar Creek rode homeward in great spirits. The victory over the Mexican rustler had afforded them a good deal of satisfaction. They arrived at the ranch in merry mood.

Bob Lawless at once informed his father of the encounter on the trail, and the rancher listened with a grim brow.

"You reckless young rascals!" he said.

"I guess we couldn't let a greaser from down south get the better of a Canadian, popper!" said Bob.

The rancher laughed.

"No; you've done well. But a stop will be put to that scoundrel's game pretty quick. I'll send off a man at once to the Mounted Police post."

And in three minutes a Kootenay cattleman was riding away with the news that a Mexican "rustler" was loose in the section, and required "rounding-up" by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

"They'll have him by noon to-morrow, unless he clears out over the border," said Bob, when the chums sat down to supper. "That game doesn't pay in the Canadian West. Hallo! What are you thinking about, Franky? You look as glum as a remittance man waiting for the post to come in."

Frank Richards laughed.

"I was thinking of Beauclerc," he said.

"Oh, bother Beauclerc!" exclaimed Bob. "That chap seems to haunt you. Pass the salmon, and think about supper."

"You mean to meet him to-morrow?"
"Of course I do, fathead! Haven't I promised to?"

"Yes; but—"
"Bless your butts! Are you going to pass the salmon this way?"

And nothing more was said about Beauclerc. Frank Richards could not quite dismiss the subject from his head, however. He wished very much that the meeting of the morrow was not to take place.

The next morning Frank Richards and his cousin were busy about the ranch, there being no school that day. On a Canadian ranch there

"Oh!"
Bob Lawless laughed.

"Everybody rides here," he said. "But old Beauclerc doesn't keep a horse about his shack. He has one sometimes, but sells it when money runs short, and his remittance is late. Sometimes, when he has luck at faro or poker, he gives his boy a new outfit. I know he bought him a pony once, but it went when old man Beauclerc was hard up. Nice man!"

"It's rough on Beauclerc having a pater like that," said Frank Richards, frowning.

"Jolly rough!" agreed Bob. "Chap could sympathise with him if he wasn't so uppish and touchy."

"I fancy that's partly the reason why he's so uppish and touchy, old fellow."



"Look out!" shouted Beauclerc suddenly, running forward. Crack! A shot from the timber rang out and the son of the remittance man reeled and fell. Frank Richards caught a glimpse of the revengeful, dusky face of the Mexican rustler—then the man was gone.

is no room for idle hands, neither did Frank have any desire to eat the bread of idleness. He was only too glad to make himself useful, and thus repay a little of the kindness he had received from the bluff old rancher.

Early in the afternoon the cousins saddled their ponies for a ride. It was time for the appointment with Vere Beauclerc to be kept, and Bob rode away to keep it, carelessly and cheerfully. But Frank's face was not so sunny as usual as he cantered along with his Canadian cousin.

The Fight!

"WHERE'S the place, Bob?"
"The Indian Ford," said Bob. "It's on the river about five miles below Cedar Creek. It's a long ride for us, but it won't be far for the cherub to walk."
"Won't Beauclerc ride?" asked Frank.
"I guess not. I don't think he has a gee-gee."

"Possibly," said Bob, with a yawn.
The green prairie fled rapidly under the ponies' hoofs. The plain was left behind, and the cousins rode by a rough track through a belt of timber near the river.

A man lying in the bush lifted his head and glanced at the trail as the riders went by. Two black eyes blazed at Bob Lawless.

The two boys were past in a moment, riding on carelessly, unconscious of the fact that Pedro Garcia's dusky face was looking after them from the bush.

The river was gleaming now through the openings in the trees. A mile farther on the cousins stopped. Here the hoof-marked track down to the water showed that they were at the ford. It was a lonely spot, shadowed by trees.

Under a tree close by the river a figure stood erect, looking out over the shining waters. Vere Beauclerc was first at the meeting-place. He

glanced round at the sound of beating hoofs and jingling bridles. The chums jumped down, letting the ponies run loose.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," said Bob.

"It is nothing. I have been here only a few minutes," said Beauclerc indifferently.

"You haven't brought a second?" asked Frank.

"No."

"Well, I can help both of you, if you want any help," said Frank cheerfully.

"Thank you! I shall need no help."

Frank bit his lip.

"Just as you like," he said shortly.

"No need to waste time," said Bob, with a glance of dislike at the cold, reserved face of the remittance man's son. "We've come here for business. I'm ready as soon as you are, Beauclerc."

"I am ready."

The two schoolboys stripped to their shirts. They faced each other under the shade of the big tree by the river, with the thick, silent timber behind. Frank Richards stood looking on.

Bob Lawless tied his braces round his waist. He disliked and despised the fellow he called the "cherub"; but he knew that the fight was going to be a hard one.

Slim and almost delicate as he looked, Vere Beauclerc had a strong frame and muscles of steel. And nobody looking at his face could have doubted that he had pluck.

"Ready?" asked Frank.

"Yes."

"Time!"

And the fight began.

Frank Richards leaned against the tree and looked on. His face was clouded. The remittance man's son had once repulsed and insulted him, yet Frank could not find it in him to dislike the lonely, proud lad. He would have given a great deal to have prevented that encounter.

But he was only a spectator, and he looked on in silence. He fully expected to see Bob Lawless the victor, yet he did not like to think of Beauclerc defeated and humiliated.

There were no rounds in the fight; it was hammer and tongs from the beginning. But as it progressed, Frank had to revise his first opinion. Beauclerc was by no means getting the worst of it.

Bob was stronger and sturdier, and had boundless pluck and determination. But in the matter of science, Beauclerc had a very great advantage.

Frank had done a good deal with the gloves in his old days at school in the Old Country, and he very soon saw that Beauclerc was a first-rate boxer.

In the rough-and-tumble fighting at the lumber school, Bob had not picked up much in the way of expert knowledge. He stood up to his more skillful opponent, receiving severe punishment without flinching, and giving back all he could; but he gave far less than he received.

Bob's face was gradually flushing, his eyes gleaming with an angry light. More than once he drove the remittance man's son back two or three yards by sheer weight and strength; but Beauclerc always recovered his ground by some manoeuvre that was too quick for Bob quite to follow it.

Bob found most of his drives stopped or

warded, and Beauclerc's swift counters came home in nearly every case. It began slowly to dawn upon the rancher's son that the slim and elegant Beauclerc was by no means booked for a licking. That thought made Bob angry and excited, and gave Beauclerc further advantage in consequence. The first to go to the grass was Bob Lawless, and he fell heavily.

Beauclerc stepped back quietly for him to rise. The half-disdainful, nonchalant expression on Beauclerc's face had not changed for a moment. It seemed as if he knew that his opponent was not up to his weight, and cared nothing for him.

Frank ran forward to Bob's assistance. The rancher's son breathed heavily as Frank helped him to his feet. He gave Frank a rather queer look.

"More in the guy than meets the eye," he murmured. "But I guess I'll lick him yet."

Beauclerc stood waiting, calm and disdainful.

Bob Lawless came on again, and the fighting was resumed. Frank Richards looked on with knitted brows. He could see now that the fight was a foregone conclusion. His cousin was painfully getting the worst of it.

As he watched the gay, kind-hearted Canadian lad meeting inevitable defeat with steady pluck and determination, Frank felt angry dislike surge up in his breast for the remittance man's son.

His thoughts were all for his cousin now. Dearly he would have liked to knock that scornful smile from Beauclerc's handsome face with his fists. But he had come there to see fair play, and he could not intervene. He hoped against hope that Bob might yet prove the victor.

Crash!

Bob Lawless was down again, more heavily than before. Beauclerc looked down on him quietly, and then picked up his jacket, and put it on. That movement, indicating that he thought the fight was over, exasperated the fallen lad. With blazing eyes Bob Lawless tried to struggle to his feet. But his head was swimming and dazed; his severe punishment had told upon him, and he sank back, panting.

"Bob," muttered Frank, stooping over his cousin.

He did not hear a rustle in the timber; he had no eyes for anything but his cousin and chum, and did not dream of the fierce, savage eyes that were peering out from the thicket.

"Bob, old man!"

"I—I guess I'm done, Franky!" gasped Bob. "I guess the guy was too hefty for me. I'll try him again another time."

"You're welcome!" said Beauclerc coldly.

The thicket rustled again, and Beauclerc glanced towards the timber.

Frank Richards helped his cousin to his feet. Bob stood up, dabbing his face with his handkerchief.

"Look out!" shouted Beauclerc suddenly.

"What!"

Crack!

Beauclerc ran forward. The sudden shot from the timber rang with stunning noise by the silent river. For an instant Frank Richards' horrified eyes caught a glimpse of a fierce, dusky face and revengeful, black eyes looking from the timber. In another instant the Mexican was gone.

Frank spun towards his cousin. He knew for

whom that murderous shot was intended. Bob Lawless stood unharmed.

But in the grass at his feet lay the son of the remittance man, his eyes half-closed and blood welling from under his shirt.

In the Shadow of Death!

"THE Mexican!" shouted Frank Richards. He ran towards the timber, hardly knowing what he did. Bob Lawless, collecting himself with an effort, ran to his pony, to the saddle of which a shot-gun was hanging. He grasped the gun and dashed after Frank.

But the Mexican was gone. The desperado did not seem even to have waited to see the result of his dastardly attempt. His aim had been unerring. Had not Vere Beauclerc rushed between, the bullet would have stricken the rancher's son down. The scoundrel had fled before the report had died away.

Bob, with blazing eyes, fired the shot-gun into the thickets. But the lead whizzed harmlessly away among the foliage.

"He's gone!" muttered Bob. "But—but Beauclerc—"

They ran back to the bank.

"He—he's wounded!" said Bob dazedly. "Good heavens, Frank, that villain was firing at me, and—and Beauclerc—"

He broke off, his voice faltering.

Why had Beauclerc done this? Why had he sprung between the rancher's son and the deadly revolver that was levelled at him? It was not the act of the disdainful snob Bob had believed him to be. It was an act of generous courage that only a high and noble heart could have been capable of.

Frank was already on his knees by Beauclerc's side. The red was on his fingers as he tore open the jacket to get at the wound. The boy's eyes opened and he smiled faintly.

"Beauclerc," muttered Bob hastily, "what do you do it for? You knew it was meant for me!"

Beauclerc nodded.

"Keep still," said Frank. "Keep still, old chap. Let me see it."

The bleeding was not profuse, and Frank breathed more freely. Beauclerc's face was deadly white, but he was quite conscious and perfectly calm. His eyes rested on Frank's face inquiringly.

"I—I don't think—it's so bad—as I thought!" muttered Frank. "We must get it bandaged, and get you to the ranch."

"I don't think it's serious." Beauclerc's voice was low but calm. "I should feel worse than I do if it were. It hasn't touched an artery or there would be more blood. Has that man gone? If not—"

"He's gone," said Frank.

Bob touched his cousin on the shoulder.

"Stay with him, Franky. I'll leave you the shot-gun in case—you understand? I'll cut across to Simpson's and get the wagon."

"Right!" said Frank.

Bob Lawless dashed to his pony and jumped on and rushed away at a gallop. He had three miles to ride to the nearest ranch-house to get a vehicle to convey Beauclerc away, but he rode like the wind.

Frank tore his handkerchief into bandages, and the sleeves of his shirt, and bound up the wound as well as he could. Beauclerc lay quiet, his head resting on Frank's arm, after the hurried bandaging was done.

Frank kept his eyes watchful, in case the

Mexican should appear, and the shot-gun was at hand. He almost wished the desperado would return, so fierce was his desire for vengeance as he looked at Beauclerc's white face, handsomer than ever in its deathly pallor.

But there was no sign of the would-be assassin. He had fled from the spot with the guilt of blood upon his soul—perhaps with remorse.

It seemed an age to Frank before he heard the beat of horse's hoofs on the trail. Bob Lawless dashed up and sprang from the saddle.

"They're coming!" he panted.

It was a roughly built buggy that came dashing up after Bob, with a big, bronzed Canadian farmer driving. Bob had already explained, and, without a word, the big Canadian bent over Vere Beauclerc, lifted him in his powerful arms, and placed him in the buggy. He examined the bandages, nodded, and stepped in after the wounded lad.

"Where are you going?" muttered Beauclerc.

"Take me home!"

"You must come to the ranch," said Bob. "I'm going to ride for a doctor. I'll let your father know as well. You must come to the ranch, old chap—you must!"

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Beauclerc glanced curiously at Bob's stricken face. He nodded slightly.

"All right, Lawless! I—I say"—his voice was a whisper—"I—I'm sorry we had any trouble. Forget all about it."

Bob pressed his hand and stepped back from the buggy. Mr. Simpson drove away up the trail.

Bob and Frank mounted their ponies and rode after the buggy. Both were silent, full of fear for the wounded lad who lay in the buggy. The ranch was reached at last.

Mr. Lawless was in the saddle, at a distance, but he rode up as the buggy halted. A few words explained, and the rancher, with a grim brow, carried the wounded boy into the house. In a few minutes Vere Beauclerc was in Bob Lawless' bed, and Bob was riding hard for the doctor.

Frank Richards, silent, pale, sat near the bed waiting till, after what seemed centuries to him, the doctor arrived. It had been a long wait, for the medical man had had to ride ten miles to the ranch.

Then Frank Richards went down and joined Bob, who sat on a settle in the porch, exhausted by hard riding.

"How is he, Frank?" Bob muttered.

"I don't know—yet."

"He did it for me, Frank!" Bob's voice was

(Continued on page 36.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,592.

ANXIOUSLY, DESPERATELY, JACK DRAKE AWAITS THE RESULT OF THE GAMBLE THAT MEANS SO MUCH TO HIM!



The study seemed to swim round the hapless junior as he sat staring stupidly at the bulk-head. What was he going to do now?

Rodney Obliges!

"DRAKE!"

Jack Drake did not look up. He was seated with his eyes glued on the desk before him, a deep wrinkle in his brow, and he did not seem to hear his Form-master's voice.

It was Saturday morning, and the Fourth Form of St. Winifred's were in class; but Jack Drake, at least, was not thinking of the lesson.

Mr. Packe fixed his eyes on the junior with a very peculiar expression.

Some of the Fourth grinned. It was rather unusual to see a fellow in the Form-room so deeply immersed in his own thoughts that he had forgotten his surroundings. Dick Rodney cast a rather anxious glance at Drake, but he was too far off to give him a nudge. Following Mr. Packe's voice there was a deep silence in the Form-room on the main deck of the old Benbow. In the silence the swish of the water round the hull of the old warship could be heard.

"Drake!"

Mr. Packe's voice was louder now, and Jack Drake heard it and started, looking up with a reddening face.

"Yes, sir!" he stammered.

"You do not seem to be thinking of your lessons, Drake," said Mr. Packe grimly.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

There was a chuckle from Tuckey Toodles. It was pretty evident to all present that Jack Drake's thoughts had been far away from the Form-room.

"You will construe, Drake," said Mr. Packe dryly. "Kindly go on where Raik left off."

Drake's colour deepened. He had not the faintest idea where Raik had left off; indeed, it

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,592.

Jack Drake's Despair!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

was only with difficulty that he collected his thoughts at all and fixed them on the matter in hand.

"I am waiting, Drake!" said Mr. Packe, in grim tones.

"I—I—yes, I—" stammered Drake.

"You may show him the place, Toodles."

Tuckey Toodles showed his neighbour the place, and Drake stood up to construe, with crimson cheeks.

Mr. Packe watched him coldly. He was not surprised to hear the junior stammer through the construe in a way that showed plainly enough that he had not prepared the lesson the evening before.

The master of the Fourth held up his hand.

"You may cease, Drake. Your construe is

Much was at stake in Jack Drake's last gamble. He would soon be clear of debt, his troubles over, so that he could settle down to work with a free mind . . . if he won!

worthy of a very backward boy in the Third Form."

"Oh, sir!"

"You did no preparation last evening, Drake?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"I am glad you are frank, at all events. Why did you do no preparation, Drake?"

"I—I—I—"

The hapless junior had no reason to give. He could not explain to Mr. Packe that he had been thinking of a certain race that was to be run that afternoon near Kingsford, and the chances of a certain horse in that race. Such an explanation would certainly not have made matters better. But that was the truth, and the worry of the plunge into gambling had been too great to allow the reckless fellow to give much thought to his work.

"I have been very disappointed in you, Drake," said Mr. Packe. "Your name is down for the Foundation Scholarship, and you are supposed to be working for the examination. So far from that, however, you are not even keeping pace with the work of the class."

"I—I'm sorry, sir! I—I'm going to work hard—next week."

"It is necessary to work hard, also, this week,"

said Mr. Packe dryly. "You have never been an industrious pupil, Drake, but you are worse this term than last. You will be detained this afternoon."

"Detained, sir?"

"The whole of the afternoon. It will enable you to make up for lost time," said Mr. Packe, with grim humour. "I shall set you a detention task which will perhaps keep your thoughts from wandering. You may sit down."

"If—if you please, sir——" stammered Drake.

"That will do!"

Drake sank into his seat with a dismayed face. Detained!

He had intended to get out on his bike after dinner and ride over to Kingsford to obtain the earliest possible news of the performance of Brown Boy in the three o'clock race. The little project was quite knocked on the head now.

Jack Drake's face was very glum during the remainder of morning lessons. When the Fourth was dismissed at last, Dick Rodney joined Drake as the juniors swarmed out on the main deck of the Benbow.

"I'm sorry, Drake," said Rodney, in a low voice. "Had you anything special on this afternoon?"

"I was going over to Kingsford," said Drake. "Look here, Rodney, you're not detained. Could you—would you—"

Rodney nodded cheerfully.

"I've nothing very special to do," he said. "I was going to join in the cricket practice, but that doesn't matter. If you want anything done at Kingsford, I'd run over for you, with pleasure. You'd have to lend me your bike, though. I haven't a jigger."

Drake glanced round. Mr. Packe had stopped near the Form-room door to chat with Mr. Woosey, the master of the Third.

"Come along," said Drake. "I don't want to be heard."

Dick Rodney, in some surprise, followed his Form-fellow forward. Drake stopped near the main chains, out of hearing of anyone but his companion. His face was rather flushed as he looked at Rodney, and he did not meet the latter's eyes.

"I—I don't know what you will think of the bisney," he muttered. "I—I want the early evening paper. There's one at Kingsford, published as soon as the races are over——"

"The races!" ejaculated Rodney.

"Don't shout!" said Drake irritably. "Do you want to tell every dashed prefect on the ship?"

Rodney compressed his lips.

"It's news of a race you want?" he asked, in a very low voice.

"Ye-es. Not—not as exactly as you think," muttered Drake. "Don't run away with the idea that I'm playing the giddy ox; it's not exactly that. You know what I told you the day we came down about my being hard-up? Well, this was a chance for getting clear. I've got five pounds on Brown Boy at ten to one against, see? That will see me clear. I'm never going to touch anything of the kind again. But I had to get clear; I owe some money——"

"My hat!" said Rodney.

"You know I broke bounds the other night with Daub & Co. Well, it was to see Gentleman Smith, at the Lobster Pot, and lay the bet," muttered Drake. "It—it's been worrying me ever since. I—I don't feel so sure of Brown Boy now as—as I did at first. I've been worried no end."

"I can imagine that!" said Rodney dryly.

"Now that old ass Packe has detained me, and I can't go! At old St. Winifred's I could have managed it, but here, on this dashed old tub, there's no getting ashore without being seen—in the daylight, at any rate. You might help me this time, Rodney. After all, we made friends the day you came."

Dick Rodney looked at him. His first impulse was to refuse point-blank to have anything to do with such an affair. But the troubled, harassed look on Drake's face touched him. He hesitated.

"I'd ask one of the other fellows—only—I feel I can trust you!" muttered Drake. "You don't chatter, anyway. You know what I told you in the train coming down—I was a fool to tell you, but—but you haven't tattled. And this is the last time—I wouldn't go through this worry again. Once I get clear, I'm done with it!"

"Suppose Brown Boy doesn't win?"

Drake shivered.

"I—I don't know. I don't dare to think of that—after all, he must win. Daub had a sure tip from a man who knows the trainer. Brown Boy's been kept dark, you know—the bookies don't know his form, or they wouldn't lay such odds against him. He's all right. Will you get along to Kingsford and get me the evening paper?"

Rodney drew a deep breath.

"I'll do it!" he said.

"Thanks!"

"Hallo, here you are, old top!" It was the drawing voice of Daubeny of the Shell. "Lookin' for you, Drake. Come on!"

Without even looking at Rodney, Daubeny slipped his arm through Drake's and led him away. Drake jerked back for a moment—but then the irresolution of his nature asserted itself once more, and he walked away with the Shell fellow.

Dick Rodney remained where he was, his hands in his pockets, staring down at the river that swirled by the hull of the Benbow. He was half-sorry that he had undertaken the commission; but Drake's handsome, harassed face haunted him, and he could not be quite sorry. And he had given his word now, and his word was his bond.

Toodles the Comforter!

JACK DRAKE was not looking cheerful at dinner.

Mr. Packe, at the head of the Fourth Form table, had a severe expression when his eyes fell upon Drake; but the junior did not notice it. He was too busy with his sombre reflections.

He hardly knew how he had landed into his present position. He had come back to St. Winifred's that term with the very best intentions and resolutions. He had intended to keep the promise he had made at home—to turn over a new leaf that term. His meeting with Dick Rodney on the way down had been a stroke of luck for him. If only he had kept up that friendship and worked with Rodney, all would have been well. But old associations had been too strong for him—somehow or other he had fallen into the old ways with Daubeny & Co., the "bucks" of St. Winifred's.

And he knew that he could have avoided that. He had only to tell the bucks of the change in his fortunes. In his heart of hearts, he knew that Daub & Co. would not have bothered to

cultivate the friendship of the fellow who was poor. But he had shrunk from making the revelation—of all the St. Winifred's fellows, only Rodney knew the facts.

And this, so far, was the end of his resolutions—he was deeper in the wretched blackguardism of the bucks than before. He was in disgrace with his Form-master—and so far from swotting for the scholarship, he was going down in his class. He was conscious that it was due to a strain of weakness in his nature—that it was his duty to struggle against and overcome. And he meant to do it—some time.

After dinner he looked for Rodney. He felt that it was up to him to show some civility at least to the fellow who was helping him out. But Daubeny joined him and walked him away to his study, where he found Torrence and Egan—and the time passed in a chatter about Brown Boy and his chances of winning. The Shell fellows were going for a spin that afternoon in a car, and Drake was wanted—but that was impossible now.

"Rotten luck!" said Daubeny. "We were going to drop in at Kingsford on the way home and pick up news of the race. Can't you get off, Drake? Pitch it nicely to old Packe and try."

Drake shook his head.

"No use!" he answered. "I'd better get off or he will come hunting for me."
"We shall be back by call-over, and we'll bring you news," said Daubeny.

"I'm getting the paper from Kingsford—that's all right."

"Who's gettin' it for you?"

"Rodney."

Daubeny whistled.

"That prig? I thought he was too good to touch anythin' like racin'."

"He's too decent, if that's what you mean," said Drake sharply. "He's doing this as a favour to me. It's jolly good of him, considering what he thinks about such things."

"Go hon!" yawned Daub.

Drake left the study rather hurriedly. Dick Rodney was rather a bone of contention there. Drake's friendship with him had not grown, but the bucks had not been able quite to make him turn his back on the new junior. At the bottom of his heart, Drake liked Rodney a good deal better than the bucks; but he had let that slide, as he did most things. But he was very patient when Daubeny & Co. made sneering references to the sailor's son.

He found Mr. Packe in the Fourth Form Room.

The Form-master gave him rather a steely look. He was displeased with Drake; all the more because he had made a kind offer to help the junior in his work for the examination; and Drake, after accepting the offer and thanking him for it, had let it drop. That, naturally, was not a way to get into Mr. Packe's good graces.

With hardly a word, the Fourth Form master proceeded to set the junior a detention task, quite sufficient to keep him occupied till five o'clock. Then Drake was left to himself in the Form-room.

He rose from his desk when Mr. Packe's footsteps had died away. He was willing to work—indeed, he was glad, in a way, to have the opportunity of working without interruption. But the affair of the race was foremost in his mind, and he could not dismiss it.

He stood at one of the windows, which

reached from the old bulwark to the poop above. It gave him a wide view of the shining Chadway, and the deep woods on the bank, beyond the school playing fields.

Ashore, fellows were gathering on the cricket ground. He saw Lovelace of the Sixth with a number of the seniors at practice. And on Little Side there was a mob of juniors. Drake was a keen cricketer, though he had hardly given a thought to the game since coming back to St. Winifred's for the new term—he had had other matters to think of.

He watched the players for some time, till three elegant forms came in sight on the gangway connecting the Benbow with the bank. Daubeny, Egan, and Torrence were starting on their afternoon's excursion.

A few minutes later he saw Dick Rodney wheel a machine out of the bicycle-shed near the porter's cottage. Rodney glanced back towards the Benbow, and apparently saw Drake at the Form-room window, for he waved his hand and smiled.

Drake watched him out of sight, and then, slowly and unwillingly, returned to his desk. He had to do some work; Mr. Packe would probably look in presently to see how he was progressing; and at all events he had to show up his work when the detention expired.

It was dreary enough, sitting there alone on that bright afternoon. For a time there was a pattering of feet on the decks of the Benbow; but it was followed by silence. Most of the fellows had gone ashore for the half-holiday.

"I say, dear old boy!"

Drake looked up quickly as the fat voice of Tuckey Toodles reached his ears. That cheerful junior, as grubby as ever, was grinning at him through the half-open door.

"Feeling rather lonely, what?" asked Toodles.

Drake grunted. He was lonely enough, but not in a humour for the society of Tuckey Toodles.

Tuckey blinked down the passage outside, and then came cautiously into the Form-room.

"Don't let Packe spot you here," said Drake.

"You're not allowed to talk to a fellow in detention."

"I've brought you something, old chap," answered Toodles, with a beaming smile.

"Eh?"

"Look here!"

Tuckey shoved a grubby hand into his pocket and brought out a chunk of toffee—warm and sticky. Several aniseed balls were clinging to it, as well as a fragment of sealing-wax, an old pen-nib, and a piece of string. Jack Drake stared at it as Tuckey held it out to him.

"For you, old chap!" said Toodles impressively.

"Oh, my hat!" said Drake.

He could not help grinning. Apparently, this was Tuckey's way of comforting a pal under detention. The toffee certainly did not look inviting; but Tuckey himself was not fastidious, and he did not suspect fastidiousness in others.

"Looks nice, doesn't it?" said Tuckey. "It's for you, old boy."

"My dear chap—"

"I mean it," said Tuckey hospitably. "It's for you—all of it! Take it, old fellow."

Drake took the sticky lump—not with the intention of eating it, however. But he would not wound Tuckey's feelings by a refusal. Tuckey beamed upon him.

"Nice, isn't it?" he said.

"Oh, awfully!"

"You're not eating it."
 "I'll—I'll tackle it presently," murmured Drake. "So soon after dinner, you know—"
 "Mind Packe doesn't see it when he comes in," said Tuckey uneasily. "Put it under your desk. Packe would confiscate it, you know—and very likely eat it himself, in his study."

"Ha, ha!"
 "Well, he might; it's jolly nice. He took a lot of aniseed balls away from me yesterday, and I never saw them again—and never expect to. I thought old Packe's breath smelt of aniseed, Drake. Didn't you?"

"Toodles!"
 "Oh crumbs!"
 Tuckey Toodles gave a wild jump as Mr. Packe's voice came, deep and stern, from the doorway.

"What are you doing here, Toodles?" demanded Mr. Packe.

"I—I came in, sir—" stuttered Toodles.
 "You came in to speak to a boy under detention?"

"Oh, no, sir! I wouldn't. I haven't said a word, have I, Drake?"

Drake did not answer that question.
 "What? You were speaking as I came in!" exclaimed Mr. Packe.

"W-w-was I, sir?"
 "You were, Toodles."

"I—I was speaking to myself, sir," explained Tuckey. "I—I often speak to myself. It—it's a habit I've got, sir. I—I left my Virgil here, sir, and—and I came for it."

"Indeed! You intend to read Virgil this afternoon, Toodles?"

"Yes, sir; very fond of reading Virgil on a half-holiday," said Tuckey eagerly. "I—I like him better than Frank Richards, sir, as—as an author. I—I revel in him, sir."

"Indeed! Well, I will not spoil your afternoon's pleasure, Toodles," said Mr. Packe.

"Th-th-thank you, sir."
 "You may read Virgil—here, for an hour!"
 "Eh?"

"I will return in an hour, and you shall explain what you have read."

"Oh dear!"
 "I trust you will enjoy yourself, Toodles."

Tuckey Toodles groaned as Mr. Packe left the Form-room. He turned a dismal look upon Drake.

"I—I say, isn't he an awful beast?" said Tuckey. "I—I believe he's a rotten practical joker—that's what he is! Disgusting, in a Form-master! He knows I hate Virgil—everybody does, except Form-masters!"

"You shouldn't tell him whoppers, you young ass!"

"Well, I like that from you—when I came here for your sake!" said Toodles indignantly. "I call that ungrateful. I—I say, Drake—"

"Well?"
 "Do you mind if I have a bit of the toffee?" said Tuckey, rather shamefacedly.

Drake chuckled.

"Not at all. You can have the lot."
 "Oh, no! I'm not greedy. Suppose we cut it in half?" suggested Tuckey. "That's fair, you know. I've got a penknife."

"Go ahead!"
 Tuckey Toodles dissected the toffee with some difficulty into two rather unequal halves. It was the larger half that went in Tuckey's direction.

Then the two juniors settled down to the classics. There was silence in the Form-room for

about ten minutes. Tuckey Toodles was blinking at the entrancing pages of Virgil; but it is probable that many of the beauties of that great poet were lost upon Toodles just then. His glance wandered incessantly to Drake's desk. He broke the silence at last.

"I say, old chap, you're not eating your toffee," said Toodles hungrily.

"Don't interrupt!"
 "All right. But I say, Drake, old chap, suppose—"

"Oh, dry up!"
 "Suppose we cut it in half, as you don't seem to care for it—"

"Anything you like."
 "You don't mind, old fellow?"

"No."
 "Right-ho, then!"

The penknife was quickly at work again, and once more there was an unequal division. Again it was the larger portion that accompanied Tuckey Toodles back to his desk.

Then silence again, and work. Jack Drake was forcing himself to put his attention to his work, and he was succeeding, more or less. But the unhappy Toodles could not fix his mind upon P. Virgilius Maro. Attractive as that famous poet was—to Form-masters, at least—Tuckey could not help his hungry thoughts wandering to the remaining chunk of sticky toffee on the shelf under Drake's desk. He resisted the temptation long and manfully, but it was too much for him at last.

"I—I say, Drake—"

"Do stop jawing, Toodles," said Drake. "I'm trying to think of this thumping rot. It's not easy, anyway."

"You're not eating your toffee, old boy."
 Drake burst into a laugh. He picked out the chunk of toffee with finger and thumb.

"Catch!" he said.

"Sure you don't want it, old chap?"
 "Quite."

"Shall I cut it in—in half?"
 "Catch, I tell you!"

Drake tossed the chunk, and Tuckey's grubby paw caught it. In an instant it was transferred to his mouth. An expression of ecstatic enjoyment overspread Tuckey's chubby face as his cheeks bulged out. But that expression vanished the next moment as Mr. Packe entered the Form-room.

DETECTIVE KERR INVESTIGATES.

Solution:

KERR: It was Trimble who unknowingly supplied me with the solution. It was clear that when Trimble had temporarily mislaid his bag at the gangway there had been an opportunity for somebody to tamper with it. Under cover of the other passengers, the thief could have opened it, dropped the banknotes inside, and closed it again. The bag, being Gussy's, had Gussy's initials on it. Gussy's own luggage had been checked when Trimble, last of the St. Jim's party to be searched, handed the bag to Gussy to hold. Thus Trimble's bag escaped examination. The notes were inside it—as I expected. And Trimble is still protesting that he was a helpless dupe of the thief, though nobody, as far as I know, has attempted to accuse him of being anything else!

A Narrow Escape!

TUCKEY TOODLES fixed his eyes on the book. He wanted to look as if he were revelling in the classic beauties of Virgil, and, at the same time, to conceal his bulging cheek from Mr. Packe's observation.

Mr. Packe came up to his desk.

In a rather dry way Mr. Packe was a little of a humorist, and Tuckey's reckless statement that he wanted to read Virgil that afternoon—evidently not a veracious statement—made Mr. Packe relentlessly determined to keep him to his word.

"Ah! I see you are enjoying yourself, Toodles," said Mr. Packe, in so grave a tone that it needed keen penetration to observe that he was being humorous.

"Ye-e-es, sir," gasped Tuckey, fervently wishing that that final chunk of toffee was still reposing under Drake's desk.

"And what have you been reading?" asked Mr. Packe. "Probably you prefer the excellent shipwreck scene in the First Book."

"Ye-es, sir. I delight in it, sir."

"You need not look at your book while you are speaking to me, Toodles. Look up."

"Oh!"

"What's the matter, Toodles? Have you the toothache?" exclaimed Mr. Packe. "Your cheek is quite swollen."

"Is—is it, sir?"

"Yes. What is the matter? Why, now the swelling is gone!" exclaimed Mr. Packe, in great astonishment.

The swelling had vanished under his astounded eyes; but the explanation was simple. Tuckey had taken the toffee on his tongue, and it now

filled up the middle of his mouth. He was trying hard to bite it in two, so that he could swallow it.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Packe.

"What is the matter, Toodles?"

"Mmmmm!"

"What?"

"Mmmmm!"

The hapless Tuckey had his teeth in the toffee now: he had buried them in it, but it was not so easy to get them out again. He was suffering from a temporary attack of lockjaw as he blinked, red and confused, at Mr. Packe.

"Is anything the matter with your mouth, Toodles?"

"Mmmmm!"

"Drake, do you know what is the matter with Toodles? Is he ill?"

"I—I think not, sir."

"Toodles, speak—"

"Mmmmm!"

"Toodles," thundered Mr. Packe, "I can only conclude that this is deliberate impertinence! If you do not immediately answer me, I shall cane you!"

"Groooo!"

"What!"

"Grooooooo!"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Packe. He whisked away to his desk, and picked up the cane.

Tuckey, with a terrific effort, got his teeth out of the toffee. He ejected it under the desk as Mr. Packe came back, cane in hand.

"Now, Toodles—"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Tuckey. "It—it's all right, sir! I—I couldn't speak, sir. I—I had lockjaw—"

"Lockjaw!"

"Yes, sir; only temporary!" gasped Toodles.

"Mum-mum-merely temporary."

"You had temporary lockjaw?" said Mr. Packe dazedly.

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Do you know that what you state is impossible, Toodles?"

"Oh, no, sir! It—it runs in our family, sir."

"Is there anything in your mouth, Toodles?"

"Yes, sir," gasped Tuckey.

"Ah, I thought so!" said Mr. Packe grimly.

"I have noticed before, Toodles, your revolting habit of gorging yourself upon sweets on all occasions. What is in your mouth?"

"M-m-my tongue, sir."

"Wha-a-at? I was not alluding to your tongue, you absurd boy! You have something else in your mouth?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"What is it?"

"My—my teeth, sir."

"You perfectly idiotic boy! Have you any kind of sweetmeats in your mouth?"

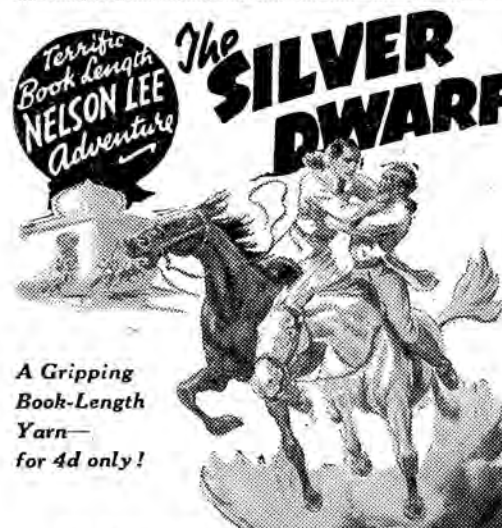
"Oh, no, sir!"

"I am afraid I cannot credit that statement, Toodles. Open your mouth at once!"

Tuckey Toodles opened his mouth wide. He felt that he could do so safely now. Mr. Packe bent his head, and looked into Tuckey's mouth. The Form-master seemed puzzled at finding the extensive receptacle empty, save for the tongue and the teeth which, of course, Tuckey could not help having there.

"This is very extraordinary!" said Mr. Packe.

"If you have nothing in your mouth, Toodles, why could you not answer me?"



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(N.B. "Footer-Stamps" may also be collected from the following papers: "BOYS CINEMA," "MAGNET," "MODERN BOY," "DETECTIVE WEEKLY," "TRIUMPH," "WILD WEST WEEKLY," "THRILLER," "SPORTS BUDGET," and "CHAMPION.")

OVERSEAS READERS! You pals who are far away—you're in this great scheme also, and special awards will be given for the best "scores" from overseas readers. There will be a special closing date for you, as well, of course!

"It was—was I-I-lockjaw, sir—an old family complaint, sir."

"Nonsense! Ah, what is that on the floor at your feet, Toodles?"

Tuckey blinked down at the toffee. He put his foot over it—rather too late. Mr. Packe's grim features grew grimmer.

"Remove your foot, Toodles! What is it?"

"I—I think it's a bit of sealing-wax, sir."

"Sealing-wax! Bless my soul! You know perfectly well that it is nothing of the kind, Toodles."

"P-p-perhaps it's a lump of glue, sir," suggested Toodles helplessly. "Or—or it might be—might be—"

"It is toffee, Toodles, and you were eating it! You are an untruthful boy!"

"Me, sir! Me untruthful!" exclaimed Tuckey.

"Pick up that toffee, Toodles!"

"Yes, sir," groaned Tuckey.

He bent down under the desk and picked up the sticky, dusty chunk. He had hoped to rescue it, after Mr. Packe had gone. Tuckey did not mind a little dust. But that hope perished now.

He held it out to Mr. Packe between a grubby thumb and forefinger, and, to judge by his look, his heart went with it.

"Here you are, sir! You—you're quite welcome, sir."

Mr. Packe blinked at him. For a moment he could not comprehend that Tuckey was offering him that sticky, dusty, unpleasant lump of toffee under the impression that he wanted to eat it. When he realised it, Mr. Packe burst into a laugh, in spite of himself.

"You utterly ridiculous boy!" he exclaimed.

"Take it to the window, and drop it into the water at once!"

"Oh, sir!"

Tuckey moved slowly to the window. He

reached his arm out, and there was a light splash in the river.

"You may go now, Toodles," said Mr. Packe.

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Tuckey.

And he went out. As he rolled down the passage outside, Tuckey grinned an expansive grin, and his grubby fist went to his mouth—to place therein a lump of toffee. With wonderful presence of mind Tuckey had dropped a pencil into the water for Mr. Packe to hear the splash, and the toffee was still in his grubby paw when he left the Form-room. And Tuckey's expression was quite beatific as he rolled away, chewing toffee!

Also Ran!

"**R**ODNEY, old chap!"

Jack Drake hurried to meet Dick Rodney as he came across the gangway from the bank. Drake had been released from detention a quarter of an hour ago, but he had not left the Benbow. At any minute Rodney might be back with the paper; and Drake did not want to run the risk of missing him. He waited about the ship, in troubled and anxious mood, watching the bank for the return of the junior.

His heart beat faster when Rodney came on the gangway at last.

Daubeny & Co. had not yet returned. Drake did not expect to see them again till call-over. But he was not thinking of the bucks. He saw a paper folded in Rodney's hand, and that paper contained the news he wanted.

Rodney looked round as he came on the deck, and nodded as Drake called to him. He joined Drake at once, and put the newspaper in his hand.

"What's the result?" breathed Drake.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,592.

"I haven't looked."

Without a word of thanks—he was too agitated to think—Jack Drake clutched the paper and hurried away with it. He could not open it on the deck and search for the racing column—there were too many eyes to see. He bottled up his impatience as well as he could, and hurried down to his study. Estcourt of the Fourth met him in the passage.

"I say, Drake—"

Drake did not heed. He brushed past Estcourt and hurried into his study, shutting the door after him. Estcourt stared after him blankly.

In his study Drake tore open the paper with feverish fingers. His eyes searched the columns.

He found the column that gave the afternoon's racing results. His hands were trembling, his face almost white. There was so much at stake—he was to be soon clear, his troubles over, so that he could settle down to work with a free mind—if Brown Boy had won. And if not, debt and difficulty—debt to his comrades, debt to Gentleman Smith. But Brown Boy had won—he must have won. It would be too cruel if he had not won. Where was the result? Why didn't the fools print it more clearly so that a fellow could see at a glance? Oh, here it was! Three o'clock race:

LOYAL TO HIS ENEMY!

(Continued from page 29.)

husky. "He saw that villain taking aim, and ran between. Why did he do it?"

"He's a splendid chap!" said Frank.

"And I'd just fought him!" muttered Bob. "There's the marks on his face now. I'm glad he licked me, Frank—I'm glad of that. What did I want to row with him for? I—I never knew—I never guessed."

His voice died away, and the two boys remained in miserable silence, waiting for news.

They started up as the doctor entered.

"How is he?" breathed Frank.

The big, frontier doctor looked down at the pale-faced boys and smiled.

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"Stodgy, Mark Tapley, Aeroplane II."

Drake stared at it. What the thump did that mean? It was the three o'clock race right enough. But where was Brown Boy? That dark horse, about which old Daub had learned from his friend who knew the trainer—that horse which was supposed to be an outsider, but which was to romp home to the astonishment and dismay of the bookies!

His eyes fell on a couple of lines of smaller type under the announcement:

"Also ran: Smike, Little Lofly, Mary Jane, and Brown Boy."

The paper fluttered from his hands, and he sank into a chair.

Also ran!

Brown Boy had not won; Brown Boy had been hopelessly beaten. It was one more of those "dead certs" that proved so extremely uncertain when put to the test. Also ran! And what was he going to do now? Also ran! The study seemed to swim round the hapless boy as he sat staring stupidly at the bulkhead.

(Next Week: "FALLEN FORTUNES!")

"Quite all right, I guess." He held up a bullet. "There's the bullet! Don't worry yourselves. There's no serious damage done, though our young friend had a narrow escape. He will mend in a week."

Bob sank down on the settle again, unable to speak. Frank felt a weight rolled from his heart. There was a long silence after the doctor had gone. Bob was the first to break it.

"Thank Heaven it's no worse, Franky! He'll get over it. After this we—we'll try to make friends—if he'll let us."

Frank Richards smiled. There was no doubt in his mind upon that point. A friendship that was to last through life dated from that terrible hour when Vere Beauchere lay in the shadow of death. The remittance man's son had proved himself to be loyal to his enemy. He was never to forget it.

(Next Wednesday: "ROUNDING UP THE RUSTLER!")

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