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The GEM 2^D

NO FLEEING CUSSY!

A dramatic moment in the
Grand Holiday-Adventure Yarn
of Tom Merry & Co.—Inside.



FIRST PRIZE-GIVING THIS WEEK! CLAIM NOW!

HOW MANY "GOALS"
HAVE YOU
SCORED?



**1000
FREE FOOTBALLS**

for Scoring "Goals"
with FOOTER-STAMPS

STOP! This is the end of the August "Footer-Stamps" Competition, and up to 250 of the Free Footballs are now going to be given away to the readers who have scored the highest number of "goals" with "Footer-Stamps" so far. First of all, there are ten more stamps given this week, five below and five more on Page 35, depicting six different actions on the football field. Cut them out and try to score another "goal" with them, or use the stamps to finish off any partly completed "goals" you may have.

TO SCORE A "GOAL," remember you only have to collect a *complete* set of the six stamps (numbered 1 to 6) made up of the following movements: **KICK-OFF, DRIBBLE, TACKLE, HEADER, SHOT, GOAL.** (Note that the "goal" stamp by itself does not count as a "goal.")

If you want to score some other quick "goals" to swell your total, remember that "Footer-Stamps" are also appearing in "Modern Boy" and "Magnet" each week.

Now, when you have scored as many complete "goals" as possible with the stamps you have collected, write your total ("goals," NOT separate stamps) in the space provided in the coupon on Page 35.

Add your name and address to the coupon also, then cut it out whole and pin your sets of goal-scoring stamps only to it. Post in a properly stamped envelope to:

**GEM "Footer-Stamps" (August),
1, Tallis House, London, E.C.4. (Comp),**

so as to reach there not later than **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1st, 1938.**

OVERSEAS READERS—You are in this scheme also, and special prizes are to be awarded for the best scores from posts outside the British Isles. In your case, send in as directed above, but note that the closing date is extended to **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1st.**

Now, when you have sent in your August "goals," keep any odd stamps you have in readiness for the September competition, which starts next week. More "Footer-Stamps" will then be given, and still more of our Prize Footballs will be offered.

5 "FOOTER-STAMPS" HERE! 5 MORE ON PAGE 35!



4 HEADER 4



3 TACKLE 3



1 KICKOFF 1



2 DRIBBLE 2



1 KICKOFF 1

SEE PAGE 35 FOR ENTRY COUPON!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,593.

GUSSY DESERTS THE ST. JIM'S CARAVANNERS—BUT IT'S LUCKY FOR GUSSY THEY DON'T DESERT HIM!

LOOKING AFTER GUSSY!



"I wefuse to be looked atfah, as I have told you before!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus angrily. "Bow-wow!" answered Blake. "Have some of these nice rashers, Gussy?" "Wats!" With that ungrateful reply Arthur Augustus walked off.

CHAPTER 1.

On the Track of Gussy!

"OH, the ass!"
 "The duffer!"
 "The chump!"

The St. Jim's caravanners were breakfasting in their camp by the open roadside in the Chilterns. Circumstances—the horse—was cropping the grass, occasionally raising his head to stare sedately at a motor-car as it passed.

Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth Form sat in the grass. Tom Merry and Manners sat on the steps of the van. Monty Lowther leaned in a graceful attitude on the wheel. All six juniors were doing full justice to eggs and rashers, which had been cooked over the oil-stove, and while they ate they talked.

Their talk consisted chiefly of a string of uncomplimentary references to the seventh member of the caravan party, now absent.

"The ass!"
 "The burbling jabber-wock!"

"The champion chump!"
 The heroes of the Shell and the Fourth were not always in complete agreement. But they

seemed in perfect harmony now as they expressed their opinion of the absent Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It was passed, nem. con, that Arthur Augustus was a fathead, a duffer, a chump, a burbling jabberwock, and a long list of other things. The ears of Arthur Augustus, wherever he was, ought to have been tingling just then.

"It's a lovely morning," said Jack Blake wrathfully, as if there was something exasperating even in the beauty of the summer morning. "We might have done no end of miles to-day, all over the giddy Chilterns."

"But now we are tied here," grunted Herries.

"Hung up!" said Manners.

"Tied by the blessed leg, as it were!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"And all on account of Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "The ass!"

"The chump!"

"The frabjous dummy!"

"The frumptions jabber-wock!"

And the chorus recommenced. Every one of the caravanners had an opinion to express about Arthur Augustus, the swell of the Fourth, the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Lower School of St. Jim's. And they expressed their

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,593.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Cutts & Co. regard the innocent Arthur Augustus simply as a rich pigeon to be plucked. But the plucking proves painful— for Cutts & Co.!

opinions with candour and with emphasis, and with repetition.

The position was really exasperating.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, having mounted the high horse, so to speak, had been left behind the previous afternoon, the caravanners feeling confident that he would follow on and rejoice them when his dignity had had a fair innings, as Monty Lowther expressed it.

Instead of which, Arthur Augustus had sent a note to the caravan camp, stating that he wasn't coming, and that he would see his old pals the next term at St. Jim's.

"Next term!" Blake remarked, five or six times. "I shall punch his silly nose a dozen times before next term!"

"Yes, rather!"

"And he's given us the go-by for Cutts—that unspeakable, cringing cad, Cutts of the Fifth!" snorted Herries.

That was, indeed, the unkindest cut of all. Cutts of the Fifth, and his pals Prye and Gilmore were staying with St. Leger, of the same Form at St. Jim's, at St. Leger's home in the Chilterns. And Arthur Augustus had accepted their invitation to join them, in blissful ignorance of the fact that the young rascals looked upon him simply as a rich pigeon to be plucked.

In his lofty wrath Arthur Augustus had said a long farewell to his fellow caravanners, and had cheerfully fallen out of the frying-pan into the fire, though probably he was not yet aware of the latter fact.

So far from intending to leave the swell of St. Jim's in the hands of Gerald Cutts and his friends, however, Tom Merry & Co. fully intended to rescue him, whether he liked it or not. Blake, indeed, declared his intention of chaining Gussy under the van if he didn't come away from St. Leger Lodge willingly.

Instead of getting on with their caravan tour, the heroes of St. Jim's had to waste time looking for St. Leger Lodge, which was somewhere in the Chiltern Hills, they knew not where; and then there was the question of getting Gussy away from the Fifth Form "blades."

"And unless they've already skinned him of his tin, they won't let him come if they can help it!" Lowther remarked. "And they can't have skinned him yet. They'll have to break that sort of thing to Gussy gently."

"The ass!"

"The fathead!"

"The chump!"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Well, we've slanged Gussy pretty well!" he remarked. "If you chaps have finished brekker and done slanging Gussy, we may as well put the horse in and start."

"Let's!" said Blake.

The caravanners did not stop to wash up. Stoves and crocks were stacked into the van, and circumstances was harnessed. As the van drew out on the road the St. Jim's juniors discussed which direction should be taken.

"That cad, St. Leger, lives about here somewhere!" Blake remarked. "But we don't know this district. Where the thump is St. Leger Lodge?"

"Echo answers where?"

"Some native will know, and tell us," said Tom Merry.

"Hallo! Here's a young shaver!"

A horsy-looking lad, with a cast in his eye and a straw in his mouth, was standing in the road, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,593.

with his hands in his pockets, staring at the van and the vanners.

There was a grin on his not-over-clean face. Perhaps he had heard the slanging that had been going on, and found it entertaining.

Jack Blake beckoned to him.

"I say, kid, do you want to earn half-a-crown?"

"I'm your man!" answered the youth promptly, and he came up to the van.

"We want somebody to show us the way to St. Leger Lodge," explained Tom Merry. "Ever heard of the place?"

"Wotto!" he answered. "It's about four mile from here."

"Oh dear!"

"On this road?" asked Manners.

"Yes; with about six turnings," grinned the youth. "I'll show you the way, if you like. You said 'arf-a-crown'?"

"That's it—if you take us to St. Leger Lodge," said Blake. "You can jump on the van, if you like."

"Wotto!"

The horsy-looking youth clambered on the van and gave directions, and the caravanners started.

The services of a guide saved them a good deal of trouble at the start, for which they were duly thankful. And their spirits rose as they rolled along in the summer sunshine.

CHAPTER 2.

Led Astray!

THE road was a little steep, and most of the juniors walked with the van. Circumstances did not put more of his beef into the pulling than he could help. The pace was not rapid, but now that they were assured that they were heading direct for their destination Tom Merry & Co. did not mind that very much.

The juniors had supposed that St. Leger Lodge was a good deal nearer than four miles, but their guide was a native of the district, and they assumed that he knew.

He pointed out the turnings as the caravan came to them, and Blake, who was driving, followed his instructions.

The horsy youth confided to Blake that his name was Charley, and that he had worked about the stables at St. Leger Lodge, and "knewed" the place like the back of his hand. From some of his remarks, Blake deduced that he had not learned much good about the stables of St. Leger Lodge. Old Major St. Leger and Mrs. St. Leger were in the South of France, Charley told him; so young Master St. Leger was at the lodge on his own.

"And a 'igh old time he's 'avin' there!" said Charley, with a wink that made Blake jump. "That there Cutts, too—he's a regular goer, he is. They made the butler drunk one night, and painted up his face, and you should 'ave 'eard 'im 'owl when 'e saw 'is chivvy in the glass in the mornin'. He thought it was a ghost, old Parker did! He, he, he!"

Blake looked at him.

His impression was that Charley was a precious young rascal, and that his employment at the lodge had helped to make him so.

"Playin' cards hevery night," the cheerful Charley rattled on. "Or else billiards. They 'ave me in sometimes to 'ard round the drinks and smokes. Nice goings on—I don't think! He, he, he!"

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "And that's the

gang Gussy has landed himself with! Oh, the howling ass!"

"Where's the lodge, young shaver?" Tom Merry called from the road.

"About a mile on, sir," said Charley, looking down at him with a grin.

The caravan rolled on. It was following a rutty lane, which seemed to lead away from the hills to nowhere in particular. The lane narrowed to a mere track, and ahead of it seemed nothing but a wide expanse of grassland.

Blake pulled in the horse at last.

"Have you missed the way?" he demanded.

Charley looked thoughtful.

"Blessed if I ain't!" he said. "It was talkin' to you, sir, I s'pose. I missed the turnin' 'arf a mile back."

"Well, you young ass!"

"Thumping young idiot!" grunted Herries. "I felt pretty sure that this didn't lead to the lodge."

"Sorry, gents," said Charley apologetically, "but it won't take long. We gotter turn back a bit!"

It was not easy to turn the caravan in a narrow track, but it was backed and turned, and the caravanners retraced their footsteps.

Charley cheerfully pointed out a turning, and the caravan rolled on.

The way led up a steep lane, and Circumstances began to show signs of reluctance.

Blake dismounted, and Charley followed his example, to lighten the van, but the pace of Circumstances grew slower and slower.

"All hands to the wheel!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

And as the road grew steeper the juniors lent their aid, shoving the van and pushing at the wheels.

They came to the top of the rise at last, and a fine view of the Chilterns was spread out before them. But there was no sign of any building.

Charley looked puzzled.

"Blessed if I ain't missed it again!" he exclaimed.

"Look here——" began Blake hotly.

"You said you knew the way, you young fat-head!" said Tom Merry. "Where the dickens are we now, then?"

"I'm sorry, gents——" began Charley.

"Your sorrow isn't much good if you've stranded us!" snapped Herries. "Where the thump are we?"

"In the Chilterns, sir."

"I know that, ass! Why don't you tell us we're in Buckinghamshire?" growled Herries.

Charley suppressed a grin.

Tom Merry was watching the young fellow rather suspiciously now. It was clear from his talk that he knew St. Leger Lodge well enough, and it was odd, to say the least, that he should have spent a whole morning looking for it in vain.

"I think I'd better ask at the shepherd's house," said Charley at last.

"Where's that?"

"Behind them trees."

"Well, cut off and ask, and be quick!"

"Orlright, sir!"

Charley left the road, and cut off across a field towards a fringe of trees at a distance. The juniors waited impatiently in the road.

"I don't quite trust that young beggar!" growled Herries. "I don't believe he's a native of these parts either. He doesn't speak like one!"

"I was thinking the same!" remarked Digby.

"I don't see why he should lead us wrong on

purpose," said Manners. "And he hasn't had his half-crown yet."

"He says he's been employed at the lodge, and from his talk that seems to be true. Perhaps he's still employed there now, and——" Tom Merry knitted his brows. "I dare say Cutts knew we shouldn't leave Gussy in his hands if we could help it. The young rascal may have been sent to hang round our camp, and offer his services, and lead us astray."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great pip!"

"I don't see any sign of a shepherd's house past those trees," said Tom.

"It may be in a hollow."

"Yes, but—— Well, I'll see."

Tom Merry clambered on top of the caravan and shaded his eyes with his hand to look.

The next moment he uttered a shout.

"He's running!"

"What?"

"The young villain!"

Tom Merry clambered down, his handsome face ablaze with excitement and wrath.

"The young rotter!" he panted. "There's no house there. He's doubled across the fields, and got back to the lane, and now he's running down the hill as hard as he can go."

"Oh crumbs!"

The caravanners looked at one another blankly. There was not much further doubt that their

DICTIONARY

Headmaster: "Boy, you are always in trouble for fighting. What is your name?"

Boy: "Richard Spud, sir; but the fellows always call me Dic-tator!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Langley, 60, Hudson Road, Southsea.

guide had been faithless, and that he had deliberately led them to the loneliest spot on the hills and deserted them there.

"The—the awful young rogue!" gasped Blake. "We've simply fallen into a trap. Cutts sent him——"

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's it! I dare say he was told to find out whether we inquired for St. Leger Lodge; and, if so, to offer his services and lead us astray. It will be no joke getting the van down this thumping hill again, either."

Blake clenched his fists.

"There's the bike."

"Oh, good!"

The juniors had forgotten the bicycle slung on the caravan. On foot there was not the slightest chance of overtaking the elusive Charley. On the bike it was quite a different matter.

Tom Merry ran to unhook the machine.

"Jump on behind, Blake!" he panted. "It may need two of us to make him come back."

"Right!"

A moment or two more, and Tom Merry was in the saddle, Blake standing on the foot-rest, and the bike was rushing down the sloping lane.

It was not necessary to pedal; free-wheeling was rather too fast, and Tom used the brakes as the bike rushed along and whizzed round corner after corner. It was a breathless rush, and it covered the ground in great style. In five minutes they sighted Charley again.

Doubtless believing that he was at a safe distance from the stranded caravanners, Charley had dropped into a walk, and was puffing at a cigarette as he lounged along. He jumped as he heard the rush of the bike behind him, and spun round.

The bike rushed on and passed him, Tom jamming on the brakes.

"Oh, my eye!"

With that startled ejaculation, Charley made a jump for the hedge. But Tom Merry and Blake were off the bike now, and they rushed after the young rascal.

Charley clambered desperately through the hedge, with the two juniors close behind. But the hedge was thick and obstinate, and Tom Merry grabbed his ankle before he could get through.

"Yow-ow! Leggo!" howled Charley.

Tom Merry wrenched, and the young rascal came sprawling back into the lane.

The next moment he was wriggling like an eel in the grasp of Tom Merry and Jack Blake.

"Now, you rotter!" panted Blake.

And Charley gave in.

CHAPTER 3.

Stranded!

"**H**OLD on, guv'nor!"
"You young rotter!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully.

"'Old on! I give in, guv'nor!"

Charley was allowed to rise to his feet, gasping for breath, Tom Merry and Blake holding an arm each.

They were not taking any more chances with the elusive young rascal.

Charley grinned at them impudently as he gasped. His trickery was quite exposed now, but he did not seem in the least degree ashamed of himself. He was only a little apprehensive as to what might happen to him.

"Come back with us!" snapped Tom Merry. "You've got to guide us to St. Leger Lodge yet."

"Oh, my eye!"

"Are we far from the place?" demanded Blake. Charley grinned.

"About eight mile," he answered. "You were two mile from it when you started. Eight mile as the crow flies, guv'nor, but longer'n that follerin' the roads."

"You rascal!" shouted Blake, shaking him. "What have you played this trick on us for?"

"Don't you know?" grinned Charley. "I reckoned you'd 'ave knowed by this time. Master Cutts' orders, sir."

"Cutts told you to hang round our camp and spook us like this?"

"Yessir!" chuckled Charley. "You see, if you was lookin' for the lodge, Master Cutts reckoned you'd ask a feller you saw near in the road, and so I was loafin' round ready for you."

"You ought to be jolly well thrashed!" growled Tom Merry. "Do you know why Cutts wished to keep us away from the lodge?"

"I reckoned it was on account of the young gent wot he brought 'ome in the car," answered Charley. "Nice young gent he was, too—perlite as you please, and spoke to me jest as if I were a gentleman like 'isself! You're after that young gent, and Cutts won't let you worry 'im. And I won't, neither—not Charley Chippis, sir!"

Evidently the polished manners of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had made an impression even upon this unscrupulous young rascal.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,593.

"Look here," said Tom Merry quietly, "that chap you speak of—D'Arcy—is our pal. Cutts and his friends have got him to St. Leger's place to get him into card-playing and that kind of rot. He doesn't know it yet."

"Why shouldn't the young gent 'ave a flutter if 'e wants to?" demanded Charley.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

He really did not quite know how to talk to a youth who asked where was the harm in gambling. Charley's moral training had certainly not been looked after in the stabling department at the lodge.

"Well, look here, we've got to get to that dashed lodge to-day," said Tom Merry. "I don't want to lick you, Charley Chippis; but you've brought us out of our way, and you've got to take us back."

Charley's jaw set obstinately.

"Nothin' doin'!" he answered.

"Yank him along to the caravan, anyhow," said Blake. "You bring the bike, and I'll hold this young rotter!"

"Right-ho!"

The juniors started uphill again, Tom Merry wheeling the bike and Blake keeping a tight grip on Charley's arm.

Charley accompanied them submissively; there was no escape for him—for the present, at least.

There was a mile to tramp uphill, and the road was steep.

In the dust and the blaze of the sun the tramp was not enjoyable. Not a soul was seen en route. The caravanners had been led into the most solitary region of the pastureland on the Chilterns.

Cutts' emissary had done his work well.

The caravan was reached at last.

Manners and Lowther, Herries and Digby, were lurching when Tom and Blake arrived with their prisoner.

"Oh, you've got him!" grunted Herries.

"Have you walloped him?"

"No," said Tom, laughing.

"Then I'll get a stiek."

"Hold on," said Tom.

"Isn't he going to be licked for stranding us here like this?" demanded Herries warmly.

"Well, the young rascal has only done what Cutts told him to do. He doesn't seem to know any better," said Tom. "But we're going to make him guide us to the lodge, somehow."

"You ain't!" said Charley. "Go and blow yourself!"

"Well, my hat!"

"You let me go!" continued Charley resentfully. "You ain't got no right to keep me 'ere! I don't care wot you says, nor wot you does! I don't give twopence for the lot of you!"

And Charley stuck his hands in his pockets and glared defiance at the St. Jim's juniors.

"What the thump kind of a lunatic is this?" growled Manners.

"He wants a hiding!" observed Herries.

Tom Merry shook his head.

Loyalty to his employer, rascal as the latter was, was a good trait in Charley's peculiar character, and did not, in Tom's opinion, call for a hiding. It was exasperating enough, certainly.

"Look here, we can find our way without this young sweep!" said Tom. "And he would most likely lead us wrong again, too. Let the little beast go, and we'll manage without him."

"He ought to be licked!"

"Oh, let him go!"

"Cut, you young rotter!" snapped Blake.

Charley "cut" promptly enough, before the

caravanners could change their minds. He walked jauntily away.

"He ought to have been licked!" growled Herries. "What the thump are we going to do now?"

"Lunch," said Tom Merry laconically. And the caravanners, not in the best humour, lunched.

Then the van was set in motion once more, and Tom Merry & Co. started on the search for St. Leger Lodge and their absent chum.

CHAPTER 4.

Half!

"**C**HUCK it!"

That was Tom Merry's decision as the sun was sinking in the west that Saturday evening.

tired, and there was a general cloud on all faces. And the remarks the caravanners made on the subject of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were exceedingly emphatic. No one, hearing them, would have supposed that the missing Gussy was their pal, and that they were looking for him from friendly motives.

Wendover was still more than a mile away when Tom Merry decided to "chuck it." His comrades were willing enough to chuck it. They were fatigued, and Circumstances was growing more and more unwilling to keep on. And the caravan halted at last on the grass by the roadside.

They camped in a rather gloomy mood.

Cutts of the Fifth had won the first round, that was certain. A whole day had been thrown away, and all the time Arthur Augustus was in



Hoot! Toot! Toot! The motor-horn hooted warning as the car came on straight for the junior standing in the middle of the road. Cutts & Co. evidently did not intend to stop if they could help it. But Tom Merry was determined not to move.

The caravanners were tired, and they were grumpy.

The blazing afternoon had been spent in retrieving the ground that they had lost under the guidance of the iniquitous Charley Chipps.

Information had been picked up on the road during the afternoon. In the quarter where Charley had stranded them, no one seemed to have heard of St. Leger Lodge, which was not surprising at the distance.

Tom Merry had finally decided to head for Wendover and make inquiries there, or near that town, for St. Leger's house. It was easy enough to get directions for Wendover; but too much time had been lost for the place to be reached that afternoon.

The horse was tired, the caravanners were

the hands of the "blades" of the St. Jim's Fifth.

Cutts' object in inveigling the swell of St. Jim's to St. Leger Lodge was plain enough to Gussy's chums, though it was certain that Gussy himself did not know it.

Gussy was to be induced to take part in the "high jinks" at the lodge, in which St. Leger was indulging with his friends during the absence of his parents. He was to be relieved of his ample cash at poker or nap or bridge. Exactly how Gerald Cutts would set about the difficult task of inducing Gussy to "have a flutter" the juniors did not know; but they feared the cunning of the blackguard of the Fifth.

And there was another consideration, too. If

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,593.

Gussy firmly resisted temptation, and declined immovably to take part in the blackguardly proceedings at the lodge, Cutts & Co. were sure to cut up "rusty" in the long run, and the consequences might be very unpleasant for Gussy.

And though Tom Merry & Co. felt quite a yearning to punch Gussy's noble nose themselves, they had a strong objection to his being mercilessly ragged by Cutts and his friends.

Tom Merry was thinking hard during supper. The search for Gussy had to be postponed till the next day, and the next day was Sunday. And on that day, naturally, the juniors were disinclined for anything in the nature of a "rag." A "scrap" with Cutts & Co. on Sunday was not at all to their taste.

"I've got an idea," Tom Merry announced at last.

"Get it off your chest!" said Blake. "I don't think much of your Shell stunts, but let's hear it."

"We don't want a row with those Fifth Form cads to-morrow—"

"That's so."

"And goodness knows how long it will take us to find St. Leger's place at our rate of travel. Suppose one of us takes the bike and looks for the place—and for Gussy. He may be fed up with Cutts & Co. by this time, and willing to come back. It's likely enough that they've shown the cloven hoof already."

"It's possible," assented Blake.

"If he's staying at the lodge, they can't refuse a chap admission to see him," argued Tom. "Perhaps I'd better go. We've got to get Gussy away from Cutts & Co. if we can; and if we can do it without a row on a Sunday all the better."

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And anyway, I'll find out where the lodge is, so that we can head for it without wasting time."

"Not a bad idea," agreed Blake.

And the caravanners assented; and so it was settled before they turned in for the night.

Sunday morning dawned fine and sunny on the caravan camp.

Tom Merry breakfasted with his comrades, and then pumped up his tyres and prepared to start.

"Don't keep us here all day," said Blake.

"You can clean the caravan while I'm gone, old chap," answered Tom.

And he pedalled away, leaving Blake snorting.

Tom Merry rode into Wendover cheerily in the sunshine, and called at the Green Lion, the inn where the juniors had scrapped with the Fifth Formers a couple of days before. Mine host knew all about St. Leger Lodge, and gave him directions at once. Tom Merry rode out of Wendover on the road to the lodge, which was a couple of miles or so from the town.

He turned from the high road into a leafy lane, pushing up a rather steep ascent. He dismounted near the top, and wheeled his machine the rest of the way. Then, for the first time, he had a view of the lodge—a handsome house standing in its own grounds, with red chimney-pots that glimmered in the sun.

It was hardly a mansion in size, but the grounds were extensive, bordered on one side by a rippling stream, and there were stables and a garage. On the terrace before the house, looking out on a green lawn, Tom caught a glimpse of moving figures, and wondered whether they were the Fifth Formers of St. Jim's.

Hoot, hoot, hoot!

A big green motor-car came buzzing along the lane, and Tom Merry recognised St. Leger's car. "Gussy!" he murmured.

St. Leger and Cutts of the Fifth were in the big car, and seated between them was the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry stood in the middle of the road and held up his hand. The car was not coming up the hill fast. Tom was glad enough of a chance of meeting Arthur Augustus without going to the house, and he was determined to stop the car.

Gerald Cutts gave a start as he saw the Shell fellow in the road. He bent forward and spoke to the chauffeur, and the car increased its speed.

Hoot! Toot, toot!

The motor-horn hooted warning as the car came on straight for the junior standing in the middle of the road.

Tom Merry's eyes glittered.

Cutts of the Fifth evidently did not intend to stop if he could help it.

Tom did not move.

That Cutts would dare to run him down he did not believe; and the chauffeur certainly saw him standing there.

"Bai Jove! Tom Mewwy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass glittered at the captain of the Shell. He caught Cutts by the arm.

"Stop the car, Cutts! Do you want to wun Tom Mewwy down?" he exclaimed.

Gerald Cutts set his teeth.

"Let him get out of the way!" he answered.

Hoot! Toot!

"Chauffeur, stop at once!" shouted Arthur Augustus, jumping up in his excitement. "Do you hear?"

The car was very close now, and the grim, determined look on Tom Merry's face could be



seen plainly enough. He was standing with his bike in the middle of the lane, which was too narrow for the car to swerve round him without touching the bike.

Cutts, with a muttered oath, signed to the chauffeur to stop. The car halted within six feet of the junior in the road.

Cutts stared at him with knitted brows. "You cheeky young sweep! Get out of the way!" he shouted.

"I'm here to speak to D'Arcy!"

"D'Arcy doesn't want to speak to you. Stand aside, or we'll run you down!"

"Run me down, if you dare!" retorted Tom Merry undauntedly.

But that was precisely what Cutts of the Fifth did not dare to do. He gave Tom a malignant look, clenching his hands.

"Well, if you won't move, we'll jolly soon shift you!" he said, between his teeth. "Come on, St. Leger!"

"Pway hold on, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus mildly. "If Tom Mewwy wishes to speak to me, there is no weason why he shouldn't. I certainly could not stand by and see Tom Mewwy wuffly handled."

A savage reply rose to Cutts' lips; but he checked it. It was his game to keep Arthur Augustus in a good humour—at present. He was not done with Lord Eastwood's son yet.

"Pway come to the oah, deah boy," continued Arthur Augustus. "What is it, Tom Mewwy? Pway cut it short, or we shall be late for church."

"For—for what?"

"Church, deah boy!"

"My only hat!"

Tom Merry could only blink at the motor-car and its occupants. Arthur Augustus' words had taken his breath away.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Nothing Doing!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY fixed his eyeglass inquiringly upon Tom Merry. He seemed to be quite cheerful and contented in his new surroundings.

At a glance, Tom could see that Cutts & Co. had not yet revealed their real object in offering Gussy the hospitality of the lodge. The swell of St. Jim's was evidently unaware, so far, that he had fallen among thieves.

"You—you—you're going to church!" ejaculated Tom Merry, at last.

Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows.

"I pwesume that there is nothin' surpwisin' in that on Sunday mornin', Tom Mewwy?" he answered stiffly.

"Something very surprising, I think, in Cutts going to church, when he's not at school and forced to," answered Tom Merry.

"What wubbish! Cutts goes to church twice ewery Sunday; he has told me so!"

"Oh, yaas!" yawned St. Leger, with a nod. "Never miss it. Always expect my guests to keep in training."

Tom Merry's brow darkened.

It was pretty clear that the "high jinks" at the lodge had been dropped for a time, for the purpose of "stuffing" the innocent Gussy and allaying his suspicions. Even Gussy, probably, had had some slight uneasiness, remembering Cutts' reputation at St. Jim's.

"The rotter is spoofing you, Gussy," Tom said.

"I am afraid, Tom Mewwy, that I cannot heah you chawactewisin' Cutts as a wottah," said

Arthur Augustus sternly. "If that is all you have to say, I wish you a vevy good-mornin'!"

"Can't you see that he's pulling your leg?" exclaimed Tom angrily.

"Certainly not!"

"Then they haven't spoofed you into playing cards yet?" snapped Tom.

"I wefuse to weply to such a question, Tom Mewwy!"

"Well, are you finished?" asked Cutts, his eyes glittering at the captain of the Shell. "I'm putting up with this insolence on your account, D'Arcy; but I think you ought to cut it short. I'm not accustomed to a slangin' match on this day of the week."

"Vevy pwopahly put, Cutts," said Arthur Augustus approvingly. "I am shocked at Tom Mewwy. I am afraid that his mannaahs have detewiwated while cawavannin'. Tom Mewwy, pway stand aside and let the cah pwocceed."

"I'm not finished yet," said Tom. "We want you to come back to the caravan, D'Arcy."

"I am afraid that is impos, deah boy."

"Look here—"

"I have not been tweated with pwopah respect, Tom Mewwy. I could ovahlook that, howevah; but now I have accepted the hospitality vevy kindly offahed by St. Leger, I cannot, of course, desert my fiwends."

"You've deserted us, fathead!"

"You left me behind, Tom Mewwy!"

"We thought you'd follow on when you got over your sulks, you ass!"

"Bai Jove! I was not sulkin'. It was impos

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### GOOD BUSINESS!

First Yoke! (at village cricket match): "The doctor be bowling well to-day, Garge."

Second Yoke! "Aye; four wickets and three new patients!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Pennell, 111, Wilbury Way, Edmonton, London, N.13.

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for me to be tweated with diswespect, that was all," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "Howevah, latah on I may wejoin you; but I have accepted St. Leger's hospitality for a week."

"They'll have cleaned you out of your cash before a week's up!" growled Tom Merry angrily.

"How long are we to stand this kind of talk, D'Arcy?" inquired Cutts, with great politeness.

"Is this quite fair to us, old chap?"

"It is not, Cutts, and I am vevy surpvised and shocked at Tom Mewwy. Good-mornin', deah boy!"

Tom did not stir.

"Did you know that Cutts sent a young rascal named Charley Chipps to lead us astray yesterday, so that we couldn't find you?" he said.

"Bai Jove! Were you lookin' for me?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, apparently surprised by the information.

"Yes, you ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Tom Mewwy."

"And we were led astray into the hills and stranded. Why do you think Cutts did that, D'Arcy, unless he's got a rotten motive in keeping you away from us?"

"I feel sure you are mistaken, Tom Mewwy."

"The young rascal confessed that Cutts had put him up to it!" exclaimed Tom.

## CHAPTER 6.

## The Enemy at the Gates!

"**F**ATHEAD!"

"Ass!"

"Frajboys chump!"

The caravanners' chorus commenced when Tom Merry arrived at the camp on the Wendover road and related his experiences to the St. Jim's juniors.

But "slanging" the absent Gussy was not much use, except as a relief to the feelings, and over lunch the caravanners had a council of war.

It was decided nem con that the St. Jim's caravan was not to proceed on its way without Gussy. That was settled to begin with. Arthur Augustus could not be left as a pigeon among rooks; that was not to be thought of. But how he was to be extracted from the hands of Cutts & Co. against his will was a knotty problem.

"We may catch him out of doors and mop him up," suggested Dig.

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's so," he said. "Anyhow, it's settled that we don't go on without him!"

"Rather!"

"I know where the dashed place is now," said Tom. "We can get there easily enough by this afternoon."

"And rush the house," said Herries.

"Fathead! We can't rush the house, but we can camp as close as possible to the gates, and wait for a chance. Anyway, we're not leaving Gussy in the lurch!"

That really seemed to be the only decision it was possible to come to, unless Gussy was to be left to his fate, which the caravanners refused even to consider.

In the afternoon the St. Jim's caravan rolled on its way, Tom Merry being the guide this time, and a much more reliable one than the iniquitous Charley Chippis.

The sun was setting when the caravan rolled along the lane leading to the gates of the lodge. The red tiles and chimney-pots glimmered in the sunset as St. Leger Lodge burst on their view. It was a charming spot, and looked as if anyone might have enjoyed life there, without the shady distractions in which Cutts & Co. found it necessary to indulge.

The van proceeded at an easy walk, while Tom Merry looked out for a camp. Between the gates and the drive and the open road was a wide stretch of grass through which the path ran to the gates.

Tom Merry inspected it with a careful eye.

"Plenty of room here for camping," he said.

"Just outside the gates," said Blake, with a grin.

"I think this must be public land," answered Tom. "It's not enclosed. All the ground between the road and the park wall is common land, I suppose? A caravan can camp anywhere on common land."

"My hat! There'll be a row with St. Leger if he finds us camping just outside his merry gates."

"Well, we don't mind a row with St. Leger."

"Not a bit," chuckled Blake. "Let's camp."

Circumstances was led off the road. There was plenty of grass there for Circumstances and there was no doubt about the caravanners' right to graze their horse on common land. Within a stone's throw of the bronze gates the caravan halted, and the horse was unharnessed.

Water was not to be had there; but the

"Bai Jove!"

"What utter rot!" yawned Cutts. "Of course I know nothin' about it, D'Arcy; but I needn't tell you that. I supposed the kids had gone on their way after leaving you behind."

Arthur Augustus looked perplexed.

"I feah that Charley Chippis was pulling your leg, Tom Mewwy," he said, at last. "Besides, you should not have been lookin' for me. You got my note, I suppose, informin' you that I was stayin' with St. Leger?"

"Yes," growled Tom.

"Then why were you lookin' for me?"

"To get you out of the hands of that gang of rascally swindlers!" answered Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"Isn't that about enough for us to stand, D'Arcy?" asked Cutts, still with great urbanity, though his eyes were glittering.

"Yaas, wathah! I am vewy sowwy, Cutts, that you have been exposed to these insultin' remarks. Tom Mewwy is undah a sewious misappwehension, but you must excuse him as he is a silly, thoughtless youngstah—"

"You silly chump!" howled the captain of the Shell. "Look here, D'Arcy, we want you to come back at once—"

"Imposs!"

"You're not going to stay with these fellows."

"Wats!"

"Will you come back with me now?" asked Tom.

"Certainly not!"

Arthur Augustus spoke in a tone of finality. It was clear that his noble mind was firmly made up.

"You are entirely mistaken, you see," he explained kindly. "You appear to suppose that I have been playin' the goat at the lodge. Nothin' of the sort, deah boy. Yestahday I was shoppin' most of the time. Have you sent on my baggage?"

"No, ass!"

"I should have been in wathah a sewious posish, Tom Mewwy, if these chaps hadn't lent me some things," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I can only say that I am surprised at you. Howevah, I will ovahlook your vewy peculiah conduct, because I am sure you mean well, and you cannot help bein' wathah dense. Now, good-mornin', deah boy!"

Tom Merry breathed hard.

He had done all he could. To collar Arthur Augustus and take him away willy-nilly was evidently impossible. There were Cutts and St. Leger to deal with in that case, as well as the swell of St. Jim's.

The Shell fellow drew his bike aside from the road at length.

"That's wight, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am sorry I cannot wejoin you, but I twust you will have a vewy nice holiday, you know."

"Fathead! We're not going on without you!" said Tom.

"Weally, you know—"

The car was moving on again, and Arthur Augustus' remark was cut short.

Tom Merry stood with his bike and watched the car disappear down the lane. Then the captain of the Shell mounted his machine and rode away. There was nothing to be done but to return to the caravan camp and consult with his comrades.

# LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

*“Ostriches Reared Successfully in England.” A feather in somebody's cap.*

An old Chinese eating-house is being shipped from Peking to Hollywood for a film. The proprietor says he has never known a joint go so far.

*A new play is called “Wet Paint.” Possibly the author hopes to deter the critics from sitting on it.*

Do you know Isabel? Isabel who? Is a bell necessary on a bicycle?

*Misprint from a bill outside the Wayland Empire, advertising a new play: “Mr. — will be resented at this theatre next week.” He would resent that!*

“What's this?” demanded Mr. Ratcliff, in a Wayland restaurant. “Cottage pie, sir,” replied the waiter. “Then I must have got one of the beams,” said Mr. Ratcliff sourly.

caravanners, who were accustomed to keeping their eyes open, had noticed a standpipe some distance back on the road, where they proceeded to fill the keg and the kettles. And they proceeded to camp in cheerful spirits—rather amused than otherwise at their thoughts of Gerald Cutts' feelings when he found them there.

The stars were coming out as they finished supper. There was a sound of footsteps on the road, and three figures came into view.

“Bai Jove!”

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was returning from an evening stroll with his dear friends Cutts and St. Leger. Arthur Augustus had enjoyed the stroll, and had not observed the yawns of his companions.

The trio halted in astonishment at the sight of the caravan.

Tom Merry & Co. rose to their feet.

“By gad!” ejaculated St. Leger. “What—what—”

Cutts strode towards the caravanners.

“What are you doing here?” he thundered.

“Camping, old top!”

“Just outside my gates, begad!” exclaimed St. Leger.

“Just!” agreed Tom Merry.

“Clear off at once!”

“Rats!”

*Red is the most arresting colour, says an art critic. What about the man in blue?*

News: Two ex-seamen have set up in business as phrenologists. All hands to the bumps!

*Grundy, doing a bit of amateur detective work, says he was nearly knocked down by a tram in Wayland. On the track of something at last!*

“Prehistoric Temple Dug Up at Avebury.” It is really very unfair the extra bits of history they keep unearthing for the new generation to remember!

*Now try this: “I can tell your thoughts by just looking at you,” said Skimpote to Gore. “Can you?” exclaimed Gore. “Then why are you still standing there?”*

Then there was the dentist who ran out of patients, so he just sat and ground his own teeth.

*“It's home on the range for me now,” said one cowboy. “Why, have they made you foreman?” asked his buddy. “No,” sighed the cowboy sadly, “I'm appointed to replace the cook!”*

Yes, and I heard this one on Brightsea Pier: “I tell you,” said one comedian, “my new gags just knocked them flat!” “Oh!” said his companion. “I guess they must have been leaning backwards to begin with!”

## Happy landings, chaps!

“I'll send my grooms to turn you off!” shouted St. Leger.

“Send as many as you like, old hoss!” said Herries. “We've got Gussy's golf clubs here, and your grooms may like to get them on their nappers.”

“Tom Mewwy—”

“Like a bunk in the caravan, Gussy?”

“Certainly not. I am St. Leger's guest. Tom Mewwy, I am vewy much surprised at this.”

“It's a surprising world,” agreed Tom Merry.

“You have no right to camp just outside St. Leger's gates without his permission.”

“Common land here, old scout!” chuckled Blake.

“Yaas; but it is vewy bad taste.”

“Not such bad taste as boozing and smoking and gambling up at the lodge.”

“Weally, Hewwies—”

“I'll have you turned off if you don't get away at once!” exclaimed St. Leger angrily.

“You can't!” answered Tom Merry coolly.

“We've a right to camp here, on common land, and you can't turn us off!”

“You'll see!”

“Well, you can try, if you like; but I warn you there will be trouble if you do try!”

“Yes, rather!” said the caravanners emphatically.

"This is a vevy painful posish for me," said Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "These fellows are my friends, St. Leger, though they are actin' in this foolish and misguided way. I twust you will allow them to wemain here for to-night, and leave it to their good taste to take the woad in the mornin'."

"We shall remain, anyway," remarked Blake. "And we're not taking the road again, Gussy, until you come along."

"Weally, Blake—"

St. Leger and Cutts exchanged glances. They were evidently exasperated and disconcerted by this move on the part of the St. Jim's caravanners.

"They can stay till mornin'," said St. Leger at last. "Come on!"

Cutts and his companions went in at the gates, which closed after them.

"Dear old Cutts seemed rather ratty," smiled Blake. "I fancy we're going to dig ourselves in here, you fellows. But I think we'll keep watch at night, in case Cutts tries any tricks."

"Yes, rather!"

And the St. Jim's caravanners turned in.

## CHAPTER 7.

### The Merry Blades!

"WHAT about a hundred up?"

Gilmore of the Fifth asked that question.

Five fellows were taking their ease in big armchairs in St. Leger's "den" at the lodge.

It was rather a big room for a "den," and very expensively furnished. There were guns and trophies of the chase on the walls, though it certainly was not St. Leger of the Fifth who had bagged those trophies.

Though the evening was warm, a log fire crackled on the wide hearth, to give the room a cosy look. Before the fire was a big tiger-skin, brought home from India by St. Leger's father. A glance at that room was enough to show that the Fifth Former of St. Jim's had indulgent parents, who considered nothing too good for him. And it was quite certain that St. Leger was none the better for such indulgence.

Four out of the five fellows in St. Leger's den were bored almost to tears; only Arthur Augustus was quite content and placid.

Cutts of the Fifth kept up a genial grin. St. Leger nobly concealed his yawns. But Prye and Gilmore found it very difficult to endure the evening, and they gave Gerald Cutts reproachful glances.

Cutts had landed them in for this, and they felt wrathful. But Cutts was the head of the party, though it was St. Leger's house.

With what fortitude they could, the Fifth Formers endured the noble society of Arthur Augustus.

Gussy was not a suspicious fellow. It never occurred to him that his companions were bored. He was not bored. And he was not really a bore. He had been to church that day, he had been on a drive, and he had had an evening walk, and now he was satisfied to chat a little before going to bed.

That was quite enough excitement for Sunday in Gussy's opinion; and Gussy was right. But

the "blades" of the Fifth had quite other views.

In the company of the noble Gussy they could not venture upon their usual distractions, and without cards or smokes or billiards or hery chatter they felt lost.

Gilmore made his remark quite suddenly, without thinking. He was beginning to feel that if there was much more of this he would shriek. Hundred up, Gilmore thought, would break the dreadful monotony.

Arthur Augustus started, and turned his eyeglass upon Gilmore. He did not speak, but his expression was very expressive.

Gerald Cutts gave Gilmore a warning look.

"Don't make silly jokes, Gilly," he said. "D'Arcy might think you were speakin' seriously."

"But I was—ahem!—all right!" stammered Gilmore.

"We've had a rather quiet day, D'Arcy," remarked Cutts, with a glance at the swell of St. Jim's. "You don't mind that?"

"I vevy much pwefer a quiet day on Sunday, Cutts."

"Quite so," assented Cutts. "To-morrow you'll find us a little more lively, old son. We're goin' to entertain you, Gussy."

"Oh, yaas!" yawned St. Leger.

"To-morrow evenin' we'll have a game of cards," said Cutts, watching the junior out of the corner of his eye. "A round game at cards is very agreeable in the evening."

"Yaas, wathah! I have often played wound games for nuts, you know."

Gilmore suppressed a groan at the bare idea of a card game for nuts.

"That's the idea!" said Cutts agreeably, smiling at Arthur Augustus. "If we don't happen to have any nuts about, we could use counters."

"Oh, yaas! Countahs would be all wight for a wound game."

"We generally use small coins for counters," remarked St. Leger—"pennies or shillings, you know!"

"I see! And weturn them at the end of the game?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh! Ah! Yes, of course!"

St. Leger gave it up.

"Well, so long as the stakes on a game are of practically no value, it doesn't matter much whether they're returnable or not," said Cutts, with his eyes very sharply on Gussy.

Arthur Augustus looked grave.

"I should think it did mattah, Cutts. It is vevy easy to go on fwom small stakes to largah ones, and a fellow might be led into gamblin' without weally wealisin' it."

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus' remark was rather too much for the blades of the Fifth. It was followed by silence. It was all Gerald Cutts could do to keep the agreeable smile on his hard face.

"By gad, it's gettin' towards bed-time!" exclaimed St. Leger at last.

"Yaas, wathah! Half-past nine!" said Gussy.

"Perhaps we'd better make a move," observed Cutts. "I don't believe in late hours on a holiday. It might get a fellow into lazy, slackin' habits."

"Oh!"

"Exactly!"

"Yaas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus; and he rose. "I weally feel wathah sleepy."

St. Leger rose, too.

"I'll see you as far as your room, old son," he said.



And he did.

When the two were gone, Gilmore and Prye jumped up, and came towards Cutts with angry looks.

"Look here, how long is this game going to last?" growled Prye. "I'm blessed if I can stand it much longer!"

"Sickenin'!" snorted Gilmore.

"Oh, don't play the goat!" snapped Cutts. "Do you think I'm enjoyin' it?"

"You look like it."

"I suppose I can't scowl at the kid as you chaps very nearly do!" grunted Cutts. "I can tell you it was a stroke of luck droppin' on him as we did and gettin' him here."

"Two days of thumpin' misery and good behaviour!" groaned Prye. "Do you call this a holiday?"

"Well, we'll have a game after the young cad's gone to bed," answered Cutts. "Here, light a cigarette, and stop grumbling!"

"Thank goodness the cheeky little beast has gone to bed!" groaned Prye, blowing out a cloud of smoke. "I've been dying for a fag!"

"How long is it goin' to last?" exclaimed Gilmore. "My patience won't stand much more of it!"

"I think we can get down to business to-morrow," Cutts knitted his brows. St. Leger came back into the room, and yawned deeply, and lighted a cigarette. "Little beast safe for the night?" asked Cutts.

"Oh, yes!"

"Thank goodness for that!"

"I've let you plant him on me, Cutts," grumbled

St. Leger, "but go easy; there's a limit to human endurance, as a political chinwagger remarked once. He's a good little idiot, and I rather like him, but I can't stand much more—I can't, you know!"

"Same here!" said Gilmore. "It's really too thick, Cutts!"

"Too thick absolutely!" concurred Prye.

Cutts lay back in his chair, looking grimly at his comrades through wreaths of smoke. His expression was not pleasant.

"It was thumpin' luck gettin' him here!" he said. "Don't talk out of your hats! How are we off for mouny?"

Three dismal groans answered Cutts. Apparently, the Fifth Form blades were not well supplied with that necessary article.

"We started our holiday well heeled," said Cutts. "We've had rather a good time. But billiards and smokes and horses run away with cash. How much did we drop together on the races?"

"Goodness knows!"

"It's left me stony!" groaned Prye. "Look here, you were goin' to get supplies when you went off on your motor-bike to see your uncle a few days ago."

Cutts scowled.

"My uncle gave me a lecture instead of a tip," he answered. "I told you so."

"Unnatural relative, begad!" murmured St. Leger. "We do seem to have landed ourselves into rather a glorious hole! Never mind; we've been paintin' the scenery scarlet, and that always has to be paid for!"



Cutts made a spring at Charley and gripped him by the collar. Then the whip rose and fell savagely. Lash, lash, lash! The wretched boy's yells rang through the stable-yard. "Ow, ow, ow!" he roared. "Ow! Oh! You 'ound! You coward!"

"It's been paid for through the nose this time!" growled Prye.

"We're all practically stony!" resumed Cutts. "St. Leger's borrowed money of his dashed butler—all the man will lend!"

"And a thumpin' interest I've got to pay on it somehow!" groaned St. Leger. "Old Parker is a business man."

"Don't pay him!" said Prye.

"Got to; he'd tell the pater! And he's not so jolly quick in answering bells and things since I borrowed his money. It's bad business to borrow money of your dashed servants!" said St. Leger, with a solemn shake of the head. "But what's a fellow to do when he's in a hole?"

"Anybody he can!" said Cutts, with a grin. "St. Leger, where's that whisky of yours? No need to keep it hidden now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The four young rascals felt better with a whisky-and-soda apiece—at least, they tried hard to believe that they did. And Cutts, with a glass in his hand and a cigarette sticking out of the corner of his mouth, went on.

"D'Arcy's come to our rescue—that's how it stands. I was shopping with him yesterday in Wendover, and I saw the plunder. He's lined with banknotes!"

There was a greedy glitter in Gerald Cutts' eyes, reflected in the eyes of his comrades.

"It's worth our while," went on Cutts. "After all, it won't do us any harm to go easy on drinkin' and smokin' for a few days; we shall enjoy it all the more when we fairly let ourselves go again!"

"Somethin' in that," agreed Gilmore. "But I can't keep up the Good Little Georgie stunt too long, old hoss!"

"We've got to lull his suspicions to begin with. He remembers one or two things that were said about us at St. Jim's!"

"Very likely!"

"He's goin' to be brought round gradually," said Cutts. "Leave it to me! I reckon it will come off to-morrow! And once he's in a game of poker I'll guarantee to do the rest!"

"After that?"

"Oh, after that he can go caravannin'! And the sooner the better!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

St. Leger did not join in the laugh. There was a slight flush on his cheeks.

Cutts gave him a sharp look.

"I don't half like it!" muttered St. Leger uneasily.

"What do you mean?"

"Dash it all, he's under my roof—he's a guest; though we're only pullin' his leg! I don't like it!"

"Have you got a better way of raisin' the wind?" sneered Cutts. "You've drawn your butler dry! Are you goin' down into the kitchen to borrow the cook's wages, by Jove?"

"Oh, don't be an ass! Look here, Cutts, if the kid plays poker with us it's got to be a square game!" muttered St. Leger. "None of your tricks! I won't stand that—under my father's roof! I mean it!"

"Tricks won't be needed—the kid's as soft as a baby!" answered Cutts coolly. "Don't get a pain in your conscience, old chap!"

"Do you know what I think?" said St. Leger abruptly.

"No, I don't! Nothin' very valuable, I suppose?"

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"I think you're wastin' your time," said St. Leger. "I know I'm not as sharp as you are, Cutts—I know that! But I can see some things that you can't, and I don't believe that that kid can be bantered, or fooled, or bamboozled into gambling for money. He's been too jolly well brought up for that. He's not very bright, I dare say, but trainin' tells. And I believe you're wastin' your time, with all your sharpness!"

A black look came over Gerald Cutts' face. Possibly deep down in his heart there was a lurking doubt as to the success of his cunning scheme—an uneasy feeling that for once his astuteness and cunning would fail.

"You've been touchin' on the subject several times," continued St. Leger. "And every time the kid heads you off. I've been watchin' him. And I firmly believe that as soon as he knows he's wanted to gamble he will clear off and leave us standin'. That's what I believe."

Gilmore drew a deep breath.

"By gad!" he said. "If it turns out like that—if we've been wastin' our time and puttin' up with the cheeky little cad for nothin'—"

Cutts muttered an oath.

"We'll give him a trial to-morrow!" he said. "We've done enough stuffin' him—and to-morrow we'll see! If he disappoints us—"

"He will!" said St. Leger.

"I don't think so. I've managed fellows before. You've had your goody-goody moments yourself, St. Leger!" sneered Cutts. "I'm rather an adept at bringin' fellows to reason. But if he does disappoint us I'll make him sorry for it! I'll skin him before I kick him out of the house!"

"You won't kick him out!" said St. Leger.

"There's goin' to be a limit, Cutts!"

"Look here—" exclaimed Cutts furiously.

Gilmore interposed.

"Easy does it!" he said. "What's the good of rowin'? I've got the cards here! Poker's the game!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was sleeping peacefully above—dreaming, probably, of woods and lanes and caravanning; certainly not dreaming of what was going on in St. Leger's "den."

Two o'clock had chimed when Cutts & Co. threw aside the cards and lounged away to bed. This was a "high old time," according to the blades of the Fifth. But they certainly did not look any better for it in the morning.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Cutts Loses His Temper!

"HALLO, Gussy! Come to brekker?" Tom Merry & Co. were up and lively in the early sunshine of the summer morning, and the caravan camp was busy.

The caravanners were sitting on the grass having breakfast when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in sight from the gates. The swell of St. Jim's was taking a stroll before breakfast.

Breakfast was rather a late meal at St. Leger Lodge. Cutts & Co. were never down early. Arthur Augustus could have breakfasted alone, but he preferred to wait till his host came down. He had a good while to wait that Monday morning, and he filled it in with strolling round the pleasant grounds of the lodge; and then he looked in at the caravan camp.

His expression was very serious as he joined the caravanners. He shook his head in response to the cheery hospitality of his old comrades.

"Thank you, deah boys, I am bweakfastin' with my fwiends!" he answered.



## Detective Kerr Investigates

No. 6.

# Mystery at Brightsea!

**G**USSY was dozing on the sands at Brightsea one afternoon, his chums, Blake, Herries, and Digby having left him for a few moments, when a stone was thrown, striking an elderly gentleman in front of Gussy, and raising a nasty bump on his head. The stranger, a Mr. Roberts, accused Gussy of having thrown the stone, and of feigning sleep immediately afterwards as cover. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, joining Blake & Co. on the front, arrived just in time for "Detective" Kerr to investigate.

**KERR:** If you'll just keep calm, Gussy, old chap, we may be able to sort this out.

**D'ARCY:** Bai Jove, this swangah accuses me of a most atrocious cwime—hurlin' a stone at his head! Whoevah did it deserves to be awwested.

**KERR:** We know you wouldn't do such a cowardly thing, Gussy. Now, Mr. Roberts, was there anybody else on the beach—just behind Gussy, I mean?

**MR. ROBERTS:** No; not a soul.

**D'ARCY:** That is a widulous statement. The beach is fairly crowded, and there could easily have been somebody behind me, out of sight.

**KERR:** The only people within earshot at the moment are an ice-cream vendor and a boatman. Suppose we ask them if they saw who did it?

**KERR:** Did you see a stone thrown at this gentleman, Boatman?

**BOATMAN:** No, I can't say I did.

**KERR:** It was only a few minutes ago, and whoever it was can't have gone far.

**BOATMAN:** No, I saw nothing. But then, I was busy with some fishing tackle in this big box here.

**KERR:** I suppose you keep an eye open for everything?

"Aren't we your friends?" demanded Blake.

"I twust so, Blake; but I am wefewwin' to St. Leger and the Fifth Form chaps. In the cirs, they would not like me to bweakfast with you, as you are persistin' in actin' the goat!"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Join up, old chap, and take the road with us," urged Tom Merry. "We're going west when we start again, and we may meet Figgins & Co. on the road."

"I should be vevy pleased to meet Figgins again, Tom Mewwy, but I cannot wejoin you at pwsent, as I accepted St. Leger's hospitality for a week. I have come here to wequest you to move on!"

**BOATMAN:** I don't miss much. Not that there's been anything to see this last half hour—but the Channel boat is due in shortly now.

**KERR:** You say you were busy, though, bending over your fishing tackle in that box——

**BOATMAN:** Oh, I only bent over it for a minute or so! Then I sat mending my net. I couldn't have missed much. I didn't see the speedboat go out, I know. And it must have been whilst I was bending, a-peerin' into that box, that the stone was thrown.

**KERR:** Seven ice-creams, please. Thanks! By the way, you've been along the beach all the afternoon, haven't you, dishing out ice-creams?

**ICE-CREAM MAN:** Yes, sir.

**KERR:** You can see the gentleman we were talking to has had a nasty knock.

**ICE-CREAM MAN:** 'Twasn't me, anyway. That's Mr. Roberts, who owns those speedboats. I worked on one not long ago myself, but they wanted too much done. They've got a new assistant now to take the money—I hear they've threatened him with the sack, too! Come to think of it, he missed the last trip out. I saw him myself running away up the beach.

**KERR:** Hallo! Here comes the chap you mean—running back. Hey! Are you working for Mr. Roberts?

**NEW ASSISTANT:** Yes. What's wrong?

**KERR:** Nothing much. But where have you been?

**NEW ASSISTANT:** Up to the head office, to see Mr. Roberts—but he wasn't there. Must have come down to the front—oh, there he is! We've developed a slight engine defect, you see, and the gov'nor wanted to know if it was O.K. to go on racing the engine, or lay it up.

**KERR:** Well, you'd better speak to Mr. Roberts over there. Oh, just a tick, Ice-Cream Man!

**ICE-CREAM MAN:** Well, what is it now?

**KERR:** You say you didn't actually see this new assistant chuck the stone—though he could easily have done it, as he was unexpectedly ashore; and if he had a grudge against Mr. Roberts——

**ICE-CREAM MAN:** No, I didn't see anything. But I was looking out to sea just about then, watching a ship signalling to the lighthouse.

**KERR:** Thanks! You've told me all I wanted to know. Well, chaps, we'd better see how Mr. Roberts is feeling.

*(Is the ice-cream man the culprit? If so, how did he give himself away? See solution on page 22.)*

"Request away," smiled Tom. "We're stopping as long as you do!"

"We're accepting St. Leger's hospitality for a week, too," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Had a good game of poker last night?" asked Herries, with a grunt.

"If you mean to imply that I would play pokah on Sunday, Hewwies——"

"I don't see what you're staying with Cutts for, then!"

"You fellows misjudge Cutts!"

"Oh, rats!"

"I wegard that wejoindah as wude, Hewwies!"

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I weally wish you fellows could see that it is bad form to plant yourselves within twenty yards of St. Leger's gates in this mannah! I feah there will be twouble if you remain here!"

"That's all right!" said Blake cheerily. "A little trouble will help to pass the time, Gussy! We've got your golf clubs ready for Cutts & Co. if they come along hunting for trouble!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then you wufuse to wetiah fwom the scene?"

"You've got it!"

"We're looking after you, you ass!" said Manners.

"I wufuse to be looked aftah, as I have told you before!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus angrily.

"Bow-wow!" answered Blake.

"Have some of these nice rashers, Gussy?"

"Wats!"

With that ungrateful reply Arthur Augustus walked off, leaving the caravanners to finish their breakfast, which they did quite cheerfully, undismayed by Gussy's lofty displeasure.

Arthur Augustus sauntered slowly and thoughtfully through the grounds towards the red-tiled house. There was no sign of Cutts & Co. about the house yet, and Arthur Augustus strolled round to the stables.

He found Charley Chipps in the yard, busy with a mop and pail. The little rascal touched his cap to Arthur Augustus, with a welcoming grin.

"Good-mornin', deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"'Mornin', sir!" said Charley.

"Busy already—what?"

"Up at six, sir," grinned Charley. "I don't keep late hours, like you young gentlemen, sir."

"Bai Jove! I do not keep late hours, young 'un," said Arthur Augustus. "We all go to bed vevy early."

Charley stared.

"Oh, sir!" he ejaculated.

"I twust, Charley, that you are not undah the impression that I keep late hours?" said Arthur Augustus, in a stately manner.

"Jest as you say, sir," answered Charley, evidently puzzled. "I 'ope you 'ad a good day yesterday, sir?"

"Yaas, deah boy—quite enjoyable!"

"Did you 'ave any luck, sir?"

"Luck?" repeated Arthur Augustus.

"I mean, I 'ope you won, sir."

"Won?" said Arthur Augustus, with a jump.

"Why, you howwid young wascal, do you think I have been gamblin'?"

Charley jumped, too.

"I—I thought—" he stammered.

"You are undah a vevy mistaken impression," said Arthur Augustus sternly. "You appeah to have vevy queah ideahs, Charley, of what goes on in your master's house!"

Charley blinked.

As he had often been a witness of the orgies in St. Leger's den, his ideas of what went on there might have been queer, but they were certainly well founded. And he had taken it for granted that Arthur Augustus was there to share in the "high jinks."

It dawned upon Charley that this elegant youth was a pigeon among the rooks, and not a youthful rook, so to speak.

"Oh, sir!" he murmured.

"Pway put such ideahs entirely out of your head, my boy," said Arthur Augustus. He addressed Charley in quite a fatherly manner, regardless of the fact that Master Chipps was the

elder of the two. "You must not think such things at all. You are quite mistaken."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Charley.

"By the way, I undahstand that you guided the cawavan on Saturday—and guided it w'ong," said Arthur Augustus. "That was a vevy wotten thing to do, Charley. You should not play such twicks."

"N-no, sir!" said Charley. "I—I thought they were arter you, sir, to stop you 'avin' a good time with Master Cutts and his friends."

"I feah that you are wathah a young ass, Charley. You gave Tom Mewwy the impression that Cutts had put you up to playin' that twick on him."

"But—but—" stammered Charley.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared a little. Charley simply did not know what to say, but his expression said a good deal.

"Bai Jove! It is impos that Cutts did so—in fact, he told me he did not!" exclaimed Gussy.

"Oh, sir!"

"Weally, Chipps—"

There was a step on the cobblestones, and Arthur Augustus looked round as Cutts of the Fifth sauntered up.

Cutts was looking pale and tired, and there were lines on his face. He was in an evil temper, the result of physical fatigue and distress over his reckless night, but he smiled genially at Arthur Augustus.

"'Mornin', old top!" he said. "I was lookin' for you. Been lookin' at St. Leger's gees—what?"

"I—I was just talkin' to Charley."

Cutts gave him a very keen look, and then his eyes glittered at Charley Chipps.

That hapless youth backed away from his pail and mop.

The clouded expression on D'Arcy's face did not escape Gerald Cutts' eyes.

"Comin' in to brekker?" he said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'll follow you," said Cutts. "St. Leger's asked me to look at his mare."

"Wight-ho!"

Arthur Augustus walked out of the stable-yard, still in a very thoughtful mood. In spite of himself, his old distrust of Cutts had come back.

Cutts waited till he was clear, and then he called Charley. The stable-boy came up very unwillingly. He was afraid of Cutts. And now that Gussy was out of sight, the blackguard of St. Jim's did not take any trouble to disguise his temper.

"What have you been saying to Master D'Arcy?" asked Cutts, in a low, savage voice.

"Nothin', sir!" stammered Charley.

"Don't tell any lies!" said Cutts savagely.

"You've been chattering, you young fool!"

"I—I ain't!" muttered Charley, backing away as Cutts let a riding-whip, which he had been carrying under his arm, slide into his hand. "I—I ain't said nothin', sir. He says as 'ow a bloke named Merry told 'im—"

"You young rotter!" said Cutts, between his teeth. "You told Merry that I had put you up to leadin' his caravan astray."

"I—I never knowed that—"

"You use your tongue too much, you fool!"

"But—but you never told me, Master Cutts. I—I—"

Cutts gripped the riding-whip. He was angry with Charley, but it was chiefly the effects of drinking and smoking that made him so evil and bitter. His savage temper wanted a victim, and the hapless stable-lad came handy as a victim.



Charley read his expression easily enough, and backed away farther in alarm.

"Come here, you scrubby little cad!" hissed Cutts.

"You ain't goin' to 'it me," said Charley. "You ain't my guv'nor, Master Cutts, anyhow. Oh, crikey!"

Cutts made a spring towards him and gripped him by the collar. Then the whip rose and fell savagely.

Lash, lash, lash!

The wretched boy's yells rang through the stable-yard. A groom came out of the stable, stared, and went in again.

Cutts' hard face was aflame with malice and cruelty as he lashed the hapless boy, who struggled in vain in his grasp.

"Ow, ow, ow!" roared Charley, struggling and kicking. "You let me go, Master Cutts! Oh! Oh, you 'ound! You coward! I'll tell Master D'Arcy what your game is, now I know. I'll tell 'im you've got 'im 'ere to cheat 'im, so I will! I know you! Oh, oh, oh!"

Cutts struck, and struck again, his savage rage further inflamed by the wretched boy's words. Charley's howls died away into sobs and moans as the bully thrashed him mercilessly. He sank on the ground, quivering and sobbing, when Cutts threw him aside at last, which was not till his arm was tired.

"Ow, ow, ow! Oh, oh, oh!" moaned Charley.

Cutts' eyes glittered down at him.

"Now, get out!" he said. "You're sacked! Do you understand? You're sacked, and you're to clear off! I'll speak to your master about it. I'll come down here after breakfast, and if you're still here I'll give you another licking!"

Cutts put his whip under his arm and strode out of the stable-yard.

St. Leger and the rest were at breakfast when he came in, all of them rather silent and surly. Cutts smiled genially as he dropped into his seat. He was playing his part once more. The savage bully had given place to the insinuating sharper.

Arthur Augustus' somewhat cloudy brow cleared, and he was soon merry and bright under the influence of Cutts' genial chat and high spirits. And once more Arthur Augustus felt that he had misjudged Cutts of the Fifth.

CHAPTER 9.

An Unexpected Guest!

"SOMEBODY'S got to fetch water," remarked Blake.

"And somebody had better bike down to Wendover for some grub!"

"And then—"

"Then we've got to kill time!" yawned Monty Lowther. "I really think it would have been better to kidnap Gussy when he gave us a look-in this morning. It would have saved time."

"The ass!"

"The fathead!"

"The chump!"

"After all, there's some jolly good scenery about here," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We can take some little walks while we're here. Let's toss up for the bikist and the water-carrier."

It fell to Herries to bike away for provisions, and to Digby to fetch water.

Manners wandered away with his camera, and Monty Lowther started searching for a farm, in quest of eggs and milk and butter.



PROFESSOR SKIMPOLE'S HOROSCOPE

This Week:

Monty Lowther.

"COME right in, Mr. Astrologer!" welcomed Monty Lowther when I visited Study No. 10 in the Shell passage. "I hope you've come to tell me all about the stars." "Why are you so eager to learn, Lowther?" I asked. "Oh, don't misunderstand me," said Lowther affably. "You see, Skimmy, I've got my comic column to write up to-day—and I was thinking your star talk might provide me with enough laughs to fill up?"

Lowther, of course, is an inveterate jester. Born under the sign of Virgo, The Virgin (August 24th to September 22nd), he is influenced by flashing Mercury, denoting a happy, light-hearted outlook on life. This does not mean to say that Lowther does not appreciate the value of hard work. He is essentially the type which profits by experience, and underneath his cloak of mirth there is much sincerity, and the ability to take reverses with a smile.

"Yes," agreed Lowther, "that's probably me, all right, Skimmy. I certainly like to remember that bit by thingummy—to be able to meet either disaster or success, and treat those two impostors just the same. By the way, Skimmy, do star-gazers drink ginger-pop? Try a glass. You must crane your head back so often, looking at the stars, I wonder you don't get a crick. Well, here's to the stars—may they never grow less!"

Tom Merry and Blake remained chatting for a time. Somebody had to stay with the van, so they stayed. But after a time, as Blake had found a book, Tom Merry went for a stroll. He did not stroll very far, however. He was sauntering down a narrow, shady lane, not a hundred yards from the caravan camp, when he halted suddenly. A peculiar sound had come to his ears.

It was a moan of pain, and it came from the thick hedge.

Tom's first thought was that it was some animal caught in the hedge, and in trouble, and his second thought was to help it out. But as he turned into the thick grass he uttered an exclamation of surprise. A figure was squatted in a gap in the hedge, rocking to and fro in pain, with the track of tears on a dirty face.

"Charley!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Charley looked up dismally.

"Oh, you!" he muttered. "You want to pitch into me, too, p'raps."

The St. Jim's junior gave him a compassionate look. He could see that the hapless youth had been "through it." His jacket had been cut by the savage blows of the whip.

"Poor kid!" exclaimed Tom. "What on earth's happened?"

"Ain't you goin' to pitch into me, too?"

"Of course not, you young ass! Who's been licking you?" exclaimed Tom. "Not one of my friends, I know that, though you deserved it."

"Maste. Cutts ain't one of your friends!" muttered Charley.

"Certainly not; though he's at the same school," said Tom. "Do you mean to say that Cutts has thrashed you like that?"

"It wasn't nobody else," said Charley, with a shudder of pain. "Sacked me, too!"

"I thought you were employed by St. Leger."

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"It's the same thing—Master St. Leger ain't got a soul of 'is own when Cutts is about," said Charley. "P'r'aps I'll get back when the major comes 'ome—but he ain't expected 'ome. He's abroad. I wouldn't go back to the lodge, not if Master St. Leger was to ask me, while Cutts was there! Oh, he's a beast—a cruel beast, he is! I've seed him thrash a 'orse, when he was in one of his tempers, till it made my blood run cold! Oh, he's a proper beast!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"St. Leger ought to have protected you," he said.

"He wasn't there—and he wouldn't, anyway. He's under Cutts' thumb!" Charley moaned. "Oh, I've 'ad it—'ard! Look at this 'ere!"

Tom Merry looked at the cruel mark of the whip where it had fallen on Charley's neck.

"My back's like that," said Charley.

"You could summons him for that," said Tom. "That kind of thing isn't allowed in England, Charley."

"Lot of good a poor bloke like me goin' to lor with a rich young gent like Cutts!" said Charley derisively. "Don't you pull my leg, sir. Oh, he was in a temper, he was! He'd been drinkin'. And that young gent with the glass eye—'e's took in proper, 'e is. I'd tell 'im all about it now, if I could."

"Come along with me!" said Tom.

"Where?" asked Charley suspiciously.

"To the caravan. We'll do something for your back," said Tom. "It wants something done to it. We've got some ointment."

"You can't kid me," said Charley.

"You young ass! I'm not kidding you, as you call it! Come with me!"

Tom Merry caught the boy's gimpy arm and lifted him.

Charley accompanied him rather suspiciously and unwillingly to the caravan camp, where Jack Blake greeted them with a stare.

"My hat! You've caught a queer fish, Tommy!" he said.

"I didn't want to come 'ere!" said Charley defiantly.

Tom Merry explained to Blake.

"Oh, I see! The Good Samaritan stunt!" said Blake. "I'm on!"

Charley, much to his astonishment, was taken into the van, where the two juniors attended to his injuries—which were severe enough—as well as they could.

By that time the rest of the caravanners had returned to camp, and they blinked in surprise at the unexpected guest.

But they were quite cordial and cheery, generously dismissing from their minds the trick Charley had played on them a couple of days earlier.

"I wonder what Gussy would think of Cutts if he could see the kid now?" grunted Herries.

"He shall see him, if he comes this way," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Let's give the kid some lunch," suggested Manners. "You'd like to have some dinner with us, young 'un?"

"Wot to!" said Charley.

Over dinner Charley brightened up a little.

He confided to the caravanners a good many circumstances about himself; that he had lost his father, and that the old major had given him a job about the stables, and that he was without



Jack Blake rushed into the room with Tom Merry's socks!" roared Blake, and he and Tom sprang

relations, so far as he knew, excepting for an uncle in London, who was a "corker."

The juniors did not inquire what variety of a "corker" Charley's uncle was.

After a time Charley lay in the grass listening to the talk of the juniors and blinking at them. It was pretty evident that the hapless lad had experienced very little in the way of kindness, and that the kindness he was receiving from the caravanners made him wonder.

"You're not going back to the lodge, Charley?" asked Tom Merry presently.

"No fear!" answered Charley promptly.

"What are you going to do?"

"Dunno!"

"Got any tin?"

"I got three bob," said Charley. "I 'ad thirty bob last week, but I lost it."

"Well, that was bad luck," said Tom Merry. "How on earth did you come to lose thirty bob?"

"On a 'orse," explained Charley.

"Oh, my hat!"

"We shall learn some things from this cheery young blade," murmured Jack Blake. "Charley, old buck, we're camping here for some time. Would you like to camp a bit?"

"Wot to!" said Charley.

"Done!" said Tom Merry. "Charley shall be our distinguished guest until Gussy falls out with his merry entertainers."

"That won't be long, if he won't play cards with them," said Blake; "and I don't believe Gussy will, with all Cutts' cunning tricks. I



mind came the rest of the caravanners. "Give 'em and dragged him back from Arthur Augustus.

shouldn't wonder if Gussy's on the road with us again to-morrow."

"I hope so," said Tom.

Charley looked curiously at the captain of the Shell.

"That young gent with the glass eye is a friend of yours, ain't he?" he inquired.

"Of course."

"I didn't rightly catch on at first," said Charley. "I savvy now. They've got 'im there to rook 'im?"

"That's it!"

"It's a 'orrid shame!" said Charley. "'E's a nice young gent, 'e is; speaks to a feller very different from Master Cutts. I s'pose he's a real gent, ain't 'e?"

"One of the best!" grinned Blake. "Gilt-edged, all wool, and a yard wide!"

"Al at Lloyds, and warranted to kill at forty rods!" said Monty Lowther solemnly.

Charley looked perplexed, as well he might.

"If he don't do wot Cutts wants there'll be trouble," he said. "Cutts will lay into 'im, same as 'e did with me, I reckon."

"He won't dare."

"There ain't much that Master Cutts wouldn't dare when 'is temper's up. There'll be a row if he disappoints Master Cutts, so I tell yer," said Charley. "They'll make 'im squirm, you can bet. I know 'em!"

The caravanners looked at one another. It occurred to them that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy might find himself in a very bad box indeed if

Cutts were disappointed in his designs. The treatment of Charley showed what the blackguard of the Fifth was capable of. And the thought of Arthur Augustus shut up, defenceless, with four angry and disappointed sharpers was a very uncomfortable one.

And Tom Merry & Co. discussed the situation from that point of view with a good deal more anxiety than before.

CHAPTER 10.

The Cloven Hoof!

"NOW for a cheery evening!" remarked Cutts for the Fifth genially.

"Yaas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Dinner was over at St. Leger Lodge, and Cutts & Co. had been knocking the balls about in the billiards-room for some time. After that—as Arthur Augustus had shown no inclination to put a stake on a game—they had adjourned to St. Leger's den.

It was close on Gussy's bed-time, but he politely forbore to mention that fact, as the Fifth Formers evidently wanted to stay up.

The servants had gone to bed, and the house was locked up; all the building was in darkness save St. Leger's den, which was brilliantly lighted.

Cutts was smiling and cheery, but there was angry uneasiness in his breast. During the day he had carefully kept Arthur Augustus away from the caravan camp outside the gates, and he had made many attempts to lead the junior's thoughts in the direction he desired them to take.

But it was in vain. Even in the billiards-room he had failed, though he had come almost out into the open there.

Now, although Gussy was quite unaware of it, the matter was to be put to the test in St. Leger's den.

To that handsome apartment Arthur Augustus was led as a lamb to the slaughter.

Cutts felt that enough time had been spent on his victim. If he did not succeed with him that evening, it was pretty clear that he would not succeed at all; and in that case—Gerald Cutts' eyes glittered savagely at the mere thought of failure after all the trouble he had taken.

He was accustomed to succeeding, and, as a rule, he could rely upon his cunning for success. But now he was assailed with doubts and an angry fear that St. Leger's predictions were, after all, well founded.

But Cutts was still smiling and genial, and he told two or three good stories which made Arthur Augustus laugh merrily. Absent-mindedly, as it were, the Fifth Former lighted a cigarette, an example which was followed by his companions.

St. Leger extended his case to Gussy.

"Thank you, no," said Arthur Augustus quietly. "Oh, I forgot! You don't smoke."

"I do not, St. Leger."

"Well, no harm in puttin' on a fag occasionally, you know," remarked Cutts, blowing out a cloud of smoke.

Arthur Augustus did not answer; he was not there to criticise his host and his fellow-guests.

Gilmore rolled out a card-table, and took a pack of cards from the drawer.

"Now for that round game," he remarked.

"Make it poker," said Cutts, with a smile.

"Poker for counters, of course. Nobody here wants to play for money, I suppose?"

"Oh, certainly not!"

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

Cutts set his teeth for a moment as D'Arcy made that innocent answer. He shuffled the cards.

Gussy was somewhat vague on the subject of poker; but Cutts was a good instructor, and he exercised the greatest patience and geniality in instructing Gussy.

Bone counters were used for the game, and D'Arcy found it interesting enough. It was a terrible bore to the others, who cared nothing for a game as a game of skill. They were anxious to see money on the table. But Cutts could not spoil his game by haste.

Several rounds were played, and Arthur Augustus, with all his inexperience, found himself a winner. He did not suspect that Gerald Cutts kindly arranged that for him. He smiled expansively as he collected up quite a heap of bone counters.

"Lucky for us it's not cash!" said Cutts, with a laugh.

"Yaas, wathah!" smiled Arthur Augustus.

"By Jove, D'Arcy would have cleared us out!" remarked St. Leger.

Cutts scanned the swell of St. Jim's, hoping to see some trace of greed in his face. But there was no trace. Gussy was pleased with his success, but he had not the slightest regret that they had not been playing for money.

Cutts felt his inward doubts strengthening.

"What about puttin' a bob or two on the game to make it interestin'?" suggested St. Leger.

Arthur Augustus laid down his cards.

"Well, I leave that to the majority," said Cutts.

"We don't want anythin' like gamblin' here in

St. Leger's house; but perhaps bob points would make it interestin'. What do you say, St. Leger?"

"Oh, I don't mind! Make it a bob limit."

"Right you are!"

"Bai Jove, it's weally past my bed-time!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "Will you fellows excuse me if I wethah?"

"My dear kid, don't go to bed now," said Cutts. "We're goin' to make an evenin' of it. We want you."

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"Can't spare you yet, kid," said St. Leger. "Dash it all, you're the life of the party! Don't desert us!"

"Vewy well, deah boy, I will take a turn on the balcony while you are playin' for a bit."

"Come, stick to the game," said Cutts, smiling.

"I'll lend you some shillings to begin, if you've no change."

"I have plenty of change, Cutts, but I would wathah not play for money."

"Of course, it's only fun."

"Well, I will look on, deah boys."

"I suggested leavin' it to the majority," observed Cutts. "The majority have decided on bobs, D'Arcy. You can scarcely stand out."

Cutts was coming rather into the open now. But there was really nothing else to be done unless he was to give up his scheme.

Arthur Augustus rose from the table.

"I am sowvy, Cutts, but I could not play cards for money," he said. "I will take a turn on the balcony, if you will excuse me."

Without waiting to be excused, Arthur Augustus went to the french windows, which opened on a little balcony, whence steps descended to the garden. He passed out, leaving the four young rascals staring at one another.

St. Leger smiled slightly.

"What did I tell you, Cutts?" he murmured.

Cutts suppressed an oath.

"Let's get goin'!" he muttered. "When he hears the money clinkin', it may draw him in."

"It won't!"

"Oh, rot! Your deal!"

The four began to play poker.

Arthur Augustus was pacing on the balcony outside in a very disquieted mood. When he passed the open window he could see the four at play, with half-crowns and currency notes on the table.

Gussy was not feeling happy. In spite of himself, it was borne in upon his mind that the warnings of his chums were well-founded, and that he was in a den of gamblers; and, unsuspecting as he was, he could not help realising that it was not for fun that Cutts & Co. wanted him to play.

He was very strongly tempted to descend the steps into the garden and make his way to the caravan camp on the road. But he could scarcely treat his host in such a cavalier manner, and he remained on the balcony in a very disturbed frame of mind.

He stopped pacing at last, and leaned on the stone parapet, looking down into the garden, in the balmy summer night, hearing faintly the voices of the gamblers from the room within.

He started as he caught sight of moving shadows in the garden below.

A whispering voice came to his ears from the gloom.

"This 'ere is the place, sir."

"Charley!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"My hat! There's Gussy!"

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It was Tom Merry's voice.

"Bai Jove!"

"Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus, with frowning brow, descended the steps half-way to the ground, peering down at the shadowy figures below.

"What are you doin' here, you fellows?" he asked sternly. "St. Leger would be vewy watty if he knew you were twespassin' on his g'rounds!"

"Looking after you, old top," came Blake's voice, with a chuckle.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Taking a rest after your gamble?" grunted Herries.

"I have not been gamblin', Hewwies!"

"Your friends are, anyhow; we could see them through the window as we came along."

"That is not my bisney, Hewwies; nor yours, either. I have not taken part in the game since there was money on the table, and I am not intendin' to do so!" said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"I say, sir, there'll be a row, then," said Charley.

"Wubbish! Why are you fellows here?"

"We came along to the rescue, Gussy."

"I fail to undahstand you, Tom Mewwy!"

"You see, we think most likely those rotters will try to rook you, and if you refuse they may pitch into you——"

"Wats! I wefuse to heah such wemarks concernin' my host, Tom Mewwy. I wefuse you to wetiah!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Then I will wetiah!" said Arthur Augustus with dignity.

And he ran up the steps again, and entered St. Leger's room and closed the french windows after him.

## CHAPTER 11.

### Rather a Shindy!

CUTTS looked round with a smile as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in from the balcony.

For the moment he supposed that the cards and the money had exercised their fascination on the junior, and that he had returned to take part in the game.

Not for an instant did he suspect the presence of Tom Merry & Co. under the balcony; and Arthur Augustus, anxious above all things to avoid a scene, did not think of enlightening him.

"You've had some fresh air, kid," said Cutts, with a smile. "We're just beginning a new deal. Sit down."

"I think I will wetiah to bed, if you fellows will excuse me," said Arthur Augustus.

"My dear chap, we won't! Sit down!"

"I am afwaid, Cutts, that I should not care to join in the game again. Good-night, deah boys."

Arthur Augustus turned to the door. He was polite, but he was quite determined; and in his tone and looks Gerald Cutts read his failure.

A very ugly expression came over Cutts' hard face.

"Don't go yet, D'Arcy," he said between his teeth.

"I must go, Cutts. Good-night!"

Arthur Augustus' hand was on the door, when Cutts sprang to his feet. Further disguise was useless, and Cutts gave it up. He caught the swell of St. Jim's by the shoulder and swung him away from the door, and then turned the key in the lock and put it in his pocket.

Cutts was out in the open now, with a vengeance. Arthur Augustus staggered a few paces.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

Gilmore and Prye were on their feet now, with flushed faces. St. Leger sat still, smoking.

"St. Leger," said Arthur Augustus very quietly, "I am your guest here. Is it by your desiah that I am tweated like this?"

The colour crept into St. Leger's face, but he did not answer, and he did not look round. It was evident that it was Cutts who was master there.

"You heard me, I think, St. Leger?"

No answer.

"Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus. "Cutts, I wefuse you to allow me to pass."

"Sit down!"

"I wefuse to sit down, Cutts. I wefuse to wemain in your society another minute!" said D'Arcy, his voice trembling with anger and indignation. "I feah, Cutts, that my fwiends were wight in warnin' me not to twust myself in your company. Nothin' will induce me to take part in the disgwaceful p'woceddin's goin' on in here, and I wefuse to wemain even this night in St. Leger's house. Now, let me pass!"

"There's your chair," said Cutts. "Sit down!"

"I wefuse to do so!"

"Oh, be pally, and join in the game!" said Gilmore.

"I shall do nothin' of the sort, Gilmore!"

"You cheeky young cad!" exclaimed Prye.

Arthur Augustus' lip curled.

"You are becomin' vewy candid now," he said.

"I have been wathah an ass. I see that now; but I certainly have no intention of becomin' a wascal, as well. I am waitin' for you to move, Cutts."

"Will you take your seat?"

"No, I will not!"

Cutts' eyes glittered evilly, and he advanced on Arthur Augustus. The big Fifth Former towered over the junior, but Gussy did not falter.

"If you are goin' to be a wuffian, Cutts, as well as a wogue and a wascal——" he began.

"Sit down, and take your hand!" said Cutts hoarsely.

"I will not! St. Leger, I appeal to you, as my host, to intahfere!"

St. Leger smoked in silence.

"Then I take it that I was asked here to be wooked at cards," said Arthur Augustus. "Is that the case, St. Leger?"

"Do you think it was for your delightful company, you cheeky-fag?" sneered Prye.

"Sit down!" said Cutts.

(Continued on the next page.)



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His powerful grasp fell upon Arthur Augustus, and the junior was swung towards the card-table.

With a flash in his eyes Arthur Augustus struck at Cutts' flushed face, and the Fifth Former gave a howl.

He jammed D'Arcy savagely into his chair.

"Now take your cards."

"I will not!"

"Listen to me!" said Cutts, hoarse with rage. "You're here to join in the game. Understand that! If you refuse, I shall take it as a personal insult. And I shall make you suffer for it. Do you understand?"

"I quite undahstand that you will act like a wuffian, Cutts, if you cannot act like a card-sharpah," replied Arthur Augustus calmly, "but I wufuse to gamble with you, all the same."

"Will you take up your cards?" hissed Cutts.

"No!"

"Let him out, Cutts!" muttered St. Leger shamefacedly. "Dash it all, we're not racing welschers! Let him go!"

Cutts gave a savage laugh.

"Yes, I'll let him go—when I've done with him," he said between his teeth.

His savage grasp fell upon Arthur Augustus again, and blows fairly rained on the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus struggled furiously, but he was as an infant in the Fifth Former's grasp. His chair went over backwards, and the card-table was knocked over, sending a shower of cards and coins on the tiger-skin.

Prye and Gilmore looked on, grinning. St. Leger started to his feet.

"Cutts! Stop it! It's too thick, I tell you—it's too thick—"

"Shut up, you fool!"

"Wescue!" roared Arthur Augustus.

The thought of Tom Merry & Co. came into his mind as he struggled with Cutts, and he shouted.

"Help! Wescue!"

The Fifth Formers stared at him, not comprehending. But they comprehended the next moment.

There was a pattering of steps on the balcony without, and the french windows were flung wide open. Jack Blake rushed into the room with Tom Merry, and behind them came the rest of the caravanners.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Blake.

"Why, what—what—" stammered Gilmore.

He had no time to stammer more, for Herries and Digby were at him.

Blake sprang on Cutts like a tiger, dragging him back from Arthur Augustus. Tom Merry grasped the rascal of the Fifth at the same moment.

## DETECTIVE KERR INVESTIGATES.

### Solution:

KERR: The ice-cream man, who admitted Mr. Roberts had previously sacked him, gave himself away when he said he had been watching a ship signalling to the lighthouse. The boatman had already stated that there had been nothing to see in the last half hour—mentioning the incoming Channel boat as an event. A large ship at sea, signalling, would take at least two or three minutes to pass across the horizon right out of sight, and the boatman certainly wouldn't have missed it. Whether Mr. Roberts takes proceedings is up to him, of course.

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Manners and Lowther tackled Prye, and rolled him over.

St. Leger started to his feet, but he did not join in the conflict, and the juniors let him alone. He backed to the door and leaned on it, still smoking his cigarette, and looked on.

Cutts was yelling, struggling furiously in the grasp of Tom Merry and Blake.

"Wag him, deah boys!" yelled Arthur Augustus excitedly.

Bump! Crash!

Cutts was being ragged, there was no doubt about that. Through the open window the grinning face of Charley looked in, in great delight.

"Give him jip!" yelled Charley. "Give him beans! Oh, I say, this is orlright! Give him some more!"

"You young fiends, let go!" shrieked Cutts.

Crash!

Cutts went sprawling over the card-table, howling. St. Leger still looked on coolly.

"Help us, you fool!" yelled Prye.

St. Leger shook his head.

"It's your game, not mine," he sneered. "You asked for it!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye.

"Pewwaps they have had enough, deah boys," he remarked. "I am vewy much obliged to you for wallyin' woud like this."

Tom Merry gasped.

"Are you coming along with us now, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Better give Cutts some more," suggested Herries.

"Yow-ow-woop!" came from Cutts, as he gasped and gurgled amid overturned furniture.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry, laughing breathlessly. "I think we've finished here."

"Yaas, wathah; let us wetiah, deah boys."

The caravanners crowded out on the balcony, Arthur Augustus accompanying them. They left three young rascals gasping and groaning behind them.

The juniors hurried through the garden, and in a few minutes they were in the road.

"Shove in the horse," said Blake. "We don't want to camp here to-night. Let's get on the road."

"Yes, rather!"

"Where's Charley?"

"'Ere I am, guv'nor!" chuckled Charley.

"You'd better hop into the van," said Tom Merry. "Now then, off we go!"

And in a few minutes more the St. Jim's caravan was on the road again, and once more Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched with the St. Jim's caravanners.

THE END.

Look out for—

## "CHARLEY'S CHAMPION!"

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# THE CHUMS OF CEDAR CREEK SCHOOL PLAY A LARGE PART IN— ROUNDING UP THE RUSTLER!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



## The M.P.s.

"THE M.P.s will be here this morning!" Bob Lawless remarked at the breakfast table at the Lawless Ranch. Frank Richards looked up inquiringly.

"The M.P.s," he repeated.

"You haven't seen the M.P.s yet?"

"No," said Frank. "I've seen them in London, but I haven't seen any Canadian M.P.s yet." Bob Lawless stared at him for a moment and then burst into a chuckle.

"Oh, I see! Well, our M.P.s are a bit different from your M.P.s," he said, still chuckling. "We may see them before we get off to school—they're sure to be early. They're coming here about the affair of that Mexican who winged poor old Beauclerc."

"My hat!" Frank Richards stared at his Canadian cousin. "Do you mean to say that M.P.s are coming here about that?"

"I guess so."

"Well, I thought I was getting used to Canada," said Frank Richards. "But I shouldn't have expected to hear that M.P.s were coming to look for a horse-thief. Where are they coming from?"

"Kamloops."

"And what are they going to do?"

"Take the trail after the Mexican."

"My hat!"

Frank Richards went on with his breakfast, still in a state of astonishment. Mr. Lawless had gone out on the ranch before the boys were down, but he came in as they rose from the breakfast table. The rancher had a rifle under his arm, and a somewhat grim expression on his bronzed face.

"You're going with the M.P.s, dad?" asked Bob, with a glance at the rifle.

"Yes, Bob. We're taking along one of the Kootenays to pick up the trail," said the rancher.

"Ahem! I'm rather good at a trail, dad!"

Mr. Lawless laughed.

"I've no doubt your assistance would be very valuable," he said. "But you're not going into danger, my boy."

"Frank's never seen a Canadian M.P., dad."

"Never, uncle," said Frank Richards.

But the rancher shook his head.

"You will go off to school," he said. "This man Garcia is a desperate character, and there will be shooting when he is run down. The farther away you youngsters are the better."

"But—" began Bob.

*The Mounties find an armed Mexican rustler a tough handful—until Frank Richards shows them how to get their man!*

"It's time you were off, too. Go and say good-bye to Beauclerc, and get to your ponies," said Mr. Lawless.

Frank and Bob went upstairs to the room where Beauclerc lay in bed. They found the wounded boy pale, but quite calm and cheerful. He gave them a pleasant smile.

"How do you feel this morning, Beauclerc?" asked Frank.

"Pretty rotten. But the doctor says I'm mending," said Beauclerc. "It will be a week or more before I come back to school. Still, I'm lucky."

"Not so lucky as I was, I guess," said Bob Lawless. "I shan't forget, Beauclerc, that you got in the way when that Mexican villain was potting at me at the Indian Ford. I'm sorry we had a scrap the other day."

Beauclerc smiled.

"That's all over and forgotten," he said. "I was to blame." His pale face coloured a little. "I've been thinking a good bit, you fellows, while I've been lying here. I'm sorry I didn't get on better with you and the other fellows. I was a bit of an ass, I'm afraid."

"Well, you were, as a matter of fact," said Frank Richards, smiling. "The fellows at Cedar Creek School were willing to be friendly enough if you had let them."

"I know. I—I was a duffer—a bit of a snob, in fact," said Beauclerc frankly. "I didn't mean to be, but there it was. When I get back I shall make a fresh start. And—and if you fellows care to be friends with me after the way I treated you, I shall be jolly glad!"

Frank's face brightened.

He had hardly expected that from the remittance man's son. Beauclerc had never seemed able to forget that he belonged to a noble family in the Old Country. His father was a wastrel, hanging about the camps, and subsisting upon remittances from England, but keeping up all the pride of a Spanish grandee notwithstanding; and Beauclerc had inherited all his class prejudices.

But the remittance man's son had evidently been thinking matters over while he lay still in the ranch-house. And Frank, who had felt friendly towards him in spite of his foibles, was glad to see the change.

He pressed Beauclerc's white hand as it lay on the coverlet.

"That's all right, old chap! We're going to be

your pals, whether you like it or not. We've decided that already."

"You bet!" said Bob Lawless heartily.

"Thank you!" said Beauclerc simply.

"Your pater's coming over to see you to-day," said Bob. "Good-bye, old scout! Keep your pecker up!"

The cousins descended and went out for their ponies. It was time to start for school at Cedar Creek. They mounted and rode away from the ranch. Frank Richards was in rather a troubled frame of mind.

The whole section had been roused by the news of the "rustler" who had robbed the cousins on their way home from school the week before, and who had wounded Beauclerc with a cowardly shot from the thicket. Outrages of that kind were rare enough in the section, and the man from Mexico was not likely to escape justice very long.

Frank would not have been surprised to see a sheriff's posse on the trail, but it was surprising news to him that trailing down a rustler was one of the duties of Canadian M.P.s. He half suspected that his Cousin Bob, who was of a humorous turn of mind, was pulling his leg. But Bob seemed quite serious about it.

About a mile from the ranch three horsemen came in sight, riding out of the timber.

"There they are!" exclaimed Bob.

Frank looked at the three riders approaching along the trail. They were splendidly built fellows, each over six feet in height, and burly and broad-shouldered. He noted that they were in uniform, with rifles on their backs. They were young men—the oldest certainly not over thirty.

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank. "And they're M.P.s!"

"I guess so."

"They look more like soldiers than Members of Parliament."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "In British Columbia M.P. stands for Mounted Police, not Member of Parliament."

"Oh!" ejaculated Frank. He understood now.

The three horsemen in uniform were members of that famous body, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. That famous corps, few in number but great in quality, kept law and order in the vast regions between the Great Lakes and the Yukon.

"A bit different from your M.P.s in London, hey?" grinned Bob.

"Yes," said Frank, joining in the laugh. "Quite."

The schoolboys saluted the M.P.s as they passed. The troopers, though they had evidently been on the trail most of the night from Kamloops, looked as fresh as paint. They returned the schoolboys' salute, and rode on at a gallop towards the ranch.

Frank and Bob rode on to the lumber school, where they arrived just in time for morning lessons.

### The Mexican Again!

**C**EDAR CREEK SCHOOL was rather in a state of excitement that Monday morning.

Frank Richards and his cousin were the centre of attention. The story of the Mexican rustler was known there, and the Cedar Creek fellows were keen to hear all about it. After morning lessons the cousins were surrounded in the school grounds by a crowd of inquirers.

"Tell us all about it," said Chunky Todgers.

"I guess we want to hear the yarn," remarked Eben Hacke. "I hear Beauclerc got drilled."

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"How did it happen?" asked Lawrence.

Frank Richards explained.

"The Mexican was in the timber when we went home from school last Friday. He robbed us of our horses, and we got them back—or, rather, Bob Lawless did. The chap laid for Bob afterwards at Indian Ford, and shot at him from the timber. But Beauclerc ran between, and got the bullet. That's all."

"By gum!" said Hacke. "Beauclerc is the real goods, and no mistake!"

"One of the best!" said Bob.

"I calculate he's got sand," said the American youth, "and I reckon I'll let him off the walloping I was going to hand him—just a few."

"And what's become of the rustler?" asked Chunky Todgers, his round eyes wide open.

"The Mounties are after him!"

"Then I guess he's a goner!" said Hacke confidently.

Miss Meadows, the schoolmistress, called the cousins to her room, to hear an account of their adventure, and then Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master, had to be satisfied. Then it was dinner-time.

After dinner, Bob Lawless and Frank Richards left the log schoolhouse together. Frank was heading for the creek, where lay the canoe he was learning to handle under his Canadian cousin's tuition. But Bob called a halt.

"Let's get the horses!" he said.

"All serene! We've got an hour before afternoon lessons," said Frank. "Where shall we go?"

"Dad didn't seem to want our help in trailing down the rustler," grinned Bob. "But there's no harm in taking a ride over towards Indian Ford to see how they're getting on. They're bound to pick up the trail there, and it's the last place where Garcia was seen!"

"Good!" said Frank.

The chums rode away from the lumber school at a trot. But as soon as they were out of sight of Cedar Creek, they broke into a gallop. The Indian Ford, on a fork of the Fraser River, was a good many miles from Cedar Creek, but the wiry Canadian ponies covered the ground in good style.

The schoolboys came in sight of the ford at last, and halted on the spot where Bob's fight with Beauclerc had taken place two days previously, and where the remittance man's son had fallen to the Mexican's shot intended for Bob Lawless.

There were many hoofprints on the grassy bank; and tracks among the timber; but there was no sign of the Mounties. Evidently the trailers had come and gone long ago—in the morning hours.

"We've had our ride for nothing," said Bob.

"I wonder whether they've got the Mexican yet."

"Might be fifty miles away," said Frank.

"Well, he might be; but if he was unmounted, it's more likely that he's skulking in the timber somewhere. He had no horse when we saw him, and unless he's stolen one since—"

"Time we got back!" remarked Frank.

"Yes; I guess we shall have to hustle, too, to get in before lessons. Come on, and let her rip!" said Bob.

The chums jumped on their ponies and rode away for Cedar Creek. Half-way to the school they rode through a belt of larch and tamarack, keeping up the gallop on the trail among the trees. It was well for them that they were going at full speed, for as they dashed along the dusky trail, a sudden shot rang out from the timber.



Crack!

A thick-set man, with curly black hair and black eyes, and a swarthy face, leaped out of the grass with a smoking rifle in his hands.

"The greaser!" yelled Bob. "Ride for it!"

The schoolboys bent low in their saddles and urged on their ponies. In a few minutes they were clear of the timber, and galloping over the open prairie. Not till the timber was left a mile behind, however, did they slacken rein.

"By gum!" gasped Bob, when they slowed at last. "That was a narrow shave. Did the last shot go anywhere near you, Frank?"

"Blessed if I know where it went!"

"He wants a mount," said Bob, looking back.

"He's skulking in the timber, as I guessed. He would pot anybody for a horse to get away on. Franky, we were a pair of silly chumps to go to the ford at all."

Frank Richards nodded. That reflection had occurred to his mind also.

"And he's not so very far from the school," said Bob thoughtfully. "He could steal a horse there—if he's given the chance. We'd better tell Miss Meadows about this."

And as soon as the breathless chums arrived at the school, they hurried to inform Miss Meadows of the Mexican's proximity. The schoolmistress listened intently.

"You should not have gone," she said. "But never mind that now. Call the others and bring all the horses inside the corral at once."

"Yes, ma'am!"

There were six or seven horses and ponies grazing along the creek, belonging to fellows who came a good distance to school. Half a dozen fellows brought them in at once, and the school gate was closed and barred.

Frank Richards regarded Miss Meadows curiously when he came in to report that the horses were corralled. He expected to see some sign of nervousness in the young lady. But the Canadian schoolmistress was perfectly calm and quiet.

"Thank you, Richards!" she said. "You may go into the school-room!"

As Frank went, he noticed that Miss Meadows was loading the shotgun that usually hung on the wall. The schoolmistress, with the gun under her arm, went the round of the strong timber palisade that surrounded the school playground, and examined the fastenings of the gate. It was evident that Miss Meadows anticipated that the Mexican might appear there, and that she did not intend to admit him within the gates if he did.

There was keen excitement in the school that afternoon. Miss Meadows did not take her class as usual, and they were turned over to Mr. Slimmey.

But there was much less attention than usual given to lessons that afternoon. All ears were listening for some sound from without.

And suddenly Bob Lawless started up.

"Hark!"

Knock! Knock! Bang!

"B-by gum!" stuttered Chunky Todgers. "It's somebody at the gate!"

"The Mexican!" muttered Frank.

"Please keep your seats!" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey.

But Mr. Slimmey was not heeded. Frank and Bob rushed out of the school-room, and a dozen fellows followed them, and Mr. Slimmey was left with the girls in the class. The knocking on the

gate was loud and furious, and a savage voice could be heard:

"Open! Caramba! Will you open?"

It was the Mexican.

### Kept Out!

FRANK RICHARDS ran towards the gate, with Bob at his heels. Frank had some vague idea of backing up Miss Meadows. Certainly he did not intend that the schoolmistress should face the desperado alone. But the Canadian girl was perfectly cool.

She had stepped upon a bench, and stood looking over the top of the gate at the man without. The shotgun was in her hands, and her hands did not tremble.

The Mexican stood thumping savagely on the gate. He ceased, and glared up furiously as Miss Meadows looked down on him from within. The ruffian was breathless, dusty, and evidently fatigued. His swarthy face was thick with perspiration and red with rage.

"Senorita, open the gate!" he said hoarsely.

"You cannot enter here!" said Miss Meadows quietly. "What do you want?"

"Caramba! Un caballo—a horse!" hissed the Mexican. "Let me in! I will harm no one."

"You will have nothing here," said Miss Meadows quietly. "Go your way. You will not be allowed to enter. If you attempt to do so, I will shoot!"

### A SHINING EXAMPLE!

Teacher: "Nature gives a snail a house for its own protection. Who can give me another example?"

Johnnie: "The crab."

Teacher: "Right. Another example?"

Billy: "Tinned sardines!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Huard, 42, Dundee Road, Plaistow, London, E.13.

The ruffian laughed savagely.

"With that popgun?" he said. "Look you, senorita! The Mounted Police are on my track. I have escaped them so far, but I must have a horse, or I am lost. Listen! I am Pedro Garcia, and in my country I have killed more men than I can count on the fingers of my hands! Your life is no more to me than a mosquito's! Open the gate!"

"I have warned you!" said Miss Meadows coldly.

"Will you let me in?"

"No!"

"Caramba!"

The dusky hand dragged at a revolver, and Miss Meadows stepped down within the gate. Her face was a little pale, but quite calm.

"What are you doing here?" she exclaimed, as she caught sight of the boys. "Go back into your school-room at once!"

"But, ma'am—" protested Frank.

"Go back, I tell you!"

The boys unwillingly retreated, but they did not go into the building.

There was a loud report outside the gate, and a bullet seared through the stout wood. Then two dusky hands appeared on the top of the gate. The Mexican had made a jump and caught it, evidently to climb over.

Bob Lawless stooped and picked up a jagged

stone, and Frank Richards and Eben Hacke followed his example.

A fierce and swarthy face rose over the top of the gate. Miss Meadows levelled the shotgun.

"Go!" she said quietly.

The fierce black eyes of the Mexican glared at her.

"You dare not!" he hissed.

"You will see if you do not go!"

Whiz! Whiz!

The stones flew through the air with good aim. One of them grazed the Mexican's ear, but another crashed fairly into the dusky face.

"Caramba!"

There was a howl of rage and pain from the ruffian, and the dusky face disappeared instantly. He was heard to fall on the ground outside, shrieking out Spanish oaths as he rolled. But his head did not rise into view again. His footsteps moved away, following the line of the palisade round.

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob Lawless suddenly.

From somewhere in the distance came the crack of a rifle. A loud shout followed.

There was a growl of fury from the Mexican, and his footsteps were heard retreating towards the creek.

"The Mounties!" shouted Bob, as galloping hoofbeats approached the gate.

Frank Richards jumped on the bench and looked over the gate. The Mexican was running down to the creek as fast as his legs could carry him, panting and cursing. From the opposite direction three horsemen came riding at top speed, and Frank recognised the Mounted Police he had passed on the trail that morning. The troopers were evidently close on the track of the rustler.

They rode past the gate and straight on towards the creek, shouting to the Mexican to halt. Pedro Garcia did not heed. With desperate bounds he reached the creek, and dragged Bob Lawless' bark canoe into the water. He leaped into it and grasped the paddle.

"Stop, or you're a dead man!" roared the sergeant, raising his rifle.

The Mexican, with a yell of defiance, pushed off into the stream.

Crack!

There was another yell from the rustler; he was evidently hit. But he was not disabled, and the canoe shot away, the Mexican paddling desperately, and in a moment or two more vanished down the creek, hidden by trees.

With a crash of hoofs, the troopers rode away down the bank in hot pursuit.

"By gum!" muttered Bob Lawless, breathing hard. "They're after him! They'll have him sure!"

The Mexican had vanished; the thunder of hoofs died away in the distance. The chase had swept far from the lumber school.

"Return to your class, my boys!" said Miss Meadows severely.

And the Cedar Creek fellows crowded back into the school-room, glowing with excitement. There was no further alarm at the log school that afternoon, but there was little work done. Everyone was thinking of the chase down the creek and surmising how it had ended.

When classes were dismissed, a good many fellows hoped to follow the trail of the Mounties down the creek and learn what had happened. But an unexpected order to remain within gates checked them.

Until some news was received of the Mexican, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,593.

Miss Meadows had very wisely decided that it was not safe for her pupils to return to their homes. For the present, therefore, the whole school remained within gates.

### Cornered!

"LISTEN, Franky!"

The chums of Cedar Creek were looking out over the gate as the sun sank lower in the west. It was long past the hour when the school usually scattered to their homes, but as yet none had gone out of gates.

That the Mexican was not far away, and that he had not yet been captured, was evident from the sounds that came on the wind from down the creek.

Frank Richards listened tensely.

Crack-ack-ack!

The reports were faint in the distance, but unmistakable. Down the creek beyond the timber rifles were busy, and every few minutes a report was borne faintly on the wind to the listening ears at the lumber school.

"He's corralled somewhere, I guess," said Bob, "and he's holding up the Mounties. On the island, perhaps."

"We can't clear off till it's over," said Frank. "There'll be a lot of anxiety if the fellows get home late—and the girls, too."

"I guess so, but it can't be helped. Miss Meadows can't let them out while that rustler's around."

The chums stood and listened to the distant firing. To Frank it was a strange and thrilling experience. His eyes met Bob's, and their expressions showed that the same thought was in both their minds.

"I'm tired of sticking here," muttered Bob.

"Just what I was thinking," Frank set his lips. "Look here, Bob, that villain shot down Vere Beauclerc. It's up to us to help lay him by the heels—if we could help."

"I wonder!" said Bob slowly.

"Hark! They're firing again!"

Crack-ack!

"There's only two shooters going now," said Bob, listening intently. "I guess one of the Mounties has been winged. Look here, we're going to see what's going on. Are you game?"

"What-ho!"

"Then here goes!"

Bob Lawless, without waiting to think further, laid his hands on the top of the gate and vaulted over. Frank Richards did not stop to reflect. He dropped over the gate after his chum. In a minute or less they were in the timber by the creek, and out of sight of the lumber school.

Crack-ack! came faintly on the wind.

"Follow on, Franky!"

"Right-ho!"

Bob Lawless led the way. The chums tramped along the creek, keeping their eyes and ears wide open. An occasional shot rang out in the distance, louder to their ears as they advanced.

"Here's the horses!" said Bob suddenly.

In the timber they came upon three horses tethered on a trail-rope, cropping the herbage by the creek. They were the Mounties' steeds. The firing was close at hand now.

"He's on the island, as I reckoned," said Bob.

Standing on the bank, close to the water, the chums looked along the creek, red now in the setting sun. Almost in the middle of the stream a small island rose from the water, thickly covered

with spruce and larch. Somewhere amid the foliage of the little river-isle lurked the Mexican horse-thief. There was no doubt about that.

From both banks of the river rifle bullets were tearing into the foliage on the island. One of the troopers had crossed the creek, evidently to cut off the escape of the Mexican on that side.

"He's there right enough," said Bob. "I guess he doesn't know how to handle a Canadian canoe, the clumsy greaser. I reckon he came to grief on the island and the canoe's gone over the rapids. My birch-bark canoe. The thief! I dare say I'll find it at the camp below to-morrow—what's left of it. They've got the rustler fairly fixed."

Crack-ack!

The bullets seemed to be searching out every corner of the little islet, which was not more than

"All serene, sergeant!" exclaimed Bob Lawless hastily, as the big man swung round on them.

"Young Lawless! What are you doing here?" growled the sergeant.

"I guess we came to see how the circus is getting on," said Bob coolly. "All O.K., Mr. Lasalle. We're not afraid of lead, and we know how to keep in cover."

The sergeant, with a grunt, reloaded his rifle. "He's winged," he said. "Twice, I reckon.

The clumsy guy ran the canoe on the island, and I reckoned we had him. But he winged Dave with his revolver, and we had to let up. He could shoot down a dozen men from there before they could set foot on the island. But he's corralled, the rat! Johnson's crossed over to the other bank to keep him busy from there."



Whiz! Whiz! Frank Richards & Co. hurled the stones with good aim. One of them crashed fairly into the dusky face of the Mexican rustler, and there was a howl of rage and pain from the ruffian.

a dozen yards across. No sound came from the desperado hidden there; his revolver did not answer the rifles.

"Why doesn't he shoot, Bob?" muttered Frank.

"Keeping his lead for a rush, I guess. His popgun wouldn't be much use at the distance, but at close quarters—"

The rifles rang out again. A sudden yell sounded from the island, though nothing but the green spruce could be seen. A bullet had gone very close to the hidden rustler.

The schoolboys pressed on along the bank. A stalwart Mountie who was lying behind a tree, with a rifle before him bearing on the island, sprang to his feet.

It was the Mounted Police sergeant. Close by him a trooper sat against a trunk, with one arm thickly bandaged, and his face pale under the tan. The rustler's revolver had claimed one victim at least.

Sergeant Lasalle threw himself into the grass again and opened fire on the island through the thickets.

The schoolboys, keeping well back among the trees, watched breathlessly. It seemed certain that sooner or later the searching fire would find out the hidden desperado on the island, and either disable him or force him to show himself and surrender. But the sun was sinking lower and lower towards the Pacific.

"I guess he's waiting for dark, Franky," Bob muttered. "Once it's dark he'll swim for the bank and chance it."

"And he'll get clear," said Frank. "Nobody could track a man through these woods in the dark."

Crack-ack!

The rifles were ringing out in unison again. Still no sound or movement from the island. It

was possible that a bullet had already found its billet, and that the Mexican desperado lay stretched in death amid the thick spruce. But it was more likely that he was watchful and alert, and hoping that a rush would be made, which would enable him to use his revolver with greater effect.

But the Mounties did not intend to play into his hands in that way.

The dusk was deepening on the creek, and the timber was growing dim. Frank Richards stood watching the silent island and the drift logs that washed down to it on the current. A sudden thought flashed into his mind, and he caught Bob Lawless by the arm.

"Bob, a good swimmer could get to the island—"

"And get a bullet through the head half-way!" growled Bob.

"Swimming behind one of those logs, Bob," said Frank, his eyes gleaming. "Look here, I could swim and shove a log along in front of me. The Mexican's got to lie low while the firing's going on, and he wouldn't see."

"By gum!" said Bob, struck by the idea.

Sergeant Lasalle turned on his elbow and looked up at the chums in the growing dusk.

"Would you be willing to take the risk, young greenhorn?" he asked, with a curious glance at the English lad.

"Yes, I would," said Frank. "That villain shot down a pal of mine, and I'd do anything to help get him collared."

The burly sergeant laughed.

"Well, I guess you won't be allowed to do anything of the sort," he said.

"Oh!" said Frank, a little crestfallen.

The big Mountie rose to his feet.

"But I guess it's a cinch!" he said. "I reckon that I'm going to try that game. The greaser is playing for time. After dark he may get clear, if we haven't winged him before; and he's lying close. Can you handle a rifle, young Lawless?"

"Can a duck swim?" said Bob disdainfully.

"I guess I'll ask you to take my gun, then, and keep it up for me," said the sergeant. "The greaser won't notice any difference then. I'll get across and have a word with Johnson, and then we'll see. Take the rifle and let's see how you shape."

He handed the rifle and the bandolier to Bob Lawless. The Canadian lad loaded the weapon at once and dropped on his knee in the thicket where the sergeant had lain. The rifle came up to his shoulder, the barrel bearing on the island across the dusky water.

Crack!

The bullet tore its way through the foliage on the island, scattering twigs and leaves as it whizzed on its way.

"Good man!" said the sergeant approvingly.

"Keep that up, kid!"

"I'm your man," said Bob.

The sergeant disappeared through the trees, going up the creek. The two schoolboys were left alone with the wounded trooper.

Bob Lawless, lying in the thicket, kept up the fire on the island with the sergeant's rifle, and Frank Richards watched him and waited. The wounded trooper lighted a cigarette with his undamaged hand.

"I guess that Mex is a gone coon!" he remarked. And he smoked quietly, heedless apparently of the wound that made his right arm helpless.

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### Rounded Up!

FRANK RICHARDS peered out from the trees with alert eyes, his heart thumping with excitement. The sergeant had gone up the creek where, out of shot of the island, he could cross to the other side and speak to his comrade there. That could not have taken him long. What was he doing now?

Frank watched the driftwood on the stream with alert eyes.

He would willingly have taken the risk himself for the purpose of bringing to justice the lawless ruffian who had shot down Beauclerc. But, at least, his suggestion had been acted upon. It was the last chance of "corralling" the desperado before the fall of darkness gave him an opportunity to escape.

Scan the stream as he would, he could not make out a swimmer. But at last he gave a sudden start.

"He's there, Bob!" he muttered.

"Good!" said Bob; and he pumped out another bullet at the island.

Down the stream a large mass of driftwood came floating on the current, directly towards the island. It was composed of several saplings and a mass of drenched foliage, and looked like many other masses of driftwood. But Frank guessed that the sergeant had lashed the fragments together.

For behind the driftwood a bare head was discernible on the surface of the water. The sergeant was swimming steadily, only the top of his head showing, and the mass of driftwood concealing him from view of the island. From the banks only he could be seen.

The sergeant had no need of much exertion, for the driftwood half-supported him, and the current floated him on.

Bob Lawless could see him now without turning his head. He went on steadily reloading and firing into the foliage on the island.

The Mountie was taking his life in his hands. For if the Mexican had suspected the trick, if he had seen some slight sign to arouse his suspicion, he could have riddled the driftwood with revolver shots from where he lay, and Sergeant Lasalle would have floated down to the rapids a dead man.

But to the Canadian sergeant danger was an old acquaintance. Closer and closer to the island drew the drifting mass, still hiding the head of the swimmer from the watchful eyes of the Mexican. At last the driftwood, swirling on the current, bumped on the shore of the island. The sergeant had reached his goal.

Still keeping in cover of the driftwood, he waded in shallow water, and then a sudden, desperate bound carried him ashore and into the spruce thickets.

Instantly the firing from the banks of the creek ceased. Another shot at the island was as likely to hit the sergeant as the Mexican rustler now.

A shout was heard across the darkening creek—a shout of rage from the Mexican, who understood at last how he had been tricked, as the Mountie sergeant plunged ashore.

Crack-ack-ack-ack-ack!

It was a sudden, staccato outbreak of revolver shots.

Bob Lawless sprang to his feet. His face was pale and set. It was a moment of tense anxiety to the chums of Cedar Creek. Frank Richards set his teeth hard.

From the island across the silent waters came  
(Continued on page 36.)





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PEN PALS COUPON  
27-8-38

**JACK DRAKE FINDS HIMSELF NOT WANTED BY THE BUCKS OF THE BENBOW WHEN THEY HEAR ABOUT HIS—**

# FALLEN FORTUNES!

By OWEN CONQUEST.



Pierce Raik had no scruples about reading another fellow's letter, and as he looked over Drake's, his eyes opened wide and he whistled.

### Raik Makes a Discovery!

**R**AIK of the Fourth paused outside Study No. 8 in the Fourth Form quarters on board the old Benbow. Night had fallen, and from nearly every window lights gleamed out upon the rolling waters of the Chadway. There was no light in Study No. 8, but from the unlighted study came the sound of restless footsteps tramping incessantly to and fro. Once or twice a muttering voice was audible, though Pierce Raik, as he bent his ear to listen, could not catch the words.

There was a very curious expression on Raik's thin, hard face. He knew that Jack Drake was in the study; he had passed the door earlier and heard the restless sound of tramping feet. The restless feet were still tramping; and Drake had not even turned on the light.

Raik grinned a little.

"Something's wrong with his lordship," he murmured. "I wonder what! Hallo, Rodney!"

Dick Rodney, the new boy in the Fourth, came along and glanced at Raik. The latter held up his hand.

"Listen!" he said in a low voice. "Drake's going it. Like a giddy tiger in a cage! What's up with him?"

"No business of mine," said Rodney shortly. "Nor of yours, either, for that matter, Raik."

"Has Brown Boy come in eleventh?" grinned Raik.

Rodney started.

"How did you know?"

"Then that's it!" Raik chuckled. "Poor old Drake! How did he get the news, though? He's

been detained this afternoon, and Daubeny hasn't come in yet. I think I'll look in on him."

"Better leave him alone," said Rodney.

"What rot!"

Raik tapped at the door and opened it. Dick Rodney walked on quickly. He did not want to see Jack Drake then. He was sorry for the amateur punter; but there was nothing he could do to help. And he knew what Raik did not know—how heavy a blow Brown Boy's defeat had been to Jack Drake of the Fourth. For he alone of the St. Winifred's fellows knew the change in Drake's fortunes.

Raik peered into the study. A restless figure was moving to and fro in the dim starlight that glimmered in at the window. It stopped and turned towards the door as Raik peered in.

"Is that you, Daub?" It was Jack Drake's voice, low and bitter. "You needn't come in; I've had the news in the evening paper. You fool with your confounded dead certs! What am I going to do now?"

"All serene, Drake——"

Drake gave a jump.

"Who's that? I thought it was Daub——"

*Pride and shame combined had made Jack Drake conceal the miserable truth of his fall from fortune. It was a false pride—a false shame—making Jack's task harder when his secret leaks out!*

"Only little me!" said Raik. "What are you in the dark for?"

"Because I choose! Let me alone!"

Drake's answer was not polite; but the cad of the Fourth was not thin-skinned. He stepped in, felt for the switch of the electric light, and turned it on. In the sudden flood of light Jack Drake's face showed up pale and careworn, and he blinked.

Pierce Raik watched his face curiously. There had never been any love lost between the two, though Raik had always been elaborately civil to one of the richest juniors at St. Winifred's. Between frank, careless open-hearted nature and a crafty, suspicious one there could be little sympathy.

"Bad luck—what?" asked Raik.

"Mind your own business!" rapped out Jack Drake angrily. "What the dickens are you asking me questions for?"

"Only sympathising, old fellow."

"I'll ask for your sympathy when I want it."

"My dear chap, don't bite a fellow's head off!"

said Raik placably. "I don't see why you should be so cut up. If you've dropped more than you could afford on the race at Kingsford you'll soon pull round. Your pater—"

"I don't want advice from you, Raik."

"Well, you are a bear with a sore head, and no mistake," smiled the Fourth Former.

Drake's lips opened for an angry retort, but he restrained it.

"Look here, Raik, I'm feeling worried, and I don't want to be bothered just now," he said. "I don't want to be uncivil, but I want to be left alone."

Raik shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, all right! I thought I'd give you a look in to see if there was anything I could do."

"There isn't. Do—do you know whether Daubeny has come in yet?"

"I think I can hear his voice now," said Raik, listening. "Yes, he's on deck with Torrence and Egan. They're late for locking up."

"Oh! I want to see him."

Jack Drake left the study quickly and hurried away towards the Shell quarters. Pierce Raik remained alone in Study No. 8. He picked up an evening paper that lay on the floor and glanced at it. It was open at the racing page, and the result of Brown Boy's race was given there.

"Brown Boy—also ran!" Raik grinned. "The silly ass must have come a cropper on the race, to judge by his looks. Silly ass, to back on an outsider like Brown Boy! But what is he so cut up for? He can't have lost more than a few quids; and a few quids never used to mean much to him. I wonder—"

Raik was puzzled.

There were several circumstances about Drake that puzzled him since the opening of the new term. Drake's name was down for the Foundation Scholarship; which meant hard work and plenty of it, and it was well known that Drake had started "sapping," though certainly he had not kept it up.

Tuckey Toodles had been heard to complain that Drake never seemed to have a half-crown to lend a chap temporarily out of cash. And now Drake was never seen spending money freely in the school canteen, as of old. Either his people were keeping him very short of cash as a warning, or—Pierce Raik wondered whether there was more than that in it.

He threw the paper aside, and as he did so, he caught sight of a letter that lay on the table. It was in the handwriting of Jack's father. Raik knew the writing well enough. He gave a quick glance through the open doorway, and then quietly pushed the door shut and picked up the letter. Pierce Raik had no scruples about looking at another fellow's letter. As he looked over it, his eyes opened wide and he whistled.

One paragraph glued his eyes.

"I trust, my dear boy, that you are settling down to work. Your Form-master tells me that you have every chance of success in the examination for the Foundation Scholarship. With a steady application to your studies there is no reason why you should not gain it. I need not remind you that upon the result of the exam depends whether you remain at St. Winifred's. It will be quite impossible for me to meet the expense of your school fees next term—"

The door opened and Raik hastily threw the letter under the table. It was Tuckey Toodles who came in.

"Hallo, what are you up to here?" asked Toodles. "Where's Drake?"

"I—I came in to speak to him," stammered Raik. "I—I was going to ask him to tea—"

"Never mind, I'll come as he's not here!" said Tuckey, with an expansive smile. "I say, Raik—did you hear me?"

Raik left the study without heeding. Tuckey Toodles gave a sniff and slammed the door after him.

Pierce Raik hurried away, his narrow eyes gleaming.

"So that's it!" he murmured. "Hard up—really hard up—that's the explanation! And he hasn't said a word—not a word. Still swanking as if he were the richest fellow at St. Winifred's—the cheeky cad! What news for the fellows if it gets out—and I rather think it will!"

And Raik chuckled. Dick Rodney had kept the secret; but it was not to remain a secret much longer.

### Startling News!

THE next day was a dreary one for Jack Drake.

It was Sunday, and in the morning the St. Winifred's fellows attended service at the old church at Chade. Drake went through it like a fellow in a dream.

In the afternoon the fellows were free till call-over, and Drake left the Benbow for a long walk by himself in the woods. He carefully avoided the society of Daubeny & Co. The latter went by devious paths to the Lobster Pot Inn—to a little party in Gentleman Smith's rooms. Drake refused to join them. The very thought of the place sickened him now.

His dismay at the loss of his bet surprised and annoyed the Bucks. It was, after all, only five pounds, and what was a five? It was little enough to Vernon Daubeny; and in the old days it had been little enough to Jack Drake. It was a great deal to him now.

He had hoped and believed that that "last flutter" would see him clear, and give him a chance to settle down to work, and keep the promise he had made at home. Instead of which it had landed him deeper in the mire. And the knowledge that he deserved it was no comfort to him.

But the Bucks naturally did not understand. They knew nothing of the change in Mr. Drake's fortunes. Pride and shame combined had made Jack conceal the miserable truth from his old associates. He could not bear to be known to be as poor as Raik or Tuckey Toodles, when he had held his own with the wealthiest fellows at St. Winifred's. It was a false pride—a false shame—and it made the junior's task harder. But he could not help it; he had still to learn his lesson.

He did not observe the peculiar smile on Raik's face as the cad of the Fourth watched him leave the Benbow after dinner, and he did not observe that several other fellows were looking at him curiously. Plunged in his own gloomy thoughts, he did not guess that his affairs were already under discussion among the juniors.

He tramped away through the woods, thinking only of his own ill-luck, and how he was to meet the consequences of his reckless folly; little dreaming of what was going on on board the Benbow. About ten minutes after he had left,

Toodles came on deck, and looked around him.

"Anybody seen Drake?" he called out.

"Gone out!" said Estcourt.

Tuckey gave a snort.

"The awful rotter! I told him distinctly to wait for me!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "I was going with him."

"I say, Tuckey ought to know whether there's anything in it, as he's Drake's studymate," remarked Sawyer.

"In what?" asked Estcourt.

"About Drake being poor now. Some of the fellows are saying his people are right on their beam-ends!"

"What rot!"

"Well, it does sound rot," said Sawyer. "But I've heard it. I say, Toodles, do you know—you're chummy with Drake, aren't you?"

"Like brothers," said Tuckey.

"Well, is it true that he's hard-up?"

"He wouldn't lend me half-a-crown this morning," said Toodles sorrowfully.

"Are his people hard-up?" asked Raik. "I've heard some of the fellows say——"

"Oh, no! They're rolling in money; like my people, you know," said Tuckey innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If they're rolling in money like Toodles' people that settles it!" grinned Newson. "We know how the Toodles family roll in money!"

"It's all rot!" exclaimed Estcourt sharply.

"Who started this yarn about Drake and his people?"

"Blessed if I know," answered Raik coolly. "I heard some of the fellows speaking about it this morning."

"Nobody seems to know quite how it started," remarked Sawyer; "but it's all over the Fourth now."

"The Third have got hold of it, too," said Raik. "I heard young Phipps on the subject with your minor, Sawyer."

"Poor old Drake!" grinned Furlly. "He will be awfully wild when he hears it. It can't be true, of course."

"Well, there's the scholarship," observed Sawyer. "Drake's entered for that, and we know he's a slacker at work. What's he entered for?"

"That's so," agreed Raik. "You're right, Sawyer. It looks as if there's something in it."

"Hold on! I didn't say I thought there was something in it. Don't you put words into a fellow's mouth, Raik!"

"Anyhow, it's Drake's own business," said Estcourt. "I don't see that it makes any difference to anybody else."

"Well, he's been keeping it dark. Swanking just the same as usual, when he's as poor as a church mouse," said Raik bitterly.

"Oh, rot! Drake doesn't swank!"

"I call it swanking!"

"Oh, you would!" said Estcourt dryly, and he walked away. Dick Rodney had come on deck, and Estcourt joined him. There was a call from Raik.

"I say, Rodney!"

The new junior looked round.

"Have you heard about Drake?"

"What are you driving at?"

"About his people being hard up, and his pater being unable to pay his school fees, and all that——"

Rodney started violently.

"What!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, you knew it!" exclaimed Raik.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,593.

"Did you know, Rodney?" asked Sawyer.

"Looks as if he did," grinned Furlly. "Tell us the parties, Rodney."

"Oh, rot!" answered Rodney. "Are you coming, Estcourt?"

"Ready, old scout!"

The two juniors stepped on to the gangway and walked away to the bank. Rodney's face was rather red, and he was feeling extremely uncomfortable.

The secret, which Drake had confided to him in a burst of confidence on his first day at St. Winifred's, and which Rodney had loyally kept, was out now.

Drake could hardly have revealed it; and Rodney wondered how it had come to light. He wondered very uneasily, too, whether Drake would jump to the conclusion that he had given it away. That was rather a disturbing thought.

There was a good deal of discussion among the St. Winifred's Fourth that afternoon on the subject of Jack Drake and the rumoured change in his fortunes. Drake, as one of the eminent society of Bucks, a friend of the elegant and expensive Daub of the Shell, and one of the wealthiest fellows in the school, had filled rather a large place on the Fourth Form horizon. He had never really swanked, as Raik hinted; but there had been a certain loftiness about him which made his fall from fortune far from displeasing to some of the fellows. As Pierce Raik gleefully remarked, he would not be able to carry his head quite so high in the future—if this were true.

Tuckey Toodles was subjected to incessant questioning. The juniors considered that he ought to know the facts, as Drake's studymate; not that he was chummy with Drake, but his inquisitiveness was well-known, and it seemed unlikely that anything could go on in his study without his knowledge. But Tuckey Toodles indignantly repudiated the suggestion. Drake was rolling in money—just like Tuckey himself—and Tuckey refused to believe that a fellow whom he had always respected could possibly be poor.

Daubeny & Co. of the Shell came in at tea-time, and then they heard the exciting news.

Drake was still out of gates. The news came as a surprise to the Bucks of the Shell. After tea they repaired to their own study to talk it over, with a good deal of excitement.

"Can't be true!" said Torrence, as he lighted a cigarette. "Some ass has made this up to pull Drake's leg."

"Oh, quite!" said Egan.

"What do you think, Daub?"

Vernon Daubeny smiled in rather an evil way. "I think Drake's been pullin' our legs, dear boys," was his answer. "It's true enough—true on the face of it."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Torrence, taken aback.

Daubeny nodded and blew out a little cloud of smoke.

"It's the real goods," he said. "I wonder I never thought of it. That explains everythin' that has puzzled me about Drake this term; the giddy scholarship; and his makin' friends with that poverty-stricken cad, Rodney; his tryin' to take to sappin', and then his bein' so awfully knocked over by losin' a miserable fiver on Brown Boy. The dear man had been pullin' our legs. Leavin' us to imagine he was flourishin', as ever, and all the time——"

"Rather caddish!" said Egan.

"Beastly caddish, old top!"



"But—Drake really hard up!" said Torrence, with wide-open eyes.

"Look how it stands," said Daubeny. "It's as clear as daylight. He won't be able to pay Gentleman Smith that fiver he's lost—and that's what's worryin' him."

"Phew!"

"Why, he owes us about ten quids!" exclaimed Egan.

"We shall have to whistle for it!" answered Daubeny.

"The cad! I'll jolly soon see that he squares!" exclaimed Egan wrathfully. "Playin' on tick and not settlin', by gad!"

"Oh, go easy!" said Torrence. "If the poor beast's come a cropper, we can let him off. It's only money lost at banker, anyhow."

"Rot!" answered Daubeny.

"Utter rot!" said Egan. "Why, he's been taking us in. Why couldn't he tell us the facts?"

"Then we'd have stood by him," said Daubeny.

"I—I mean, to a certain extent. But after deceivin' us like this, he can't expect fellows to have anythin' to do with him."

"Hardly!"

Evidently the hapless junior who had fallen from fortune had little sympathy to look for from his old comrades, the noble Bucks of St. Winifred's.

### Dropped!

"HERE'S Drake!"

It was a murmur in the Fourth as Jack Drake hurried up just in time to take his place for call-over.

Drake looked tired and dispirited; he had spent the afternoon tramping by himself in the woods along the Chadway. The exercise and fresh air had done him good, but he was feeling harassed and troubled. He arrived just in time to escape being marked absent by Mr. Packe.

Many curious glances were turned upon him, though he did not observe them at first. Tuckey Toodles tugged at his sleeve. Drake looked down irritably at the fat junior.

"It's a rotten shame, old chap!" whispered Toodles. "I don't believe a word of it!"

Drake stared.

"What the thunder do you mean?" he growled.

"I say, dear old fellow—"

"Oh, dry up!"

Jack Drake moved away as soon as the juniors were dismissed, and Tuckey had no further opportunity to bestow sympathy. Some of the fellows laughed as Drake passed them, but he did not connect the laugh with himself.

Daubeny & Co. were chatting near the mainmast when Drake came along. They certainly saw him approaching to speak, but before he could join them they turned and walked away to their own quarters.

Drake stood rooted to the deck for a moment, staring after them.

What did that new conduct on the part of the Bucks mean? A flush crept into his face. He was in a humour to be touchy and exacting, and less incivility would have angered him. He strode after the three Shell fellows.

"Daub!" he called out.

Vernon Daubeny glanced carelessly back.

"Hallo!" he said nonchalantly.

"Stop a minute!"

"I'm goin' to my study."

"I want to speak to you."

"Well, you can come to the study, if you like."

And Vernon Daubeny walked on with his friends.

The flush in Drake's face deepened. His eyes were glittering now under his deepened brows. The change in Daubeny & Co.'s manner was inexplicable—unless—

Did they know?

Drake had tried to believe that, if the facts were known, his knutty friends would stand by him. But at the bottom of his heart he had always known that it would not be so. Vernon Daubeny had no use for "lame ducks." Unless a fellow could keep his end up in his honourable society, he was not wanted there. A poor and needy outsider who could not afford to go the pace was not the pal Daubeny was looking for. And Drake had never entered heartily into the shady pursuits of the Bucks; it was carelessness more than anything else that had led him into their ways at all.

Did they know?

But how could they know? Nobody knew excepting Dick Rodney, and Rodney had promised to keep the secret, and he had kept his promise—so far, at least. Had he been tattling at last?

Drake, with glittering eyes, followed the Bucks to their study. Daubeny had closed the door; the Fourth Former kicked it open and entered.

Egan shrank back a little from his pale, passionate face. Torrence looked extremely uncomfortable. But Daubeny, with perfect coolness, selected a cigarette from his case and proceeded to light it.

Drake's eyes glittered at him.

"What does this mean?" he asked in a low, thick voice.

Daubeny eyed him coolly through the smoke curls.

"What are you alludin' to, dear man?" he inquired.

"Your confounded cheek!" broke out Drake hotly. "Hang you, you know what I mean!" He clenched his hands. "If you don't explain—"

"I rather think it's up to you to explain," drawled Daubeny. "From the talk that's goin' on, we've heard what you ought to have told us before. You can't expect us to like it."

"The—the talk! What talk?"

"You came back this term goin' on just the same as before," said Daubeny. "You never let on a word about your pater bein' on the rocks and yourself be hard-up as Tuckey Toodles—did you?"

Drake's hands unclenched. He almost tottered, and he rested a hand on the study table to support himself.

"You—you know?" he gasped.

He had suspected it, feared it, but it came as a shock to him.

Daubeny smiled.

"I needn't ask if it's true!" he said. "Your face is enough for me! Do you call this playin' the game, Drake? You let us believe that everythin' was going on as usual! You've spoofered us! You owe us money! You owe Gentleman Smith money, and you can't pay it! I took you to Smith as a friend; if he doesn't get the money from you he will look to me! Is that cricket? I call it caddish swindlin'!"

Drake panted.

"You rotter! I shall pay Smith—and you—every penny!"

Daubeny gave a shrug.

"All the better if you do," he answered. "Will

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,593.

it be convenient to hand over the cash just now? You owe ten quids in this study!"

Egan broke in.

"And you lost it to us after you were on the rocks! You played with us knowing you couldn't pay!"

Drake breathed hard.

"I can pay!" he said. "I hoped to get clear on Brown Boy. But I shall pay up every shilling, you cad! I can do it by selling my bike."

"The sooner the better, then!" sneered Daubeny. "You've had time to sell your bike, but you haven't done it! Not that I care much about the money. I'm willin' to call off the debt. Hang the money! But you've treated us badly."

"Rottenly!" said Egan.

"No decent fellow would have acted as you've done!" said Daubeny. "I prefer to pal only with decent fellows! That's a tip!"

Drake's hands clenched again.

"I knew it would be like this if you knew!" he muttered. "You're catching at any excuse to give me the cold shoulder because I'm hard-up! What's the good of telling lies about it, Daubeny?"

Daubeny flushed a little.

"That isn't the kind of language I care to hear in this study!" he said, with insulting calmness. "Perhaps you wouldn't mind gettin' out!"

"I'll get out fast enough! I was a fool ever to put a foot in this study!" said Drake bitterly. "What have I been playin' the cad and black-guard for? I never wanted to; it was always against the grain! I was a thundering fool, and I'm glad it's over!"

"You weren't in a hurry to get it over!" sneered Daubeny. "You've been hangin' on to us this term under false pretences, anyhow!"

"Look here, Daub—" began Torrence uneasily.

"You dry up, Torrence! The less we see of this outsider the better!" said Daubeny. "We've been taken in—imposed upon, in fact! There's the door, Drake!"

"Who told you about my affairs at home?" said Drake quietly.

"Nobody in particular. It's the talk of the ship."

"That's not good enough. Nobody knew excepting myself and Rodney. I want to know how it got out."

"Find out!" said Egan.

"These things are bound to get out in the long run," smiled Daubeny. "But if it's a fact that that cad Rodney knew, I don't see that you need look any farther for the fellow who gave you away! Not that I blame him; I don't see why he should keep your shady secrets!"

"He—he promised—" muttered Drake.

Daubeny laughed.

"Then he's broken the promise," he said. "Just what I should have expected of such a rank outsider!"

"Did he tell you?"

"No. I heard it at the tea-table," said Daubeny, after a momentary pause, in which he debated whether it was worth while to utter a falsehood. But it was not needed. Drake's look showed plainly enough what was going to happen when he met Dick Rodney again. "But if you say Rodney knew—"

Drake did not wait for more. He strode from the study, his brows knitted and his eyes gleaming. Daubeny laughed lightly, and threw the door shut after him.

"I suppose it was Rodney who let it out, from what he says," remarked Egan.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,593.

"I suppose so. Must have been a fool to tell the chap if he didn't want it repeated. I fancy the dear boy is booked for a fight." Vernon Daubeny rubbed his nose, where there still remained a trace of a collision with Dick Rodney's knuckles. "It's turnin' out quite amusin'. Drake's a terrific fightin' man when his dander's up. That sappin' cad Rodney is booked for a high old time, I think. We must be on hand when it comes off. I'll lay two to one in quids on Drake."

And Daubeny lighted another cigarette.

### Challenged!

JACK DRAKE strode away from Daubeny's study with gleaming eyes. The truth was out now; and not for a moment did he doubt that Rodney had betrayed him. From whom else could the information have come? Only Rodney knew, and he had betrayed what had been confided to him in a thoughtless moment. Drake could not look at it otherwise.

The expression on his face as he came out on the main deck drew a good many glances upon him.

"He knows we know now," murmured Raik to Sawyer, and Sawyer major nodded. "The dear man seems annoyed."

"Looking for trouble," grinned Sawyer. "He wants to know who found it out and gave him away! Was it you, Raik?"

"I? How could I know anything about his affairs? Don't be a silly ass!"

"Well, somebody did."

Drake came up to the two juniors; and Raik, in spite of his nerve and impudence, backed away a little. Jack's face was not pleasant to look upon at that moment.

"Do you fellows know where Rodney is?" asked Drake.

"Rodney, the new kid?" said Raik, greatly relieved. "Do you want him?"

"That's why I'm asking."

"I think I saw him go down to the Common-room."

"Right!"

Drake turned and ran down the steps to the lower deck. Raik and Sawyer exchanged glances.

"Was it Rodney, then?" asked Sawyer, with a whistle.

Raik smiled.

"Very likely! Let's go and see the fun."

And they followed.

There were a good many fellows in the Common-room when Jack Drake came in. He noted now that they ceased speaking as he entered, and glanced at him. He did not need telling that his affairs were under discussion.

Rodney was talking to Estcourt near the big table; and both of them had avoided looking at Drake. They were surprised when he strode up to them with a flushed and furious face.

"Rodney! You cad!" he panted.

Dick Rodney rose quickly to his feet.

"Drake—"

"You cad!" repeated Drake. "You rotter!"

There was a buzz from the juniors as they gathered round. It was easily to be seen that Drake was in a furious temper; and the general impression was that he was looking for a victim

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to break it upon. But it was surprising that he should have picked on the quiet, sedate Rodney. "What's Rodney done?" asked Newson.

"I've done nothing," said Rodney, before Drake could speak. "Drake, old man, you're making a mistake. I know what you suspect; but it isn't so."

"I don't suspect—I know!"

"I tell you—"

"What's the trouble?" asked several voices.

Drake's eyes gleamed round at the crowd.

"I'll tell you what the trouble is!" he exclaimed passionately. "The day that cad came to St. Winny's I was fool enough to make friends with him, and I told him something about my affairs, which he promised never to speak of. Now it's all over the school."

"Then it's true!" murmured Tuckey Toodles.

"Oh, my hat!"

Rodney's steady glance did not falter.

"I know it's all over the school now, Drake," he said quietly, "but I have not said a word."

"Liar!"

There was a breathless pause; and then Rodney spoke quietly.

"Very well! If you don't take my word, there's no use my saying anything more."

"You rotter! You won't get off so cheaply as that!" panted Drake, advancing upon the new junior. "Put up your hands!"

Rodney put his hands into his pockets.

"Do you hear me?" shouted Drake. "Are you a coward as well as a liar? Put up your hands!"

"I—look here—"

Smack!

Drake's open hand came across Rodney's cheek with a report almost like a pistol shot. The new junior staggered back under the blow.

"Now will you put up your hands?"

"I will not fight you or anybody else on a Sunday!" said Rodney quietly. "I'll fight you tomorrow, Drake, and do my best to give you the thrashing you're asking for."

Drake started a little. In his rage he had forgotten the day. He dropped his hands.

"To-morrow, then!" he said.

"Yes."

"That's settled, then."

And Jack Drake strode from the Common-room, leaving the juniors of St. Winifred's in an excited buzz.

(Next Week: "FROM FOES TO FRIENDS!")  
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,593.

## ROUNDING UP THE RUSTLER!

(Continued from page 28.)

the sound of crashing thickets and further pistol shots.

It was man to man now—the big sergeant against the desperate Mexican rustler—man to man, hidden by the dusky thickets. The shooting ceased suddenly, but the sounds of a struggle could be heard in the evening stillness.

There was a splash in the creek as the trooper on the other bank plunged into the water and swam for the island. The schoolboys saw him scramble ashore there, dim in the thickening dusk. Frank Richards made a movement towards the creek, and Bob Lawless joined him, putting down the rifle.

"Come on, Frank!" he breathed.

The chums plunged into the water together and swam on the current to the island. But the sounds of strife had ceased before they dragged themselves ashore there. They plunged into the spruce thickets breathlessly.

On the ground the Mexican desperado lay, with his arms bound down to his sides, his teeth showing like those of a wild animal, and his black eyes glittering with rage and hatred.

The trooper was knotting a cord about his arms quietly and methodically. Sergeant Lasalle was wiping blood from his face where a revolver bullet had gone very close.

"Got him?" exclaimed Bob.

The sergeant laughed quietly.

"I guess I have!" he remarked. "He won't get loose again in a hurry. Gosh, it was a tussle, all the same!"

"You're wounded!" said Frank.

"Only a scratch, sonny, though another inch nearer would have put me out. But I was too close on him." The sergeant smiled down on the savage captive. "Ready to travel, Mr. Greaser?"

"Caramba!"

"We've got to get him back to the bank," said

the sergeant. "I reckon we can hold him up between us, Johnson, without drowning him. He won't have his paws loose again in a hurry, anyhow."

"I reckon so, sergeant."

The Mexican was hauled to his feet. Taking the captured ruffian between them, the sergeant and the trooper plunged into the stream again and piloted the ruffian ashore.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless followed them, and, leaving the Mounties with their prisoner, the chums started at once for the lumber school with the good news that the rustler was captured.

It had been long dark when they arrived at Cedar Creek School, and they found Miss Meadows, who had missed them, in great anxiety. But their news relieved her anxiety, and the school was dismissed.

Bob and Frank ran their ponies out of the corral and mounted for the ride home. They arrived at the ranch at an unusually late hour, and found Mr. Lawless very worried.

"Well, where have you been?" demanded the rancher grimly, when the schoolboys came in after putting up their ponies.

"Sorry, dad, we couldn't get in before," said Bob cheerfully. "We've been on Government service."

"What?" shouted the rancher.

"Helping the Mounties to round up the rustler," explained Bob airily. "We got him—"

"Tell me just what you've been doing, you reckless young rascals!" exclaimed Mr. Lawless.

Bob explained cheerfully at the supper table, with his mouth full of corn-cake and beef. Frank Richards slipped upstairs to tell Vere Beaulere the news.

A few days later Frank and Bob were wanted at Kamloops as witnesses against the captured rustler, who was comfortably disposed of for a term of years at the expense of the hospitable Canadian Government.

And needless to say, the chums of Cedar Creek were decidedly pleased with themselves and the part they had played in rounding up the rustler.

(Next Wednesday: "THE CEDAR CREEK SWEEPSTAKE!")

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