

EVERY BOY'S COLLECTING OUR "FOOTER-STAMPS"!

Join in To-day—
HUNDREDS OF FOOTBALLS TO BE WON!

The **GEM** 2^D

In this issue!

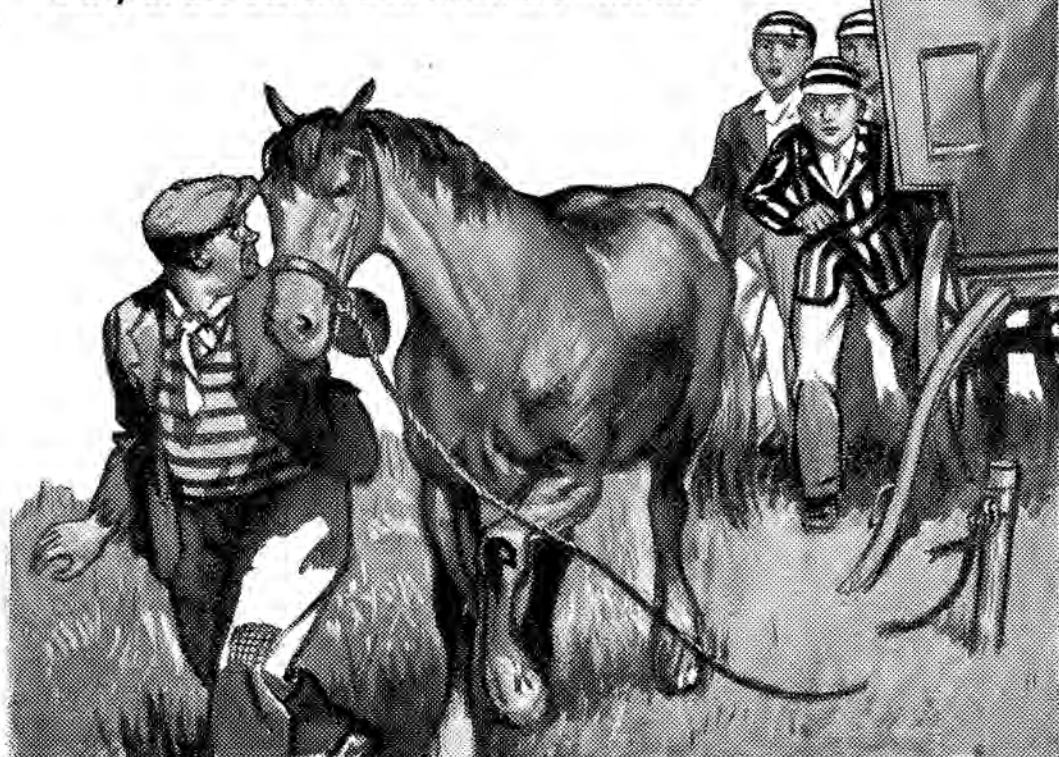
**"CHARLEY'S
CHAMPION!"**

**"THE CEDAR CREEK
SWEEPSTAKE!"**

**"FROM FOES
TO FRIENDS!"**

"HOI! THAT'S OUR HORSE!"

—An amusing incident from the lively long
story of the St. Jim's caravanners—within.



SEPTEMBER CONTEST KICKS OFF THIS WEEK!



LINE up for the kick-off of the September "Footer-Stamps" Contest, in which 300 more of our Super Footballs are to be won by "Footer-Stamps" collectors.

"Footer-Stamps" are being printed every week in the GEM. They consist of pictures of six different actions on the football field, and the object of this great competition stamp-game is to score as many "goals" as possible by the end of September.

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

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

There are ten more stamps this week—five below and five more on page 35. Cut them out and try to score a "goal" with them, then keep them until you get some more goal-scoring stamps in next week's issue. If you have any odd stamps left over from the August competition they can be included, too.

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

"Footer-Stamps" is all the rage—see that you're in it, so that we can send you a football very soon, maybe! Up to 300 more of the 1,000 Footballs offered are going to be awarded in the September competition for the readers scoring the highest number of goals with "Footer-Stamps" for the month.

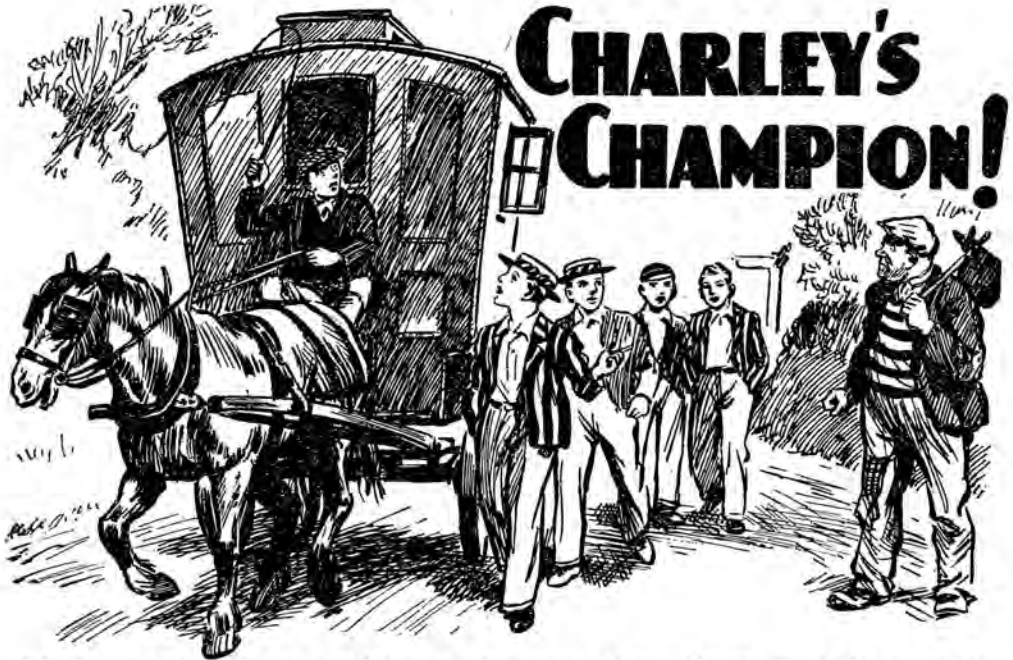
Don't send any stamps yet; wait until we tell you how and where at the end of the month. There's nothing to pay, remember!

OVERSEAS READERS! You pals who are far away—you're in this great scheme also, and special awards will be given for the best "scores" from overseas readers. There will be a special closing date for you as well, of course!

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



TOM MERRY & CO. HAVE CAUSE TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF THEIR NEW RECRUIT, BUT GUSSY STANDS FIRM AS—



CHARLEY'S CHAMPION!

"Strike me pink!" It was a sudden ejaculation from Charley. He was staring blankly at the ruffianly-looking man by the roadside. Tom Merry glanced at him. "Hallo, Charley! Do you know that merchant?" he asked.

CHAPTER 1.

The Chase of the Caravan!

"LISTEN!"

Tom Merry halted.

The full round moon rode high in the sky, and the roads and fields and the great mass of the Chiltern Hills were almost as bright as by day.

It was past midnight, but the St. Jim's caravan was jogging along a chalky road in the Chilterns. Jack Blake was driving, occasionally jerking the reins and addressing remarks to the horse.

Circumstances—the caravan horse—displayed an inclination to halt at every other step. He did not seem to see any adequate reason for this night march; and Circumstances had a will of his own.

Some of the caravanners were dozing in the van; but Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were walking with the horse, seconding Blake's manful efforts to keep him on the go.

Circumstances was not tired; he had been resting all day. But he evidently thought it was high time that all respectable caravanners were in bed.

"Listen, you chaps!"

Tom Merry looked back along the road, across which the shadows of the wayside trees lay in a black network.

"Gee-up!" grunted Blake.

"Hold on, Blake!"

"My dear man, if this lump of dead-and-alive cat's meat ever stops we shall never get it to start again."

"We're being followed," said Tom. "I can hear horses on the road."

Blake gave a snort and allowed the horse to halt. Circumstances did so with an air of great firmness. Something more than persuasion was likely to be required to make him start again, as Blake foresaw.

Tom Merry was listening intently. Now that the rumble of the caravan and the clumping of Circumstances' hoofs had ceased, deep silence lay on the hilly road.

Through the silence came the tattoo of distant hoof-beats. Far back on the road horsemen were riding at a gallop after the St. Jim's caravan.

"I thought I heard it several times," said Tom Merry. "Now I'm sure. You fellows can hear it?"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

When Charley Chipps joins up with the St. Jim's caravanners it is just like the generous-hearted Gussy to champion the homeless waif—in spite of Charley's mysterious conduct!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,594.

"Half a dozen horses," said Lowther.

"Well, what does it matter?" asked Blake. "If chaps have a fancy for riding in the middle of the night, it needn't worry us."

"I'm thinking of Cutts."

"Cutts of the Fifth? Bother him! We've done with that cad!"

"I hope so. But——"

"We're six or seven miles from St. Leger Lodge now," said Blake. "They wouldn't follow us all this way—if they followed us at all."

Tom Merry did not answer. He was staring back along the road intently. He thought it only too probable that Cutts of the Fifth and his friends were following the caravan; and if that were the case, there was trouble in store for somebody.

An eyeglass glimmered in the doorway of the van, and Arthur Augustus looked out inquiringly.

"Campin' here, deah boys?" he asked.

"The horse thinks so!" grunted Blake.

"Well, what are you stoppin' for?"

"Tom Merry's dreaming about Cutts!" said Blake crossly. "He thinks those rotters are after us."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped down from the van. Manners, Herries, and Digby followed him, and they brought golf clubs with them. If Cutts & Co. were on the track the clubs were likely to be wanted.

"I'm not dreaming, Blake, old scout," answered Tom Merry. "Look!"

He pointed along the road. In the moonlight a bunch of riders had come into sight in the distance, riding hard. They were too far off for faces to be recognised, but one of them at least Tom was sure he knew.

"Cutts!" said Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Those Fifth Form wottahs are aftah us, deah boys. I wathah thought that Cutts would be watty aftah gettin' such a feahful thwashin'."

Jack Blake jumped down from the driver's seat.

The thudding of the horses' hoofs on the hard, chalky road was more distinct now, growing nearer and louder every moment.

"They mean trouble," said Tom Merry.

"We can give them back as good as they send!" growled Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The St. Jim's juniors gathered together, each with a weapon of some kind in his hand. The road they were following was a very lonely one, and the hour was very late. There was no chance of help at hand.

In grim silence they watched the bunch of riders draw nearer till they were able to recognise Cutts of the Fifth and Prye and Gilmore in the moonlight. Three burly fellows, who looked like stablemen, were riding with the three Fifth Formers of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! It's goin' to be wathah a swap!" remarked Arthur Augustus, as he took a business-like grip on a cleek. "It's weally my fault, you fellows. I've landed you in this."

"You always were an ass!" remarked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Can't be helped," said Tom Merry cheerily. "They look rather a heffy crowd for us, but we'll handle them all right."

"Oh, yes, rather!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked distressed. He

felt that it really was his fault—and so, certainly, it was.

In the innocence of his unsuspecting heart he had joined Gerald Cutts' party at St. Leger's house, to discover rather late that he was only wanted to gamble and lose his ample cash—which he had firmly declined to do. And as Cutts' evil temper had been fully roused by his refusal, Arthur Augustus would have been severely handled had not the rest of the caravanners come to his rescue.

But they had rescued him, roughly handling Cutts & Co. in the process. And then the caravanners had pushed on, late as the hour was, anxious to get out of the neighbourhood of St. Leger Lodge.

Tom Merry had not quite expected Cutts to take his defeat and thrashing quietly—and evidently he had been right. There were several men employed about the stables at the lodge, and evidently Cutts had called upon them, and started on the track of the caravanners to pay off his score.

"Shoulder to shoulder!" said Blake.

A grimy face looked out of the caravan; it belonged to Charley Chippis, lately a stable-boy at the lodge. It was Charley who had guided the caravanners to the rescue of their chum—whether out of regard for Arthur Augustus, or in retaliation for a thrashing Cutts had given him, they did not inquire.

Charley knuckled his sleepy eyes and blinked at the St. Jim's juniors.

"Wot's the row?" he asked.

"There is goin' to be a swap, Charley," said Arthur Augustus. "You had better stay in the van, kid."

Charley blinked along the moonlit road.

"Master Cutts and the stable blokes!" he said, with a whistle. "They're a rough old lot, sir, they are. You coves 'ad better mizzle!"

"Rats!" grunted Blake.

"We should uttahly wefuse to wetweat fwom those wuffians, Charley!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"And they'd catch us up if we did!" grunted Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The kid can help," said Blake. "Cutts knows you showed us the way into the lodge, Charley, and if he lays hands on you you'll get some more of his riding-whip. Lay hold of something and line up."

"Every little helps," assented Tom Merry.

Charley nodded.

"I'm your man, gents!" he answered.

And Charley jumped out of the caravan with a frying-pan in his hand. It was the only weapon he could find, the golf clubs being already appropriated.

Cutts & Co. came on at a gallop, as if they meant to ride the caravanners down, and the juniors drew close to the van.

Within a few yards of the St. Jim's caravan, Cutts pulled in his horse.

"Got them!" exclaimed Cutts. "Pile in, you fellows! Use your whips and thrash them till they can't yell!"

And Cutts lashed out with his riding-whip.

CHAPTER 2.

The Fight!

"YAWOOOH!"

It was Arthur Augustus who caught Cutts' riding-whip with his shoulder, and he gave a terrific yell.

Cutts' followers rode close, and they had the advantage, being on horseback. They lashed out mercilessly at the juniors with their riding-whips.

It was a ruffianly attack, but quite in keeping with the character of Gerald Cutts. He evidently cared very little how much damage he did. He had relied upon Arthur Augustus' banknotes to restore his finances, having been rendered nearly "stony" by his little speculations on the races. He had been disappointed, and thrashed into the bargain, and now he was in a bitter, revengeful mood.

He lashed out recklessly with his whip, while his horse pranced.

Loud yells rang out as the whips made rapid play on heads and shoulders.

Tom Merry & Co. were at a disadvantage, but they were not taking the attack quietly by any means. The golf clubs lashed out in return, though, unfortunately, the horses caught more of the blows than the riders.

The animals pranced and plunged under the blows, however, and some of the riders were soon in difficulties.

Prye lost his stirrups and his reins, and clung to his horse's neck to save himself, gasping. The horse, uncontrolled, broke into a gallop, and dashed away up the road, with Prye yelling frantically for help. But there was no help for Prye. His comrades were too busy.

Gilmore's horse was rearing and plunging, maddened by a blow on his nose, and Gilmore had all his work cut out to get him under control. He was quickly out of the tussle, as well as Prye.

Cutts was a good horseman, however, and the three stablemen had no trouble. And the four of them plied their attack hotly, and they were a big handful for the juniors on foot.

It was Charley who first distinguished himself. Heedless of the lashes that rained on him, the little vagrant seized one of the grooms by the foot and unhorsed him.

The man came down into the road with a heavy bump and lay groaning, his horse dashing away at a gallop.

Arthur Augustus seemed to be understudying a grasshopper in his wild jumps and hops to elude the blows Cutts was raining on him; but the swell of St. Jim's found a chance with the cleek at last.

The iron-headed golf club landed on Cutts' chest with a terrific clump and the blackguard of the Fifth rolled off his horse as if he had been shot. Whiz!

Charley's frying-pan flew through the air and caught one of the grooms on the side of the head. He went down into the road, roaring.

A change had come over the scene now. There was only one of the grooms who was not out of the scrap, and he was assailed on all sides by lashing clubs.

He backed his horse, turned tail, and rode back the way he had come, with a score or more of bruises to show for his trouble.

Cutts was staggering to his feet, his hard face almost demoniacal in expression.

"Down that cad!" panted Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Cutts dodged the cleek and closed with Arthur Augustus. But Blake, Herries, and Digby rushed in to the help of Arthur Augustus, and Cutts went down, the juniors sprawling over him.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther rushed at the two grooms who were on the ground. They had no mercy on them. The golf clubs lashed at the pair as they scrambled up and fled after their runaway horses.

Gilmore had succeeded in getting his horse under control at last; but he did not linger. The fight had gone against the rascals of the Fifth, after all, and Gilmore did not want any more.

He turned a deaf ear to Cutts' frantic yell for help, and rode away at a gallop.

Cutts' horse was pawing the ground, and Tom Merry dragged it round and gave it a smart tap, sending it careering up the road after the fleeing Gilmore.

"Beaten the rotters!" gasped Tom.

"Yow-ow-ow!" mumbled Manners, as he rubbed his head.

"Oh! Ow! Wow!" was Monty Lowther's remark.

"And we've got Cutts!" said Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. "We've got the cad! Hold him, you fellows!"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Cutts was safe enough. He was on his back in the road, and Jack Blake was kneeling on his chest, and Herries was trampling on his legs. Digby was jamming a golf club on his nose, as a hint to keep still.

"I wathah think we have whacked the wottahs," said Arthur Augustus, with great satisfaction. "I am feahfully hurt, you know, but we have won!"

"Oh, my napper!" mumbled Lowther.

"Look at my nose!" said Manners.

"Nevah mind your nose, Mannahs, old chap!"

"Fathead! Ow-wow!"

THAT CROWNED IT!

A man was making lengthy inquiries at a garage about hiring a car, and the people in the queue behind him were getting impatient.

"The fact is," he said, "I have a week-end I don't know what to do with."

"Put your hat on it!" exclaimed a voice from the queue.

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Baker, 19, Sandford Road, Sale Moor, Cheshire.

"Will you let me go?" said Cutts, between his teeth.

The cad of the Fifth was quivering with rage in the vengeful grasp of the juniors.

Tom Merry & Co. had certainly received severe punishment in the tussle, but Cutts was sorry by that time that he had set out for vengeance.

"No, we won't let you go!" said Jack Blake coolly. "You came here of your own accord, you cad, and you'll go when we please—not when you please! Charley!"

"Yessir?" grinned Charley.

"Get a rope out of the van!"

"Suttingly, sir!"

"What on earth—" began Tom Merry.

"Cutts is coming along with us," said Blake.

"He was very keen on following our van. He can follow it a bit farther—"

"My hat! What—"

"I'm going to tie him on behind!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's the rope, sir!" grinned Charley.

"Tie it round his wrists, Dig, while I hold the cad!"

"What-ho!" chuckled Dig.

Cutts began to struggle again, but Arthur Augustus promptly collared his hair and began to tug. Cutts was tired first, and he gave in.

Digby knotted the ends of the rope round Cutts'

wrists, fastening them securely together. Then the dandy of the Fifth was allowed to get on his feet.

His first proceeding was to kick at Blake with savage force. But Herries was ready with a club, and the club landed on Cutts' leg just in time.

It landed with a sounding crack, and Cutts gave a howl of anguish.

"You'll get that every time you kick!" remarked Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ow-ow! Yow-ow!"

Cutts did not kick again. One lesson of that kind was quite enough for him.

Jack Blake tied the loose end of the rope to the caravan.

"Now we'll get on!" he remarked.

"Let me go!" shrieked Cutts.

"Shut up!"

"I'll yell for help! I'll——"

Crack!

Herries put in another with the golf club, and Cutts roared.

"It will be a harder one next time!" said Herries warningly.

"I—I—I'll——"

"Are you going to be quiet?" demanded Herries, brandishing the driver within a foot of Cutts' nose.

"Oh, you—you— Yes!" gasped Cutts. "Keep that club away, you young villain! I—I—I'll be quiet!"

Cutts gave a wild look round the road. His friends were gone, and his horse had vanished. There was likely to be some difficulty in recovering that horse; but that was Cutts' business, and he certainly could not set about it now. He was booked to follow the caravan.

Tom Merry & Co. spent some time in attending to their injuries. There was a plentiful flow of embrocation. Then they took to the road.

Circumstances yielded to the persuasion of a pull at his head and a cracking whip at his tail.

Cutts followed the van. He had no choice about that, as he was tied on.

The caravan swung along in the moonlight, and Cutts of the Fifth kept up with it behind like a led horse, with an expression on his face that Manners said he would like to photograph, only he was afraid it would damage the camera.

CHAPTER 3.

Follow Your Leader!

"KEEP on till morning!" remarked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! It's a wippin' night!" said Arthur Augustus. "I will dwive, if you like, Blake."

"We don't want to wind up in the ditch, old chap!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Jolly good idea to keep on till morning!" said Herries. "I'll turn in, and you can call me in the morning!"

Herries turned in in a bunk in the caravan, and Digby and Manners followed his example.

Charley was camping on the floor on a rug. Lowther sat with Blake in front, and Tom Merry walked at the horse's head.

It was a glorious summer night, with a full silver moon sailing overhead, and a deep blue sky dotted with fleecy clouds. The caravan proceeded at a walk, save where a steep slope in the road

made Circumstances get a move on, whether he liked it or not.

Behind the van tramped Cutts of the Fifth. For a time he was silent, but at last he began to demand, in furious tones, to be released.

The caravanners did not heed, and Cutts' voice grew louder and louder. He woke Herries at last.

Herries did not like being awakened out of his nap. He did not say anything to Cutts, however. He reached out of the van with a cleek, and gave the dandy of the Fifth a rap on the head.

Cutts roared.

"Another word, and I'll come out to you!" said Herries.

"You—you——"

Crack!

"Ow-ow! Wow!"

After that Cutts was silent. Herries returned to his bunk, and his nap was not disturbed again by Cutts. The unfortunate Fifth Former tramped on in furious silence.

There was no help for him. Not a soul was passed on the lonely road as the caravan rumbled on in the small hours of the morning.

The night march was an agreeable experience enough for the caravanners, but Cutts did not find it so agreeable.

The moon waned at last as the early flush of dawn began to creep over the Chilterns.

The caravan rolled on till the dawn was rosy in the sky and the birds were beginning to sing.

Then, on the outskirts of a little village, Tom Merry looked round for a suitable spot for camping.

Charley put his head out of the van, and rubbed his eyes and grinned at Cutts.

Charley had not forgotten the thrashing Cutts had given him in the stable-yard at St. Léger Lodge. Cutts gave him an appealing look.

"Cast off that rope, Chippis!" he muttered, keeping his voice low to avoid awakening the juniors in the van.

"No fear!" grinned Charley.

"I'll speak to St. Léger, and ask him to give you your job again at the lodge, Chippis."

"Promise?" asked Charley.

"Yes!" said Cutts eagerly.

"An' 'ow much is your promise worth, Master Cutts?" inquired Charley derisively.

Cutts ground his teeth.

"You scrubby little scoundrel——"

"You laid into me with a 'orsowhip!" said Charley. "I've paid you out, ain't I? I showed these blokes 'ow to get in at the lodge, when you was tryin' to swindle Master D'Arcy, and thrashed 'im 'cause he wouldn't be swindled. P'raps you're sorry now you laid that whip on, Master Cutts!"

Perhaps Cutts was sorry, considering the consequences; but he certainly looked as if he would like to lay it on again.

"You're a rotter, you are, Master Cutts!" jeered Charley.

Cutts almost choked.

"I'll stand you a quid to let me loose, Chippis," he whispered.

"You can say ten quids, an' I wouldn't do it," answered Charley. "I've got your marks all over my back now, Master Cutts."

"I—I'm sorry——"

"I dessay you are, as it's turned out!"

"Cast off that rope, kid!"

"No blinkin' fear!" answered Charley emphatically. "I'll pull your ear instead!"

"Wha-a-at?"



Loud yells rang out as the whips of Cutts' followers made rapid play on the heads and shoulders of the caravanners. Tom Merry & Co. were at a disadvantage, but they did not take the attack quietly, and they lashed out with the golf clubs in return.

"Like this 'ere!" said Charley.

He dropped from the van and pulled Cutts' ear, with a gurgle of merriment. Then he jumped back, and dodged Cutts' lashing boot.

Cutts had to stand on one foot while he kicked, and the pull of the van nearly dragged him over. He jumped desperately to save himself, panting, and Charley followed him, giggling.

"Ave another try, Master Cutts!"

"Oh, you little hound!" muttered Cutts, stifling his fury.

"'Ound yourself!" retorted Charley.

"Charley!" said a voice from the van.

"Yessir!"

Arthur Augustus rubbed his eyes and jammed his eyeglass into one of them and surveyed Charley severely.

"I am surprisid at you, Charley!" he said.

"What 'ave I done?"

"You are twiumpihin' ovah a fallen enemy!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "That is as bad as hittin' a chap when he is down. I am vewy much surprisid at you, Charley! It is not cwicket!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Hallo! There goes Gussy's jawbone!" came Digby's sleepy voice from the van. "Last thing at night and first thing in the morning!"

"Wearly, Dig—"

"Oh, go it, old chap! Are you at firstly?"

"You uttah ass!"

"It's all right; I shall be asleep again before you get to seventhly."

"I wefuse to weply to such wibald wemarks, Dig!"

And Arthur Augustus dropped from the van. And for the next few minutes he walked with Charley, giving that dismayed youth a very severe lecture, to which Master Chipps listened very meekly.

"Halt!" sang out Tom Merry at last.

The St. Jim's van jolted to a halt.

The early sunshine glimmered on a wide common, with the red tiles of a village in sight down the road.

Arthur Augustus glanced round approvingly. He quitted Charley, perhaps feeling that he had done enough, for the present, for that youth's moral improvement.

"A vewy good spot for campin'! We can get some watah in the village, and pewwaps some milk and eggs for bwekkah. They're up already. Here come some chaps!"

Three farm hands came tramping along the road, on their way to early work.

Cutts' eyes gleamed as he saw them. He was ready to yell for help to any stranger that passed, and these were the first. But the juniors were not prepared to explain the matter to strangers. They collared Gerald Cutts and bundled him headlong into the van.

There Blake sat on him, and Herries jammed a golf club on his mouth, to keep him quiet till the labourers were past.

The trio passed, with a cheery "good-mornin'," cheerily returned by the caravanners, and their footsteps died away up the road.

Tom Merry looked into the van, and grinned at the sight of Cutts' furious face.

"About time we kicked that rotter out," he remarked.

"I've got a good idea," said Blake. "Caravanning is all very well, but to make it really comfy you want a man-of-all-work with you. That's Cutts' job."

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Cutts is pretty good at a lot of things," said Blake. "He can ride and shoot, I believe; and I know he can play poker, and back horses, and drink whisky, and smoke cigars. The only thing he's never tried his hand at is honest work. We're going to give him a chance. Are you willing to be our man-of-all-work for to-day, Cutts?"

"No!" yelled Cutts.

"Jab him with that club, Herries!"

"Certainly!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Cutts.

"Are you willing now, Cutts?"

"You young demon—"

"Another jab, Herries!"

"Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you willing now, Cutts?" asked Blake cheerfully.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yes," gasped Cutts.

"Good! I thought you'd be willing if I talked to you a little. Keep that club handy, though, Herries; he may jib again!"

"You bet!"

And Cutts was lifted out of the van, to commence his career as man-of-all-work for the caravan party. And, to judge by Blake's look, Gerald Cutts' new job was not going to be a sinecure.

CHAPTER 4.

The Man-of-All-Work!

TOM MERRY & CO. turned the caravan off the road, crossing the common to a considerable distance in order to keep their camp out of range of passing eyes. That was necessary, considering the measures they were taking to secure the services of a man-of-all-work.

Circumstances was taken out and tethered, and he grazed contentedly on the grass, and then lay down to sleep.

Digby and Lowther went into the village in search of provender, while the others were preparing camp.

Cutts of the Fifth was cast loose from the rope of the van; but Blake tied it on his arm and kept hold of the other end. He did not intend to give the man-of-all-work a chance of sacking himself.

As soon as his hands were free Cutts clenched them furiously, and he looked inclined to run amuck among the caravanners.

But he didn't. Blake and Herries had golf clubs ready for him if he did; and Cutts was aware that those clubs would be used without mercy in case of mutiny.

The juniors had the marks of the whips all over them from the fight of the night before, and the marks were painful. Until those marks wore off, at least, they were not likely to waste much mercy on the blackguard of the St. Jim's Fifth.

Gerald Cutts was "in for it."

"Better have a camp-fire," remarked Blake. "There's plenty of loose sticks in the hedge yonder, and it will save the oil. Nothing like economy! Will you gather us some firewood, Cutts?"

"No!" shrieked Cutts.

"Jab him, Herries!"

"Keep off!" panted Cutts. "I—I'll gather the firewood."

"Get a move on, then!"

Blake, Herries, and Manners accompanied Cutts to gather the sticks. They did not gather any; it was no use working when there was a man-of-all-work on the spot.

Cutts gathered the sticks, simmering with speechless fury, and when he slacked Herries was always ready with a jab.

After a jab or two Gerald Cutts gave up slacking. Herries was rather emphatic with his jabs. Cutts was led back to camp with his arms stacked with brushwood, his face almost hidden by his cargo. What could be seen of his face was pale with rage.

"This will remind you of when you were a fag in the Third," remarked Blake. "I dare say you were a slacking little rascal! But we're not going to let you slack now. Will you clean the stoves for us, Cutts?"

"No—yes!" gasped Cutts.

"If they're damaged at all, Cutts, we shall give you a round dozen with the cleek! That's a tip!"

The stoves were not damaged.

By the time Cutts had finished them Lowther and Dig were back with a can of water, a jug of milk, and a bag of eggs.

Cutts was then rather dirty, and there was a dab of soot on his nose.

"May as well have the kettle cleaned after brekker as we've got a man to do it for us," observed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"While we're having brekker, Cutts, you can get on with the boots."

ADRIFT ON THE PACIFIC

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"I won't!" raved Cutts.

"What?"

"I—I mean, all right. Yes!"

"Yes what?" demanded Blake.

"The man-of-all-work has been jolly badly trained," said Monty Lowther. "Don't you know that you say 'sir' to your master, my man?"

Cutts' only reply was a homicidal look.

"Are you getting tired of jabbing him, Herries?"

"Not at all."

"Then jab him till he addresses his master with proper respect."

"Certainly!"

Herries was quite active with the cleek.

Cutts danced and hopped as the Fourth Former jabbed.

"Yaroooh! Stoppit! I'll—I'll——"

"Will you treat your masters with proper respect now, Cutts?"

"Ow! Yow! Yes!" gasped Cutts.

"Yes what?"

"Yes, sir!" stuttered Cutts, foaming.

"That's better! Keep that up."

"Yaas, wathah! If you are vewy industwious and wespectful, Cutts, we may be able to give you a good chawactah when we sack you."

"Bear that in mind, Cutts."

Cutts made an indistinguishable sound.

"Do you hear me?" demanded Blake.

"Yes!" gasped Cutts.

"Give him a——"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Cutts, before Blake could get out the word "jab."

"Bai Jove! He's learnin'!"

"We'll teach him manners in time," remarked Blake. "After a bit more he will be quite a good servant. Don't you think so, Cutts?"

"Yes—sir!" gurgled Cutts.

"That's right!"

The caravanners sat down cheerfully to breakfast. Cutts had to sit down, as Blake was keeping hold of the cord on his arm. He looked round wildly, but only the wide common stretched before his eyes. There was nothing to help Cutts.

His feelings could not have been expressed in words as he sat and glared savagely at the caravanners. He was paying for his sins now—and as his sins were many, it was only just that the punishment should be heavy.

"Aren't you going to feed your man, Blake?" asked Tom Merry, with a laugh, when breakfast was over.

"Well, I don't believe in pampering menials," said Blake. "Still, he can have some bread-and-margarine—not too much margarine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts refused the proffered refreshment with a savage gesture. He was set to work cleaning and polishing kettles and saucepans. It was not an enticing task; and, to tell the exact truth, the caravanners had neglected it a little. Some of the pots and pans were most decidedly in need of polishing.

Blake's man-of-all-work came in very useful indeed. A job or two were required to start Cutts polishing, but after that he polished away as if his life depended on it. His ribs certainly did depend on it. They were aching from Herries' emphatic jabs.

After a night march, the caravanners intended to rest all the morning.

Tom Merry and Blake, who had had least sleep, turned in, Herries being left in charge of Cutts'

cord. Herries was not likely to fail as a watchman.

Pots and pans and kettles gleamed like silver when Cutts had finished with them. Cutts did not look so bright; he was, in fact, extremely dirty by that time, and his once-elegant clothes were in a rather sad state. He stared away towards the road every few minutes, with a faint hope of seeing his friends arrive, but there was no sign of them.

Prye and Gilmore had had more than enough of the caravanners, and Cutts was left to his fate.

"Do you think we could twust your man to wub down the horse, Blake?" asked Arthur Augustus, as Blake was turning in.

"Jab him till he does it properly," yawned Blake. "Don't let him yell and wake me up, though. If he yells give him twice as much, Herries."

"Leave him to me!" answered Herries.

Cutts was quite able to rub down the horse, and he did the work thoroughly. After that his duty was to bring pails of water from the pond and wash down the outside of the caravan.

Several little tasks that had been overlooked were performed now—by Cutts. By noon Gerald Cutts was getting tired. It was probable, as Lowther remarked, that he had never done so much honest work in his life before as he had done that morning.

Tom Merry and Blake turned out of the bunk

CLEAN ENOUGH!

Lady: "Have you cleaned the fish?"

Fishmonger: "Cleaned the fish, ma'am! Why, it's lived all its life in water!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Lancashire Morcomblake, Bridport, Dorset.

in time for lunch, and an appetising stew was boiled in an iron pot over the camp-fire, Charley Chips feeding the fire with sticks under it.

When the merry caravanners sat round to lunch Cutts was offered the bread-and-margarine again, and this time he accepted it. He was nearly famished by that time. He ate his frugal lunch with a pale and furious face, while the caravanners discussed the savoury stew.

"We start after lunch," remarked Tom Merry. "Isn't it about time you sacked your man, Blake?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake considered.

"He's jolly useful," he said. "I know he's ugly and bad-mannered, but he can work. Why not keep him on?"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Servants are vewy difficult to obtain these days, you know. Let us give Cutts a permanent job."

Cutts breathed hard.

"More trouble than he's worth if he howls to people we pass on the road," said Tom, laughing. "Besides, I think the rotter has had enough."

"Have you had enough, Cutts?" asked Blake.

A fiendish look was the only reply.

"Where's your club, Herries?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes!" gasped Cutts. "I—I mean, yes, sir! I—I've had enough."

"Well, I'm afraid you haven't been with us long enough for us to give you a character," said

Blake. "Besides, I couldn't give you a very good character, Cutts. You can work, but you are unwilling and require constant jabbing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Let him loose," said Blake. "I shan't be sorry to see the last of him. Cutts, you're discharged!"

Cutts was released from the cord, and he stepped away.

"I'll remember this!" he said, in a voice hoarse with fury.

"It will do you good to remember it," assented Blake. "I hope you have benefited by the lesson, Cutts, before we see you next term at St. Jim's. Otherwise, we may take you on as a fag in Study No. 6."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gerald Cutts tramped away across the common towards the road. He had a ten-mile walk before him to get back to St. Leger Lodge.

He turned, at a safe distance, and shook a furious fist at the caravan camp; and Blake smiled, and waved back with his hand in a genial farewell. Then Cutts tramped out on the road and disappeared.

CHAPTER 5.

The Proper Thing to Do!

"**N**OW, deah boys—"
"Jawbone solo by Gussy!" said Monty Lowther.

"Pway do not intewwupt me with widiculous wemarks, Lowthah! There is a wathah important mattah to be settled."

"Anything happened to your silk hat?" inquired Blake.

"Nothin' has happened to my silk hat, Blake."

"Is it your best necktie?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Or your silk socks?" asked Blake. "I used a pair to wipe out the frying-pan yesterday."

"By Jove! You uttah wuffian!"

"It was all right; they'd been washed," assured Blake. "I think they want washing again now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you fellows will leave off cacklin'," said Arthur Augustus warmly, "we can considah the vevy important mattah I was alludin' to."

"Is there anything important besides your toppers and neckties and socks?" asked Monty Lowther, in surprise.

"Wats! I was wefewin' to Charley."

"Oh, Charley!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! What is goin' to be done with Charley?"

Master Chipps blinked at Arthur Augustus and grinned.

Tom Merry & Co. stared at their noble chum.

"I dare say Charley knows best," suggested Digby.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Charley has been sacked," he said.

"Well, that's no loss to him," said Blake. "He's quite as well out of the stables at St. Leger Lodge."

"Yaas, wathah! I agwee to that. I am vevy much afraid that Charley's mowal twainin' was neglected there."

"Go hon!"

"I should certainly advise Charley not to return there," said Arthur Augustus. "The associations of the place are of a low mowal tone, and not at all good for a youngstah like Charley."

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"Go hon!" murmured Blake.

"Moreovah, it is vevy pwob that if Charley went back to the lodge, that howwid wascal Cutts would pitch into him again, and most likely St. Leger wouldn't take him on, eithah. You see it was owin' to Charley that you fellows wescued me fwom those wotahs, and they are likely to feel vevy watty about it."

"Just a few, I should think!" grinned Blake.

"I ain't goin' back," said Charley. "I 'ad enough of Master Cutts' 'orse-whip, I can tell you."

"What are you thinkin' of doin', Charley?"

"Dunno, sir!"

"Let's pass the hat round for Charley, and make up a little sum to see him through till he gets a job," suggested Manners.

"That's a good idea!" assented Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I do not wegard it as a vevy good ideah, deah boys. Pwobably Charley could get a job all wight. But I feah that he is feelin' the effects of the vevy bad mowal twainin' he has weceived. I am sowwy to say it—I am sure you will excuse me, Charley—but he is a weguhah little wascal in some wpects."

"Oh, sir!" murmured Charley.

"He has told whoppahs," said Arthur Augustus. "I am also aware that he has backed horses—a youngstah like him! And you can see for yourselves that he is not vevy clean."

"Well, I have some doubts as to whether he really baths every morning," said Blake solemnly. "But perhaps he forgot to ring for the hot water when he was sleeping over the stable at the lodge."

"Oh, my heye!" said Charley.

"Pway do not jest on a sewious subject, Blake. There is somethin' vevy w'ong in the state of affairs when a fellow isn't able to get a bath ewevy mornin'," said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Howevah—"

"My hat! Haven't you finished yet?"

"Certainly not!"

"Better camp here for a few days, and let Gussy finish," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Wats! I was goin' to wemark that it was partly on our account that Charley was sacked, and it is up to us to see him through. Moreovah—"

"We've had moreovah before!"

"Moreovah," said Arthur Augustus, frowning. "Charley's mowal twainin' wequiah lookin' into, for the weasons I have stated. In the cires, I think I had bettah take Charley in hand."

"You?"

"Yaas, wathah! I think that would be the wight and pwopah thin' to do. He can come on in the cawan with us—"

"Oh!"

"And as we're goin' through Hampshire latah, we will take him home—"

"To—to your father's place, do you mean?" ejaculated Blake.

"Yaas!"

"Oh, my hat! And what will Lord Eastwood say when you trot him in?" asked Blake.

"I weally do not know, Blake. But no doubt he will wegard me as havin' acted in the pwopah mannah. I feel that we have a duty towards Charley, and I will ask my patah's advice about cawwvin' it out."

"My word!"

"Is Charley to be consulted?" queried Lowther meekly. "It's vevy possible that Charley may want to have a word in settlin' his own business."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody

A publicity expert says everybody should possess a television set. But whilst the price is what it is, most chaps will prefer reading the GEM.

When in a jam it is a good plan to close the eyes and think, writes an authority. The drivers of the cars behind can be relied upon to tell you when to move on!

I hear a film is to be made of the life of William Tell. I suppose they will call it "A Hero To The Core." What did you say? Apple-sauce?

The primary aim in life is to obtain food to eat, states a scientist. It is also all the rest of Baggy Trimble's aims put together!

If you should chance to meet a Zulu chief, he will greet you by saying "Sibongo wene." But there, it is very unlikely that you will ever meet a Zulu, so why worry?

As the old sheep said: "These modern ewes are terrible! I'm sure we never romped about like that in our young days!"

Overheard at the Wayland Empire: "I don't say actors of to-day fail to enjoy their work," observed the old actor, "but in my day, so did the audience!"

Stop Press: A visitor to Folkestone who has heard a swing broadcast from his home town in America by radio has decided to push on a bit farther!

Next: "Here, Taggles," said Wally D'Arcy cheerily, "here's some stuff to help your hombago." "Ho!" grunted Taggles suspiciously. "What makes you think it wants any help?"

"56,789 Lions Escape From Zoo." Yes, that was a nasty headline to see, even though I saw it in a nightmare.

Hold this one: "What's that?" asked Buck Finn, at the Stratford Memorial Theatre. "The largest theatre in the world," answered Blake. "Gosh, we've got a stage six times as large as that in America," replied Finn. Just then two elephants came round the corner. "Heck, what are they?" exclaimed Finn. "Oh, a couple of mice off your stage!" replied Blake easily.

Oh, keep your eyes skinned for flying submarines, chaps! And for goodness' sake drop me a postcard if you happen to see any.

All right, class dismiss till next Wed.!

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that. Charley, deah boy"—Arthur Augustus turned to the staring Charley benignantly—"would you like to come on with us in the cawavan?"

"Oh lor!" said Charley. "Wotto!"

"I am suah, Charley, that you will not be offended if I wequest you to have a thowough wash first."

"Oh, my heye!" gasped Charley. "I'm all right, sir. I 'ad a wash the day afore yesterday, sir!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Course, it wasn't all over," added Charley.

Arthur Augustus glanced at his grinning chums.

"You see, deah boys, Charley is vevy much in need of pwopah twainin', in the hands of a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Are you going to wash him?" asked Blake.

"Wats! It is settled that Charley comes on with us."

"Old on, sir!" said Charley.

"Bai Jove! Don't you want to come, kid?"

"Not if the other gents don't want me to, sir," said Charley sturdily. "If you wants me to come, sir, I'll make myself usefoul about the van, and look arter the 'orse; but I ain't comin' if I ain't wanted, jest because you're a kind-hearted young bloke, sir."

"I twust, deah boy—" began Arthur Augustus.

"All serene, Charley!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We want you no end, old top!"

"We yearn for your society, dear boy," said Monty Lowther, with great solemnity.

"Who yer kiddin'?" said Charley.

"It's all right; you're coming," said Blake.

"Then I'll look arter the 'orse and do jobs," said Charley. "I wants to earn my keep, sir," said Arthur Augustus approvingly.

"And now," said Blake, "if Gussy's done exercising his lower jaw, we may as well take the road."

"But is he done?" asked Lowther doubtfully.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry, jumping up.

And the caravanners broke camp and started on the road once more, and the latest addition to the caravan party tramped along with the horse, whistling cheerily.

There was no doubt that Charley was satisfied with the new arrangement.

But Tom Merry & Co. could not help wondering what Gussy's noble pater would say when Charley arrived at Eastwood House.

CHAPTER 6.

An Old Acquaintance!

"**W**HERE are we headin' for now, Tom Mewwy?"

"Reading."

"Bai Jove! Then we are in Berkshire?"

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"Fortunately," said Monty Lowther solemnly, "it's all Berks and no bites!"

"Wats!"

It was a week since the St. Jim's caravanners had left St. Leger Lodge in the Chiltern Hills behind them.

The caravanners had wondered at first whether they would see anything more of Gerald Cutts. But they did not see anything more of him.

Cutts had had enough of the caravanners, and they went on their way in peace, glad enough, on their side, to see the last of the black sheep of St. Jim's.

Charley had proved quite an acquisition to the caravan party. Charley knew all about horses, and was soon fast friends with Circumstances. And although the caravanners were prepared to "whack out" the work on fair terms, treating Charley as one of the party, that cheerful youth insisted on earning his keep, as he expressed it, and made himself useful in a score of ways.

And when Arthur Augustus discovered that Charley could brush a silk hat—and brush it nicely—he was more than ever satisfied that he had done the right thing in attaching Charley to the party.

Charley was driving now, with a very cheerful, if somewhat grubby face. Charley had taken quite kindly to regular washing, but, somehow, his face had a tendency to grubbiness.

"We cross the Thames again at Reading," said Tom Merry, "then we keep on to Hants, and you land your passenger at Eastwood House, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "And we can dwoop in for some biscuits at Weadin'."

"Some what?"

"Biscuits. Weadin' is famous for its biscuits, you know."

"Yes, ass. But there's no need to go to Reading for them," said Blake. "You can get them anywhere. Hallo! I've seen that merchant before!"

Blake glanced at a tattered figure that was tramping ahead a little way in front of the caravan.

The other fellows followed his glance.

The stranger was a tramp, and a very unsavoury-looking one, in tattered and frowsy attire, with a rag of a cap jammed on his head.

Tom Merry could see only his back, but there seemed something familiar to his eyes about the man.

As the caravan rumbled along the tramp turned his head, and cast a beery glance at the voyagers. And then the juniors ejaculated all at once:

"The tramp!"

They recognised the man now. They had fallen in with him at the beginning of the caravan tour, at the time when Figgins & Co. had captured the van, and the School House juniors had pursued the raiders and run them down.

What his name was they did not know, but they knew the beery, evil face and slouching gait of the roadside ruffian.

The man evidently recognised them, too, for he scowled savagely at the cheery party.

Jack Blake paused.

"Good chance to bump that rotter!" he said. "You remember he led us astray when we were looking for Figgins & Co., and landed us in a field among bulls and things!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Strike me pink!"

It was a sudden ejaculation from Charley. He

was staring blankly at the ruffianly looking man by the roadside.

Tom Merry glanced up at him.

"Hallo, Charley! Do you know that merchant?" he asked.

"Oh crikey!" was Charley's answer.

He blinked at the merchant.

The tramp looked at him, and started and grinned.

Charley gave the horse a touch with the whip, and Circumstances jumped into a trot.

The caravan rattled past the tramp at a good rate.

The juniors, who were walking, were left behind for a minute.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

The caravanners hurried after the van. The tramp stood staring after them with an evil grin on his face, and then started on his way again—in the same direction as the caravan.

"Hallo! What did you bolt like that for, you young ass?" exclaimed Blake, as he came up with the caravan.

"Skuse me, sir!" said Charley, colouring.

"The 'orse is a bit fresh, and he went it!"

"Charley!" said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Yessir?"

"You are tellin' whoppahs again!"

"Oh, sir!"

"The horse did not bolt," said Arthur Augustus. "You whacked him, and that was why he wan, Charley."

"I—I—I—"

"I am vewy sowwy, Charley, to see that you have not bwocken yourself of the howwid habit of tellin' whoppahs. It is vewy distwessin'."

Arthur Augustus looked really distressed. It looked as if the moral training he had been giving Charley for the past week had been wasted.

"Oh, sir!" murmured Charley. "Sorry, Master Gussy! I—I meantersey, I—I didn't want to speak to that bloke, sir!"

"There was no weason, Charley, why you should speak to that vewy unpleasant person if you did not wish to."

"No, sir," said Charley meekly.

"He is a vewy disweputable person, Charley."

"I know, sir."

"I suppose you mean to say that you know the man, and you wanted to keep clear of him, kid?" said Tom Merry.

Charley's grubby face was crimson.

"I—I come across 'im before, sir!" he stammered.

"You are vewy wight in wishin' to keep cleah of him, Charley. He is a vewy unscwupulous and wuffianly person. But you should not tell whoppahs!"

"I—I won't, sir!"

"Pway bear that in mind, Charley! I am tellin' you this for your own good, you know, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus kindly.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Charley devoted his attention to the horse, still looking very red and confused, and Arthur Augustus let the matter drop. It was pretty clear that Charley was acquainted with the tramp, and it was to his credit that he did not wish to keep up the acquaintance of so very questionable a character.

Blake looked back presently, and remarked:

"That tramp rotter is on our track!"

"Is he a-follerin' us, sir?" asked Charley.

"Looks like it."

"He was walkin' in this diwection when we passed him, you know," remarked Arthur

Augustus. "Pwobably he is goin' to Weadin', too."

"Likely enough," assented Blake. "But we'll keep an eye open for him, all the same. He's quite capable of stealing the horse when we camp if he gets a chance."

"Yaas, wathah! Charley!"

"Yessir?"

"Pway be vewy careful, Charley, if you see that boundah wound again, not to have anythin' to do with him! He is a wotten chawactah!"

"Yessir!"

The caravan rolled on, and the tramp was dismissed from the minds of the caravanners, though perhaps not from Charley's.

Reading lay ahead now, and the van crossed the Thames by the great bridge, and rolled on to the busy town.

The sun was sinking now, but the caravanners

CHAPTER 7.

Dark Doubts!

"WHERE'S Charley?"

Tom Merry asked that question about half an hour later.

He had been looking out for a camp, and he had found a suitable spot. Then he missed Master Chipps.

Arthur Augustus had talked cricket to Herries and Dig as they walked. He was explaining how he would have bagged a century in the match with Greyfriars if, owing to unforeseen circumstances, his wicket hadn't fallen.

"Charley's comin' aftah us," he answered. "He's stoppin' by the woad to gathah black-bewwies."

"The young ass! He would have missed us if we'd turned off the road!" said Tom.



Herries did not like being awakened out of his nap, and he reached out of the van with the golf club and gave the dandy of the Fifth a rap on the head. Cutts roared. "Another word, and I'll come out to you!" said Herries.

kept on the road till they were well into the open country again. Charley had given the driving to Blake now, and he sat at the back of the van, his eyes on the road behind as the van rolled on.

The brightness seemed to have gone out of Charley's face, and he looked very thoughtful.

He dropped from the van presently and approached Arthur Augustus timidly.

"Master Gussy—"

"Yaas, deah boy?" said Arthur Augustus benignantly.

"There's a lot of blackberries in them 'edges, sir," said Charley. "I thought as 'ow I might gather some of them, sir, in a basket for supper. I'd soon catch you up again."

"Certainly, kid! A vewy happy thought!"

And Charley took a fruit-basket from the van and started work on the hedges.

The caravan rolled on, and Charley was soon out of sight behind.

"Oh, Charley is a vewy sharp kid! He would find us all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "Besides, we are not turnin' off the woad if we are goin' to camp here."

"Halt!" sang out Tom.

Circumstances halted on a furzy common that stretched beside the road. The sun was very low down now, and a dark night was coming on. It was high time to camp.

Charley was not there to lend a hand as usual. The horse was staked out, and the caravanners prepared supper, and still Charley did not arrive.

"Where has that young ass got to?" grunted Blake. "He can't have missed us, as we haven't left the high road."

"Those blackberries will be rather late for supper if he doesn't buck up!" remarked Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus rose from the steps of the

caravan and scanned the road, upon which the shadows now lay thick.

He was relieved to hear the sound of footsteps.

"This way, Charley!" he called out.

It was Charley at last.

Master Chippis came tramping off the road and joined the caravanners, with a basket on his arm in which lay a few blackberries.

He had evidently not been very successful in his search for the luscious berry.

"Did you lose your way, kid?" asked Tom.

"Oh, no, sir!"

"You've been a long time."

"Very sorry, sir!" said Charley humbly.

"My dear kid, it doesn't matter," said Tom, smiling. "I was afraid you'd get lost."

"I ain't got many berries, sir," said Charley. "There wasn't so many as I thought on them 'edges."

"That's all wight, deah boy!"

"Your supper's ready, kid," said Manners.

"It's really too bad!" said Charley. "You young gents 'ave gone and got my supper instead of me 'elpin'!"

Charley seemed quite shamefaced, and he did not make a very good supper. As a rule, Master Chippis had a very healthy appetite indeed, but he seemed to have lost it now.

He was very silent, too.

He answered the remarks of the caravanners in monosyllables when they spoke to him.

It was not difficult to see that there was something amiss with Master Chippis, and the caravanners could not help being aware that it dated from the meeting with the tramp on the other side of Reading.

In spite of himself, a curious suspicion came into Tom Merry's mind. He would not give it utterance, however. Charley was a member of the party now, and therefore to be trusted. But Tom started when, having finished supper, Charley rose, and said:

"You gents mind if I takes a little stroll afore goin' to bed?"

"Do just as you like, kid," said Tom.

"Thank you, sir!"

Charley disappeared into the shadows.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy polished his eyeglass very thoughtfully, and presently broke the silence that followed Charley's departure.

"Pwobably you fellows have noticed that there seems to be somethin' wathah w'ong with our young fwiend?"

"I should think so!" grunted Blake.

"Then you have noticed it, Blake?"

"Yes, ass! It was plain enough for even you to see."

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's jolly queer," said Blake. "I hope—"

He paused.

"Well?" said Tom Merry.

"Well, I should hate to distrust the chap," said Blake, "but—but we know what a little rogue he was with Cutts & Co. He knew that tramp. That rotter was following the van to Reading. I—I wonder—"

"That's what I was thinking," said Tom Merry quietly. "I wonder if that rascal has followed us farther? It was very queer, Charley dropping behind, and staying so long."

"He went to gathah blackbewwies, Tom Mewwy."

"He didn't have much luck with them, then."

"Bai Jove! You surely do not suspect, Tom

Mewwy, that he dwopped behind to meet that howwid wuffian without our knowledge?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, aghast.

Tom shifted uncomfortably.

"I don't like to suspect it," he said, "but it looks jolly like it."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"What's the good of beating about the bush?" grunted Herries. "It's as plain as daylight that that's what he did. He looked it all over his face when he came back!"

"I wefuse to cwedit it for one moment, Hewwies."

"Br-r-r!"

"If that's the case—and it certainly looks like it," said Tom Merry—"it's a rather serious matter. If that ruffian is following us, it can only be for one reason—theft!"

"He couldn't have any other reason," said Blake.

"You wemembah perfectly well that Charley bolted to keep fwom speakin' to that wuffian, Blake."

"Unless that was a blind."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"I don't like distrustin' him, as I said," went on Blake. "But it looks to me as if he avoided speaking to the man in our presence, and dropped behind to speak to him alone afterwards, And he's gone to see him again now, I believe."

"Wubbish!"

Arthur Augustus spoke warmly; all the more so because he could see that the rest of the party were of Blake's opinion. The fact was that the circumstances were obvious enough; there was no other explanation of Charley's peculiar looks and peculiar conduct.

The caravanners were in a decidedly uneasy mood. They liked Charley, and they wanted to help him. But it could not be forgotten that he had acted like a young rascal when serving Cutts & Co.

It was possible that the kindness of the caravanners and Gussy's moral precepts had had an improving effect upon Master Chippis. The caravanners certainly hoped so. But his present conduct required a good bit of explaining.

"It's rotten!" said Tom Merry, after a long silence. "But we can't run the risk of the horse being stolen while we're asleep. And—and we can't distrust a fellow and keep a civil face to him at the same time. We'd better speak out when the kid comes in."

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"I insist upon not a word bein' said to Charley!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly. "It was through me that he joined the party, and I have the wight to wefuse to allow his feelings to be hurt. I am quite sure that he is as twue as steel!"

"I don't say he isn't," growled Blake. "But he's keeping a secret communication with a drunken thief and blackguard, and you know it—or ought to know it!"

"Nothin' of the sort!"

"Then where has he gone?"

"He said he was goin' for a stwoll."

"Oh, rats!"

"Here he comes!" said Dig quietly.

"Then we'll speak out—"

"You'll do nothin' of the sort, Blake! If you distwust my young fwiend, I will stay awake to-night and keep watch. But I will not allow Charley's feelings to be hurt by suspicions"



**Detective Kerr
Investigates
No. 7.
THE
AIR RAID
ALARM!**

SHORTLY after midnight St. Jim's was startled into wakefulness by the wail of the air raid siren. The electric switch controlling it was just outside Taggles' lodge, in a special case on the wall, ready for any emergency. Taggles, rushing out, saw shadowy figures disappearing towards the School House. Knox of the Sixth, investigating the disturbance, found four juniors out of their dormitories—Hammond and Reilly of the Fourth, and Racke and Croke, well-known "gay dogs" of the Shell. The Head was fairly sure that one of them had been climbing over the school wall, and, slipping, had accidentally set the alarm off. So "Detective" Kerr, in the interests of justice, decided to investigate.

TAGGLES: Nobody could have got out of the masters' private gate last night, Master Kerr. The lock jammed when Mr. Railton returned at ten o'clock. But I fixed it first thing this morning.
KERR: Thanks, Taggy. I think I'll have a chat with Hammond and Reilly now.

KERR: It certainly looks black against you two fellows—

REILLY: Haven't we explained ourselves to the Head, begorrah? We only came down to get some essence for Hammond's tooth—the poor chap hasn't had a decent night's sleep for a week now, owing to neuralgia—

HAMMOND: That's true, Kerr. Mrs. Mimms, the House dame, will tell the Head I've had neuralgia if he asks her.

KERR: From what I know of you chaps, I don't think either of you intended to break bounds. But we'll see what Racke and Croke have to say.

RACKE: Well, Mr. Smart-Guy Kerr, you won't get much out of us, I warn you!

CROOKE: Give a dog a bad name and hang him—that's your style, Kerr!



"It isn't a suspicion—it's a certainty!" growled Herries.

"Wubbish!"

"I tell you—" howled Blake.

"Wats!"

"Oh, let Gussy have his way!" said Tom Merry resignedly. "It's barely possible that he's right, and I should be sorry to hurt the kid's feelings without cause. Keep mum, if Gussy wants us to."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Charley joined a very silent circle of campers. But he did not notice that silence. He was evidently in a troubled state of mind himself. He sat down without a word.

"Better turn in!" said Tom Merry abruptly.

And the caravanners rose.

KERR: Not at all. If you are innocent it will be to your benefit to help me.

RACKE: We've admitted to the Head we were in the quad—though we hadn't got as far as the wall. We were going out to post an urgent letter—

KERR: I suspect you were actually going to visit some of your shady friends at the Green Man.
CROOKE: What if we were? That doesn't prove—

KERR: My point exactly. It doesn't prove that you touched the alarm switch. But if you didn't, who did?

RACKE: Will you believe us if I say we saw Knox's window sash go up, and watched Knox clamber out?

KERR: Where were you when you saw that?

RACKE: In deep shadow, under the box-room window, where we had just got out. Knox couldn't see us.

KERR: But why did you hide? Aren't you pals of his?

RACKE: We were. Knox lent me a duplicate key to the masters' gate—every prefect has one—and I haven't given it back yet. You see, Knox asked me to get a bet on for him with Banks, the bookie, the other day, and as I didn't see Banks in time, Knox lost a pile, because the horse won at long odds. Since then Knox has been down on me like a ton of bricks!

KERR: Excuse me, Knox. A fellow, whose name I can't mention, tells me he actually saw you in the quad last night.

KNOX: It's a lie. I was awake in my room when the alarm went. That's why I was out in a flash, and caught four juniors—

KERR: But do you know which one it was sounded the alarm?

KNOX: It was Racke. I don't know why I should tell you, Kerr, but I couldn't sleep, and happening to glance out of my window, I saw Racke and Croke. Racke has given a lot of trouble lately—he has a key of mine, I remember. Racke was climbing over the wall by Taggles' lodge when he slipped. Trying to save himself as he fell, he jerked down the switch which sounded the alarm.

KERR: Didn't they try to get away?

KNOX: They took to their heels—but I rounded them up by the masters' gate. I knew they couldn't get out there.

KERR: So you're satisfied it was Racke who gave the alarm?

KNOX: Perfectly. Aren't you?

(Who is the culprit and how did he give himself away? See solution on page 33.)

CHAPTER 8.

Very Mysterious!

"MASTER GUSSY!"
The Terrible Three were putting up the tent, with the aid of Blake, Herries, and Dig.

Charley was still sitting in glum silence, forgetful of his duties. As a rule, he was the most active when work was to be done. But now he did not seem to observe that Tom Merry & Co. were erecting the tent.

"Yaas, kid?" said Arthur Augustus, very kindly. Gussy was going to join the other caravanners to help, when Charley spoke to him in a low voice, and he turned back.

Charley did not meet his eyes.

"You—you said, Master Gussy—"

"Yaas?"

"You—you said—" stammered Charley.

He seemed unable to proceed. His face was crimson.

Arthur Augustus looked at him very curiously in the dim starlight.

"My deah kid, you can speak quite frankly to me," said the swell of St. Jim's gently, in his most fatherly manner. "If you have anythin' to tell me, Charley, pway go ahead."

"You—you said, Master Gussy—"

"Yaas, what did I say, Charley?"

"You—you said you was goin' to give me somethin' for workin' about the van, sir," said Charley hesitatingly. "I told you as I wouldn't take any money from you, sir. Would you mind, Master Gussy, if I changed my mind?"

"Not at all, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "You have done more than your fair share of work, Charley, and you are entitled to a salawy."

"I don't want to be paid, sir," murmured Charley. "'Tain't that, sir. But—but if you would give me a quid, sir—"

"You are entitled to that, Charley."

"I don't mean—I don't mean more'n once, sir. I don't mean as 'ow I want any wages for 'elpin' about the van, sir. But you—you said—and—and I do want a pound, sir, bad. I wouldn't ask you, only—only—"

Charley's voice trailed off.

"It's all wight, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus was surprised; he could not help being surprised. But he took out his little pocket-book and extracted a pound note therefrom.

Charley took it hesitatingly.

"Pway don't look so confused, kid!" said Arthur Augustus. "You are quite entitled to some money."

"I ain't, sir," said Charley, "and I wouldn't take no money from you, sir, only—only—"

"Only what, deah boy?"

"Nothin', sir!" gulped Charley.

"Are you going to lend a hand, Gussy?" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"Well, get a move on, then, lazybones!"

"I am not lazy, Blake! I am talkin' to Charley, and—"

"Can't you give your chin a rest while we're putting up the tent?"

"Wats! Come and lend a hand, Charley!"

"Yessir!"

Charley lent a hand, and the tent was finished.

Blake, Herries, and Dig turned in in the bunks of the caravan, and the Terrible Three took the tent.

Arthur Augustus took out his sleeping-bag into the grass. He intended to keep watch, rather as a reproach to his chums than because he thought it necessary. And he disposed himself in the warm bag—to keep awake.

Charley generally slept in rugs in the tent, but he did not enter the tent now.

Tom Merry called to him.

"Bed-time, Charley!"

"I'll sleep in the hopen to-night, if you don't mind, sir," answered Charley.

Tom Merry started.

If he had not been uneasy before, this sudden decision of Charley's would probably have made him so.

"Look here, kid, you'd better come into the

tent," he said, after a pause. "You've got no sleeping-bag."

"I shall be all right, sir!"

Arthur Augustus chimed in.

"Bettah go into the tent, Charley. There will be dew on the gwass, and you may catch cold."

"I—I—"

"Pway take my advice, Charley, and bunk down in the tent."

It was scarcely possible for Charley to argue further. The Terrible Three were watching him rather grimly from the opening of the tent. If Charley insisted upon camping in the open, it would scarcely leave any doubt that he had some secret intentions for that night.

But Charley stammered: "Yessir!" in answer to Arthur Augustus, and went into the tent. He rolled himself in a rug, and was soon breathing steadily and regularly.

The Terrible Three settled themselves down to sleep.

But in their uneasy mood sleep did not come easily. Whether Master Chippas was falling back into roguery or not, it was clear enough to them that he was keeping a secret, and that he probably had some surreptitious plan for that night which was frustrated by his having to sleep in the tent with the Shell fellows.

Manners and Lowther slept at last, but Tom Merry remained awake for some time. He was dozing off at last, when something startled him into broad wakefulness. He sat up, rubbing his eyes.

It was pitchy dark in the tent; he could not see an inch from his nose. The low, regular breathing from Manners and Lowther came to his ears. But the deeper sound of Charley's breathing, on the other side, was no longer to be heard.

"Charley!" Tom called out.

There was no answer.

Tom Merry stretched out his hand in the darkness. The rugs were there, still warm; but they were empty.

Charley Chippas was no longer in the tent.

"Wharrer marrer?" came a sleepy murmur from Monty Lowther.

"Wake up, you chaps!"

"What's up?" muttered Manners.

"Charley's gone!"

CHAPTER 9.

A Night Alarm!

TOM MERRY was hurrying on his clothes. Manners and Lowther were on their feet in a moment.

"Gone!" muttered Lowther.

"He's not in the tent."

"My hat!"

"The young rascal!" muttered Manners. "What has he gone for? For good, do you think?"

"He can't have cleared off for good. If he wanted to go, there was no need to sneak off in this way; he could have left us any time he pleased."

"Then why—"

"If he's gone for good," said Tom, "he's only got one motive for going like this—he's robbed us. But I can't think that of him. I simply can't understand it. But I'm fed-up with these dashed mysteries, and I'm jolly well going to know what he's up to, and Gussy can go and eat coke!"

The Terrible Three, hastily dressed, emerged from the tent.

A dim starlight fell on the caravan camp.

Arthur Augustus—who was to keep watch—was fast asleep in his sleeping-bag. But the Shell fellows' first thought was for the horse. To their relief, they found Circumstances sleeping in the grass beside the van.

There was no sign of Charley about the camp. Master Chipps had vanished.
 "Is he coming back, I wonder?" murmured Manners.

Tom Merry knitted his brows.
 "The gee-gee's all right!" said Lowther.
 "Nothing else he could bag except that. He couldn't take anything from the caravan without waking the fellows there."

"I can't believe he's a thief," said Tom. "It's too beastly. But—but why should he clear off like this? If he's only gone to meet that rotten tramp—but why should he?"

"Give it up—unless it's to fetch him here to steal."

It seemed the only possible explanation, and yet Tom Merry shrank from it. Only the most complete proof would make him believe that Charley was in league with a thief.

"We'll stay awake now, anyhow," said Manners.
 "Oh, yes, rather!"

The chums of the Shell were hardly feeling sleepy now. They were too disturbed and anxious for that.

They stood in the shadow of the caravan and waited.

It was a quarter of an hour later when a soft and stealthy footstep was audible in the grass. A shadowy figure came slinking into the camp and headed for the tent.

It was Charley!
 Evidently under the impression that the Shell fellows were still asleep in the tent, Charley entered it stealthily, careful not to wake them. Wherever he had been, he had not been gone long; it was doubtless his movement in leaving that had awakened Tom Merry from his uneasy doze.

"He's come back!" muttered Manners grimly.
 "Come on!" said Tom.

The chums of the Shell advanced towards the tent. The flap was open, and as they reached it Charley's startled face looked out. He had just made the discovery that the tent was unoccupied.

Charley gave a little gasp as he met the Terrible Three face to face.

"Oh!"
 "Well?" said Tom Merry.

Charley gasped.
 "I—I ain't been doin' no 'arm!" he stammered.

"Where have you been?"
 "Only down the road, sir," muttered Charley.

"To meet that tramp?"
 Charley gave a cry.

"Ow did you know?" he gasped.
 "Then that was it?"

"I—I——"

Charley's voice trailed off, and he blinked wretchedly at the accusing faces of the juniors.

It was a confession, and it confirmed the suspicions of the St. Jim's juniors. The ruffianly tramp had followed the caravan; he was lurking about the camp, and Charley had been out secretly to meet him while he deemed the caravanners asleep.

There was no further doubt on that subject.

"You young rascal!" said Tom Merry, rather sadly than angrily. "And you dropped behind to meet that man when you pretended you were gathering blackberries!"

"Oh, sir!" mumbled Charley.



PROFESSOR SKIMPOLE'S HOROSCOPE

This Week:
Dr. Richard Holmes.

IT was not without some trepidation that I knocked on the Head's study door. Dr. Holmes treated my request for his birth date with kindly interest, however. "Though I cannot say that I place entire belief in the so-called messages of the stars," he said, "I am nevertheless glad to see that one of my boys is thoughtful enough to delve into the matter from a scientific standpoint. I hope you achieve results satisfactory to all, Skimpole."

Dr. Holmes' consideration was only what one would expect from one who, coming under Cancer, The Crab (June 22nd to July 22nd), and the great planet Jupiter, is entrusted with power, with far-reaching influence over the lives of others. He has the ability to appeal successfully to the imagination of his listeners, communicating his inspiration to a remarkable degree. Serenity and justice are the leading traits.

I left this horoscope reading, neatly written, on Dr. Holmes' desk, being rather relieved that he was not in his study then. However, Dr. Holmes sent for me later, and congratulated me. "You are very flattering, Skimpole," said the Head a twinkle in his eye, "but I can assure you, your headmaster's aim is always to encourage. But don't neglect your mathematics in class, Skimpole. Mr. Linton tells me you are rather starry-minded when it comes to quadratic equations!"

=====

"You went out to meet him again after supper?"

"I—I——"

"And now you've been to meet him for a third time," said Tom. "We've told you the man is a thief and a rascal, Charley."

"I—I——"

"Well, what have you been dealing with him for?"

"I ain't been doin' no 'arm," said Charley, with a tremble in his voice.

"Then you can tell us what you've been doing."
 "I—I——"

"You've known that man before?" said Tom.
 "Ye-es, sir."

"Then you know the kind of man he is?"
 "I—I s'pose so, sir."

"Well, what game are you up to with him?" demanded Manners. "Have you fixed it up with him to rob the place while we're asleep?"

"I ain't!" muttered Charley.
 "Is he coming here?"

"No."
 "Where is he, then?"

"He's gone, sir."
 "Gone?" exclaimed the Terrible Three together.

"Yes, he's gone now," muttered Charley. "I—I—I ain't been doin' no 'arm, sir. I swear I ain't! And he's gone. You won't never see him agin, and I 'ope I won't, either!"

Tom Merry looked searchingly at the troubled, crimson face.

It went against the grain with him to suspect anyone, but Charley's conduct was rather too mysterious and suspicious for much reliance to be placed upon him now. If he had any explanation to give, there was no reason why he should not give it, so far as the juniors could see. And he did not offer any.

"I'd like to believe you, Charley," said Tom at last, "but—but it's a bit hard. That man is a thief and a rascal, and he's followed us, and he can have only one reason for doing that. You can turn in, and we'll keep watch."

"Wot for?" asked Charley.

"For your friend the tramp," said Monty Lowther.

"'E ain't comin' 'ere, sir!" said Charley eagerly.

"Well, if he does come we shall be ready for him. You can turn in."

"I—I—" stammered Charley.

"Talking's no good!" said Tom Merry. "I believe that man intends to rob us if he can to-night, whether you know it or not. We're going to keep watch. You can turn in or not, as you like; but you've got to keep quiet, anyhow."

"Yessir!" said Charley humbly.

Master Chipps retired into the tent, though not to sleep.

The Terrible Three waited in the deep shadow of the caravan, on the watch. Overhead the stars twinkled in the dark sky.

An hour passed.

Tom Merry was beginning to wonder whether he had been over alert, when a sound came to his ears.

It was the sound of the horse stirring on the other side of the caravan.

The chums of the Shell caught their breath.

"Quiet!" breathed Tom Merry.

Silent as spectres, the three juniors trod round the caravan in the grass. The horse was on its feet now, and they caught the glimmer of a knife as it was drawn across the tethering rope.

The rope parted.

A shadowy figure rose from the grass beside the horse and took hold of the halter to lead him away.

The glimmering starlight fell upon an evil face and a ragged cap.

But for the fact that the Terrible Three were on the watch, they would certainly never have seen the caravan horse again, and the tramp would have bagged a valuable prize. But it was not to be.

As the ruffian drew the horse away from the van three juniors rushed forward and leaped after him.

There was a wild yell as the horse thief went down in the grass with a crash, with the three Shell fellows on top of him.

CHAPTER 10. Charley's Secret!

"A H! Oh! Yah!" gasped Lowther.

"Down the cad!" gasped Lowther. The tramp was already downed. — He gasped and wriggled spasmodically under the Terrible Three, howling dismally.

"Yow-ow-ow! Oh! Ah! Blow me! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah?"

"What the thump—"

"What the dickens—"

Blake, Herries, and Dig came jumping out of the van in their pyjamas.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rushed on the scene with a blanket round him.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,594.

There was a buzz of voices in the starlit caravan camp.

The tramp was gasping and groaning. Monty Lowther had a knee on his neck, and Manners another on his chest, and Tom Merry had him by the ears. Never was a pilferer so completely bagged as the tramp at that moment.

"Got him!" gasped Manners.

"Gweat Scott! Who is it?"

"The tramp!" yelled Blake.

"He was stealing the horse," panted Tom, "and we jolly well stopped him in time!"

"Groooogh! Ow! Wow!" came from the prisoner. "Let a bloke gerrup! Oh, get off my neck, you young 'ound! Ow!"

"I'll keep on your neck for a bit, old top!" answered Lowther. "You're going to choky for this! And it's high time you did. See that the gee-gee doesn't wander off, Blake. He's loose."

"The gee's lying down, and he's going to sleep!" grinned Blake. "Catch him wandering!"

"That uttah wottah must have followed us f'rom the othah side of Weadin'," said Arthur Augustus.

"I told you so, ass! And that young rascal Charley knew—"

"Wubbish!"

"He went out to meet him—"

"Wats!"

"He's confessed it!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! You've been dweamin', deah boy!" Arthur Augustus was not to be convinced.

"Charley knows nothin' whatevah of this affair. I am perfectly certain of that."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"



The three watching juniors heard soft, stealthy footsteps for the tent. It was Charley! "He's come back!"

Charley, with a pale face, came through the crowd of caravanners. His lips were quivering, and he seemed on the verge of tears.

"Did he try to pinch the 'orse?" he asked in a breathless voice.

"Yes, he did!" growled Blake.

"I never knowed nothin' about it, gents."

"I am suah you know nothin' whatevah about the mattah, Charley."

Grunt!—from Herries.

"If that unintelligible sound implies doubt, Hewwies—"

"Fathead!"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead! And I wepeat," exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly, "that Charley knew nothin' whatevah about this wascal comin' here!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Charley. "I never knowed. I thought 'e was gone. 'E said 'e would arter I give 'im the quid."

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"The—the what?" he exclaimed.

"The quid, sir," mumbled Charley.

"Gweat Scott! Do you mean to say that you asked me for that pound to give to this uttah wuffian?"

"Ye-es, sir! I—I—"

"Oh deah!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and stared at Charley, almost dumbfounded. He had refused to have his faith in the little vagrant shaken, but now—

"Will you gerroff my neck?" howled the ruffian. "Charley, you young 'ound, you lend me a 'and, can't you?"

"No, I won't!" said Charley. "You said as

'ow you'd go, and you broke your word, and came 'ere to steal the 'orse! I don't care what 'appens to you now, so there!"

"You young raskil—"

"Shut up, my man!" said Monty Lowther.

And as he enforced the command with a jab with his knee at the tramp's neck, that unfortunate gentleman shut up promptly with an agonised gurgle.

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

He fixed his eyes sternly upon Charley.

Arthur Augustus was still staring dumbfounded at his protegee.

"Why should you care what happens to this scoundrel, now or any time?" asked Tom Merry.

Charley's lips trembled.

"I suppose I'd better out with it now," he said. "You won't never speak to me ag'in, I s'pose, arter you know."

"Pway speak up, Charley!" said Arthur Augustus quietly. "You are among fwriends here who can make allowances for your wathah bad mowal twainin'."

"I ain't done nothin' wrong," said Charley.

"I—I twust so; but—"

"I knowed 'e was a-follerin' of us," said Charley drearily. "I saw him from the back of the van. I—I dropped be'ind to speak to 'im, and asked him to clear off. 'E said 'e wouldn't, and 'e follered on. I spotted 'im 'angin' about on the common, and that's why I went out for a stroll, sir. I—I offered to give 'im some money for drink if he'd go."

"Bai Jove!"

"And 'e give me 'is davey 'e'd go if I made it a quid," said Charley. "'E give me 'is solemn davey, sir, so I asked you for the quid, and arter you all was asleep I creeped out to give it to 'im. Then 'e started, and I reckoned 'e was gone back to Readin' to look for a doss. I never knowed 'e meant to come 'ere stealin' all the same. I swear I never knowed!"

"I am quite sure of that, Charley," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

Tom Merry & Co. looked dubiously at Master Chipp.

"But what did you want to have anything to do with the man at all for?" asked Tom Merry.

"I didn't want to, sir."

"Then why did you?"

"E—e—I—I—I s'pose I better own up!" mumbled Charley.

"You had certainly better!" grunted Blake.

"Pway be quite fwank, Charley!"

"E—e's my uncle, sir!" gasped Charley, hanging his head. "Now you know, an' I s'pose I'd better 'ook it!"

"Your uncle!" exclaimed all the juniors together, in consternation.

They understood at last.

Charley had confided to them before that he possessed only one relation—an uncle who was a 'reg'lar corker." The tramp evidently was the regular corker who was Charley's uncle.

"Oh!" said Tom Merry blankly.

"He's a bad lot, 'e is," said Charley tearfully—"a norful bad lot! An' 'e's been in the stone jug, too. I ain't seed 'im for a long time, and you could 'ave knocked me down with a fever, sir, when we passed 'im this arternoon on the road."

"Poor old Charley!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I quite compwehend now."

"'E reckoned as 'ow I would 'elp 'im rob you gents," said Charley. "That was 'is game, and



A shadowy figure came slinking into the camp and headed Manners grimly. "Come on!" said Tom.

that was why 'e followed us. But I wouldn't, and I told 'im straight. I warned 'im off, I did, and 'e said 'e'd mizzle for a quid. And I give him the quid what Master D'Arcy give me. 'E's got it about 'im now. An' now—"

Arthur Augustus looked loftily at his chums.

"I think you will wemembah, deah boys, that I wemarked that Charley was twue blue," he said. "I don't want to say 'I told you so,' but weally—"

"Where are you going, Charley?" exclaimed Tom Merry, as Master Chippis turned away.

"You don't want me no longer, sir," said Charley. "You don't want the nevvie of a thief an' a gaolbird here. I knows that."

"Stop where you are, you young ass!"

"Yaas, watah!"

Charley hesitated.

"I'd better go," he said though it was very clear that he wished to stay. "You'll always be thinkin' that you can't trust me now."

"Wats! Wubbish! Wot!" said Arthur Augustus emphatically. "You are certainly stayin', you young duffah! You have pwoted that you are to be twusted—not that that was necessary. I am afwaid, Charley, that your uncle is an awful wascal!"

"'E is that, sir!" mumbled Charley.

"I'm sorry I doubted you, kid," said Tom Merry. "But you really asked for it, you know. You ought to have told us this at first."

"Yaas, watah!"

"I—I thought, sir—"

"Let that rotter get up," said Tom. "We can't very well give him in charge if he's Charley's uncle."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Charley.

The tramp staggered to his feet. He gave his nephew an evil look and scowled at the juniors.

"Now, you rascal," said Tom Merry, "you ought to go to prison, and you know it. You've been worrying your nephew, who's worth a thousand of you, and getting money out of him. Give him back the pound you screwed out of him."

"I don't want it, sir!" stammered Charley.

"You're dead in this act, Charley. We're running this show. Hand out that pound at once, my man!"

The ruffian gritted his teeth.

"Get a rope, Blake. We'll give him a rope's-ending."

"'E's your blinkin' pound!" hissed Charley's uncle savagely. And he flung the currency note into the grass.

"Take it, Charley!"

"Tain't mine, sir," said Charley. "Master Gussy give it to me, and I wouldn't 'ave took it, only to make Uncle Joe mizzle, sir. I ain't takin' it!"

"Give it to Gussy, then."

"Weally, Charley—"

"It's yours, sir!"

"Oh, vevy well!" said Arthur Augustus. "Certainly it would be w'ong to allow that dishonest wascal to keep it. Have you any stwong objection, Charley, to your wrelative goin' to pwison?"

"Oh, sir!"

"Fathead!" said Blake. "He's not going to choky. I dare say he'll land there in a week or two without our help. You fellows remember how we first met him. He tried to rob Figgins & Co., and they tied up one of his hoofs and sent him hopping. We'll give him some more of the same."

"Hear, hear!"

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"You can go back to bed, Charley," said Blake. "We'll take care of your merry uncle. Buzz off!" Charley hesitated.

"Oh, sir, if—if you'd be so kind, sir—"

"Well, what is it now?"

"'E's my uncle, sir!" mumbled Charley.

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors looked at one another. Then Jack Blake raised his hand and pointed to the road.

"Cut, you rotter!" he said briefly to the ruffian.

And the man, with a savage growl at the caravanners, "cut."

The St. Jim's party were glad to see the last of him, and not the least glad, probably, was his nephew Charley.

CHAPTER 11.

A Chance for Charley!

"HALLO, Gus!"

It was a week or so later, and the St. Jim's caravan was winding along a leafy lane in Hampshire, when three juvenile cyclists came buzzing along and slacked down to keep pace with them.

The caravanners were near now to the stately home of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, which was their next stopping-place.

Charley was driving, as usual, with a very cheery face. His uncle had vanished from his life as suddenly as he had re-entered it; nothing had been seen of the ruffian since the parting that night on the common in Berkshire. And the caravanners had been very kind to Charley since, to make up for their doubts, though that was really Charley's own fault.

Arthur Augustus was walking beside the van, looking up to Charley and talking to him, when the cyclists came alongside.

One of them reached out and tilted Gussy's straw hat over his noble nose as he hailed him.

"Yawwooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Fancy meeting you, Gus!"

Arthur Augustus clutched his hat off his eyes and glared round.

"Bai Jove! Wally!" he exclaimed.

It was D'Arcy minor of the Third Form at St. Jim's. His companions were Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne, also of the St. Jim's Third.

"Coming home, Gussy?" asked Wally.

"Yaas."

"I'm afraid it won't do, Gus!"

"And why not, pway?" demanded Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Tramps and gipsies aren't admitted to the grounds!" explained D'Arcy minor.

And his comrades roared.

"You feahfully cheeky young wepwobate!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great wrath.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wash your face before you come in, Gussy, anyway!" urged Wally. "The mater's away with Conway somewhere; but the pater's at home, and if he sees you with a face like that—"

"If you are askin' for a feahful thwashin', Wally—"

"Hallo! Got a new driver?" asked Wally, looking up at Charley. "I thought you'd never manage the horse, you fellows! I'd have come with you to drive, only these kids were coming home with me for the vac. How many accidents have you had so far?"

"We have not had any accidents, you young ass!"

(Continued on page 22.)



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PEN PALS COUPON

3-9-38

And Charley is not a dwivah; he's a fwiend of ours!"

"A bosom pal!" said Blake.

"Charley, deah boy, this is my young bwothah, Wally! Wally, this is my fwiend, Charley Chippis!"

"Very glad to see you, sir!" said Charley.

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally. "What have you been up to, Gussy?"

"Charley is comin' home with us to see the patah, Wally. If you are goin' on, you may as well mention to the govannah that we're comin', and that we're goin' to camp in the park."

"And I'll warn the lodgekeeper not to turn you off as tramps!" promised Wally.

"You young wascal!" roared Arthur Augustus.

Wally chuckled, and rode on with his comrades. Arthur Augustus frowned after them majestically, while Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

An hour later the St. Jim's caravan was camped in the park of Eastwood House.

Arthur Augustus carefully removed all signs of travel-stain from himself before he led his chums up to the house.

Charley went with them in a state of considerable trepidation.

Wally met them in the hall with a grinning face.

"The governor's in the library," he said. "He's putting on his best smile for your pals, Gussy. You have caught him in a good temper."

"You are a disrespectful young wascal, Wally! Pway come with me, deah boys! This way, Charley! Is anythin' the maitah, kid?"

"N-no, sir!" gasped Charley.

Arthur Augustus led his numerous flock into the library, where Lord Eastwood was seated.

His lordship rose and greeted the caravanners with grace and courtesy, his glance lingering a little on Charley Chippis.

Charley, much awed by the tall, grave gentleman, held on to Arthur Augustus' sleeve.

"This is my fwiend, Charley Chippis, patah!" said Arthur Augustus, presenting the late stable-boy of St. Leger Lodge.

"I am very glad to meet your friend Charley Chippis, Arthur!" said Lord Eastwood gravely.

"This is my fathah, Lord Eastwood, Charley!"

"Oh crikey!" said Charley.

Lord Eastwood started.

"I did not quite catch your friend's remark, Arthur!" he said. "What did he say?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh lor'!" said Charley, evidently overcome.

"Bless my soul!" said his lordship, puzzled.

"The fact is, patah," said Arthur Augustus, "my fwiend Charley is a little nervous—I weally do not know why. He was not at all nervous when he was goin' for Cutts with a fwyin'-pan—"

"What?"

"I—I mean—ahem!—Charley is a new acquaintance, patah," explained Arthur Augustus. "I met him a few weeks ago in Bucks. He was a stable-boy—"

"Eh?"

"He was employed in the stables, sir, at a place in Bucks."

"Bless my soul!"

"I was not at all satisfied with the suwoundings for a youngstah of his age. The mowal influence he weceived there was vevy far frowm wight and pwopah for a mere kid."

Lord Eastwood looked at his son.

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Tom Merry & Co. looked at the floor. They did not want to laugh in the awe-inspiring presence of a peer of the realm. But it was a little difficult to keep grave while Arthur Augustus made his explanation.

"Upon wefflection, patah," continued Arthur Augustus cheerily, "I decided that it wouldn't do, and I have taken Charley in charge, with a view to placin' him in bettah suwoundings. He is weally one of the best, and has washed wegulahly evah since he has been with us—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Neck and ears, sir, every day!" said Charley eagerly.

"Bless my soul!"

"We shall be campin' here for a few days, fathah, and in that time, I am sure, you will think of somethin' for Charley."

"Really, Arthur—"

"And I am sure, patah, that you will approve of my action in takin' him away frowm his formah suwoundings when I mention that he was thwown among a set of howwid, smokin', dwinkin', and gamblin' wottahs!"

There was a pause, and Lord Eastwood looked hard at the cheery Gussy. Then he smiled.

"I certainly approve if the matter is as you say, Arthur," he said. "Please leave Charley with me, and I will have a little talk with him. Sit down, my lad!"

"Vevy well, sir!"

Arthur Augustus & Co. retreated, leaving Charley sitting and blinking at his lordship.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry, when they were outside the library. "It's very lucky your pater isn't subject to fits, Gussy!"

"Why, deah boy?"

"I think you'd have given him one!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "Now, it fortunately happens that we are in time for lunch, and it will be wathah a change to have lunch undah a woof. I twust the patah will not keep Charley long."

Charley joined the caravanners before lunch was over. His face was beaming.

"Well, how did you get on with the govannah, kid?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Ain't 'e a top'ole old bloke!" said Charley admiringly.

Arthur Augustus coughed.

It was the first time he had heard his noble pater referred to as an "old bloke."

"And 'e's goin' to put me with a farmer on this 'ere estate!" said Charley enthusiastically. "I'm goin' to be a farmer myself when I grow up! Wot do you think of that?"

"Bravo!" said Tom Merry.

"Prime, ain't it?" said Charley.

And the caravanners agreed that it was prime.

A couple of days later the St. Jim's caravan rolled on its way with the merry caravanners, leaving Charley to his new life.

Arthur Augustus mentioned several times to his comrades—giving Charley's case as an instance—that they could always rely upon him to tell them the right and proper thing to do.

And the caravanners grinned, and agreed that they could.

(Next week: "STRANDED!")

FRANK RICHARDS FINDS HIMSELF UNABLE TO PREVENT HIS SCHOOL-
FELLOWS FROM BEING TRICKED IN—

The Cedar Creek Sweepstake!



By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Kern Gunten thinks he's cute in wangling the Cedar Creek Sweepstake so that he will be the winner. But there's many a slip. . . .

Gunten's Little Game!

"YOU fellows coming?" asked Lawrence. Morning school was over at Cedar Creek, and Frank Richards and Bob Lawless were chatting by the schoolhouse porch. Most of the Cedar Creek fellows had gone out of gates, in the direction of the old clearing along the creek.

Lawrence was bound in the same direction when he stopped to speak to Bob Lawless and his English cousin.

"Anything on?" asked Frank.

"It's a meeting at the old clearing," explained Lawrence. "Gunten's getting up a sweep."

And he went off whistling towards the gates.

"A sweep," repeated Frank Richards, looking inquiringly at his cousin.

Bob gave a sniff.

"Another of Gunten's little schemes!" he said. "That guy's always getting up something. May as well get along."

The chums of Cedar Creek followed Lawrence. The old clearing was only a few minutes' walk from the school. It had once been cultivated, but the settler had given it up and gone years before, and the clearing was abandoned and overgrown with bush. A half-ruined shack and corral stood near the grassy bank of the creek.

It was in the old corral that the Cedar Creek fellows were gathered. It was out of sight of the schoolhouse, and beyond the ken of Miss Meadows, the schoolmistress.

There were a dozen fellows gathered round Kern Gunten, and Frank Richards and his chum joined them.

Gunten was not a popular fellow at Cedar Creek. He was a Swiss by birth, and his father was a storekeeper at Thompson, a town on the river a few miles from the school. Frank Richards had had little to say to Gunten so far, but he did not like him. Gunten's hard face and narrow, shifty eyes did not inspire trust.

"Old Man Gunten" was reputed to be one of the sharpest customers between Kicking Horse Pass and the Pacific, and his son was a chip of the old block.

Gunten was rather a remarkable character in some ways. Schoolboy as he was, he was known

to join sometimes in poker games with cattlemen at Thompson and Cedar Creek camp, and what he did not know about poker and euchre was supposed to be not worth knowing.

Gunten's hard face wore an agreeable expression, however, as he gave Bob Lawless a welcoming nod. The Swiss was always very civil to the rich rancher's son.

"You fellows taking tickets in the sweep?" he asked. "A dollar a time, you know. It's for the big race at Thompson on Monday. There's eight entries, and the race is run in the afternoon."

"Pocahontas will win, I guess," remarked Eben Hacke, with an air of great wisdom. "I guess the galoot that bags Pocahontas will waltz off with the jackpot."

"Well, every chap stands an equal chance of getting Pocahontas," said Gunten. "It costs you a dollar to come in, Lawless."

"What do you say, Franky?" asked Bob.

"I'd rather not," said Frank. "Your pater wouldn't like you to take a hand in gambling, Bob, or me either."

"If you came here to give us a sermon I guess you can vamoose, Richards," said Gunten disagreeably. "We can get all we want in that line on Sundays at the mission."

There was a laugh from some of the fellows, and Frank's cheeks reddened. He was perfectly well aware that a sweepstake on a race, with money prizes, was gambling, and he did not want to have a hand in it. But it was rather disconcerting to be held up as a fellow given to "preaching."

"This isn't what you'd call gambling, Richards," remarked Chunky Todgers. "It's only a sweep, you know."

"What's the difference?"

"Well, there is a difference, isn't there, Gunten?"

"Of course there is!" said Gunten contemptuously. "And if there wasn't, why shouldn't a fellow have a flutter? I guess Richards hasn't the sand to risk his dollar—that's about the size of it."

"That isn't true," said Frank. "But—"

"That's enough! We haven't come here to chew the rag," said Gunten. "Keep your dollar in your trousers pocket, and pat yourself on the back for

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being a good, nice little boy, and superior to everybody else. A sweepstake is good enough for us common mortals."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank's face was crimson.

"After all, there's no harm in it, Frank," said Bob uneasily.

Bob Lawless had all a healthy lad's horror of appearing as a "model youth" and a shining light. Frank shared that feeling with him, but he did not feel inclined to be drawn into Gunten's shady practices, all the same.

"I guess I'm on, anyway," said Hacke. "Get along with the business, Gunny, or we shall have the schoolmarm come inquiring after us."

"Well, I guess I want to know how many galoots are in the game," said Gunten. "There's eight horses, and the rest blanks. Here's the list of horses."

Gunten read out the list.

"Pocahontas, North Wind, Canpac, Jolly Roger, Nova Scotian, Wolfe, Lucille, and Briar Bush. Pocahontas is the favourite, and I guess he will win; but every hoss has a chance. The holder of the winning ticket takes the whole pool—nothing for second or third. Now then, how many? The more that come in the bigger the prize."

"I guess I'm taking two tickets," remarked Hacke, feeling in his pockets.

"One for me!" said Lawrence.

"Same here," said Dawson.

"Same here, if somebody will lend me a dollar," said Chunky Todgers. "I say, Richards, if you're not going in for it, lend me a dollar."

"You'd better keep out, too," said Frank.

"I asked for a dollar, not a sermon," said Chunky Todgers plaintively. "Will you lend me the dollar if I listen to the sermon? I'll promise not to interrupt for ten minutes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll lend you a dollar if you like," said Frank, "but—"

"Shell out!" said Chunky promptly.

His fat fingers closed eagerly on the dollar.

"I'm on, Gunny! Mind you give me Pocahontas!" he said.

"Come on, Lawless! Don't stand out!" urged Gunten. "Everybody's in it but you, and you're a sport, anyway."

"I guess I'll take one, Gunten," said Bob, making up his mind.

"Good for you, Lawless! Now we're all in it excepting Frank Richards, and we shan't miss him. I'll get out the tickets."

Gunten opened a pocket-book and began scribbling the names of the horses on separate leaves.

"And Richards will be quite safe if Miss Meadows hears about the sweep and gets mad with us," sneered Hacke.

Frank bit his lip.

"Count me in, too, Gunten!" he exclaimed at once.

"Oh, good!" Gunten looked over the crowd. "That's fifteen of us. Eight hosses and seven blanks. I won't keep you waiting a jiffy."

And the Swiss tore the leaves out of the book, seven blanks and eight with the names of horses written on them, to serve as tickets in the draw.

Very Lucky!

FRANK RICHARDS stood silent, with a very clouded brow, while most of the fellows were buzzing with excitement. As there were fifteen entrants the prize amounted to fifteen
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dollars for the lucky winner, a very considerable sum for a schoolboy to possess.

All the participants in the draw hoped to get Pocahontas, the favourite, but Frank had a vague suspicion that Gunten himself would be the lucky man. He did not trust the Swiss, and he could not help thinking that it was more than possible that the "sport" of the lumber school did not intend the sweep to run on lines of sheer chance.

But the other fellows were evidently unsuspecting, and Frank naturally did not care to utter the doubt in his mind.

"Anybody got a hat?" said Gunten, when the tickets were ready.

Eben Hacke handed over his big stetson hat, and Gunten placed it on a log by which he was standing.

"Now I guess I drop these tickets in," he remarked, "and you draw in turn. Pay up first."

"Two for me," said Hacke.

"That's another blank to go in, then."

Hacke was the only fellow who ventured two dollars on the sweep. The rest were content with one ticket each. Schoolboy finances did not allow them to "plunge."

Gunten collared the total sum, sixteen dollars, and placed it carefully in a little leather bag.

"That goes to the winner," he said.

"Who draws first?" asked Hacke, eyeing the stetson hat hungrily.

"I guess I do, as manager of the sweep," said Gunten. "It all comes to the same thing."

"If it all comes to the same thing I guess I can draw first," said Hacke.

Gunten hesitated a moment. The slips of paper were mixed together in the hat, and the fellows were to draw one each without looking at them, so it really did not matter who drew first and who drew last. But the Swiss, for reasons of his own, seemed to want to draw first.

"Let Hacke draw first," said Frank Richards at once. "Why shouldn't he?"

"I guess—"

"Hacke's put up the biggest stake, too," said Frank. "He's entitled to draw first on that account, anyway."

The Swiss gave Frank Richards a dark look for a second. But he nodded to Hacke, with an expression of great frankness, the next moment.

"Draw first if you choose," he said. "It's all the same to me."

He held up the hat, covered with a handkerchief, leaving only room for a hand to be thrust in, without the contents being seen. Hacke shoved in his hand and brought out a slip of paper. There was a general craning of necks to see the paper.

"Blank!" growled Hacke.

"Bang goes one dollar!" grinned Bob Lawless. "Never mind, you've got another chance, Hacke."

"Go it, Hacke!"

Hacke shoved his hand into the hat again. He drew it out and looked eagerly at the slip of paper in his fingers.

"Canpac," he said.

"Well, Canpac's a good horse," said Gunten. "Don't grumble!"

"I'm not grumbling," said Hacke. "I reckon Pocahontas will win; but I'm game. All O.K."

"I draw next," said Gunten. "Hold the hat, Chunky."

"Right!"

The Falstaff of Cedar Creek held the big stetson, and Gunten shoved his hand into the aperture left by the handkerchief. He fumbled

among the slips for a few moments, and then drew out a paper.

"What is it?" asked Hacke.

The Swiss looked at the paper he had drawn. "Pocahontas!" he exclaimed.

"The favourite!" said Chunky Todgers dismally. "There goes sixteen dollars."

The Swiss smiled.

"Just luck!" he said.

"Some galoots have all the luck," said Hacke.

"Still, Pocahontas mayn't win after all. I rather fancy Canpac's chances, come to think of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Richards was grimly silent. His distrust of Gunten was rather instinctive than founded upon any evidence. But the fact that Gunten had drawn the horse looked upon as a certain winner was something like evidence. It might be sheer chance. But Frank could not feel that it was. And why had Gunten been so keen on drawing first, and why had he been in haste to draw second, after having had to yield the point?

Frank felt that he could guess, but he was silent. He had noted that Gunten's sleeve went into the hat along with his hand. That was all, but it was enough, when his suspicions had already been aroused. But it was useless to speak. He had no atom of proof. Indeed, he was not feeling absolutely certain himself.

The schoolboys went on drawing the slips from the hat, and the draw was finished at last.

"What's yours?" asked Bob. "Mine's a blessed blank."

Frank showed his slip. He had drawn a paper with a name written on it, at all events.

"Jolly Roger," said Bob. "Not much good, I'm afraid."

"Oh dear!" groaned Chunky Todgers dismally.

"What have you got, Chunky?"

"Blank!"

"You owe Richards a dollar for it!" chuckled Dawson.

Another groan from Chunky.

"Never mind about the dollar," said Frank, laughing.

"Oh, I'll settle that up," said Chunky. "Not this week, perhaps—nor next—but the week after that—or the week after that—"

"Or next summer!" said Hacke.

"Hallo! Here's Slimmey!" murmured Gunten. "Don't chew the rag about the sweep to Slimmey."

Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master, strolled into the old corral, glancing at the boys over his gold-rimmed glasses. He was not suspicious; Mr. Slimmey was never suspicious. The sweep could have been carried out in the school-room without Mr. Slimmey noticing it.

The schoolboys cleared off, and Mr. Slimmey gazed after them, perhaps wondering why they had met in the old corral, but certainly never suspecting.

The Rogue!

FRANK RICHARDS was looking very thoughtful at the dinner-table in the lumber school. Bob Lawless gazed at him several times. Bob was not quite satisfied with taking part in Gunten's scheme, but he was feeling a little irritated at Frank's view of it.

When they came out after dinner the chums sauntered down towards the creek to while away the time till afternoon lessons. Bob broke out rather abruptly.

"Look here, Frank, don't be a solemn guy. There's no harm done, you know. A chap doesn't want to feel that he's being morally condemned and executed."

Frank smiled.

"I'm not condemning you, Bob, or the other fellows. That's not what I'm thinking about."

"Oh, isn't it?" asked Bob. "Thinking of Beauclerc at the ranch. He's all right, Frank, and he'll be back at school in a few days."

"No. I was thinking of the sweep, but not the way you meant," said Frank. "I—I don't know whether to tell you—"

"Tell me what?"

"It's no good accusing a fellow of a rotten trick unless you can prove it, is it?"

"Certainly not; worse than no good, in fact," said Bob. "But what on earth are you driving at?"

"I don't trust Gunten," said Frank abruptly.

"Nobody does," said Bob. "It's well known that his father kept a gambling show in Switzerland, before he emigrated to Canada, and there's a lot of that game goes on at his store in Thompson. Gunten takes after his popper. He gets the fellows to play poker with him, and generally wins. But I don't see—"

SPOTTED!

Tommy (at zoo): "I wonder what that tiger would say if it could speak?"

Father: "It would probably say: 'Pardon me, sonny, but I am a leopard!'"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Montague, 10, Salisbury Crescent, Summertown, Oxford.

"About the sweep," said Frank. "It's a swindle, I believe, and Gunten is skinning the fellows without giving them a chance. I don't like standing by and holding my tongue while he does it. That's what I was thinking about."

"If you think that, you'd better let your chin wag," said Bob. "But it seems to me you're dreaming. Gunten drew his paper the same as the rest."

"I know. But Gunten was anxious to draw first. You must have noticed that."

"Yes."

"After Hacke had drawn he drew second, before any other fellow had a chance to speak."

"What difference does it make?"

"This much," said Frank quietly. "Gunten put the papers in the hat. If he put the Pocahontas paper with the rest, all serene. If he kept it in his sleeve—"

"What!" ejaculated Bob.

"If he kept it in his sleeve," repeated Frank, in the same quiet tone, "he would naturally be anxious to draw as quickly as possible. If he had drawn last, for instance, the last fellow before him would have noticed that there was only one paper in the hat instead of two, and it would have been clear that Gunten had kept one back. If he kept one back, it was absolutely necessary for him to draw early, so that the others wouldn't discover that a paper was missing."

"Frank," said Bob, "you can't think—"

"When he drew, his sleeve went into the hat as well as his hand," said Frank. "I know it sounds rotten to say so, but I can't help thinking that the Pocahontas paper was in his sleeve. He let it slip into his hand, instead of taking it by

chance among the rest, as the fellows naturally supposed."

Bob was silent.

"Well, what do you think, Bob?"

"I guess it's possible, what you say," said Bob slowly. "I noticed what you say about his sleeve, though I didn't think anything of it. But—but I think, Franky, you're prejudiced against Gunten because he got up the sweepstake and because he's a rather shady galoot. You don't feel quite certain of this yourself, do you?"

"I think it's jolly likely!"

"That's not enough to accuse a chap on."

"I know."

"All the fellows would be down on you if you did. Better not say anything to anybody else. They'd think you were mad because you'd only drawn Jolly Roger."

"Bother Jolly Roger!" growled Frank.

"What worries me is that I suspect Gunten of swindling the fellows, and I don't like to stand by and let him do it."

"I know that. But as you can't prove anything, it would look like slandering the fellow to say what you think."

"You think I'd better say nothing, then?"

"Yes, rather!"

"All serene," said Frank. "Let it drop, Bob. Come and look at the canoe."

"Right!" said Bob, relieved.

"Hallo! What's that?" said Frank, as they went along the creek.

From a clump of trees by the water came the voice of Gunten.

"Two for me!"

Bob gave a snort.

"It's a poker game," he said.

The chums looked through the thicket. Gunten was seated under the trees, with Hacke and Dawson. Hacke had a pack of cards in his hand.

"Hallo!" said Gunten, looking up. "Come and take a hand, Bob."

Another snort from Bob.

"Look here, Gunten!" he exclaimed. "This is rotten, and you know it! You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself."

"Had another sermon from your cousin?" grinned Gunten. "I said two, Hacke."

Hacke dealt two cards in the place of the two discarded by Gunten from his hand of five. It was "draw" poker.

"Leave that rot alone, Dawson," said Bob. "You, too, Hacke. You know what Miss Meadows would think if she saw you."

Hacke and Dawson coloured uncomfortably.

"Bless Miss Meadows!" yawned Gunten. "We're not hanging on the skirts of a school-marm. Go away and play with your canoe!"

The chums went on their way. Bob Lawless' brow was very dark.

"That fellow Gunten is the worst in the school!" he growled. "Hacke and Dawson wouldn't play that fool game, only he banters them into it. He'll win their money, too. He has awfully good luck."

"Good luck all round, it seems," said Frank dryly. "He wins at poker, and he draws winners in a sweep. Look here, Bob, suppose we take the rotter by the neck and shove his head into the creek?"

"Oh, never mind Gunten! He gives me a bad taste in the mouth. Let's get the canoe out."

And the chums pushed the birch-bark canoe into the water, and soon forgot all about the Swiss.

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But when the bell rang for afternoon school, and they were coming back to the schoolhouse, they met Dawson, who was looking dismal.

Bob Lawless clapped him on the shoulder.

"Cheer-ho!" he said. "What's the matter? Lost a Canadian cent and found a Mexican dollar?"

Dawson grunted.

"Lend me ten dollars," he said.

"Make it ten thousand," grinned Bob. "I've got twenty-five cents, if that's any good."

"What on earth do you want ten dollars for, Dawson?" asked Frank Richards.

"I—I've lost it at poker."

"To Gunten?" asked Frank.

"Yes."

"Well, you won't be able to pay, so don't worry!" said Bob Lawless.

"I'm not going to owe that foreign cad money!" said Dawson glumly. "He's been sneering already because I can't pay up."

"Punch his nose, then!"

Dawson grunted and strode on. He was evidently very much worried by his debt of "honour." Probably he was repenting by that time that he had allowed Gunten to initiate him into the mysteries of draw-poker.

Nothing Doing!

WERE BEAUCLERC joined the chums when they went to school on Monday morning.

Beauclerc was still looking a little pale after his illness, but he was well enough to attend school, and he was anxious to begin again.

He was still staying at the Lawless Ranch. The three schoolboys rode off together in great spirits on Monday morning. During the weeks Beauclerc had spent at the ranch, the trio had become great friends.

Miss Meadows spoke very kindly to Beauclerc when he came in, and Frank was glad to see that the other fellows received him cordially.

Beauclerc was still somewhat quiet and reserved, but there was a conspicuous absence of that somewhat supercilious manner which had marked him when he first came to Cedar Creek.

Most of the Cedar Creek fellows that morning were thinking of the sweep. Miss Meadows noticed an unusual absence of mind in her class, but she was far from attributing it to the real cause.

After morning lessons there was much discussion in the school playground on the subject of the morning's race at Thompson. The race was over and decided by now; but the result, of course, was not known at the lumber school.

Dick Dawson joined the three chums, with an anxious pucker in his brow.

"Think Briar Bush has a chance, Bob?" he asked.

"How should I know?" said Bob. "I've never seen any of the geegees. Have you drawn Briar Bush?"

Dawson nodded.

"Well, I hope he'll win," said Bob. "But I fancy Gunten is going to pull off the sweep with Pocahontas."

"That sixteen dollars would see me through," said Dawson miserably. "I—I'm in debt ten dollars, you know."

"If Gunten asks for it tell him to go and chop chips!" said Frank Richards.

"I've paid him."

"Oh, you've paid him!" said Bob Lawless.

"If you've paid him, what are you worrying about?"

"I—I had to get the money at home to pay him," said Dawson, his face flushing. "I—I got it to pay part in advance on my new sled at Thompson, and—and if the popper finds I haven't paid anything on the sled—"

"You silly guy!" exclaimed Bob. "You've used your father's money to pay a gambling debt!"

"Well, it was my money, as the sled's for me," said Dawson, with crimson cheeks. "I had to pay that Swiss beast. I couldn't stand him jawing me about owing him money."

"You ass!"

"Well, if Briar Bush wins, that will see me through," said Dawson. "I—I hope Briar Bush will win. I wish we could hear. Somebody will

"You might as well have ridden home and got news of the race," said Bob Lawless.

"Everybody's anxious to know the result, excepting the chaps who drew blanks. Dawson's in a flurry about his precious Briar Bush."

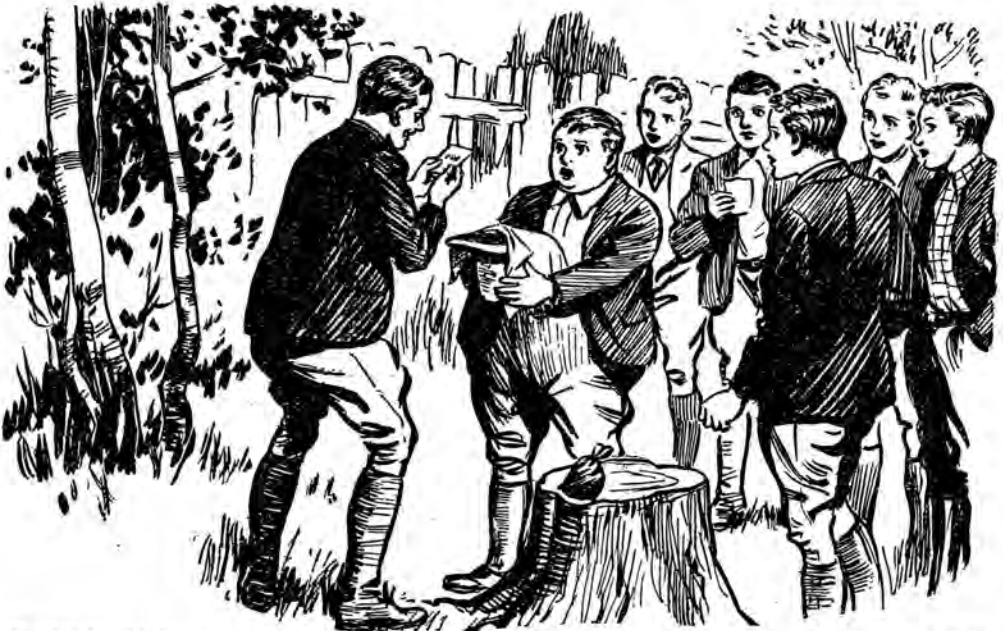
"Oh, Briar Bush hasn't a chance," remarked Gunten.

"I guess Pocahontas will win—or rather, has won!" said Bob, with a nod. "You have all the luck—and I don't envy you!"

Gunten sneered.

"More sermons from Richards—hey?" he asked. "Richards wasn't bound to enter the sweep, and I'm quite open to take his ticket off him, if he likes, for the dollar he put in."

"That's a good offer, Franky!" said Bob. "Give him Jolly Roger and get your dollar back."



Gunten fumbled among the slips in the hat for a few moments and then drew out a paper. "What is it?" asked Hacke. The Swiss looked at the paper he had drawn. "Pocahontas!" he exclaimed. "The favourite!" said Chunky Todgers dismally. "There goes sixteen dollars!"

have to ride over to Thompson and find out who's won."

And Dawson walked away with a glum face. "That fellow Gunten ought to be suppressed!" said Frank Richards savagely. "By the way, where is he? I don't see him about."

"He's gone for a ride," said Chunky Todgers. Gunten did not turn up for dinner at the school. But near time for afternoon lessons he came cantering up the trail and jumped off his pony.

He joined Bob and his chums, who were chatting by the creek. There was a somewhat sombre look on Gunten's face.

"Hallo!" said Bob. "Been home to your dinner?"

Gunten shook his head. "No; I've been for a ride up towards Indian Ford. I had sandwiches with me for dinner."

Frank Richards fixed his eyes upon the hard, cunning face of Kern Gunten.

"So you're offering to take losers at a dollar each?" he said.

"If you're not satisfied I'll take your loser off your hands," said Gunten. "I can't say fairer than that, can I?"

"Will you take my blank off me?" grinned Bob.

"Or Dawson's Briar Bush?" asked Frank Richards.

Gunten hesitated. "I'll take Briar Bush along with Jolly Roger," he said.

"Hallo, Dawson!" bawled Bob Lawless. Dawson, who was staring moodily into the creek, looked round, and came up.

"What's on?" he asked. "Heard the result yet?"

"Oh, no! But Gunten's buying up losers at a dollar each," chuckled Bob. "I'm blessed if I know why, but he's doing it. Give him your ticket and bag your dollar!"

"I said I'd take Briar Bush with Jolly Roger," said Gunten, compressing his thick lips a little. "You can have mine," said Dawson at once.

"What about you, Richards?"

Frank smiled rather grimly.

"I'm keeping mine," he said.

"Well, you are an ass!" exclaimed Bob Lawless in astonishment. "Jolly Roger's no good, and your dollar's safe if you take Gunten's offer."

"I'll keep him, all the same."

"Do you think that rotten outsider's likely to win?" sneered Gunten.

"I think you think so, or you wouldn't offer to buy him," said Frank Richards coolly.

Gunten bit his lip.

"I've got the favourite," he said. "Every fellow knows that Pocahontas is practically a certainty."

"Then why are you offering dollars for outsiders?"

"I guess it's the fair thing, as I got up the sweep, and you say you're not satisfied."

"By gum! First time I ever heard you worrying about the fair thing, Gunny!" grinned Bob.

Gunten scowled.

"And you never thought of doing the fair thing, as you call it, till this afternoon, after the

race is won," said Frank Richards quietly.

"It comes to the same thing, as none of us knows the result yet," said Gunten.

"Yes, I guess that's so," agreed Bob. "What are you getting at, Frank?"

Vere Beauclerc looked curiously at Frank, but he did not speak.

"Well, here's Dawson making you an offer, Gunten," said Frank. "Take his ticket and give him his dollar."

"I'm waiting," said Dawson.

"I'll take both or neither," said Gunten.

"You won't take both," said Frank coolly. "And you wouldn't want both if you thought them both losers."

"Frank," murmured Bob Lawless.

Gunten clenched his hands, his eyes gleaming savagely.

"What do you mean, Richards?" he muttered between his teeth. "How could I know whether they're winners or losers?"

"Well, it will pay you better to take one loser than two," said Frank Richards, with a grin. "Take Dawson's ticket and leave mine alone."

"I'll give you two dollars for it, if you like," said Gunten.

"Two dollars for a horse you know to be a loser," said Frank, laughing. "You're getting jolly generous."

"Look here!" exclaimed Gunten fiercely. "Will you let me have Jolly Roger or won't you?"

"No, I won't!"

"Why not?" exclaimed Bob Lawless in wonder. "I'll tell you," said Frank Richards quietly.

"Because Gunten wouldn't offer two dollars, or two cents, for my ticket unless he thought it was the winner. He's come here specially to get my ticket away from me. And he's doing it because he knows that his precious favourite Pocahontas has lost."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"And that Jolly Roger, the rotten outsider, has won," concluded Frank Richards.

Gunten's face was pale with rage.

"That's rot!" said Bob decidedly. "How could he know? The race was run at Thompson, miles from here."

"And Gunten's been for a long ride and missed dinner."

"But he rode to the Indian Ford, and that's in the opposite direction."

"I don't believe him," said Frank Richards coolly. "I believe he's worked a swindle in the sweep and bagged the supposed winner; and now he's found that his winner isn't a winner, and that my outsider is. I believe he's been to the town and found out the result of the race."

"By gad!" murmured Beauclerc.

Bob Lawless stared at Gunten and his lip curled. The expression on the face of the Swiss was enough for him.

"You low-down rotter!" said Bob in utter disgust. "So that was your game, was it?"

Gunten gritted his teeth.

"It's a lie!" he exclaimed furiously. "I know nothing about the result of the race."

"Well, we shall know what to think if we find that Jolly Roger has won," said Bob scornfully.

"He—he may have won, of course," muttered Gunten. "Outsiders sometimes do. But, of course, I don't know. Richards is a liar, and I'll make him swallow his words."

And with that the Swiss sprang furiously at Frank Richards. Frank's hands went up like lightning.



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The Swiss was older and bigger than the English lad, and probably thought he had an easy thing before him. He soon found out his mistake.

His savage drives were knocked aside, and Frank's right came out like a hammer, landing fairly upon his thick nose. Gunten gave a yell and went over backwards, and rolled on the ground.

"Well hit!" grinned Beauclerc.

"Bullseye!" chortled Bob Lawless. "Up with you, Gunny! Have some more!"

Gunten rose slowly to his feet. He pressed his hand to his nose, and his fingers came away red. He gave Frank Richards a look of hatred, but he did not renew the fight. With a scowling brow, he turned away without a word.

The Winner!

BLACK SAM, the stableman, was surrounded by the Cedar Creek fellows when school was dismissed that afternoon.

Gunten was there, too. It was necessary for him to keep up appearances if he could, and his voice joined in the general inquiry:

"Who won the race this morning, Sam?"

The negro grinned, showing a fine set of teeth.

"What you children know 'bout dat?" he said.

"Rats! Tell us who was the winner," said Bob.

"You must have heard while you were up in town."

"Yes, sah, me hear," grinned Black Sam. "I'se lost twenty cents on Pocahontas."

"Then Pocahontas has lost?" said Hacke.

"Yes, sah."

"Who's won, you black image?" roared Hacke.

"Canpac?"

"No, sah! Jolly Roger win de race!"

"Jolly Roger!" said Frank Richards, with a deep breath.

Black Sam went about his business, and the schoolboys surrounded Gunten. Frank Richards held out his hand.

"Sixteen dollars, please!" he said laconically.

There was a pause. As Jolly Roger had won, Frank Richards had won the sweep, and the money had to be handed over to him. But Gunten seemed unable to bring himself to do it.

"Shell out!" said Hacke. "What are you hanging back for, Gunten? Richards has won the durocks, hasn't he?"

"Pay up!" chortled Chunky Todgers. "You'll lend me a dollar out of it, won't you, Richards?"

Slowly and reluctantly Gunten drew the little leather bag from his pocket. The contents were counted out. Sixteen dollars were handed over and, to judge by the look on Kern Gunten's face, every dollar that he handed over was like a tooth being drawn out of his head.

"I guess you have the luck, Richards!" said Eben Hacke, slapping Frank on the shoulder. "Well, I'm glad it wasn't that foreign trash, anyway, with his low-down tricks. You're white, anyway."

"Thanks!" said Frank, laughing.

The foreign boy walked away, scowling. Gunten's scheme for relieving his schoolfellows of their money had not been much of a success. With all his cunning and unscrupulousness, he had failed to land the prize, and a dollar of his own money was included in the sum he had been

(Continued on page 36.)

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A FIERCE FIGHT TO A FINISH LEADS TO A FIRM FRIENDSHIP ON BOARD THE BENBOW!



"Rodney! Drake!" exclaimed Mr. Packe. "You have been fighting!" "Ye-es, sir," murmured Rodney. "Do you consider that your appearance reflects credit upon the school you belong to?" inquired the Fourth Form master.

Black Ingratitude!

DRAKE, old chap!" Tuckey Toodles called to Jack Drake of the Fourth as the juniors came out after lessons on Monday morning. Drake did not heed, even if he heard.

He strode away down the passage to the main deck of the Benbow, his hands driven deep in his pockets, and a sombre cloud upon his brow. Some of the Fourth Formers grinned as they glanced after him.

Just at present Jack Drake and his affairs were a very interesting topic to the juniors of St. Winifred's. Drake had been one of the richest fellows at the School on the River, and his fall from fortune had only become generally known the day before. The fact that Drake had kept it a secret rather amused some of the fellows. It added a touch of the ridiculous to what was serious enough for Drake.

"The silly ass!" said Raik of the Fourth. "It couldn't be kept dark for long. He ought to have known that."

"It's nobody's business but his own," said Estcourt dryly.

"Well, I don't know about that. He came back for the new term swanking in his old style, and putting on as many airs as ever," growled Raik. "Like his cheek, I think, when he's as poor as Toodles, or that half-pay boulder Rodney."

"I've never noticed Drake putting on airs." "Oh rot! Daubeny and his set in the Shell have thrown him over," said Raik.

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FROM FOES TO FRIENDS!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

"They would! All the better for him!"

"He doesn't look as if he's enjoying it, whether it's better for him or not," grinned Raik.

Estcourt turned away without replying.

"Drake, old boy!" called out Tuckey Toodles, coming breathlessly along the passage. The main mast of the Benbow concealed Jack Drake from his sight, as Tuckey blinked round in search of him. "Raik, where is he?"

"What on earth do you want with him, Tuckey?" chuckled Raik. "Don't you know he's stony?"

"I'm standing by him!" said Toodles loftily.

"Lot of good that will do him."

"I'm not going to desert him," explained Tuckey. "Of course, he ought to have told me, as his oldest pal. We've always been chummy, like brothers, in fact. He ought to have relied on my friendship. Those cads in the Shell have given him the go-by; but he won't mind that when he knows I'm going to stick to him."

It takes a licking to open Jack Drake's eyes to the fact that the fellow he thought had betrayed him was really a loyal chum!

And Tuckey rolled on in search of his study-mate.

Daubeny, Torrence, and Egan, the three knuts of the Shell, came strolling along the main deck, as Drake stood leaning against the mast, gazing out upon the sunlit river. Drake raised his eyes as the elegant trio passed; but they did not glance in his direction. Daubeny & Co. walked on, looking straight before them—elaborately unconscious of their former friend's existence.

Drake's eyes glittered for a moment. But he made no sign. He had expected something of the sort, when the truth became known; the bucks of St. Winifred's had no use for a fellow who was down on his luck beyond the hope of recovery.

"Yah! Rotters!" said a voice at Drake's elbow.

The Fourth Former glanced round, and met the expansive smile of Tuckey Toodles.

"Cheer up, old chap!" said Toodles,

"Eh?"

"Keep a stiff upper lip, you know," said Tuckey encouragingly. "Never mind those cads!"

"Why should I mind them?" growled Drake.

"I know they never speak to you now they know you're hard up," pursued Tuckey, with the best intentions in the world, but not with the greatest possible display of tact.

Drake flushed.

"Oh, dry up!" he said.

"My dear old fellow——"

"Don't bother!"

"Ahem!"

"Cut off!" snapped Drake.

Tuckey Toodles coughed. This was rather discouraging for a fellow who was prepared to display devoted friendship.

"Now, look here, Drake," said Toodles impressively, "don't you be downhearted. Rely on your old pal."

"What?"

"I'm not going to desert you," said Tuckey affectionately. "Never in this world, dear old boy. Rely on me. Of course, you ought to have told me at once."

"Told you what?" snapped Drake.

"About your pater coming a cropper and all that," said Tuckey. "You ought to have confided in me. But I forgive you."

"You ass!"

"Look here, if you're going to call me names, Drake——"

"Roll away and don't bother, then."

"You don't seem to catch on," said Toodles patiently. "I'm not bothering you. I'm cheering you up."

"Oh rats!"

"I know what it's like to be hard up, and I can sympathise. I've been short of cash myself—only temporarily, of course. But I know what it's like. And I'm sticking to you, old fellow. Don't you run away with the idea that I'm going to turn my back on you. I wouldn't."

"You can, as soon as you like; and the sooner the better."

"Never, old fellow! I'm going to stick to you like glue," said Tuckey loyally. "You needn't be downhearted any more—I mean it. I know it's been worrying you——"

"Eh? What's been worrying me?"

"You were afraid I might desert you, like the rest," said Toodles. "Oh, I know—I know. That's why I'm relieving your mind at once, see. I'm not going to let it make any difference to me. I'm a generous chap, you know—loyal and all that. Of course, you're not a chap worth knowing now."

"Wha-a-at?"

"But I don't mind," said Tuckey generously. "I'm sticking to you all the same. I may not be able to give you so much of my time. I've got so many friends, you know. I can't exactly promise you that we're going to be inseparable. But you won't expect that in the circumstances, will you?"

Drake stared at him blankly.

"But I shall continue to know you," went on Toodles. "I shall always look on you as a pal. I'm not going to give you the marble eye just because you're nobody. Not me!"

"You silly, cheeky ass!" roared Drake.

Toodles jumped.

"Eh? What? Look here, if that's your way of showing gratitude, Drake——"

"You—you silly oyster! Clear off, before I kick you along the deck!"

"Now, look here, Drake, I'm sticking to you, as I said; but it's got to be understood that you're

civil," said Toodles, wagging his fat forefinger at the incensed junior. "I can't stand any airs and graces from you; you can't expect it in the circles. I'm not going to desert you; I'm going to take notice of you."

"Tut—tut—take notice of me!" stuttered Drake.

"Yes, rather!" said Tuckey, beaming with good nature. "I'm going to take notice of you, old fellow—in public, too! I'm not too proud to know you. I—— Oh! Leggo! Wharrer you at, you beast?"

Drake had taken the kind and generous Tuckey by the collar and was shaking him forcibly. The fat junior wriggled in his grasp and yelled.

"Yaroo! Leggo, you beast! Do you call this grateful? Yoop! Leggo! Oh, you rotter! Ow! I won't speak to you now. I won't take any notice of you—yoooop!"

Bump!

Tuckey Toodles sat down on the deck with a heavy bump, and Drake walked away aft and left him there. Fallen as his fortunes were, Drake of the Fourth apparently had no use for the devoted friendship of Tuckey Toodles.

The Fight!

DICK RODNEY glanced at Drake when the Fourth came into their Form-room that afternoon. Drake met his glance and his eyes gleamed, and Rodney turned his head away at once. His resentment against the new junior was as keen as ever, and he was looking forward grimly to the meeting arranged to follow lessons. Rodney perhaps had hoped for some sign of softening in his face; if so, he was disappointed.

When Mr. Packe dismissed the Fourth that afternoon, Rodney paused to speak to Drake in the passage, but the latter did not stop. He went directly on, leaving Rodney with flushed cheeks. Estcourt tapped Rodney on the arm.

"It's coming off, I suppose?" he asked.

"I suppose so," answered Rodney. "You're going to be my second?"

"Yes. We'd better get ashore as soon as we can."

"I'm ready."

A good many of the Fourth converged towards the gangway to the shore. All the Form were interested in the meeting between Drake and Rodney. Estcourt carried a bag with him as he left the Benbow with Rodney; it contained the gloves and other necessities. Drake left the ship by himself. He had not asked any fellow in the Fourth to be his second.

The juniors followed in twos and threes. It was to be a fight of an unusually serious kind, and it was necessary to keep the affair from the knowledge of masters and prefects. Drake, without a glance to right or left, strode on past the cricket ground, and entered the wood that lay thick and green along the bank of the Chadway.

Out of sight of the school-ship the Fourth Formers gathered in a crowd in a glade among the trees. Some of the Third had followed them, having had the news of the impending fight; and Daubeny & Co. of the Shell also sauntered up. The bucks were interested in the fight from the point of view of laying bets on the result.

Estcourt set down the bag and opened it, and produced two pairs of boxing-gloves, a couple of

towels, and a tin basin, which Sawyer major filled at the river. Drake watched those preparations impatiently.

"Let's get going!" he growled.

"Who's your second?" asked Estcourt.

"I don't want a second."

"Better have the thing in order. Any fellow will act for you. Sawyer will. Come on, Sawyer."

"I don't mind," said Sawyer of the Fourth, coming forward. "Now then, off with your jacket, my pippin!"

"Who's going to keep time?"

"One of the Shell chaps—here, Daubeny—"

"Certainly!" said Vernon Daubeny, lounging elegantly forward. "Quite at your service, dear boys."

Drake's brow darkened.

"Get out!" he said.

Daubeny looked at him.

"Did you address me?" he asked, with a curl of the lip.

"Yes, I did. Get out! You're not wanted!"

"I agree with Drake," said Rodney. "Daubeny isn't wanted here. One of the Fourth can keep time."

Daubeny shrugged his shoulders, and returned to his pocket the handsome gold watch he had already taken out. His cheeks were a little flushed as he rejoined Torrence and Egan.

Norman of the Fourth was appointed time-keeper. Then all was ready. The juniors crowded in a ring round the space left for the fight.

Dick Rodney put his gloves on very slowly. Some of the juniors grinned as they noted it, and noted his hesitating manner. Raik murmured to Newson that the "half-pay" merchant was suffering from cold feet. And that impression grew stronger when Rodney, with a flushed face, stepped closer to Drake and spoke to him in a low voice.

"Before this begins, Drake, I'd like to tell you again that I never let out your secret," he said. "I told you I wouldn't and I didn't. I wish you'd believe that."

"Who did, then?"

"I don't know, of course."

"Nobody knew but you!" said Drake between his teeth. "I told you—like a silly ass—and you promised afterwards—"

"I kept my word, Drake."

"You didn't!"

Rodney compressed his lips.

"Very well, if you can't take my word, that's enough," he said, and he stepped back.

"Is this a fight or a conversation?" asked Sawyer.

"I'm ready."

"Now then, Norman—"

"Time!" said Norman.

And the fight began.

There was keen attention all round the crowded ring. Jack Drake was known to be a good fighting-man, in spite of the fact that he had been an associate of the slackers of the school. Dick Rodney was an unknown quantity; but there was no doubt that he looked very fit. And he soon proved that it was from no want of courage that he had desired to avoid the fight.

He stood up quietly and calmly to Drake's attack, which was hot and almost savage from the start. His defence was good, and Drake did not land any blows; but Rodney did not trouble to hit out in reply.

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At the call of time, Jack Drake was red and breathless from his exertions, and no damage had been done on either side.

"By gad! That new kid's hot stuff!" Torrence remarked, loud enough for Drake to hear. "He's only playing with him!"

Drake shut his teeth hard. The same thought had occurred to his own mind, and the thought that Rodney did not regard him as a foe man worthy of his steel was exasperating. As time was called Drake rushed to the attack more fiercely than before, and this time Rodney's defence did not serve him so well.

"Well hit!" chirruped Raik, as Jack's fist came home on his adversary's nose, and there was a spurt of red.

Rodney staggered back a little, and Drake followed it up with right and left, and the sailor's son went heavily to the ground.

Drake stood panting.

Norman began to count, with a grinning face; but there was no need. Rodney was up before he reached five. His eyes were gleaming now.

If he had thought of sparing his adversary he had to dismiss that idea now, or take a licking, that was evident. And naturally he did not choose the latter alternative.

The round ended with close, hard fighting, in which a good deal of punishment was given and taken on both sides, in spite of the gloves.

"Time!" rapped out Norman at last—rather late, for he had been so interested in the hard fighting that he had forgotten to look at the watch.

The combatants separated. Both were glad of the rest; and both came readily up to the mark when time was called for the third round.

The fight had settled down to a slogging match now. Both the juniors were angry, and both were determined.

The onlookers watched breathlessly. Through the fourth and fifth rounds the slogging went on. In the sixth round there was less slogging, but neither showed a sign of yielding.

"Seventh round," murmured Raik, when the adversaries faced one another again. "My hat! There'll be marks to show for this. Look at Rodney's nose."

"And Drake's eye!" grinned Newson.

Thud!

Jack Drake was down. But the call of time came to his relief, and Sawyer mayor made a knee for him and Drake rested there, breathing hard. Dick Rodney was standing in his corner, evidently much less the worse for wear than Drake.

"You'll win!" murmured Estcourt.

Rodney made no reply.

"By gad, Egan, you'll bag my quids on Drake!" said Daubeny. "I thought he was in better form than this. Like to call it off?"

Egan chuckled.

"No fear! You put two to one on him and you're sticking to it, old top. It's a sure thing for me."

"Shut up, you betting outsiders!" called out Sawyer.

"Go and eat coke!" was Daubeny's reply.

Jack Drake breathed hard. The bucks of the Shell did not spare him; their opinion of his coming defeat was uttered quite in his hearing. As Norman called time for the eighth round, Drake's eyes had a blaze in them as he toed the line.

In that round Drake put all he knew into the conflict. He had challenged Rodney as a punish-

ment for betraying his secret, as he believed, and it was looking as if the punishment would work round the other way. His attack was fast and furious, and for a time Rodney could not stop him, and he was driven round the ring.

Vernon Daubeny brightened up again; it began to look as if his bet might be safe, after all. Right on the call of time Drake got home with right and left, and Rodney went spinning out of the ring.

"Well hit!" yelled Daubeny in great delight.

"Down and out!" grinned Raik.

But Raik was wrong. Estcourt picked his man up, made a knee for him, and sponged his blazing face. Rodney rested there without saying a word, saving his breath. He knew that he would want it all.

"Going on, Rodney?" called out Sawyer major.

Rodney did not speak; but after a glance at him, Estcourt called out in reply:

"My man's going on, How's your man?"

"Oh, fit for a dozen rounds yet!" answered Sawyer.

Dick Rodney looked a little groggy, but he came up sharply enough when time was called. Again Drake pressed the attack, but his good fortune was not repeated. Rodney stepped aside from a rush, and drove in a blow on the jaw that sent the junior spinning, and Drake collapsed in the grass. There was a breathless shout.

"Drake's down!"

"And out!" grinned Raik.

Norman counted.

"One, two, three, four, five, six——"

Drake made an effort to rise, but his head was spinning; his jaw felt as if a mule had kicked him there. He reeled over in the grass.

"Seven, eight, nine——"

Another fierce effort to rise, but it was in vain. Drake almost reached his knees, and rolled back again.

"Out!"

Norman put away his watch. Drake gave a gasping cry and scrambled savagely up, standing unsteadily.

"I'm ready—I'm ready——"

"You're counted out!" answered Norman. "Besides, don't play the goat—you can hardly stand. Don't be an ass!"

Drake was staggering, his head swimming. Sawyer major caught him by the shoulder.

"Can't be helped, old chap! You put up a ripping fight!" said Sawyer comfortingly. "Lean on me."

The fight was over. Jack Drake had been knocked out in the ninth round; and, apart from the count, it was clear enough to all the onlookers that he could not have gone on. That last hard drive had finished him, and he was done. He sat in the grass dazedly while Sawyer bathed his face. Dick Rodney put on his jacket, with his second's help, and after some hesitation came across to Drake.

"I'm sorry for this, Drake," he said, looking down on the dazed face of the defeated junior. "I didn't want it. Now that it's over, I assure you once more that I never did what you believe. Won't you believe me now?"

"No," muttered Drake. "I won't!"

"I'm sorry!"

And with that Dick Rodney turned and left the glade with Estcourt. The crowd of juniors broke up, discussing the fight, and Jack Drake was left to bathe his face in the Chadway before he returned to the Benbow. But bathing did not do

it much good, and it was pretty certain that both the combatants would be called over the coals when their faces were seen at St. Winifred's again.

Friends at Last!

"JEST looking for you, Master Drake."

Jack Drake started. He was leaning against a tree on the footpath, out of sight of the Benbow, as the shadows of the evening thickened over the valley of the Chadway.

He was waiting for the dusk to thicken before returning to the ship, hoping to dodge in with his face unnoticed after dusk. He was not in a mood for a lecture from Mr. Packe or the Head.

His nose was red and swollen, and there was a dark circle round his left eye. He was feeling tired and utterly rotten all over—the effect of the reaction after his exertions and the severe punishment he had received in the fight. And his dark face darkened still more as a podgy figure came along the footpath and stopped.

It was Gentleman Smith of the Lobster Pot.

Drake had not seen him since that unlucky bet on Brown Boy, and he certainly did not want to see him. Hitherto Mr. Smith had been very civil, not to say oily, towards the richest fellow at St. Winifred's. But there was a change in his manner now.

His expression was decidedly unpleasant, as his little round eyes fixed on Drake's bruised and clouded face.

"You!" muttered Drake.

"I've just been speaking to Master Daubeny," explained the bookmaker. "He told me I'd most likely find you along 'ere, so I came along."

"Confound Daubeny!"

"You ain't sich friends with Master Daubeny now?" said Mr. Smith, with a keen look at the junior.

"No."

"Well, that ain't my business. I jest wanted to see you, to trouble you for a little fiver you owe me, Master Drake."

"I—I——"

"I dessay you 'eard," remarked Mr. Smith, "that Brown Boy did not pull it off at Kingsford."

"Yes," muttered Drake.

"You owe me five quid."

"I—I know I do."

"That's why I was looking for you," said Mr. Smith pleasantly.

Drake's face was scarlet.

"You seem to be in a hurry," he said bitterly. "Has Daub told you—but of course he has."

"Master Daubeny may have mentioned that things ain't the same with you as they was," said Gentleman Smith. "No business of mine, so long as you square. Got it 'andy, sir?"

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KERR: I was far from satisfied. Knox had given himself away, and I told him so. I asked him how he knew Racke and Crooke couldn't have got out by the masters' gate if they had wanted to. Knox had said Racke had a key. And only Mr. Railton and Taggles knew the gate was jammed. Knox must, then, have tried it himself. And then, no doubt, he attempted to get over the wall—falling and setting off the air raid alarm. At any rate, Knox has agreed to get Hammond and Reilly, Racke and Crooke off. So I'm not saying a word!

"No."

An exceedingly unpleasant look came over Mr. Smith's red face.

"What does that mean, Master Drake?" he inquired.

"It means that I can't settle this evening," muttered Drake, almost trembling with mortification at having to humble himself before a man like Gentleman Smith of the Lobster Pot. "I suppose my word's good enough. I'll let you have the money during the week."

"That's all very well——"

"Hang you, man, you'll have your money!" broke out Drake savagely. "Now leave me alone—I'm feeling pretty rotten just now."

"I know I shall 'ave my money," answered Mr. Smith. "I've got the bit of writing you give me, which you wouldn't care to 'ave made public. But I ain't collecting wastepaper to save up, young man. I'll give you till Wednesday, and you'd better pony up then, or there'll be trouble."

Mr. Smith evidently had little civility to waste on a youth who was worth nothing more to him. He grunted and turned away, and disappeared into the dusk.

Drake drew a deep breath.

If anyone had come along the footpath and seen him with the sharper from the Lobster Pot! What a fool he had been!

He owed money right and left; five pounds to the sharper, and ten pounds to his former associates; the bucks, and he was stony. And he had come back to St. Winifred's that term to work for a scholarship, and to keep clear of his old reckless ways!

"I say, Drake——"

The junior swung round angrily. Tuckey Toodles' chubby face loomed up in the dusk under

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the trees. Tuckey gave him an expansive grin, and winked.

"All serene!" he said. "I'm not going to say a word."

"Did you see?" asked Drake.

"Couldn't help it, old boy—couldn't help hearing what the man said, too," said Tuckey cheerily. "But never mind that. I can keep a secret. I'm not a chatterbox like that chap Rodney. Besides, I'm going to help you out."

"What?"

"You rely on me," said Toodles confidently. "I'm your pal, you know. I'm not going to desert you, though you cut up so jolly rusty this morning."

"If you say a word about what you've just spied out, I'll wring your fat neck!" said Drake, in concentrated tones.

"Oh, draw it mild, old chap! I only came to tell you it was just on locking up, and you'd be late!" exclaimed Tuckey Toodles warmly. "Is this what you call thanks——"

"Oh rats!"

Jack Drake strode along the path towards the river, and Toodles trotted after him. Coote, the porter, was about to close the gate on the gangway when they arrived. Coote cast a rather curious glance at Drake's face, and closed the gate after the juniors were within.

"Just saved you from being locked out, Drake, dear old boy," said Tuckey Toodles.

Drake gave an ungrateful grunt, and hurried across the gangway to the Benbow. He was just in time to answer his name at call-over, which was being taken by Mr. Packe in the open space on the main deck.

Dick Rodney was there with the rest of the Fourth, and his face as well as Drake's showed signs only too plainly of the fight in the wood.

Mr. Packe's eyes lingered on Drake and Rodney, but he went through the roll-call without comment. After the roll had been taken, however, and the boys dismissed, he called the two delinquents.

"Rodney! Drake!"

The two juniors came unwillingly forward.

"You have been fighting!" said Mr. Packe.

"Ye-es, sir!" murmured Rodney.

"Do you consider that your appearance reflects credit upon the school you belong to?" inquired Mr. Packe.

No reply.

"You will go into the Form-room and remain there for an hour, writing out the conjugation of 'sum,'" said Mr. Packe.

"Oh dear!" mumbled Drake.

Aching and rotten as he was, Drake felt that he could hardly stand a dose of Latin conjugations just then. But the Form-master's word was law, and there was nothing to do but obey.

The two juniors proceeded to the deserted Form-room, which was all in darkness. Rodney turned on the electric light. They sat glumly enough at their desks.

Tuckey Toodles looked in.

"Cheer up, Drake, old boy," he said. "I'm going to get tea in the study, and it will be ready when you come out."

"All right."

"How much tin have you got?"

"None!" grunted Drake.

"I say, I don't see how I'm to get tea without any money," said Tuckey Toodles.

"Don't get it, then."

"If you call that civil, Drake——"

..... MORE "FOOTER-STAMPS" AND THE RULES!

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"Oh, for goodness' sake sheer off, Tuckey! You're a worry!"

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Toodles. "Just when I'm thinking out a scheme, too, to get you out of your scrape with Mr. Smith——"

Whiz!

A Latin dictionary came hurtling across the room, and Tuckey Toodles jumped out of the doorway just in time.

"Yah!" he roared, and he departed.

Drake dragged out his Latin grammar and a sheaf of impot paper from his desk. Then he set to work.

"Sum, es, est, sumus, estis, sunt," danced before his eyes as he tried to write. He scribbled away wearily; but at last he gave it up, and leaned his elbow on his desk.

Rodney glanced at him and ceased working, too.

"We're both in for it, Drake!" he remarked.

Drake started and looked at him. He was not prepared for conversation with the junior he regarded as his enemy.

"Fed-up?" asked Rodney.

"Yes," grunted Drake.

"Let's chance it and give it a rest."

"I'm going to."

There was a short silence. Dick Rodney broke it. "Look here, Drake. We made friends the day I came to St. Winifred's, though we haven't kept it up somehow since. I do wish that you'd believe that I never gave away the affair you told me of. I give you my word of honour that I never uttered a syllable on the subject to a soul."

Drake looked at him rather oddly. Rodney had been the victor in the fight, and certainly there seemed no reason why he should prevaricate now. And now that Drake was calmer, he could not help thinking that there was truth in the clear, honest eyes and earnest face of the sailor's son.

"Can't you believe me?" asked Rodney.

"Well, I suppose so, if you give me your word," said Drake at last. "Perhaps I've been a bit hasty. I've been feeling rotten all round; and I dare say that what I wanted as much as anything was somebody to fall foul of." He smiled

bitterly. "That's candid, isn't it? It's queer how the thing got out if you didn't speak."

"Didn't you mention it to anyone else?" asked Rodney.

"Not a soul."

"It's jolly queer, then. Have you any letters about—letters from home?"

"Ah!" Drake gave a start. "Oh, what an ass I've been! My letter—it was left on my study table on Saturday—when Raik was there——"

"Raik?" said Rodney.

"I remember—I looked for it afterwards, and I found it under the table," said Drake. "I had left it on the table before. And that howling cad Raik was in the study while I went to speak to Daub——"

"Was there anything in the letter?"

"Oh, yes, more than enough!"

"It doesn't seem quite fair to put it on Raik without any proof, but——" said Rodney slowly.

"Oh, he's cad enough! Fellows have kicked him before this for spying into their letters," said Drake scornfully. "I—I'm sorry I suspected you, Rodney." Drake's face was red now. "I—I was an ass—if I'd thought it out calmly——"

Dick Rodney smiled.

"Well, I'm glad you've thought it out calmly at last," he said. "No harm done."

There was another silence. It was Jack Drake who broke it this time—hesitatingly.

"Rodney!"

"Hallo!"

"The—the day you came, we chummed up and—and made an arrangement to work together. It fell through—my fault, I know. Would you care to try it, after all?"

"Like a shot!" said Rodney brightly. "I'd like it no end."

"It's a go, then—we'll try it."

And when the hour of detention had expired, Rodney and Drake astounded the Fourth Form by reappearing in public with linked arms, evidently on the best of terms with one another.

(Next Wednesday: TUCKEY TOODLES' TUCK-IN!)

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THE CEDAR CREEK SWEEPSTAKE!

(Continued from page 29.)

compelled to hand over. That was the net result of his scheming, and it was not a gratifying result.

Frank Richards slipped the money into his pocket and walked away with his chums, dodging Chunky Todgers, who seemed to consider himself entitled to a dollar, at least, out of the pool.

Frank tapped Dick Dawson on the arm, and that youth gave him a gloomy look. His last hope of raising the wind had gone now.

"I want to jaw to you, Dawson," said Frank, taking the Canadian lad's arm; and Dawson went with him, while Bob and Beauclerc went to take out the horses for home.

Frank Richards and Dawson stopped on the bank of the creek, out of hearing of the fellows.

"Well, what is it?" asked Dawson glumly.

"You're not going to offer to lend me ten dollars, I suppose? I may as well tell you that I couldn't square up this side of Christmas, if you did."

Frank smiled.

"I'm not going to offer to lend you ten dollars," he replied. "I'm going to hand it to you. The money isn't mine—"

"You won't, I guess."

"That doesn't make it mine, and I'm not going to keep it. Look here, Dawson, you were a duffer to play cards with Gutten. It may do for him, but it's not good enough for you. But never mind that. You've got to pay ten dollars to the sled man in town, and there's the ten."

"But—but I can't take it!" stammered Dawson. "I'll pitch it into the creek if you don't," said Frank, swinging his hand. "Now, yes or no? Going—going—"

Dick Dawson caught his hand.

"There you are then," said Frank, with a smile. "I didn't lose anything, you duffer. I'm not going to keep the rest either. Drop in at Thompson as you ride home, and pay the man."

"You're a jolly good sort, Richards," said Dawson, in a low voice. "I—I shan't forget this, and if I can do anything any time—I couldn't have faced popper when it came out that I'd lost the money!"

"You could do something if you liked," said Frank.

"What is it?"

"Punch Gutten's nose if he asks you to play cards again!"

Dawson laughed.

"I will—that's a cinch!"

Frank Richards hurried after his chums, and found Beauclerc holding his pony ready for him. The three schoolboys rode away on the trail for the Lawless Ranch. But half-way home Frank wheeled from the trail.

"We've got to call in at the mission, you fellows," he said.

"What on earth for?" exclaimed Bob.

"I've got some dollars to drop in the box."

"Oh, is that the game?"

"Exactly."

Bob Lawless looked rather curiously at his cousin when the schoolboys rode away from the mission.

"How much have you kept for yourself?" he asked.

"Nix!"

"Good for you!" said Bob.

And that was the end of the Cedar Creek sweepstake. But a few days later at school, Frank Richards observed Gutten speak to Dick Dawson in the school playground, and the next moment Gutten rolled over under a tremendous drive on the nose. Evidently Dawson was keeping his promise!

(Next week: "SCHOOLBOY JUSTICE!")

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