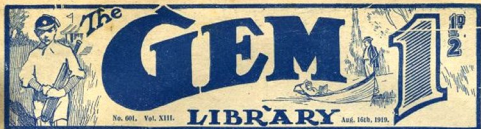
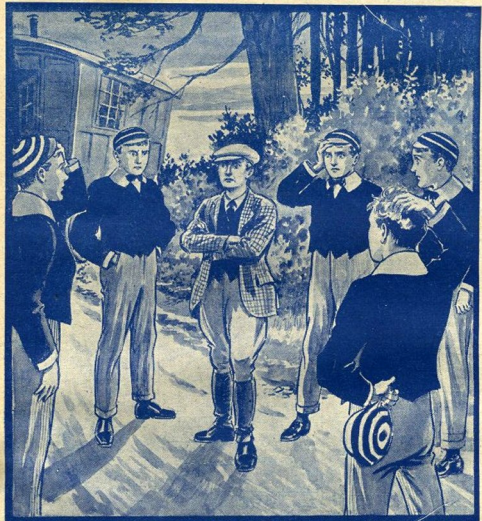


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LOOKING AFTER GUSSY!



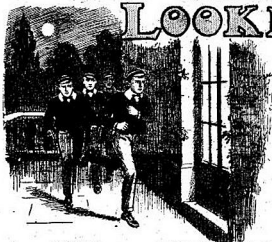
THE CARAVAN PARTY'S GUIDE ON STRIKE!

(A Startling Incident in the Splendid Long Complete School Tale in this Issue.)

16-8-19

LOOKING AFTER GUSSY.

A Magnificent Long Complete Story
of
TOM MERRY & CO. at St. Jim's,
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



CHAPTER I.

On the Track of Arthur Augustus!

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

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

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

"The ass!"
"The burling jabberwock!"
"The champion chump!"

The heroes of the Sixth and the Fourth were not always in complete agreement. But they seemed in perfect harmony now as they expressed their opinions of the absent Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It was passed, hence, com., that Arthur Augustus was a fathod, a duffer, a chump, a burling jabberwock, and a long list of other things.

The cars of Arthur Augustus, wherever he was, ought to have been tingling just then.

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

"And how we are tick-heck!" granted Herries.

"Hanging round for Gussy!" said Robert Arthur Digby. "It would serve him right if we went on and left him!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Well, he's left us!" granted Dig indignantly.

"And it's a lovely morning!" said Blake. "Look at the sun on the hills now, at this minute! And we're stopped—"

"Hang up!" said Manners.
"Tied by the blessed leg, as it were!" remarked Monty Louther.

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

"The chump!"
"The frabjous dunny!"
"The frumious jabberwock!"

And the chorus recommenced. Every one of the caravanners had an opinion to express about Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth; the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Lower School at St. Jim's. And they expressed their opinions with candour and with emphasis, and with repetition. Their language, as the celebrated Truthful Janes would have remarked, was "frequent and painful and free."

The position was really exasperating. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, having mounted the high horse, so to speak, had been left behind the previous afternoon; the caravanners feeling quite confident that he would follow on and rejoin them when his dignity had had a fair innings, as Monty Louther expressed it.

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

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

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

"The ass!"
"The chump!"
"The frabjous duffer!"

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

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

So far from intending to leave the swell of St. Jim's in the hands of Gerald Cutts and his friends, however, Tom Merry & Co. fully intended to rescue him, whether he liked it or not. Blake, indeed, declared his intention of chaining

Gussy under the van if he didn't come away from St. Leger Lodge willingly.

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

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

"The ass!"
"The fathod!"
"The chump!"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.
"Well, we've stanged Gussy pretty well!" he remarked. "If you chaps have finished brokber, and done stanging Gussy, we may as well put the horse to and start."

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

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

"Echo answers where!"
"Some native will know, and tell us," said Tom Merry. "Look for a giddy native."

"Hallo! Here's a young shaver!"
A horsey-looking lad, with a cast in his eye and a straw in his mouth, was standing in the road, with his hands in his pockets, staring at the van and the caravanners. There was a grin on his not-over-clean face. Perhaps he had heard the slanging that had been going on, and found it entertaining.

Jack Blake beckoned to him.
"Here, kid!" he called out.

"Allo!" answered the horsey-looking youth.

"Do you want to earn half-a-crown?"
"I'm your man," answered the youth promptly, and he came up to the caravan.

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

"Is it far from here?"

The youth looked at Tom Merry, and seemed to consider.

"About four miles!" he answered.

"Oh, dear!"

"On this road?" asked Manners.

"Yes, with about six turnings,"

answered the youth. "I'll show you the

way if you like. You said half-crown!"

"That's it, if you take us to St. Leger

Stable," said Blake. "You can jump on

the van if you like."

"-Wot!"

The horsey-looking youth clambered on the van, and gave directions, and the caravaners started. The services of a guide saved them a good deal of trouble at the start, for when they were duly thankful, and their spirits rose as they rolled along in the summer sunshine.

CHAPTER 2. Led Astray!

THE road was a little steep, and most of the caravaners walked with the van. Circumstances did not put more of his beef into the pulling than he could help. The pace was not rapid, but when they were assured that they were heading direct for their destination Tom Merry & Co. did not mind that very much. The juniors had supposed that St. Leger Lodge was a good deal nearer than four miles, but their guide was a native of the district, and they assumed that he knew. He pointed out the turnings, as the caravan came to them, and Blake, who was driving, followed his instructions.

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

"And a 'oh old time he's having there!" said Charley, with a wink that made Blake jump. "That there Cotts, too—he's a regular gorr, he is. They made the butler drunk one night, and pointed up his face with crayons, and you should 'ave 'eard 'im 'owl when 'e saw 'is chivvy in the glass in the morning. He thought it was a ghost, old Farber did. He, he, he!"

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

"Frying cards hevery night!" the cheerful Charley rattled on. "Or else bellows. They 'ave me in sometimes to 'and round the drinks and smokes. Now gorrge on—I don't think! He, he, he!"

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "And that's the good Gussy he's landed himself with! Oh, the howling ass!"

"Where's the Lodge, young sharer?"

Tom Merry called from the road.

"About a mile on, sir," said Charley,

looking down at him with a grin.

"It seems to me that we've done a good four miles."

"There's so many ups and downs, sir, it seems longer than what it is," explained Charley.

"Oh, all right!"

The caravan rolled on. It was following a ratty lane, which seemed to lead away into the hills to nowhere in particular. The lane narrowed to a mere track, and ahead of it seemed nothing

but a wide expanse of grass land. Blake pulled in the horse at last.

"Have you missed the way?" he demanded.

Charley looked thoughtful.

"Blessed if I ain't," he said. "It was talking to you, sir. I spoke. I missed the turning 'arf a mile back."

"Well, you young ass!"

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

"Sorry, please," said Charley apologetically. "but it won't take long. We better turn back a bit."

It was not easy to turn the van in the narrow track, but it was backed and turned, and the caravaners tried back the way they had come. Charley cheerfully pointed out a turning, and the caravan rolled on. The way lay up a steep lane, and Circumstances began to show signs of reluctance. Blake dismounted, and Charley followed his example, to lighten the van, but the pace of Circumstances grew slower and slower.

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

And as the road grew steeper the juniors sat there aid, shivering the van and pushing at the wheels.

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

Charley looked puzzled.

"Blessed if I ain't missed it again!"

he exclaimed.

"Look here—" began Blake hotly.

"You said you knew the way, you

young, fathead!" said Tom Merry.

"Where the dickens are we, now, then?"

Charley reflected.

The caravaners watched him impatiently and angrily. It was nearly noon now, and they were tired and getting hungry. They had expected a short run to the destination, but it was pretty clear now that the run was not to be short.

"I'm sorry, guv—" began Charley. "Your sorrow isn't much good if you're stranded us!" snapped Herries.

"Where the thump are we?"

"In the Chilterns, sir."

"I know that, ass! Why don't you

tell us we're in Buckinghamshire?"

growled Herries.

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

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

"Where's that?"

"Behind those trees."

"Well, out off and ask, and be

quick!"

"Oh right, sir!"

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

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

"I was thinking the same!" remarked Digby.

"I don't see why he should lead us wrong on purpose," said Manners. "And he hasn't had his half-crown yet."

"Unless—" began Tom Merry.

"Unless what?"

"He says he's been employed at the Lodge, and from his talk that seems to be true. Perhaps he's still employed there now, and—"

Tom Merry knitted his brows. "I dare say Cotts knew we shouldn't leave Gussy in his hands if we could help it. The young rascal may

have been sent to hang round our camp, to offer his services, and lead us astray."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great pip!"

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

"It may be in a hollow."

"Yes, but—"

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

"The most unlikely be uttered a shout."

"He's coming!"

"What!"

"The young villain!"

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

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

"Oh crumbs!"

The caravaners looked at one another blankly.

There was not much further doubt that the young villain had been faithless, and that he had deliberately led them to the highest spot on the hills and deserted them there.

"The—The awful young rascal!" gasped Blake. "We've simply fallen into a trap. Cotts sent him—"

Tom Merry nodded.

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

"Blake clenched his fists."

"You saw him in this lane?" he asked.

"Yes," found half a dozen turnings,

running down the hill top speed."

"There's the bike!"

"Oh, good!"

The juniors had forgotten the bicycle along on the caravan for the moment. On foot there was not the slightest chance of overtaking the chivvy Charley.

On the bike it was quite a different matter. Tom Merry ran to unhook the machine.

"Jump on behind, Blake," he panted.

"It may save two of us to make him

come back!"

"Right!"

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

It was not necessary to pedal; freewheeling was rather too fast, and Tom used the brakes, as the bike rushed along and whizzed round corner after corner.

It was a breathless rush, and it covered the ground in great style.

In five minutes they sighted Charley again.

Doubtless believing that he was at a safe distance from the stranded caravaners, Charley had dropped into a walk, and was puffing at a cigarette as he lounged along.

He jumped as he heard the rush of the bike behind him, and spun round. The bike rushed on, and passed him, Tom jamming on the brakes.

"Oh, my eye!"

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

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

"Yow-ow! Leggo!" howled Charley.

Tom Merry wrenched, and the young

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rascal came spinning back into the lane. The next moment he was wriggling like an eel in the grasp of Tom Merry and Jack Blake, and he went down on his back, and Blake's knee was planted on his chest.

"Now, you rotter!" panted Blake, and Charley gave in.

CHAPTER 3.

Stranded!

"O LD on, guv'nor!"
"You young rotter!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully.
"Old on! I give in, guv'nor!"

Charley was allowed to rise to his feet, gasping for breath, Tom Merry and Blake holding an arm each. They were not taking any more chances with the elusive young rascal.

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

"Come back with us!" snapped Tom Merry.

"Wot's the good?" asked Charley. "I got to get 'ome!"

"You've got to guide us to St. Leger Lodge yet."

"Oh, my eye!"

"Are you far from the place?" demanded Blake.

Charley grinned.

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

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

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

"Cutts told you to hang round our camp and spoof us like this!"

"Yessir!" chuckled Charley. "You see, if you was looking for the Lodge, Master Cutts reckoned you'd ask a feller you saw near in the road, and so I was loafing round ready for you. 'Skuse me, guv'nor, but I'd ad to do wot Master Cutts sez. He's a guest at the Lodge, and Master St. Leger ain't got a will of his own when Cutts is there, you believe me."

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

"I reckoned it was on account of the young gent that he brought 'ome in the car," answered Charley. "Nico young gent he was, too—perlite as you please, and spoke to me just as if I was a gentleman like himself. You're after that young gent, and Cutts won't let you worry 'im. And I won't neither, so there!"

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

"Arter 'im, you are," continued Charley, with a grin. "I ain't 'doping you—d Charley Chipps, sir! No blooming fear! You let that young gent alone! So now you know! And if you wallop me it won't make no difference! I ain't going to 'elp you!"

"Look here," said Tom Merry quietly, "the chap you speak of—D'Arcy—is our pal."

"And you're arter your pal to worrit 'im!" said Charley incredulously.

"He belongs to our party," explained Tom. "Cutts and his friends have got

him to St. Leger's place to get him into card-playing and that kind of rot. He doesn't know it yet."

"Why shouldn't the young gent 'ave a flutter if he wants!" demanded Charley.

"Gambling, I mean," said Tom.

"Well, where's the 'arm'!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

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

"Ain't I backed 'cross myself!" said Charley derisively. "Mister Cutts 'isself 'ave give me tips on a 'orse. Ain't I played pitch-and-toss in the stable-yard more times than I can remember! Where's the 'arm! If Master D'Arcy wants to 'ave a flutter, let 'im go 'ead, and 'bless his 'eart, I ain't stopping 'im!"

Tom Merry and Blake looked at one another. How to deal with this peculiar young rascal was a problem to them. There was a kind of simplicity mingled with Charley's cunning and rascality that touched them, somehow. The boy had become what he was through following the example of his betters—or those, at least, who should have been his betters.

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

Charley's jaw set obstinately.

"Nothing doing!" he answered.

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

"Right-ho!"

The juniors started uphill again, Tom Merry wheeling the bike and Blake keeping a tight grip on Charley's arm. Charley accompanied them submissively; there was no escape for him—for the present, at least.

There was a mile to tramp uphill, and the road was steep. In the dust and the blaze of the sun the tramp was not enjoyable. Not a soul was men on route. The caravanners had been led into the most solitary region of the pasture-lands on the Chilterns. Cutts' emissary had done his work well.

The caravan was reached at last. Manners and Lowther, Herries and Digby, were lurching when Tom and Blake arrived with their prisoner.

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

"Have you walloped him!"

"No," said Tom, laughing.

"Then I'll get a stick."

"Hold on!" said Tom.

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

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

"You ain't!" said Charley.

"Wen't you guide us!" demanded Lowther.

"No, I won't! I ain't going to 'elp you no more, that young gent!" answered Charley. "Go and blow yourselves!"

"Well, my hat!"

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

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

They stared at him.
"What the thump kind of a lunatic is this!" growled Manners.

"He wants a hiding!" observed Herries.

Tom Merry shook his head.

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

"Look here, we can find our way without this young sweep," said Tom.

"We can't be very far from a home of some sort, if we only know where to look for it. And he would most likely lead us wrong again, too. Let the little beast go, and we'll manage without him."

"He ought to be licked!"

"Oh, let him go!"

"Cut, you young rotter!" snapped Blake.

Charley "cut" promptly enough, before the caravanners could change their minds. He walked jauntily away, but at a short distance he turned and grinned at the St. Jim's party. Then he placed his thumb to his nose, and extended his fingers in an exceedingly disrespectful salute.

Herries made a rush towards him, and the young rascal took to his heels and fled down the lane.

"He ought to have been 'hid!" growled Herries, as he came back rather breathlessly. "What the thump are we going to do now!"

"Lunch," said Tom Merry laconically.

And the caravanners, not in the best humour, lunched. Then the van was set in motion once more, and Tom Merry & Co. started on the search for St. Leger Lodge and their absent chum.

CHAPTER 4.

Ha! Ha!

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

The caravanners were tired, and they were grumpy.

A blazing afternoon had been spent in retrieving the ground they had lost under the guidance of the inquisitive Charley Chipps.

Information had been picked up on the road during the afternoon. In the quarter where Charley had stranded them no one seemed to have heard of St. Leger Lodge, which was not surprising at the distance. Tom Merry had finally decided to head for Wendover and make inquiries there, or near that town, for St. Leger's house. It was easy enough to get directions for Wendover; but too much time had been lost for the place to be reached that afternoon. The horse was tired, the caravanners were tired, and there was a general cloud on all faces. And the remarks the caravanners made on the subject of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were exceedingly emphatic. No one, hearing them, would have supposed that the missing Gussy was their pal, and that they were looking for him from friendly motives. The chief desire among the St. Jim's caravanners seemed to be to get near enough to the Honourable Arthur Augustus to punch his noble nose.

Wendover was still more than a mile away when Tom Merry decided to "chuck" it.

His comrades were willing enough to chuck it. They were fatigued, and circumstances was growing more and more unwilling to keep on. Circumstances turned his head at them occasionally, and gave them reproachful looks, evidently not understanding or appreciating the state of affairs. And the caravan



"Don't go yet, D'Arcy," said Cutts between his teeth. Arthur Augustus was about to leave when Cutts sprang to his feet, an ugly expression coming over his hard face. (See chapter 11.)

halted at last on the grass by the roadside.

They camped in a rather gloomy mood. Cutts of the Fifth had won the first round, that was certain. A whole day had been thrown away, and all the time Arthur Augustus was in the hands of the "blades" of the St. Jim's Fifth. Cutts' object in invading the swell of St. Jim's to St. Leger Lodge was plain enough to Gussy's chums, though it was certain that Gussy himself did not know it. Gussy was to be induced to take part in the "high jinks" at the Lodge in which St. Leger was indulging with his friends during the absence of his parents. He was to be relieved of his ample cash at poker or nap or bridge. Exactly how Gerald Cutts would set about the difficult task of inducing Gussy to "have a flutter" the juniors did not know; but they feared the cunning of the blackguard of the Fifth.

And there was another consideration, too. If Gussy firmly resisted temptation, and declined immovably to take part in the blackguardly proceedings at the Lodge, Cutts & Co. were sure to cut up "rusty" in the long run; and the consequences might be very unpleasant for Gussy. And though Tom Merry & Co. felt quite a yearning to punch Gussy's noble nose themselves, they had a strong

objection to his being mercilessly ragged by Cutts and his friends.

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

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

"Get it off your chest," said Blake. "I don't think much of your Shell stunts, but let's hear it."
"We don't want a row with those Fifth Form cads to-morrow—"

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

"It's possible," assented Blake.
"If he's staying at the Lodge, they can't refuse a chap admission to see him," argued Tom. "Perhaps I'd better go, Blake, as I'm a bit more careful than you are—"

"What rot!"

"I should punch his head, to begin with," remarked Herries.

"Then you won't do for an ambassador," said Tom, laughing. "I'll go, I think. We've got to get Gussy away from Cutts & Co. if we can; and if we can do it without a row on Sunday all the better. And, anyway, I'll find out where the Lodge is, so that we can head for it without wasting time."

"Not a bad idea," agreed Blake.

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

Sunday morning dawned fine and sunny on the caravan camp.

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

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

"You can clean down the wheels and things while I'm gone, old chap," answered Tom.

And he peddled away, leaving Blake snorting.

Tom Merry rode into Wendover cheerily in the sunshine, and called at the Green Lion, the inn where the juniors had scrapped with the Fifth-Formers a couple of days before. Miss host knew all about St. Leger Lodge.

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and gave him directions at once. Tom Merry rode out of Wendover on the road to the Lodge, which was a couple of miles or so from the town.

He turned from the high road into a leafy lane, pulling up a rather steep ascent. He dismounted near the top, and wheeled his machine the rest of the way. Then, for the first time, he had a view of the Lodge—a handsome house standing in its own grounds, with red chimney-pots that glistened in the sun. It was hardly a mansion in size, but the grounds were extensive, bordered on one side by a rippling stream, and there were stables and a garage. On the terrace before the house, looking out on a green lawn, Tom caught a glimpse of moving figures, and wondered whether they were the Fifth-Formers of St. Jim's.

Hoot, hoot, hoot!
A big green motor-car came buzzing along the lane, and Tom Merry recognized St. Leger's car.

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

Tom Merry stood in the road and held up his hand.

The car was coming uphill rather slowly. Tom Merry was glad enough of a chance of meeting Arthur Augustus without going to the house, and he was determined to stop the car.

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

Hoot, toot, hoot!
The motor-horn's hoarse warning as the car came on a straight for the junior standing in the middle of the road.

Tom Merry's eyes glittered.
Cutts of the Fifth evidently did not intend to stop if he could help it.

Tom did not move.
That Cutts would dare to run him down he did not believe; and the chauffeur certainly saw him standing there. Tom stood motionless, with one hand resting on his bike, and the other raised as a signal for the car to stop.

His heart thumped as the big car came rushing on. But he stood his ground grimly.

"Bai Jove! Tom Mewwy!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass glittered at the captain of the Shell. He caught Cutts by the arm.

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

Gerald Cutts set his teeth.
"Let him get out of the way!" he snarled.

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

The car was very close now, and the grim, determined look on Tom Merry's face could be seen plainly enough. He was holding his bike athwart the road, in the middle, and the lane was too narrow for the car to swerve round him without touching the bike.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Pray hold on, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus mildly. "If Tom Mewwy wishes to speak to me, there is no reason why he shouldn't. I certainly could not stand by and see Tom Mewwy wuffed by."

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

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

"For—for what!"
"Church, dear boy!"

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

CHAPTER 5.

Nothing Doing!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY fixed his eyeglass inquiringly upon Tom Merry. He seemed to be quite cheerful and contented in his new surroundings. At a glance Tom could see that Cutts & Co. had not yet revealed their real object in offering Guusy the hospitality of the Lodge. The swell of St. Jim's was evidently unaware, so far, that he had fallen among thieves.

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

Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows.
"I presume that there is nothin' surprising in that on Sunday morning," Tom Mewwy!" he answered stiffly.

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

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

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

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

But that Cutts should carry his hypocrisy to the length of pretending to attend Divine service made Tom feel sick with disgust.

"The rotter is spoofing you, Guusy," he said.

"I am afraid, Tom Mewwy, that I cannot hear you chawctowin' Cutts as a wotab, said Arthur Augustus sternly. "If that is all you have to say I wish you a vewy good-mornin'!"

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

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

"I wufuse to wely to such a question, Tom Mewwy!"

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

accustomed to a slanging match on this day of the week."

"Vewy pweaphly put, Cutts," said Arthur Augustus approvingly. "I am shocked at Tom Mewwy. I am afraid that his manners, like flake's, have deteriorated while curvamin'." Tom Mewwy, pray stand aside and let the cah proceed."

"I'm not finished yet," said Tom.

"We want you to come back to the caravan, D'Arcy."

"I am afraid that is impose, dear boy."

"Look here—"

"I have not been treated with pweaph respect, Tom Mewwy. I could overlook that, howehav; but now I have accepted the hospitality vewy kindly of fashed by St. Leger I cannot, of course, desert my friends."

"You've deserted us, fathead!"

"You left me behind, Tom Mewwy!"

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

"Bai Jove! I was not sulkin'—it was impos for me to be treated with diswpect, that was all," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "Howehav, lath on I may wejoin you; but I have accepted St. Leger's hospitality for a week."

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

"How long are we to stand this kind of talk, D'Arcy!" inquired Cutts, with great politeness. "Is this quite fair to us, old chap?"

"It is not, Cutts; and I am vewy surprised and shocked at Tom Mewwy. Good-mornin', dear boy!"

Tom did not stir.

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

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

"Yes, you ass!"

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

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

"I feel such you are mistaken, Tom Mewwy. I am not at all surprised to hear that you lost yourselves—"

"What?"

"I was afraid somethin' would happen when I was no longer there to look afteh you."

"You silly ass!" roared Tom.

"Wally, Tom Mewwy."

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

"Bai Jove!"

"What utter rot!" yawned Cutts. "Of course, I know nothing about it, D'Arcy; but I needn't tell you that. I supposed the kids had gone on their way after leaving you behind."

Arthur Augustus looked perplexed.

"I feah that Charley Chippe was pullin' your leg, Tom Mewwy," he said at last.

"Besides, you should not have been lookin' for me. You got my note, I suppose, informin' you that I was stayin' with St. Leger?"

"Yes!" growled Tom.

"Then why were you lookin' for me, Pway?"

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

"Bai Jove!"

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

"Yaas, wathah! I am vewy sorry, Cutts, that you have been exposed to

these inaudible remarks. Tom Mewry is unshakable a serious misapprehension; but you must excuse him, as he is a silly, thoughtless young fellow.

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

"Impose!"

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

"Waste!"

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

"Certainly not!"

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

"You are entirely mistaken, you see," he explained kindly. "You appear to suppose that I have been playin' the goat at the Lodge. Notin' of the sort, dear boy. Yestaday I was shoppin' most of the time. Harg you sent on my baggage?"

"No, aas!"

"I should have been in wathah a serious posiah. Tom Mewry, if these chaps hadn't lent me some things," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I can only say that I am surprised at you. However, I overlook your very peculiar conduct, because I am such you mean well, and you cannot help but wathah dense, nose, good manner, dear boy!"

Tom Merry heaved a hand.

He had done all he could. To collar Arthur Augustus, and take him away willy-nilly, was evidently impossible.

There were Cutts and St. Leger to deal with in that case, as well as the swell of St. Jim's. The Shell fellow drew his hiko aside from the road at length.

"That's right, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am sowsy I cannot wejoin you; but I trust you will have a verry nice holiday, you know."

"Fatehead!" he was not going on without you!" said Tom.

"Wesly, you know."

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

Tom Merry stood with his hiko, and watched the car surmount the hill, and disappear on the other side. Evidently Cutts was intending to spend his Sunday morning in a very unaccustomed way, for the purpose of pulling the wool over the eyes of his intended victim.

The captain of the Shell mounted his machine at last and rode away. There was nothing to be done but to return to the caravan camp and consult with his comrades.

CHAPTER 6.

The Enemy at the Gates!

"**F**ATEHEAD!"

"Aas!"

"Frabjous chump!"

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

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

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

Herries proposed a march on the Lodge and a frontal attack, and carrying off the obstinate swell of the Fourth by sheer force. But Herries' plan was a little too large an order. There were four sturdy seniors to be dealt with in

the Lodge party, as well as Gussy himself, and the servants and the men about the stables and garage. And, as Manners observed, in case of such a foray, Cutts had only to telephone for the police.

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

Tom Merry nodded.

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

"Yes, rather!"

"I know where the dashed place is now," went on Tom. "We can get there easily enough by this evening—"

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

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

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

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

Tom Merry looked out for a camp.

Between the gates of the drive and the open road was a wide stretch of grass through which the path ran to the gates. Tom Merry inspected it with a careful eye.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Circumstances was led off the road. There was plenty of grass there for Circumstances, and there was no doubt about the caravaniers' right to grass their horse on common land. Within a stone's throw of the bronze gates the caravan halted, and the horse was unharnessed. Water was not to be had there; but the caravaniers who had consented to keeping their eyes open, had noted a standpipe some distance back on the road, where they had filled the keg and the kettles. And they proceeded to camp in cheerful spirits—rather amused than otherwise at their thoughts of Gerald Cutts' feelings when he found them there.

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

"Bai Jove!"

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

The trio halted in astonishment at the sight of the caravan. Tom Merry & Co. rose to their feet.

"By gad!" ejaculated St. Leger. "What—what—"

Cutts strode towards the caravaniers. "What are you doing here?" he thundered.

"Camping, old top!"

"Just outside my gates, begad!" exclaimed St. Leger.

"Just!" agreed Tom Merry.

"Clear off at once!"

"Rats!"

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

"Send as many as you like, old boss!" said Herries. "We've got Gussy's griddle-bars, and your grooms may like to get them on their zappers!"

Tom Merry spoke.

"Like a lurch in the caravan, Gussy!"

"Certainly not! I am St. Leger's guest. Tom Mewry, I am verry much surprised at this!"

"It's a surprising world!" agreed Tom Merry.

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

"Common land here, old scout!" chuckled Blake.

"Yass; but it is in verry bad taste."

"Not such bad taste as boozing and smoking and gambling up at the Lodge!"

"Wesly, Herries—"

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

"You can't!" answered Tom Merry coolly. "We've a right to camp here, on common land, and you can't turn us off!"

"You'll see!"

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

"Yes, rather!" said the caravaniers emphatically.

"This is a verry painful posiah for me," said Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "These fellows are my friends, St. Leger, though they are acin' in the locality and murthered way. I trust you will allow them to woman back for to-night, and leave it to their good taste to take the wood in the mornin'."

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

"Wesly, Blake—"

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

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

Cutts and his companions went in at the gates. Arthur Augustus casting a reproachful look back at his chums as he went. Blake waved his hand to him cheerily.

"Your bunk's ready for you, Gussy!" he called out.

"Waste!"

The gates closed after Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and the Fifth-Formers.

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

"Yes, rather!"

And the St. Jim's caravaniers turned in.

CHAPTER 7.

The Merry Blades!

"**W**HAT about fifty up!"

Gilmore of the Fifth asked that question.

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

It was rather a big room for a "den," and very expensively furnished. There were guns and trophies of the chase on the walls—though it certainly was not St. Leger of the Fifth who had bagged those trophies. Though the evening was warm, a log fire crackled on the wide hearth, to give the room a cozy look. Before the fire was a big tiger-skin, brought home from India by St. Leger's father. A glance at that room was enough to show that the Fifth-Former considered nothing too good for him. And it was quite certain that St. Leger was none the better for so much indulgence.

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

Cutts of the Fifth kept up a peevish grin. St. Leger nobly concealed his yawns. But Frye and Gilmore found it very difficult to endure the evening, and they gave Gerald Cutts reproachful glances. Cutts had "landed" them in for this; and they felt wrathful. But Cutts was the head of the party, though it was St. Leger's house, and Cutts' word was law.

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

Gussy was not a suspicious fellow. It never occurred to him that his companions were bored. He was not bored. And he was not really a bore. He had been to church that day, he had been on a drive, and he had had an evening walk, and now he was satisfied to chat a little before going to bed. That was quite enough excitement for Sunday in Gussy's opinion—and Gussy was right. But the "blades" of the Fifth had quite other views. In the company of the noble Gussy, they could not venture upon their usual distractions—and without cards or smokes or billiards or horse chatter they felt lost.

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

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

Gerald Cutts gave Gilmore a warning look.

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

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

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

"I very much prefer a quiet day on Sunday, Cutts."

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

"Oh, yass!" yawned St. Leger.

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

"Yass, wathah! I have often played woud games for nuts, you know."

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

"Nuts!" he whispered to Frye.

And Frye made an anguished grimace.

It needed all Cutts' influence to keep his comrades from telling Arthur Augustus D'Arcy what they thought of him.

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

"Oh, yass, counters would be all wight for a woud game!"

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

"I see—and wethers them at the end of the game!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh! Ah! Yass, of course."

St. Leger gave it up.

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

Arthur Augustus looked grave.

"I should think it did mattah, Cutts. It is very easy to go on fwom small stakes to largah ones, and a fellow might be led into gambin' without wethly wethisin' it."

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

"It'n!"

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

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

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

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

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"Oh!"

"Ah, exactly!"

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

"St. Leger rose, too.

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

And he did.

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

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

"Sickenin'!" snorted Gilmore.

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

"You looked like it."

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

"Two days of thumpin' misery an' good behaviour!" growled Frye. "Do you call this a holiday!"

"Well, we have a game after the young cad's gone to bed," answered Cutts.

"Here, light a cigarette, and stop grubbin'."

"Thank goodness the cheery little beast is gone!" growled Frye, blowing out a cloud of smoke. "I've been dyin' for a fog."

"Same here!"

Cutts lighted a cigar.

"But how long is it going to last?" exclaimed Gilmore. "My constitution won't stand much more of it."

"I think we can get down to business to-morrow," Cutts knitted his brows.

St. Leger came back into the room, and yawned deeply, and lighted a cigarette.

"Little beast safe for the night!" asked Cutts.

"Oh, yass!"

"Thank goodness for that!"

"I've let you plant him on me, Cutts," grumbled St. Leger. "but go easy—go easy; there's a limit to human endurance, as a political chin-wagger remarked once. He's a good little idler, an' I rather like him; but I can't stand much more. I can't, you know!"

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

"Too thick absolutely!" concurred Frye.

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

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

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

"We started our holiday well-beeled," said Cutts. "We've had rather a good time. But billiards and smokes, and houses run away with cash. How much did we drop altogether on the race?"

"Goodness knows."

"It's left me stony!" growled Frye.

"Look here, you were givin' to get supplies when you went off on your motor-bike to see your uncle a few days ago. You said so."

Cutts scowled.

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

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

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

"We're all-practically stony," resumed



Cutts made a spring towards the hapless Charley, and gripped him by the collar. Lash, lash, lash! The riding-whip rose and fell savagely. (See Chapter 8.)

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

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

"Don't pay him!" said Frye. "Got to—ho'd tell the pater! And he's not so jolly quick in answerin' bells an' things since I borrowed his money. It's bad binney to borrow money of your dashed servants!" said St. Leger with a solemn shake of the head. "But what's a fellow to do when he's in a hole? That's what I want to know! What's a fellow to do?"

"Anybody he can!" said Cutts, with a grin. "St. Leger, where's that testatus

of yours? No need to keep it hidden now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"D'Arcy's come to our rescue, that's how it stands! What are you grinning at, St. Leger?"

"I was just wonderin' what the Head of St. Jim's would say if he could see you now, old top!"

"I don't think he'd want Cutts back seat temp!" grinned Frye.

"Oh, don't set," said Cutts. "Look

here! That kid is lined with money. I was shoppin' with him yesterday in Woodover, an' I saw the plunder. He's lined with banknotes!"

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

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

"Somethin' in that!" agreed Gilmore. "But I can't keep up the Good Little Georgee stunt too long, old boss! I'm not strong enough really!"

"We've got to lull his suspicions, to

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begin with. He remembers one or two things that were said about us at St. Jim's!"

"Very likely!"

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

"After that?"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

St. Leger did not join in the laugh. There was a slight flush on his cheeks. Cutts gave him a sharp look.

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

"What do you mean?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A black look came over Gerald Cutts' face.

Possibly deep down in his heart there was a lurking doubt as to the success of his cunning schemes—an uneasy feeling

that for once his astuteness and cunning would fail.

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

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

Cutts muttered an oath.

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

"He will!" said St. Leger.

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

"You won't kick him out!" said St. Leger. "There's goin' to be a limit, Cutts!"

"Look here—" exclaimed Cutts furiously.

Gilmore interposed. "What's the good of raggin'! I've got the cards here! Poker's the word!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was sleeping peacefully above—dreaming, probably, of woods and lanes and caravanning; certainly not dreaming of what was going on in St. Leger's "den." Two o'clock had chimed when Cutts & Co. threw aside the cards and loured away to bed. This was a "high old time," according to the blades of the Fifth. But they certainly did not look any better for it in the morning.

CHAPTER 8.

Cutts Loses his Temper!

"HALLO, Gussy! Come to brekker!"

Tom Merry & Co. were up and lively in the early sunshine of the summer morning, and the caravan camp was busy.

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The caravanners were sitting on the grass having breakfast when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in sight from the gates.

The swell of St. Jim's was taking a stroll before breakfast.

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

His expression was very serious as he joined the caravanners.

He shook his head in response to the cheery hospitality of his old comrades.

"Thank you, dear boys! I ask breakfastin' with my friends!" he answered.

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

"I trust so, Blake; but I am weferrin' to St. Leger and the Fifth Form chaps. Unless the cire, they would not like me to breakfast with you, as you are persistin' in actin' the goat!"

"Fathhead!"

"Weally, Blake—"

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

"I should be very pleased to meet Figgins again, Tom Mewey; but I cannot rejoin you at present, as I accepted St. Leger's hospitality for a week. I have come here to request you to move on!"

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowtham—"

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

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

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

"You fellows misjudge Cutts!"

"Oh, rats!"

"I regard that wejoindah as wrole, Hewies! I weally wish you fellows could see that it is bad form to plant yourselves within twenty yards of St. Leger's gates in this mannah! I fash there will be twouble if you remain hesh!"

"That's all right!" said Blake cheerily.

"A little trouble will help to pass the time, Gussy! We've got your golf-clubs ready for Cutts & Co, if they come along hunting for trouble!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then you wrefuse to wrefuse from the scene!"

"You've got it!"

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

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

"Bow-wow!"

"Have some of these nice raspers, Gussy?"

"Wats!"

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

Arthur Augustus sauntered slowly and thoughtfully through the grounds towards the red-tiled house.

He was not in a comfortable mood. Cutts & Co. had concealed the cloven hoof so successfully—chiefly owing to

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Gussy's unsuspectingness—that the elegant Fourth-Former was convinced by this time that they had been misjudged. His opinion was destined to undergo a change, but that was not yet. And he was deeply distressed by the attitude taken up by Tom Merry & Co. Any hostile collision between the caravanners and the party at the Lodge would have made Gussy's position very painful indeed.

There was no sign of Cutts & Co. about the house yet, and Arthur Augustus strolled round to the stables. He found Charley Chippis in the yard, busy with a mop and pail. The little rascal touched his cap to Arthur Augustus with a welcoming grin.

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

"Mornin', sir!" said Charley.

"Busy already—what!"

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

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

Charley stared.

"Oh, sir!" he ejaculated.

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

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

"Yass, deah boy—quite enjoyable."

"Did you 'ave any luck, sir?"

"Luck!" repeated Arthur Augustus.

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

"Won!" said Arthur Augustus, with a jump. "Why, you howwid young wascal, do you think I have been gamblin'!"

Charley jumped, too.

"I—I thought—" he stammered.

"You are undah a verry mistaken impression," said Arthur Augustus sternly. "You appear to have verry queer ideas, Charley, of what goes on in your master's house."

Charley blinked.

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

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

"Oh, sir!" he murmured.

"P'ray put such ideas entirely out of your head, my boy," said Arthur Augustus. He addressed Charley in quite a fatherly manner, regardless of the fact that Master Chippis was the elder of the two.

You must not think such things at all. You are quite mistaken."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Charley.

"By the way, I undahstand that you guided the caravan on Satahday, and guided it w'ong," said Arthur Augustus.

"That was a verry rotten thing to do, Charley. You should not play such tricks."

"Nanno, sir!" stammered Charley.

"I—I thought they was arter you, sir, to stop you 'avin' a good time with Master Cutts and his friends."

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

"But—but—" stuttered Charley.

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

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

"Oh, sir!"

"Weally, Chippis—"

There was a step on the cobblestones, and Arthur Augustus looked round as Cutts of the Fifth sauntered up. Cutts was looking pale and tired, and there were lines on his face. He was in an evil temper, the result of physical fatigue and distress after his reckless night, but he smiled genially at Arthur Augustus.

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

"I—I was just talkin' to Charley."

Cutts gave him a very keen look, and then his eyes glittered at Charley Chippis. That hapless youth backed away from his pail and mop. The clouded expression on D'Arcy's face did not escape Gerald Cutts's eyes.

"Comin' in to brekker!" he said.

"Yass, wathah!"

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

"Wigh-ho!"

Arthur Augustus walked out of the stable-yard, still in a very thoughtful mood. In spite of himself, his old distrust of Cutts had come back. Cutts waited till he was clear, and then called Charley. The stable-boy came up very unwillingly. He was afraid of Cutts. And now that Gussy was out of sight the blackguard of St. Jim's did not take any trouble to disguise his evil temper.

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

"Nothin', sir!" stammered Charley.

"Don't tell me any lies!" said Cutts savagely. "You've been chattering, you young fool!"

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

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

"I—I never knowed that—"

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

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

Cutts gripped the riding-whip. He was angry with Charley, but it was chiefly the effects of drinking and smoking that made him so evil and bitter. His savage temper wanted a victim, and the hapless stable-lad came handy as a victim. Charley read his expression easily enough, and backed away farther in alarm.

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

"You ain't going to 'it me," said Charley. "You ain't my gov'nor, Master Cutts, anyhow. Oh crickey!"

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

Lash, lash, lash!

The wretched boy's yell rang through the stable-yard. A groom came out of the stable, stared, and went in again. Cutts's hard face was aflame with malice and cruelty as he lashed the hapless boy, who struggled in vain in his grasp.

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

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

"Or, or, or! Oh, oh, oh!" moaned Charley.

Cutts's eyes glittered down at him.

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

Cutts threw his whip under his arm, and strode out of the stable-yard. St. Leger and the rest were at breakfast when he came in, all of them rather silent and surly. Cutts smiled genially as he dropped into his seat. He was playing his part once more. The savage bully had given place to the insinuating sharper. Arthur Augustus somewhat clouded brow cleared, and he was soon merry and bright under the influence of Cutts's genial chat and high spirits. And once more Arthur Augustus felt that he had misjudged Cutts of the Fifth.

CHAPTER 9.

An Unexpected Guest!

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

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

"And then—"

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

"The as!"

"The fathod!"

"The chump!"

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

It fell to Herries to 'bike away for provisions, and to Digby to fetch the water. Manners wandered away with his camera, and Monty Lowther started searching for a farm in quest of eggs and milk and butter. Tom Merry and Blake remained chatting for a time. Somebody had to stay with the van, so they stayed. But after a time, as Blake had found a book, Tom Merry went for a stroll.

He did not stroll very far, however. He was sauntering down a narrow, shady lane, not a hundred yards from the caravan camp, when he halted suddenly. A peculiar sound had come to his ears.

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

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

"Charley!" exclaimed Tom Merry. Charley looked up dismally.

"Oh, you!" he muttered. "You want to pitch into me, too, p'raps. I don't care! I can't be 'urt much more'n I'm 'urt already, so there!"

The St. Jim's junior gave him a compassionate look. He could see that the hapless youth had "been through it."

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His jacket had been cut by the savage blow of the whip.

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

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

"Of course not, you young ass! Who's been licking you?" exclaimed Tom.

"Not one of my friends, I know that, though you deserved it."

"Master Cutts ain't one of your friends," muttered Charley.

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

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

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

"It's the same thing—Master St. Leger ain't got a soul of his own when Cutts is about," said Charley. "Praps I'll get back when the major comes 'ome—but he ain't expected 'ome. He's in Germany with the Army. I wouldn't go back to the Lodge, nor if Master St. Leger was to ask me, while Cutts was there! Oh, he's a beast—a cruel beast, he is! I've seed 'im thrash a 'orse, when he was in one of his tempers, till it made my blood run cold! Oh, he's a proper beast!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

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

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

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

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

"You could summons him for that," said Tom. "That kind of thing isn't allowed in England, Charley; it's a bit too Prussian."

"Lot of good a pore bloke like mo going to-er with a rich young gent like Cutts!" said Charley, derisively. "Don't you pull my leg, sir. Oh, he was in a temper, he was! He'd been drinking. And that young gent with the glass eyes—his's took in proper, he is. I'd tell him all about it now, if I could. Oh, oh, oh!"

"Come along with me," said Tom.

"Where?" asked Charley, suspiciously.

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

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

"You young ass, I'm not gammoning you! Come with me."

Tom Merry caught the boy's grimy arm, and lifted him. Charley accompanied him rather suspiciously and unwillingly to the caravan camp, where Jack Blake greeted them with a stare.

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

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

Tom Merry explained to Blake.

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

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

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

But they were quite cordial and cheery, generously dismissing from their THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 691.

minds the trick Charley had played on them a couple of days earlier.

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

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

"Yes, rather!"

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

"Wotto!" said Charley.

Over dinner Charley brightened up a good deal.

He confided to the caravanners a good many circumstances about himself; and his father had fallen in Flanders, and then the old major had given him a job about the stables, where he "slep" in a room over the stable—and that he was without relations, so far as he knew, excepting for an uncle in London, who was a "corker." The juniors did not inquire what variety of a "corker" Charley's uncle was.

After a time, Charley lay in the grass listening to the talk of the juniors, and blinking at them.

It was pretty evident that the hapless lad had experienced very little in the way of kindness, and that the kindness he was receiving from the caravanners made him wonder.

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

"No fear!" answered Charley, promptly.

"What are you going to do?"

"Dunno!"

"Got any tin?"

"I got three bob," said Charley.

"I 'ad thirty bob last week, but I lost it."

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

"On a 'orse!" explained Charley.

"Oh, my hat!"

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

"Wotto!" said Charley.

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

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"That won't be long, if he won't play cards with them," said Blake, "and I don't believe Gussy will, with all Cutts's cunning tricks. I shouldn't wonder if Gussy's on the road with 'er again to-morrow."

"I hope so," said Tom.

Charley looked curiously at the captain of the Shell.

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

"Of course."

"I didn't rightly catch on at first," said Charley. "I savvy now—they've got him there to 'rook 'im!"

"That's it."

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

"One of the best," grinned Blake.

"Gilt-edged, all wool, and a yard wide!"

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

Charley looked perplexed, as well he might.

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

"He wouldn't dare."

"There ain't much that Master Cutts wouldn't dare, when his temper's up. There'll be a row if he disappoints Master Cutts, so I tell yer," said Charley.

"They'll make him squirm, you can bet. I know 'em!"

The caravanners looked at one another. It occurred to them that Arthur Augustus D'Arrey might find himself in a very bad box indeed if Cutts were disappointed in his designs. The treatment of Charley showed what the blackguard of the Fifth was capable of. And the thought of Arthur Augustus shut up defenceless with four angry and disappointed sharpers was a very uncomfortable one. And Tom Merry & Co. discussed the situation, from that point of view, with a good deal more anxiety than before.

CHAPTER 10.

The Cloven Hoof!

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

"Yass, 'Atbah!" assented Arthur Augustus D'Arrey.

Dinner was over at St. Leger Lodge, and Cutts & Co. had been knocking the bats about in the billiard-room for some time. After that—as Arthur Augustus had shown no inclination to put a stake on a game—they had adjourned to St. Leger's den. It was close on Gussy's bed-time—but he politely forbore to mention that fact, as the Fifth-Formers evidently wanted to stay up. The servants had gone to bed, and the house was locked up; all the building was in darkness save St. Leger's den, which was brilliantly lighted.

Cutts was smiling and cheery; but there was angry uneasiness in his breast.

During the day he had carefully kept Arthur Augustus away from the caravan camp quite as he liked; and he had made many attempts to lead the junior's thoughts in the direction he desired them to take.

But it was in vain.

Even in the billiard-room he had failed, though he had come almost out into the open there.

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

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

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

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

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

"Thank you, no!" said Arthur Augustus quietly.

"Oh, I forgot! You don't smoke!"

"I do not, St. Leger."

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

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

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

"Now for that round game!" he remarked.

"Make it poker," said Cutts, with a smile. "Poker for counters, of course. Nobody here wants to play for money, I suppose!"

"Oh, certainly not!"

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

Cutts set his teeth for a moment as D'Arcy made that innocent answer. He shuddered the cards. Gussy was somewhat vague on the subject of poker; but Cutts was a good instructor, and he exercised the greatest patience and gentleness in instructing Gussy. Bone counters were used for the game, and D'Arcy found it interesting enough. It was a terrible bore to the others, who cared nothing for the game as a game of skill. They were anxious to see money on the table.

But Cutts would not spoil his game by haste.

Several rounds were played, and Arthur Augustus, with all his inexperience, found himself a winner. He did not suspect that Gerald Cutts kindly arranged that for him.

He smiled expansively as he collected up quite a heap of bone counters.

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

"Yass, wathah!" smiled Arthur Augustus.

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

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

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

Arthur Augustus laid down his cards.

"Well, I leave that to the majority," said Cutts. "We don't want anythin' like gamblin' here in St. Leger's house; but perhaps bob points would make it interestin'. What do you say, St. Leger?"

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

"Right you are!"

"By Jove, it's wathahly past my bedtime!" remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Will you fellows excuse me if I wathah!"

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

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

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

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

"Come, come, sick to the game!" said Cutts, smiling. "I'll lend you some shillings to begin, if you've no change."

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

"Of course, it's only fun."

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

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

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

Arthur Augustus rose from the table.

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

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

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

Cutts suppressed an oath.

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

"It won't!"

"Oh, rot! Your deal!"

The four began to play poker. Arthur Augustus was pacing on the balcony outside in a very disquieted mood.

When he passed the open window he could see the four at play, and the glimmer of the cards and half-crowns and currency notes on the table.

Gussy was not feeling happy.

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

He was very strongly tempted to descend the steps into the garden and make his way to the caravan camp on the road.

But he could scarcely treat his host in such a cavalier fashion, and he remained on the balcony in a very disturbed frame of mind.

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

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

A whispering voice came to his ears from the gloom.

"This 'ere is the place, sir."

"Charley!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"My hat! There's Gussy!"

"Is that Tom Merry's voice."

"Bai Jove!"

"Gussy!"

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

"What are you doin' here, you fellows?" he asked sternly. "St. Leger would be vewy wathah if he knew you were twespain' on his grounds!"

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

"Wathahly, Blake—"

"Takin' a rest after your gamble!" grunted Herrick.

"I have not been gamblin', Hewwies!"

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

"That is not my bizney, Hewwies; nor yours, either. I have not taken part in the game since there was money on the table, and I'm not interestin' to do so!"

said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

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

"Wubbish! Why are you fellahs beah!"

"We came along to the repous, Gussy."

"I fail to understand you, Tom Merwuy."

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

"Wats! I refuse to heah such remarks concernin' my host, Tom Merwuy. I wquest you to wathah!"

"Bow-wow!"

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

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

CHAPTER 11.

Rather a Shindy!

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

For the moment he supposed that the cards and the money had exercised their fascination on the junior, and that he had returned to take part in the game. Not for an instant did he suspect the presence of Tom Merry & Co. under the balcony; and Arthur Augustus, anxious above all things to avoid a scene, did not think of enlightening him.

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

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

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

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

Arthur Augustus turned to the door.

He was polite, but he was quite determined; and in his tone and his look Gerald Cutts read his failure.

A very ugly expression came over Cutts's hard face.

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

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

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

Cutts was out in the open now with a vengeance.

Arthur Augustus staggered a few paces.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

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

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

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

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

No answer.

"Very well," said Arthur Augustus.

"Cutts, I request you to allow me to pass."

"Sit down!"

"I refuse to sit down, Cutts. I refuse to remain in your society another minute!" said D'Arcy, his voice trembling with anger and indignation.

"I fash, Cutts, that my friends were wight in warnin' me not to twist myself in your company. Nothin' will induce me to take part in the disgraceful proceedings of your school, and I refuse to remain even this night in St. Leger's house. Now, let me pass!"

"There's your chair," said Cutts.

"Sit down!"

"I refuse to do so!"

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

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

"You cheeky young cad!" exclaimed Prye.

Arthur Augustus' lip curled.

"Are you becomin' vewy candid now," he said. "I have been withan an ass—I say that now; but I certainly have no intention of becomin' a wascal as well. I am waitin' for you to move, Cutts."

"Will you take your seat?"

"No, I will not!"

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

"If you are goin' to be a wulfian, Cutts, as well as a wogue and a wascal—"

he began.

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

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

"St. Leger smoked in silence."

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

"Did you think it was for your delightful company, you cheeky lag?" sneered Prye.

"Sit down!" said Cutts.

His powerful grasp fell upon Arthur Augustus, and the junior was swung towards the card-table. With a flash in his eyes Arthur Augustus struck at Cutts' flushed face, and the Fifth-Former gave a howl.

He jammed D'Arcy savagely into his chair.

"Now take your cards!"

"I will not!"

"Listen to me," said Cutts, hoarse with rage. "You're here to join in the game. Understand that! If you

refuse, I shall take it as a personal insult, and I shall make you suffer for it. Do you understand?"

"I quite understand that you will act like a wulfian, Cutts, if you cannot act like a card-sharpah," replied Arthur Augustus calmly. "But I refuse to gamble with you, all the same."

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

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

Cutts gave a savage laugh.

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

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

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

"Shut up, you fool!"

"Wescue!" roared Arthur Augustus.

The thought of Tom Merry & Co. came into his mind as he struggled with Cutts, and he shouted. If only they were still within hearing—

"Help! Wescue!"

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

There was a pattering of steps on the balcony without, and the French windows were flung wide open.

Jack Blake rushed into the room with Tom Merry, and behind them came the rest of the caravans.

"Give them socks!" roared Blake.

"Why, what—what—?" stammered Gilmore.

He had no time to stammer more, for Herries and Digby were at him, crashing him to the floor. Blake sprang on Cutts like a tiger, dragging him back from Arthur Augustus. Tom Merry grasped the rascal of the Fifth at the same moment. Manners and Lowther tackled Prye, and rolled him over. St. Leger started to his feet, but he did not join in the conflict, and the juniors let him alone. He backed to the door and leaned on it, still smoking his cigarette, and looking on.

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

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

Bump! Crash!

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

"Give him jip!" yelled Charley.

"Give him beans! Oh, I say, this is ord right! Give him some more!"

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

Crash!

Cutts went sprawling over the card-table, howling. Prye and Gilmore were yelling for mercy. St. Leger still looked on coolly.

"Help us, you fool!" yelled Prye.

St. Leger shook his head.

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

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye.

"Pewpaws they have had enough, deah boys," he remarked. "I am very much obliged to you for walling would like this."

Tom Merry gasped.

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Better give Cutts some more," suggested Herries.

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

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

"Yaas, wathah; let us wctire, deah boys!"

The caravanners crowded out on the balcony, Arthur Augustus accompanying them. They left three young rascals gasping and groaning behind them. The juniors hurried through the gardens, and in a few minutes they were in the road.

"Shove in the horse," said Blake.

"We don't want to camp here to-night. Let's get on the road."

"Yes, rather!"

"Where's Charley?"

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

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

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

THE END.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS.

A Special New Series by the Editor of the Companion Papers.

CHAPTER 13.

PRESS DAY.

"MY dear fellow," I replied to my cross-examiner, "my time is fully occupied, I can assure you. The papers do not run themselves. It is necessary for somebody to be in command, and it is my privilege to be that somebody. To begin with, every story has to be edited—"

"Even then like Martin Clifford are not infallible. They occasionally make mistakes. And it is part of my duty to see that those mistakes do not appear in print."

"I refuse to believe that Martin Clifford ever makes a blunder!"

"Indeed! Well, just cast your eye over the first page of this manuscript."

"And I handed a typewritten 'G-m' story to my visitor."

"He scanned it intently for some moments."

"There's nothing wrong with this," he said at length.

"On the contrary," I said, "there are two mistakes on the first page."

"Name them!"

"Very well. The second paragraph runs as follows: A strong wind came up from the sea as the rival teams took the field."

"That's quite O.K."

"It would be, if it were a Greyfriars story. Unfortunately, the sea breezes don't penetrate to St. Jim's."

"Oh!"

"The second error is this: 'Faulner of the Sixth, who was referred, blew a shrill blast on his whistle.'"

"That's perfectly accurate," said my visitor.

"Except for the fact that Faulner happens to be a Greyfriars fellow!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Mistakes of this sort are bound to arise. I went on. 'Martin Clifford had probably just finished reading one of Frank Richards' stories, and he accidentally typed the name Faulner instead of Darrel or Baker.'"

"I see."

"Most of these stories have to be read very carefully before they are sent to the printers. A certain amount of revision is invariably necessary."

"Still, reading manuscripts is not a hard life."

"But that represents only a small portion of an editor's work. Among other things, I have to staff the control."

"But they're not so unruly mob, are they?"

"Of course not! At the same time, their individual needs must have attention. There are such things as summer holidays to be arranged, and when a sub-editor takes a bit of his head to get worried, I have to arrange for his work to be carried on during his honeymoon. Then, again, queries are constantly cropping up in the office, and I am called upon to give decisions."

"Let you don't call that hard work—"

"I haven't finished yet. You may not be aware of the fact that there are plots to revolt, advertisements to map out, to say nothing of numerous rough sketches for the guidance of artists."

"You mean to say an artist cannot do his sketches off his own bat?"

"Not always. He may not know exactly what is required. Therefore, a rough sketch helps him a good deal."

"I thought! You're a busier fellow than I thought!"

"Thank you! I might mention that I rely especially to a good many of my readers."

"Oh, but that's simple! You just say, 'My dear Chum,—Many thanks for your letter, and for your loyalty to my papers,—I am sincerely yours, The Editor.'"

"Nonsense! In many cases a letter calls for a whole heap of explanation."

"And to prove my point I picked up a reply I had just written to a Liverpool reader who had approached me on the all-important subject of choosing a cover."

"Finally, I succeeded in convincing my visitor that an editor is anything but a gentleman of leisure."

"Another point which I omitted to mention," I said, "is the frequent exchange of compliments which goes on between the Editor and the printers. Our printers happen to be exceptionally nice fellows. At the same time, it is necessary to make certain things clear to them. Particularly is this the case with regard to sketches. Nearly every sketch which goes to the printing works is accompanied by instructions to the process department. In fact, I devote at least a couple of hours to whispering sweet nothings to the printers, and they, in turn, whisper sweet nothings to me."

"You are on good terms with them?"

"Decidedly! I will give you a sample of my conversation with the foreman-printer. My telephone-bell rings. A voice like a cooling dore hails me over the wires:

"Is that the Editor of the 'Gem'?"

"Yes."

"Good morning, sir! I trust you have had a good night?"

"Splendid, thanks!"

"You are perfectly fit?"

"Yes."

"And in the pink of condition?"

"Certainly!"

"You're not dead yet?"

"Of course not!"

"Then, for mercy's sake, look up and don't overdo the next 'Gem' story!"

"My visitor gasps: 'These printers are!' he murmured."

"Yes, aren't they? The fellow who spoke about the politeness of printers" was talking out of his mind. He should have said 'the politeness of printers'."

"Well, well!" said my visitor, as he rose to depart. "I take back all the unkind things I said about an editor being an idle sort of fellow. The Bishop of London and the Bishop of Exeter have each chosen to be the hardest-worked man in the community, but you leave 'em both standing!"

"Having fully converted my visitor, I ushered him out."

Let me at once say that I had not been polling his leg. An editor's life is emphatically a busy one. And I would not have it otherwise, for I like being busy. Stagnation is the worst of all diseases.

Quite apart from the items I have enumerated, an editor carries a big responsibility on his shoulders. And the more papers he controls the bigger the responsibility.

One has to be continually keeping authors and artists up to the mark. The articles and sketches have to be submitted weeks before they actually appear, and it sometimes happens that a writer or an artist

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET. THE BOY'S FRIEND. THE GEM. THE PINKY POPULAR. SHUCKLES. Every Monday. Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

For Next Wednesday:

"CHARLEY AND THE CARRAVANNERS!"

By Martin Clifford.

Under the above title your favourite author has written another capital complete story, dealing with the further adventures of Tom Merry & Co. whilst on their holiday tour.

It is a story full of excitement and fun, and to make certain of next week's issue of the GEM Library you will be well-advised to place an early order with your newsagent.

HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS?

The 'Greyfriars Herald' is coming out again in October!

During the War I received thousands of letters from readers of the Companion Papers asking that the great school journal should commence publication again.

However, like a great many other things, during that terrible time—now happily past—it could not be done. But those thousands of letters were sufficient to convince me that one of my chief tasks after the restoration of Peace would be to take steps to restore the 'Greyfriars Herald' to its rightful place among the Companion Papers.

And so, in spite of the colossal amount of work which has been involved in the preparation of the Annual, apart from the Companion Papers, I have now definitely arranged that the 'Greyfriars Herald' shall make its reappearance in

OCTOBER!

Nothing but the knowledge that thousands upon thousands of readers of the Companion Papers are anxiously awaiting this great event would have impelled me to embark upon this gigantic task at such a busy time.

But I have always made it a rule to study the wishes of my readers before personal considerations, and in consequence I am now hard at work upon the preparations of No. 1 of the new edition of the

"GREYFRIARS HERALD."

You will realize that by doing this I am putting great faith in the loas of thousands of readers of the Companion Papers all over the world, for it is upon them that the success of the new edition of the great journal will depend.

I have only to ask you to get the first number when it comes out in October, for I know that if you read No. 1 you will be certain to obtain the succeeding numbers, as it is going to be better than ever it has been before.

I said there was only one thing I had to ask you, but there is another, and very important, request I have to make.

I want you to be sure and tell all your chums, whether boy or girl, about the reappearance of the 'Greyfriars Herald'.

None but the most selfish want to keep good things to themselves, and if you

TELL ALL YOUR CHUMS

they will be everlastingly grateful to you. Therefore,

DONT FORGET.

THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD."

In

OCTOBER!

WHAT I LIKE TO HEAR.

I have received a long and interesting letter from a girl chum of East Ham, in which she says:

"After being a reader of your fine books for some years, I have at last plucked up courage to write and express my thanks for the many wavy hours they have helped to pass." "I receive thousands of letters in the course of a year from readers who, like my girl

chum, have found that the Companion Papers are the best friends for the weary hours.

No readers of the Gem ever suffer from the "hump"—they don't! They tried. They could read about Tom Merry & Co. and suffer from the "hump" at the same time.

My chum goes on to say:

"I know an old lady of seventy that used to enjoy the 'Billy Bunters,' as she called them, as thoroughly as I."

I have received increasing proof of late that all my readers are not boys and girls, and I dare venture to say that a great many more "grown-ups" would be added to the number of loyal supporters of the Companion Papers if they had a fair idea of the good things which are included therein.

AN ADVERTISING SUGGESTION.

An old reader of the Companion Papers sends me a most interesting letter from the North, with a suggestion—in connection with the good old 'Penny Pop' (long may he reign!), concerning the tales of Harry Wharton & Co., which we all consider to be the best that Frank Richards has ever written. We wondered (and please don't laugh, Mr. Editor) if it would be possible for a number of boys of your choosing to tour the country as Harry Wharton & Co. I am sure it would be a great advertisement for the Companion Papers (if they need advertizing!).

It is quite a bright idea, though, I am afraid, not at all feasible.

I have so many thousands of loyal supporters that, were I called upon to make a choice such as my correspondent suggests, I should not be satisfied unless I could include them all. And—well, it would be rather awkward to send a party numbering some tens of thousands on a tour round the country, wouldn't it?

No; after all, the best advertisement the Companion Papers can have is for every loyal reader to tell his or her chums about our splendid school stories, and get them to become readers.

However, I am always glad to hear from any of my chums, and welcome all suggestions.

YOUR EDITOR.

NOTICES.

Back Numbers: Wanted and for Sale.

Miss Kitty Betchlor, 48, Belsheim Terrace, St. John's Wood, London, N.W.8, a sufferer from rheumatism which keeps her bedridden, asks any fellow-reader of the "Magnet" to let her have Numbers 1-135, for which she offers 2s. 6d. each.

Cecil Whitford, Mount May, St. Agnes, Scourie, Cornwall, has back numbers to sell. Albert Dailow, 2/23, Boreley Park Road, Small Heath, Birmingham, wants "Gems" and "Magnets" 1-400; 3d. each; 401-50, 2/6; 501 numbers, 40. Write first.

Thomas J. Redmond, 195, the Paythe, Wexford, Ireland, has 1-17 "P. P." 50a-10 "Magnet," and 572-593 "Gem" to sell. Highest offer.

H. Maher, 27, Terrace Street, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, wants Buster japes, also "School and Sport," "Rivals and Chums," etc.

Jack Harding, 21, College Road, Kent Town, South Australia—"Gems" and "Magnets." Write, stating particulars and price.

Philip McVizzart, 75, Gevashill Street, Glasgow—"Magnets" from 1901 to 1912, also 1898, 2s. each offered. Write first.

J. Buchanan, 11, Shelton Avenue, Wallon, Liverpool—"Magnets" up to 1913, 2d. each offered. Write first.

William Lloyd, 43, Luxmore Road, Waller, Liverpool—"Magnets" up to 1913, 2d. each offered. Write first.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

(Continued from page 15).

does not realize the extreme urgency of a danger. He may imagine he is keeping well ahead with his work, when all the time he is falling behind.

So far as Martin Clifford and Frank Richards are concerned there has been no danger, except one never-to-be-forgotten occasion when I found myself without a "Gem" story to go to press with!

It was not Martin Clifford's fault, although I did not learn the true facts of the case until afterwards.

It so happened that Martin Clifford had sent in two rattling good stories dealing with Talbot, and entitled respectively "The Call of the Past" and "Cast Out from the School." A third was to follow to complete the series, and the third never came!

Time did not permit of my writing to Martin Clifford for an explanation. And it did not seem altogether satisfactory to send a telegram. The "Gem" author was at his bungalow, situated in a remote part of the South Coast, and telegrams took a long time to filter through.

Although I had been trained to keep a cool head in an emergency of this sort, I confess I felt extremely anxious.

The story was required within twenty-four hours.

The afternoon post, which I awaited with almost frenzied eagerness, brought me no manuscript.

What had happened?

My mind was filled with numerous conjectures concerning Martin Clifford.

A terrible storm had raged recently, and I could not help wondering if Martin Clifford had encountered it whilst out in his sailing-boat.

Only a week before several sailing-craft had capsize in a storm off the coast, close to Martin Clifford's residence, and I could be excused for thinking that he might have shared the fate which so frequently overtakes those that go down to the sea in ships.

Tap, tap!

It was a knock on the door of my sanctum. Never had I shouted "Come in" so eagerly and expectantly, for it occurred to me that Martin Clifford had personally brought his manuscript up to town.

But it was not the "Gem" author who appeared. It was Mr. Macdonald, the artist.

"For four days," he explained, "I've been waiting to illustrate the next 'Gem' story."

"It isn't in," I said dully.

"What?"

"I've been expecting it by every post, but nothing has happened."

"Great Scott! What's become of Martin Clifford?"

"Goodness knows!"

There was a longer pause. Then Mr. Macdonald said:

"What are you going to do about it?"

I shook my head. Visions of an issue of the "Gem" Library containing an instalment of a serial, a column of Chat, and nothing more, began to haunt me.

"You could ask Frank Richards to write the story for once in a way," suggested Mr. Macdonald hopefully.

"Impossible!" I said. "In the first place, Frank Richards is far too busy with his own work; and, secondly, the story I'm waiting for is one of a series. It's no use anyone else attempting to write it."

"What an awful state of affairs!"



Robin Hood.

"Ghastly!" I said. "Had I better stand by, in case the manuscript comes in?"

"Not I," I said. "Mr. Macdonald waited in my sanctum until the afternoon had merged into evening."

"Look here," I said at length, "there's no object in your making an all-night vigil of it! You'd better go home. You're on the 'phone at your studio, and I'll ring you up if there's any news."

"That's the idea!"

When the "Gem" artist had gone I summoned my editor.

"Martin Clifford's next story hasn't come to hand," I said.

The sub-editor stared.

"Then it will be too late," he said.

"Not if I get the manuscript to-morrow morning. Would you like a little adventure?"

He nodded.

"Go down to Martin Clifford's bungalow and find out exactly what has happened. There's a train leaving Victoria in half an hour."

"Right!" said the sub-editor promptly.

"You'd better take a couple of notebooks with you."

"Not if I get the manuscript to-morrow morning," said the sub-editor.

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Thanks to the tireless energy of Martin Clifford and the sub-editor, the "Gem" Library made its appearance on the book-stall as usual.

The story which was completed under such dramatic circumstances was entitled "Loyal to the Last"; and, I might add, lest there be any who consider it must have been a slipshod performance, that the story in question was unanimously voted to be one of Martin Clifford's masterpieces.

Considering that Mr. Macdonald was engaged in a race against time, the sketches were excellent. Most of my classes will remember the cover scene, which portrayed Tom Merry & Co.'s discovery of Reginald Talbot on the Thames Embankment.

This is the only occasion so far as I can recollect, when we have really "cut it fine."

Our old and tried friends, the printers, will readily testify to the fact that the number of sleepless nights they have been caused through the late arrival of "copy" at the printing works is practically nil.

Nevertheless, an editor is always up against the possibility of delay. You will understand now what I mean when I say that authors and artists have to be kept up to the mark.

If this were not done stories and sketches would not be available at the time of going to press. And that way lies disaster.

CHAPTER 14.

Oft Duty!

I WAS seated in my sanctum one morning, wrestling with a fifteen-page letter from somebody signing himself "An Ardent Reader," when the door was thrown open, and Martin Clifford burst in.

He had now fully recovered from his illness, and was well ahead with his "Gem" stories.

"Hallo, I exclaimed. 'What brings you from your bungalow?'"

Martin Clifford calmly filled his pipe from my pouch.

"You come along," he said, "with the object of dragging you from your den—by force, if necessary. You're coming for a cycle-pin into the country."

"Oh, am I?" I grunted. "It's the first I've heard of it."

"Not you needn't pretend you're busy," said Martin Clifford. "That 'Ardent Reader' who's had the cheek to send you fifteen pages of questions can jolly well whistise for the answers!"

"But there is other work—"

"Leave it to the sub."

"Impossible!"

"That work," said Martin Clifford, "ought to be struck out of the dictionary. You're not going to tell me that the Companion Papers will collapse if you take just one day off."

"It can't be done," I said. "I've got several long-haired poets to interview."

"Let them amuse themselves by interviewing each other! I say you're coming out!"

"And I say I'm not!"

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

Our conversation had reached this hostile stage when Frank Richards came in.

"Hallo, Martin!" he said cheerily. "Then, turning to me, he added: 'The bikes are all ready.'"

"Eh? What bikes?" I asked.

"The bikes for our cycling-squad, of course!" I could see at once that this was a protracted phob.

(To be continued in next Wednesday's issue of the GEM Library. Order your copy to-day.)

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