

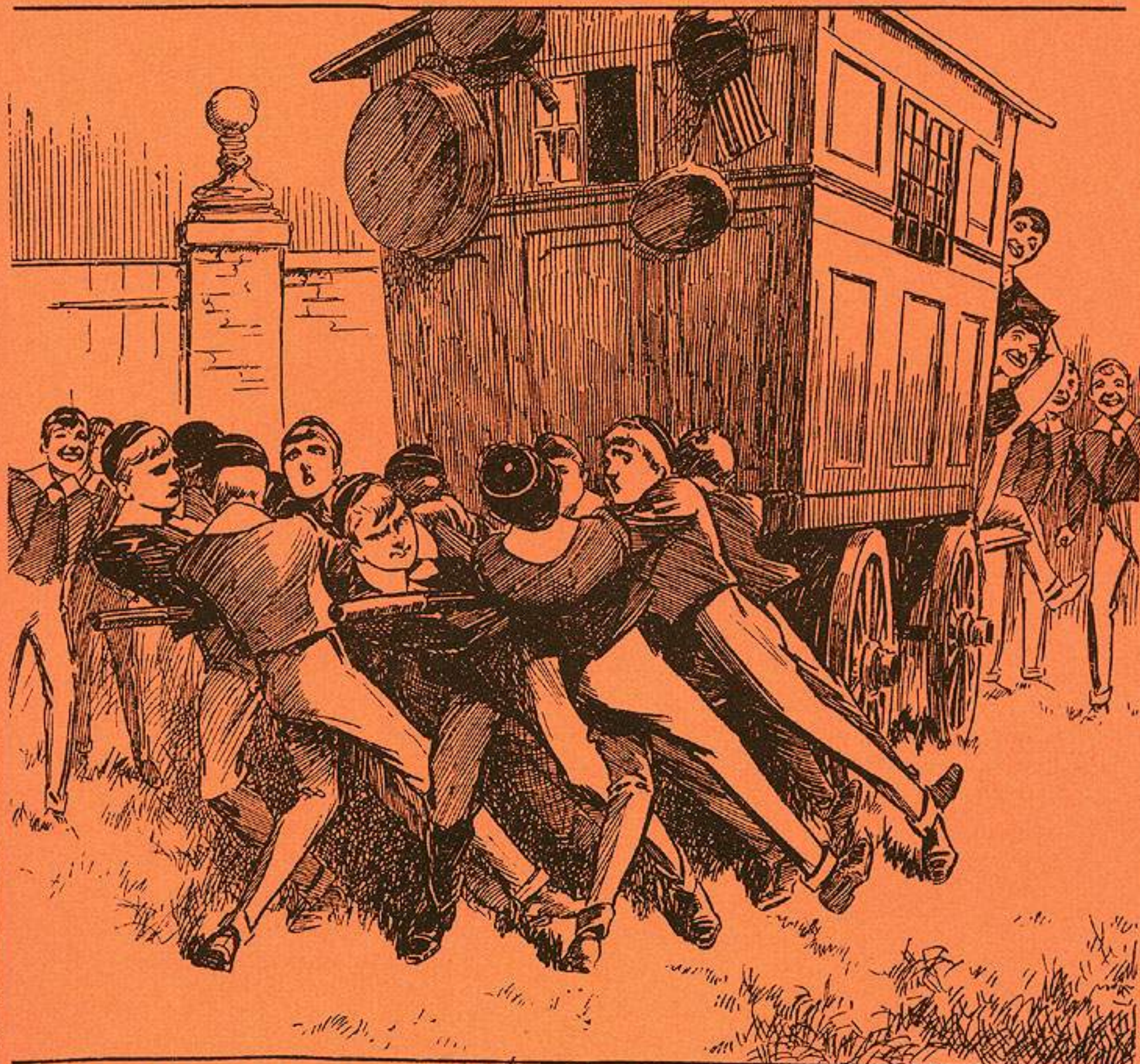
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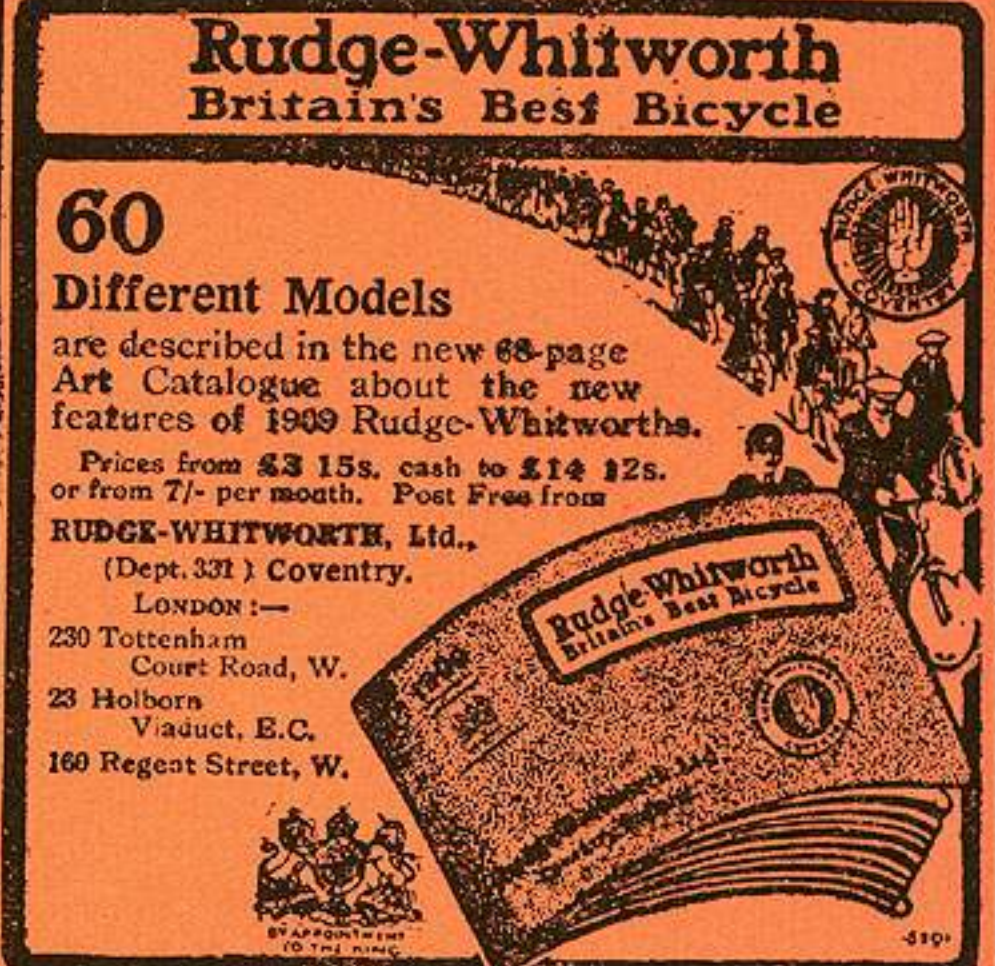
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— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

How the Caravan came to Greyfriars.

**B**UMP!  
Clatter!  
Clang!  
“What on earth’s that row?” muttered Harry Wharton. He peered into the darkness of the Friardale Road. It was a dark night; and Greyfriars school lay dim and silent. Only from the masters’ study windows lights still gleamed into the leafy Close. The junior studies and the junior dormitories were in darkness; and the juniors ought all to have been asleep. But two of them, at least, were wide awake—and out of doors.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, of the Remove, had just climbed the school wall, in the dense black shadow of the overhanging trees, and were about to drop outside into the road, when the sudden clatter came to their ears, and they paused.

Clatter!  
Clang!  
“What on earth——”  
“It’s some giddy cart or other coming along,” muttered Bob Cherry—“a market cart, I suppose, from the way it bumps. But——”  
Clang! clink! clang!

“Blessed if I know what that means,” said Bob. “Better keep up here in cover till it’s gone by, whatever it is.”

“Yes, rather.”  
Under the leafy branches, on top of the school wall, the two juniors remained as quiet as mice, and peered down into the road. A glimmering light came into view in the darkness, evidently carried by the, as yet unseen, vehicle.

Clang! clink! clang!  
“I should say that chap had all his family tins and kettles hanging round his cart,” muttered Bob Cherry. “What a ghastly row!”

The noise seemed greater in the dead silence of the night. It echoed along the lonely road, and through the dim wood on the other side. Wharton and Cherry waited impatiently. They did not wish to show themselves to any passer, for they were breaking bounds, and they could not afford to run the slightest risk of that fact becoming known to the “powers that were” at Greyfriars. Not that there was any harm in the little excursion, as far as that went. They were going to set some night-lines in the Sark—or, rather, Bob Cherry was going to do so, and Harry was going with him to keep him company. But it was against the rules; and any master or prefect who had discovered them at that moment might not have credited that their intention was so innocent. Not so long before, a boy



in the Remove had been compelled to leave Greyfriars for the offence known as "pub-haunting."

Clink! clink! clang! clink!

Bob Cherry uttered a suppressed exclamation.

"It's a caravan!"

In the glimmer of the light, the vehicle had come into sight at last—dim, but discernible. It was a gipsy caravan, drawn by a single bony horse, with a man sitting on the shaft. The clanking and clinking came from a collection of pails, pans, and kettles, slung under the caravan. The horse was moving slowly and solemnly, and the heavy van rolled and bumped in every rut of the road.

Harry Wharton looked down at the caravan with interest. Some time before he had had rough adventures with a gang of outcast gipsies—and Nadesha, the old gipsy who had fled from her people, was still living at Greyfriars. The boys saw little of her, but sometimes she was seen in the Head's garden, or in the wood, and Harry always had a cheery smile for her. He liked the old gipsy, though he did not quite understand her. The sight of the caravan brought his gipsy adventures back freshly to his mind. He watched the lumbering vehicle as it rolled past.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" muttered Bob Cherry. "The beastly thing's stopping!"

"By Jove!"

The clatter and the clinking came to an end. The caravan halted, just outside the gates of Greyfriars.

The gipsy slipped from the shaft, and his form was seen dimly approaching the gate, and he fumbled for the bell.

Wharton gave a low whistle.

"Look! He's ringing! What on earth does it mean?"

Bob Cherry shrugged his shoulders.

"Blessed if I know."

The juniors were keenly interested now. They had expected to see the caravan pass on, and then they would have slipped down from the wall and gone on their way. Its halting outside the school gates surprised them; the sight of the gipsy ringing the porter's bell astounded them.

They crept further along the wall to obtain a better view of the gateway. The setting of the night-lines was a matter of minor importance now. What on earth could the gipsy want at Greyfriars college at half-past ten at night?

Ting-ting-ting!

In the quiet night, the juniors could hear the bell ringing in the porter's lodge. Bob Cherry chuckled as he pictured the expression on Gosling's face when he heard it. Gosling, the school porter, didn't like being disturbed in the evening, even by the Head himself. It was a point of honour with Gosling to do as little as possible for his wages, and he made it another point to grumble at doing that little. On the present occasion, he allowed the bell to ring three times before he came out of his lodge, and he came out in a towering temper.

"Wot I says is this 'ere," he growled, as he came down to the gate. "Why can't folks get in early, and allow an honest man to rest arter his day's work!"

The juniors suppressed a chuckle. They were near enough to Gosling to toss a stone upon his head, and they plainly heard his muttered complaints. The porter did not suspect their presence. He went to the gate, and peered between the upright iron bars into the road. The sight of the gipsy caravan made him jump.

"Who's there?" he demanded angrily.

A dark bearded face looked through the bars, and a pair of black eyes glittered at him. Gosling started back a little.

"This is Greyfriars?" demanded a voice.

"Yes, it is," grunted Gosling. "'Ave you woke me up"—the porter had not been in bed, but he was fond of making out as hard a case as possible—"ave you woke me up to ask fool's questions? Wot I says is this 'ere, you get along."

"Nadesha is here?"

"Eh! Yes, the old woman's here, I suppose. Leastways, she was to-day, and I don't 'spose she's flown away," said Gosling sarcastically.

"Tell her Tawno wishes to speak to her."

"Yes, I'm likely to go looking for a gipsy, to toll her another gipsy wants to speak to 'er this time of night," said Gosling, with crushing irony. "Wouldn't you like to step in and 'ave a glass of wine with the 'Ead?"

"Open the gates!"

"Ho, yes; I don't think!"

"Old Telengro is gone," said the gipsy, through the bars. "Nadesha was his relation, and he has sent her the caravan. He bade me bring it to her. Nadesha is here, and I have brought her the van."

"I don't care tuppence for hold Telengro, whoever he may be, or for Nadesha, or for you, neither," said Gosling. "I ain't going to hopen the gates. You can't bring your trash in 'ere. Wot I says is this 'ere, you 'ustle hoff."

"I have brought the caravan to Nadesha."

"Well, I'm goin' to bed."

"Open the gates."

"Ho, ho, ho!" Gosling retreated towards his lodge, and

the gipsy shook the bars of the gate. "Yes, you can shake, my pipping; but you won't get that gate open."

"I have brought the caravan—"

"Better send it by parcels post," said Gosling, still in the same ironic vein; "or you can let 'er 'ave it on a pitcher postcard. Good-night!"

"Then I will wait."

"Wait, then," grinned Gosling, and he went into his lodge and slammed the door.

The gipsy muttered something in the Romany tongue. The juniors heard him, and though they did not understand the words, they knew that it was something very uncomplimentary to Gosling. Then he led the horse to the belt of grass on the other side of the road, and tethered him to a tree with a length of rope, casting him loose from the harness. The juniors watched him in wonder. It was evident that Tawno meant to keep his word, and not to leave the spot. Was he going to wait there all night?

It certainly looked like it, for he climbed into the caravan, closed the door after him, and was not seen again.

"He's gone to bed," muttered Bob Cherry.

"Looks like it."

"I suppose he's going to wait till morning. Well, that needn't bother us. It's a rum business. Come on."

The juniors dropped into the road. They were absent half an hour; and when they came back, eleven had struck from the clock-tower of Greyfriars, and the gipsy caravan was still by the roadside. The van was silent, the gipsy in it evidently asleep; the only sound in the silence was the crop-crop of the feeding horse.

The juniors climbed in, and, wondering what would come of the affair on the morrow, made their way back to the Remove dormitory and turned in. There was a yawn and a grunt from Frank Nugent's bed.

"You've been a jolly long time gone."

"Yes," said Harry. "We had to delay—you see, we—"

Snore!

Nugent was asleep again, and Harry smiled, and postponed the explanation till the morning. In a few minutes he was asleep himself.

Meanwhile, the gipsy van remained stationary in the road opposite the gates of Greyfriars, while the dark hours rolled away.

The early light of the summer morning glimmered at last on the painted woodwork of the caravan, and the gipsy Tawno came out, rubbing his eyes, and lighted his pipe. He sat on the sloping shafts to smoke, while the horse, waking, began to crop the grass again. Gosling came down and unlocked the gates, and cast a glance of disfavour out at the caravan. The gipsy nodded and grinned at him; a salute which the school porter did not deign to acknowledge.

When he was gone about his duties, Tawno quietly harnessed the horse in the shafts, and led him in through the open gates. Gosling came out of his lodge in wrath, and shouted at the gipsy.

"You can't bring that in 'ere, I tell you."

Tawno walked on steadily, leading the horse. Gosling rushed towards him, with the intention of running him out; but the gipsy tapped a silver handle that protruded from his sash, and Gosling turned pale. He was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. Tawno grinned, and led the horse on, till he was on the grass plot in the centre of the old Close. There he halted, unharnessed the horse, and led him away, leaving the caravan in the middle of the grass plot.

He led the horse out of the gates of Greyfriars, and disappeared the way he had come the previous night, leaving Gosling staring helplessly at the stranded caravan.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER, Nadesha's Property.

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter uttered the exclamation excitedly. He was looking out of the staircase window, having glanced out as he was coming down from the dormitory that morning. What he saw rooted him to the spot with amazement.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo! what's the matter with you?" asked Bulstrode, as he stopped. Wharton and his chums were already down; Billy Bunter was generally one of the last to leave the dormitory. Bunter blinked round at the burly Removite.

"I say, Bulstrode! Look there! Somebody's driven the hack on to the grass plot, and left it there."

Bulstrode looked out of the window. He grinned at the sight of the stranded vehicle. Billy Bunter was remarkably short-sighted, or he would never have mistaken a gipsy caravan for the village hack even at that distance.

"A giddy caravan!" exclaimed Bulstrode, in wonder. "What on earth can it be doing there—how did it come in, too? There's no horse to it. I'm going to see what this means."

And he went downstairs three at a time. Harry Wharton



was in the lower hall, talking to Nugent and Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh. It was a Wednesday, and a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the chums of the Remove were discussing the programme for the afternoon. A cricket fixture had been scratched at the last moment by a team that had been booked to visit the Greyfriars Juniors, and the chums were left with an empty half-holiday to fill up.

Bulstrode brushed past them and ran out into the quadrangle, and Bob Cherry glanced after him in surprise.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's Bulstrode after, I wonder?"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you downstairs for, Bunty—it's nearly three minutes to breakfast-time."

"Oh, really, Cherry—I say, you fellows, there's a gipsy caravan in the Close. I saw it first, and—"

"In the Close!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in surprise.

"Then that chap Tawno has got it inside the gates."

And the Famous Four ran out into the Close.

There was the caravan, sure enough, in the middle of that carefully-kept grass-plot, which was the pride of the Greyfriars gardener's heart. Tawno, the gipsy, had been too considerate to leave it on the drive, where it would be in the way; but it was doubtful if either the Head or his gardener would thank him for the consideration he had shown.

The big, heavy wheels of the caravan had sunk deep into the grassy soil, and the horse's hoofs had kicked up the turf. There were already half a dozen fellows round the caravan with Bulstrode, very interested and curious, when Wharton and his friends arrived upon the spot.

"Well, this is a giddy curiosity," said Temple, of the Upper Fourth. "How on earth did it get here?"

"Somebody dropped it from an aeroplane during the night, I should think," said Fry. "There's no giddy horse attached to the giddy show."

"There's a horse's tracks in the grass, though."

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

"It's the same one, Harry," Bob Cherry remarked, looking over the caravan. "I'd know those beautifully carved cornices anywhere. Somebody carved them with a pick-axe or a crow-bar, I think."

"So you've seen it before, kid?" exclaimed Temple.

"What do you think?" said Bob Cherry, addressing Temple with that cheery air of patronage generally adopted by the Greyfriars Remove towards the higher Form. "We know all about it. Belongs to a friend of ours—a very old friend."

"Rats!" said Temple & Co., with one voice.

"Let's have a look in it," said Bulstrode. "As it's stranded here, I suppose we may squint in it."

"The squintfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur, in his Bhanipur English. "The curiousness of my worthy self is also great."

The door of the caravan at the back was unfastened, and the juniors soon had it open, and they looked in. The morning sunlight glimmered through the tiny windows, which were tightly closed. Gipsies do not as a rule place much faith in fresh air, at least, in their movable dwellings. Perhaps they get enough outside their caravans. The interior of the van was stuffy, not to say mephitic, with the odours of stale bedding, ancient cookery, fried fish, and onions. Bulstrode gave a sniff, and then a snort, and jammed open the little windows.

"My hat! this is rather thick," said Nugent. "Fancy anybody sleeping in it! What are those rags in the corner for, I wonder?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's the bed, I imagine."

"My word! I should want it disinfected before I slept in it. But I say, if it were clean, it would be jolly to go on the road with a thing of this sort," said Nugent, with a gleam of adventure in his eye. "I've often envied those gipsy chaps, going about in caravans and camping where they like. Ripping in the fine weather at all events."

"I wonder what the Head will say when he sees it," murmured Bob Cherry. "Right on his darling grass-plot too. That chap Tawno was a beast."

"We might as well go and tell Nadesha."

"Hallo, here's Quelch—and, by Jove, the Head!"

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was walking in the Close with Dr. Locke, and talking to him, when he caught sight of the caravan. For a moment he remained petrified, and then he pointed it out to the Head. The Head put up his glasses, and stared blankly at the caravan.

"Dear me!" said the Head. "This is most extraordinary! This is a vehicle of some sort, Mr. Quelch."

"It certainly looks like it," agreed Mr. Quelch, concealing a smile.

"Yet there is no horse attached—how it can have come there is a mystery. Let us get a nearer view."

And the two gentlemen walked towards the stranded caravan. The boys respectfully raised their caps and made way for them. Dr. Locke walked round the caravan, examining it through his glasses with an air of amazement that, as Bob Cherry said in a whisper, "wouldn't come off."

"Dear me," said the Head again. "This is—is most extraordinary! I should guess this vehicle to be a caravan, Mr. Quelch—one of those vehicles in which itinerant merchants

travel, gaining a livelihood by vending pans, kettles, clothes-props, and articles of that nature." Again Mr. Quelch smiled assent. "But the amazing thing is, how did it get here?" said Dr. Locke, as much astounded by the caravan in the Close as Robinson Crusoe was by the footprint in the sand. "Boys, do you know anything about this?"

Harry Wharton coloured for a moment. He didn't want to tell the Head that he had witnessed the arrival of Tawno with the caravan, from the top of the school wall, at an hour when all good juniors were asleep in bed.

"I think Gosling could tell you, sir," he said. "Shall I call him, sir?"

"Yes, certainly."

Gosling came back with Wharton in a few minutes. The Head turned his glasses upon the porter.

"Do you know how this—er—this vehicle came here, Gosling?" he asked.

"Which it was brought here, sir," said Gosling.

"I—er—guessed as much, certainly," said the Head. "But by whom—and why?"

"A gipsy cove," said Gosling.

"Dear me! I asked you who brought the caravan here," exclaimed the Head, "and you answer me with a remark concerning a cove. I trust you have not been drinking, Gosling, at this early hour."

Gosling snorted.

"I said a gipsy cove, sir," he said surlily.

"A—a—a gipsy cove," said the puzzled Doctor, "a cove, I believe, is a—a sort of diminutive inlet on the sea-shore."

"There is another sort of a cove, I think, sir," said Mr. Quelch, laughing. "Gosling means a person."

"Dear me! Do you mean a person, Gosling?"

"Yes, sir," grunted Gosling. "A gipsy pusson, sir. He brought this 'ere thing into the Close, sir, though I hordered him not to do nothing of the kind. He says it belongs to Mrs. Nadesha, sir, and he was to leave it 'ere."

"Extraordinary!"

"Wot I says is this 'ere, sir—"

"That will do, Gosling. Wharton, will you—er—inform Mrs. Nadesha that her—ah—property is here, and request her to take immediate steps to have it removed?"

"Certainly, sir."

And the Head walked away with Mr. Quelch. As he entered the School House, he cast a final glance back at the caravan, and said once more:

"Dear me! Extraordinary!"

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. Shifting the Caravan.

N ADESHA, the old gipsy, was at her door, looking out into the fresh, morning sunshine. Nadesha occupied a little cottage within the grounds of Greyfriars, but separated by the Head's garden from the broad Close. In her little cottage Nadesha sometimes received visits from the boys, and especially she liked the visits Harry Wharton sometimes paid her. It was strange the deep attachment the old gipsy showed for the lad, who had first met her while he was on the worst of terms with her people. The old brown face lighted up, as Nadesha caught sight of the hero of the Remove coming up the little path to the cottage. Nadesha made a picturesque figure at the cottage door, in her scarlet shawl, with her swarthy face and black eyes. Wharton lifted his cap as he came up.

"It is good of you to come and see the old gipsy, my pretty chal," said Nadesha. "What have you to tell me?" she added as she noted the junior's smile.

"News of a legacy, Nadesha."

"A legacy?" The gipsy looked puzzled. "What do you say?"

"Do you know a man named Tawno—a man of your race?"

Nadesha nodded. "And had you a relation named Telengro?"

Wharton's face grew grave as he remembered what Tawno had said, that the former owner of the caravan was "gone." Exactly what Tawno had meant to imply by "gone" Wharton did not know, but it might mean that the man was dead.

"Old Telengro? Yes—what of him?"

Wharton repeated what he had heard Tawno say to Gosling. Nadesha smiled.

"He is in prison again," she said.

"In prison?"

"Yes. He has been there before, for taking the chickens from the house-dwellers," said Nadesha. "The caravan was mine, but I did not want it, and I left it with him. Now he is gone off the road he has sent it to me—Tawno is a fool. I would have given it to him rather than have it sent here. But—how did you come to hear all this said, my chal, at such an hour last night?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Keep it dark, Nadesha—I was out of bounds." Her face grew grave, and he went on hastily, "Only to go with Bob



Cherry to set some night-lines; you don't think I should do anything blackguardly, do you?"

"I know you would not," said Nadesha, softly.

"But what are you going to do with the caravan, Nadesha? Can we help you in any way? That ass Tawno has shoved it in the middle of the Close, and taken the horse away. I suppose the horse belonged to him, and he was satisfied with delivering your property here," said Wharton, laughing. "The Head wants it shifted. It doesn't look pretty where it is."

"Tawno is a fool," said Nadesha. "The caravan must be taken away. I do not know what to do with it. I cannot keep it here—I do not want it. Gosling might have let him put it in the stable-yard—it could be taken there now, for the present."

"Good! I'll see to it for you. If we can't pull it I'll tip Gosling a couple of bob to put a horse to it."

"Thank you, my bonny chal," said the old gipsy. And Wharton raised his cap, with as much respect to the old gipsy woman as he would have shown to a princess, and hurried away. A crowd of juniors were still waiting round the caravan.

"Well, what says the giddy heiress?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"It's to be shifted round to the stables for the present. Gosling ought to have put it there, only Gosling's a beast."

"Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Hallo, you there, Gosling! No extra charge for my opinion of you," said Wharton coolly. "Can you lend us a horse to yank this van away?"

"Which I can't, Master Wharton."

"Get in the shafts yourself—a donkey will do," said Hazeldene.

Gosling stalked away without making any reply to this remark. Harry Wharton lifted the heavy shafts from the ground, and gave a pull, but the caravan did not even budge.

"Line up, you chaps," he said, "about a dozen of us can do it, if we put our beef into it."

A dozen Removites crammed themselves cheerily round the shafts, and grasped them.

"Some of you shove behind!" called out Wharton, and Bulstrode, Stott, Skinner, Snoop, and several others rushed to the rear of the caravan.

"Now, altogether!"

"The altogetherfulness is terrific."

Harry Wharton & Co. dragged at the caravan with all their strength. But it refused to budge.

"Put your beef into it!" gasped Bob Cherry, with the perspiration running down his face. "She's bound to come!"

"Go it!"

"Another tug—all together, now!"

They tugged—they pulled—they hauled! Still the caravan did not move. Harry Wharton was astonished. Between those pulling and those shoving behind, the vehicle, heavy as it was, ought to have rolled along easily enough. A cackle of laughter from the fellows who were looking on roused Harry's suspicions. He left his place at the shafts, and stepped back to look behind the caravan.

Instead of shoving behind, Bulstrode & Co. were hanging or sitting on the caravan, and chuckling away for all they were worth.

It was not surprising that the van had refused to move, under the circumstances. Wharton glared at the jokers wrathfully.

A water-can, which Gosling had brought out for early use, was standing, filled, beside the fountain at the end of the grass-plot. Wharton did not speak, but he made a clutch at the water-can. In a moment he turned a sweeping spray of water over the back of the caravan and the practical jokers clinging to it.

There was a roar.

"Ow! What's that?"

"Chuck it!"

"Oh! Ow! Groo!"

"Mm-m-m-m! I'm wet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry, as the practical jokers dropped from their hold and scattered frantically from the shower of water. "Ha, ha, ha! No extra charge for a shower-bath, Bulstrode!"

"Ow—you beasts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton threw down the empty water-can with a laugh. The practical jokers had scattered far and wide, and at the next essay to move the van, Wharton shoved behind himself, and willing hands backed him up.

The big, heavy vehicle moved at last.

With a bumping and a groaning it lurched away, and the tin pots and pans slung from the axle clanked and clinked cheerily.

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "That's a jolly sort of marching music, and no mistake. I should like to travel to that all day long—I don't think!"

Clatter! clatter! bump! clank! clink!

Swaying and lurching and bumping, the caravan rolled on its way. It went in a series of tacks, like a sailing-vessel beating up a river against the wind, first in one direction and then

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in another. Sometimes it had a great deal of way on it, and went with a rush—then it would slacken and almost refuse to move. But the juniors stuck to it. It wasn't their fault if the van insisted upon taking in all the flower-beds possible en route, and if it bumped into a fence and broke it down, and crashed against a tree and deprived it of a couple of branches. The juniors were pretty well exhausted by the time the vehicle rolled clanking over the stones of the stableyard.

Harry Wharton let go, and gasped for breath.

"My hat! Thank goodness that's done! How on earth does one horse contrive to drag a thing like that about?"

"Blessed if I know," said Bob Cherry. "I shouldn't care to be the horse. Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's the breakfast bell!"

And the juniors rushed off.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Wharton's Great Idea.

THE great idea came to Harry Wharton first of all.

He was in the Form-room at the time.

Mr. Quelch and the Remove were enjoying—more or less—a thrilling excursion into the realms of Latin verbs, when the idea occurred to Wharton.

It was such a ripping idea that it made him start, and he involuntarily uttered a slight exclamation.

"By Jove!"

It was only a slight exclamation, but it caught the keen ears of the Form-master. Mr. Quelch was trying to make Billy Bunter understand that although "hortor" was passive in form it was active in meaning, and Billy Bunter, the least promising pupil in the Remove, had apparently made up his mind not to understand anything that morning. Thus the interruption did not find Mr. Quelch in an amiable mood. He turned round towards Wharton, whose face went scarlet at once.

"Did you speak, Wharton?"

"N-n-no, not exactly, sir."

"I thought I heard you speak, Wharton."

"I—I didn't mean to, sir."

"Ah! You were so much interested by the lesson, that you could not possibly remain silent while I was explaining to the stupidest boy in the class," said Mr. Quelch.

"N-not exactly, sir," stammered Wharton. "It—it was an idea that came into my head, sir."

"Indeed! Some new light to be thrown on the subject of deponent verbs, no doubt?"

"N-n-no, sir. I—I was thinking of something else."

"Well, you are frank, at all events, Wharton," said the Form-master, a little taken aback. "You will take fifty lines for thinking of something else in class."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

And Wharton breathed more freely. He had been afraid that he might be detained in the afternoon, which would have knocked on the head, so to speak, the brilliant idea that had flashed into his brain.

The lines could be done in the evening. The idea could be carried out in the afternoon. And it was such a ripping idea that Wharton could not help thinking of it still, although the eye of the Remove-master was turned suspiciously in his direction more than once.

Once or twice Wharton glanced out of the window. The weather was perfect—hardly a cloud in the blue June sky. No chance of rain—at present, at all events, to spoil the best wheeze he had ever thought of.

He was anxious for the class to be dismissed. Seldom had morning lessons seemed so long. He was tempted to whisper his idea to Bob Cherry, or to Nugent, or Hurree Singh; but Mr. Quelch was too watchful. It was safer to keep it to himself till after school, and run no risks. An afternoon's detention would have been a crushing blow.

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The welcome word of dismissal came at last, and Wharton jumped up like a jack-in-the-box. The Remove left the Form-room, and Wharton was immediately surrounded in the passage by curious inquirers.

"What the dickens was the matter with you in class?" asked Nugent. "You nearly caught it! Bunter was worrying Quelch into a fearful wax with his stupidity!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"It's a wheeze," said Harry, his eyes glistening, "a ripping wheeze for this afternoon."

"Good! Go ahead!"

"We've got the afternoon free. What price a journey in the caravan?"

His chums stared at him for a moment, taken by surprise.

"Don't you see how ripping it is?" said Wharton eagerly. "Old Nadesha would lend us the caravan like a shot. We could hire a horse in the village. It would be a ripping adventure. We might get a long way on the road, and not get in till locking-up—Wingate would give us a permit to cut early call-over. What do you think?"

"Jolly good," said Bob Cherry. "I'd drive, and—"

"Ahem," said Nugent, "I'd drive, and—"

"We could take some grub, and make a sort of picnic of it," said Billy Bunter eagerly. "If you fellows place the funds in my hands, I'll look after the grub department, with pleasure."

"I dare say you would," grinned Nugent. "We'll look after the funds ourselves. It's a ripping wheeze, Harry, if Nadesha will lend us the caravan."

"I'm sure she will—I'll cut off and ask her, anyway. As a matter of fact, she'd be glad to get it taken out of the stable-yard, and stowed away somewhere. When we go to get the horse at Milsom's we'll arrange for him to house the van when we've done with it—for the present, and save Nadesha bothering about it. You chaps be ready to come out immediately after dinner."

"I say, Wharton, you'd better let me get—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

And Harry Wharton hurried away to old Nadesha's cottage. He returned in five minutes, with a cheery face, and announced that the gipsy had gladly given him leave to do as he liked with the caravan.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry gleefully. "We'll buzz off to Friardale on our bikes after dinner, and get the horse, and then—"

"Hurrah for the road!" said Nugent.

And immediately the juniors' midday dinner had been despatched, they were whirling away on their bicycles to the village—in search of a horse.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Bob Cherry Does the Bareback Act.

THE more the chums of the Remove thought about Wharton's great idea, the better they liked it. To spend a long summer's afternoon on the road, jogging along in a gipsy caravan, camping-out for their meals, was an attractive prospect. There was a spice of real adventure in it very attractive to healthy boys. They were eager to start; and as Wharton had received a remittance that morning from a generous uncle, they would not be hampered by want of funds. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, too, was overflowing with wealth. The Nabol had more pocket-money than any four other juniors at Greyfriars, and he would have "blued" it all on his friends if they would have allowed him. They wouldn't; but in the case of a special occasion like this, the dusky junior's funds were available.

Mr. Milsom, in Friardale, kept a livery stable, and he let out all sorts of things on hire. He called them horses—and, indeed, anatomically they, doubtless, were horses. There was, in fact, a great deal to be seen of their anatomy, and people in Friardale said their bones could be counted from outside, bone by bone. This was a calumny; but no one had ever accused Mr. Milsom of keeping his steeds in too good condition. He had two or three good ones for knowing customers; but the greater part would have moved the disdain even of an officer of the Remount Department. Mr. Milsom received the juniors from Greyfriars with a gracious smile, and led them into the yard to show them his stock.

"We want a good strong beast," said Wharton. "He's got to pull a gipsy caravan with half a dozen chaps in it, up hill and down dale. He needn't be fast, but he must be strong and steady."

"I've got just the animal you want," said Mr. Milsom, chewing a straw. "Come and look in this stall, and say if you don't think him a beauty."

The boys looked into the stall. An ancient horse blinked sleepily at them, and the juniors stared at it. Had it been five or six years younger, it might have pulled a cab about a level street, provided there was no one in the cab. Wharton smiled.

"I said a horse!" he explained.

Mr. Milsom nearly swallowed the straw he was chewing.

"Well, ain't that a horse?" he demanded.

Wharton looked at the animal as he might have looked at some curiosity in a zoological show, and shook his head.

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"It may have been a horse once," he remarked. "I'm not casting reflections on its past, and I can't remember more than ten or twelve years ago, so I don't know what horses were like in those days. That may be a specimen of what horses were like in the reign of George the Third, or it mayn't. What I want is a horse."

Mr. Milsom grinned feebly.

"Come and look at this critter," he said.

In another stall was another steed, a little better than the ancient specimen the juniors had first seen. Wharton, who had ridden all kinds of horseflesh at his uncle's house, was a good judge of an animal, and probably knew as much on the subject as Mr. Milsom did. He smiled as he looked into the stall.

"Is that a horse too?" he asked.

The other juniors chuckled, and Mr. Milsom turned red.

"Look 'ere," he said, "that's a good 'orse. That 'orse ain't more'n four years old, and he's in lovely condition."

Wharton laughed, and drew the animal's head to him, patting it gently to keep it quiet. It was a quiet old animal, and allowed its mouth to be opened without trouble. A glance at the teeth was enough to refute Mr. Milsom's statement. The stable master's face was a study.

"You see, I know the game," explained Wharton. "If this old chap was only four years old, the corner incisor teeth would be still milk-teeth."

"Hem," said Mr. Milsom, coughing.

"As a matter of fact," went on Wharton coolly, "the chap's got all his permanent teeth, which makes him out over five. And as there isn't a mark left on the teeth, he's over eight. I should say about ten or twelve myself."

Mr. Milsom chuckled.

"Come this way, young gents," he said. "How was I to know you knew anything about 'orses?"

He crossed the cobblestoned yard, and showed them into another door, and a horse that was feeding at a rack turned its head to look at them.

It was a powerful animal this time, and although by no means over-fed, it was in good condition for work, and fully able to negotiate the caravan. Harry Wharton nodded.

"What ho," he said. "He'll do."

"You can take him," said Mr. Milsom with a sigh. "I don't let everybody have that 'orse. He's a bute, he is. He's got a playful temper of his own, but he ain't vicious—not he. Nothin' like it. You can take him, Master Wharton."

"Good—he's all right."

"Will you want any harness?"

"No; that was left with the caravan; we can make it do, I think. Just put a bridle on him, and we'll ride him to the school; never mind a saddle."

And in a few minutes Harry was leading the horse out through the village street. Wharton was a good rider, and he could ride almost anything barebacked. The horse walked with him quietly enough, yet there was a latent gloam in his eyes which bore out Mr. Milsom's statement that he had a playful temper.

"I'll ride him, if you like, and you can wheel my jigger," said Bob Cherry.

"I was just thinking—" began Nugent.

"All right; you can go on thinking, and I'll take the boss. Hold him a minute, while I mount, Harry. I suppose he isn't a riding horse, but it's no good wasting a chance."

"Better have a saddle then," said Harry dubiously.

"Rats; I don't want a saddle. He's got a back big enough for anybody to sit on, I suppose."

"Ye-es, but he may jib when somebody's on his back. He's not used to being ridden, for one thing."

"Oh, give us a hand on; I'm all right."

Bob Cherry sat astride of the horse, and grasped the reins. The animal stood stock still, and refused to budge. Bob Cherry urged him with voice and heels, but he did not move. Nugent chuckled.

"Shall I push behind, Bob?" he asked.

"Oh, rats," grunted Bob. "It's you chaps hanging round that stops him. Buzz off."

Harry laughed, and mounted his machine, taking Bob's by the handlebars. The juniors rode off, keeping to the side of the road in case the horse should suddenly bolt with Bob, so as to give him room to pass.

"Now, then, old boss," said Bob Cherry persuasively, "go ahead! Get on! You horrid beast, why don't you start! Get on, old boss—go it, beauty! You pig, get a move on you, or I'll larrup you."

And still the horse stood like a statue. Some village youngsters gathered round, and offered advice and assistance. They advised Bob to get out and walk, or to carry his steed himself, as he would not move otherwise. They offered to push the horse behind, or to pull him along by his ears, and suggested the propriety of giving him a feed. Bob Cherry grew scarlet with annoyance, and he gave the horse at last a sharp spank with his cap.



That moved the steed!

He shot forward like an arrow from a bow, so suddenly that Bob nearly rolled off his back. He reeled back, and then reeled forward, and found himself clutching at the horse's mane for dear life.

The horse needed no urging now. He went along the road with a terrific clatter of hoofs. He was past the cyclists in a flash.

"Go it," shrieked Nugent. "Hold on, Bob! Hang on to his whiskers!"

"The hangonfulness is terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

The horse dashed onward, with Bob Cherry clinging frantically to his neck.

There was a sudden exclamation from the roadside, and two pretty girls stopped in alarm and surprise. Bob Cherry could have kicked himself as he recognised Marjorie Hazeldene and her friend Clara, from Cliff House School. They were the last persons in the world he would have wanted to see him in this absurd and humiliating position.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Miss Clara. "The horse is running away with him!"

Marjorie ran quickly into the road and threw up her hand.

The horse clattered to a stop, but he did not remain still. He started a series of "cavortings" worthy of a half-tamed mustang on a Texan prairie. He roared, and he clattered, and he twisted and turned, sometimes on his forelegs, sometimes trying, as far as Bob could judge, to execute a sort of hornpipe on his hind legs. The junior clung desperately to his neck.

The girls could not help smiling.

"My—my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I—excuse me, Miss Marjorie! I—I'm riding him to the school, you know, and he's—he's a little fresh."

"Yes, he looks it," said Marjorie. "Shall I hold him while you jump off?"

"Not a bit of it—I'll be all right in a minute! Oh, my hat!"

The horse whisked round Marjorie and dashed on, and the two girls looked after the flying horseman in dismay.

Right on towards the school dashed the unfortunate Bob, and he disappeared in the distance. There was a buzz of cycle bells as the juniors came scorching on. Marjorie waved her hand to them from the grassy roadside, and Harry Wharton slackened a moment to raise his cap.

"Don't stop!" cried Marjorie. "Look after Bob."

And Wharton nodded and scorching on. He was getting anxious about his chum. The horse was not vicious, certainly; but there was no doubt that he was playful—terribly playful. The cyclists were quite as fast as the horse, and they quickly came in sight of him again, near the school gates, which stood wide open. Bob Cherry was vainly trying to stop his steed.

Wharton snapped his teeth. If the runaway dashed on past the gates, the chase might be almost endless, and take up the greater part of the afternoon. Fortunately, down the road, past the gates, a group of Greyfriars fellows appeared in sight. They were Blundell and Bland, and several more Fifth-Formers, going to the river. Wharton rang his bell furiously and yelled to them:

"Stop the horse! Stop it!"

The Fifth-Formers heard the shouting and the clattering of hoofs, and turned their heads. They lined up quickly across the road, shouting to the horse and waving their caps, and the runaway clattered to a stop. He seemed inclined to turn and make a break back to the village, but the cyclists were in the way. He whisked round in the road several times, but a high hedge shut him off from the fields. Only the open gateway of Greyfriars offered a way of escape, and in a few moments the horse made up his mind. He clattered in through the gateway, and the juniors followed him with great relief.

"Thanks, Blundell," called out Wharton, and he jumped off his machine in the gateway. "You stick here, Inky, will you, and stop him if he tries to get out again?"

"The stopfulness will be terrific."

And leaving the nabob on guard at the gate, Wharton and Nugent rushed in pursuit of the refractory horse.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Getting Ready.

**B**OB CHERRY was having an exciting time.

His mount having been driven into the gates of Greyfriars, still found plenty of room to disport himself. He went along the drive with a clatter of hoofs, and there was a scattering of fellows out of his way. They scattered, and they yelled with laughter at the sight of Bob Cherry clinging to the horse's mane. Bob did not feel very much like laughing.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wingate of the Sixth. "What's that young beggar doing? Get off that horse at once, Cherry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Temple. "He would if he could!"

Bob would gladly have obeyed, but he could see no other way

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of getting off the horse than by letting go his hold and rolling on a heap on the ground—and that way was too dangerous and too painful for him to adopt. So he sat tight.

"Stop the horse!" shouted Harry Wharton.

A crowd of fellows rushed to stop him, but the horse swerved away and escaped them, and clattered off towards the cricket field.

A match was in progress there, between two senior elevens belonging to the Fifth and the Sixth.

Their feelings when the excited horse and its helpless rider bore down upon them may be imagined.

"Keep off!" roared Carberry, who was at the wicket. "Get away, you young idiot."

"I—I—I—c-c-c-can't!"

"Faith, and I'll pulverise yez," roared Burke of the Sixth. "Ye're messing up the game entirely."

"I—I—I—c-c-c-can't help it."

The horse's hoofs thudded over the pitch, and the fieldsmen scattered. Two or three of them rushed to secure him, but he avoided them easily, and rattled on. They drove him off the cricket-field with shouts and yells, and he galloped off in the direction of the Head's garden.

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Wharton. "The gate's open, and—"

"Phew!"

The horse dashed through the gate, and the juniors were almost petrified with horror as he trampled over the flower-beds.

There was an exclamation of amazement from the garden.

"Bless my soul! Who—what is this?"

It was the Head!

Bob Cherry would have given whole worlds and solar systems to stop the exasperating beast then, but he could not. And the animal was not in the least awed by the Head. He pranced on gaily.

"Boy!" gasped the doctor. "Boy!"

Mr. Quelch, who was chatting with the Head in the garden, ran quickly towards the horse. The master of the Remove was an active man, and he succeeded in grasping the rein, and brought the horse to a standstill. Bob Cherry, gasping for breath, streaming with perspiration, and as red as a poppy, slid to the ground.

"Th-th-thank you, sir," he gasped.

"What does this mean, Cherry?" said the Remove-master sternly. "How dare you—"

"Yes," said the Head sternly. "Bless my soul! How dare you, Cherry?"

"I—I couldn't help it, sir! You—you surely don't think I was doing it for fun?" gasped the junior.

Dr. Locke smiled slightly.

"Did the horse run away with you?"

"Yes, sir; the—the horrid beast!"

"You should not have brought a horse within the precincts of Greyfriars."

"I—I didn't, sir. He brought me."

"Look at my flower-beds."

"I—I'm sorry, sir. I'll dig them up for you if you like, sir, and put some new seeds in, and set it all right again. I'm awfully sorry!"

The Head could not help smiling, as he thought of the improvement an amateur gardener of the Remove would be likely to make in his well-kept garden.

"You see, sir," said Bob, "we were bringing the horse to take that caravan away, and—and—"

"Oh, in that case I excuse you. Take him away!"

"Certainly, sir," said Bob Cherry, glad to escape so cheaply.

"Can you manage him now?"

"Oh, yes, sir; so long as I'm leading him. I wouldn't have got on his back if I'd known what a savage beast he was."

And Bob Cherry led the now quiet horse from the garden.

Harry Wharton and Nugent met him at the gate, and Harry took the horse.

"I can lead him all right," said Bob.

"That's all very well, old chap; but if you lead him as you ride him there will be trouble," said Wharton. "I'll take charge of him. You've given the chaps a circus as it is."

And Harry led the horse away to the stable-yard. He was like a lamb now, and Bob Cherry thought he even saw a twinkle in his eyes.

"The rotter!" said Bob wrathfully. "Who'd have thought he was such a beast to look at him? He doesn't look as if he had so much go in him at all. He's an artful dodger."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!" said Harry, backing Dodger, as Bob had already named the horse, towards the caravan. "Hold up the shafts, you chaps!"

"But I say, Wharton, we shall want some grub—"

"You won't," grinned Nugent.

"Look here, I'm coming with you, I suppose. I could have gone to Cliff House to tea if I had liked, and I put it off to come with you in the caravan," said Billy Bunter, blinking at him.

"Liar!" said Bob Cherry, cheerfully.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

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"Shove that harness on," said Harry. "The collar fits him like a charm. This is a better horse than that chap Tawno had. Shut up, Bunter. You can come with us if you like, but we'll look after the grub ourselves."

"If you can't trust me with a few shillings, Wharton——"

"Well, I can't; so shut up!"

"I'll go and get my camera, then," said Billy Bunter. "I may be able to get some photographs on the road. I might get a series of pictures in some illustrated paper, called 'Pictures of Caravan Life,' or something of the sort. There's a great demand for good photographs in the illustrated Press. I'm expecting to get a lot of money out of it. At present I'm rather short. If you could lend me half-a-crown, Wharton——"

"Oh, ring off!"

"If you could lend me half-a-crown, Nugent——"

"Clear out!" yelled Nugent, picking up a strap. "By Jove——" Bunter did not wait to hear the rest, but cleared out promptly.

The juniors harnessed the horse to the caravan. He submitted to the operation with perfect quietness. The harness was in very good condition, though greatly in want of cleaning. Bob Cherry remarked that they would set Bunter cleaning it at the first halt. Hurree Singh, having put the bicycles away in the shed, rejoined his chums and lent them a hand. Several juniors came to the yard to look on, among them Hazeldene, Marjorie's brother.

"You're going out in that giddy show?" asked Hazeldene.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Yes; will you come?"

"Yes, rather," said Hazeldene, willingly enough. And he joined the party, and lent a hand cheerfully in the work. The juniors received several offers of assistance and company from the other lookers-on, but Wharton declined them all with thanks.

"The caravan won't hold more," he said. "Not with comfort, anyway. We can't take the whole giddy school."

"You can make room for me," said Skinner, persuasively.

"I know a lot of dodges about camping-out."

"Sorry; can't be did."

"Oh, rats! I wouldn't come in the rattling old turnout, anyway."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Good; then we're both satisfied."

He threw open the door of the caravan, and the juniors turned out most of the contents. The foul old bedding was discarded. It was dirty, and it looked very much as if it might be the abode of insects. Everything in the caravan was dragged out to air, and the windows were forced open, and left open. The stableman lent the juniors a pail of hot water and a mop, with which they gave the interior of the van a cleaning such as it had long stood in need of. With their sleeves rolled up, and stable aprons tucked round them, the boys set to work, mopping, sluicing, scrubbing, and scraping, and the change they wrought in the interior of the caravan was wonderful.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry, after half-an-hour's steady work, "you'd hardly know the thing now. What price giving it a name?" he went on thoughtfully. "'The Saucy Susan' would look ripping, and I could easily shove it on in white paint."

"Good!" said Harry, laughing. "'The Saucy Susan' let it be, by all means. It's a ripping name. We shall want a nose-bag and some grub for the horse. You can let us have it, Mike!"

The stableman nodded assent. Supplies for the horse having been negotiated for, supplies for the juniors themselves were the next item. These had to be obtained at the school shop, and thither the juniors—after a wash and brush down in the stable—repaired. They left the horse and van standing in the yard, all ready for departure, while they went to the shop; and then Harry Wharton proceeded to make extensive purchases, which delighted the heart of Mrs. Mumble, and made Billy Bunter's mouth water.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### The Raid of the Upper Fourth.

**B**ILLY BUNTER looked on at the rapidly-increasing pile of good things on the counter, with his little round eyes glistening behind his big spectacles. Wharton was laying in a good supply. They were going to have their tea on the road, and they would probably want an extra meal, too; and anyway, what was left over would come in for the study cupboard. While Harry was giving his orders, Hurree Singh went up to No. 1 Study for the utensils that would be required—kettle and teapot and crockery and methylated spirit stove. He returned with them packed in a bag, and Harry borrowed a basket of Mrs. Mumble to pack the provisions in.

The juniors had been too busy to notice particularly that during the purchases the number of fellows in the school shop had increased. Their trip in the caravan was attracting a great deal of attention, so there was nothing remarkable in it. But what was curious was that most of the fellows in the shop belonged to the Upper Fourth. And the way they grinned at one another indicated that something was afoot, if the Removites had noticed it.

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Wharton, having packed his goods into the basket, slung it on his arm, and the chums turned to leave the shop. A crowd of Upper Fourth fellows filled the doorway, and did not seem disposed to let them pass.

"Let's pass through," said Wharton good-naturedly.

"Say 'please,' pretty," said Mills, with a grin.

"Oh, don't be an ass. Get out of the way!"

"Not to-day, thank you."

"Will you let us pass?"

"Some other time, dear boy!"

And the Upper Fourth fellows drew closer together, grinning. Wharton frowned. It was a jape of the rival Form, of course; but the Removites weren't looking for a Form row just then. The afternoon was wearing on, and they wanted to get gone in the caravan.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Wharton, impatiently. "There's no sense in a jape like this. We don't want a scrap now."

"That's all you know," grinned Mills. "There may be more in it than meets the eye. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled his comrades.

Clank! Clatter! Clink!

The sound from the Close came clearly in at the tuck-shop. Wharton started. It was the sound that had broken the silence of the night, when the two chums were on the school wall, and Tawno the gipsy had brought the caravan along to the gates of Greyfriars. Wharton knew it again at once. It was the sound of the caravan in motion.

In an instant he knew what the Upper Fourth were planning. These fellows had been told off to blockade the Removites in the tuck-shop, while Temple, Dabney & Co. were raiding the caravan.

Clank! clink! clank!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry excitedly.

"They've got our van—they're driving off the Saucy Susan!"

"Get out of the way!" roared Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you let us pass?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton wasted no more time in words. He dropped the basket and made a furious rush at the doorway. The Upper Fourth fellows met the attack manfully, and Harry's chums backed him up with equal determination.

If Temple and Dabney escaped with the van into the road, and drove off, the afternoon's outing would be "messed up" with a vengeance. After the Removites had fetched the horse from Friardale, and cleaned out the caravan, to have both of them collared by their rivals was too bad. The laugh would be up against the Famous Four with a vengeance.

They fought desperately for a passage from the tuck-shop. Even Hazeldene, who was not a fighting-man as a rule, backed up the comrades with as much determination as themselves. Billy Bunter was pushed out of the way at the start—and he was quite content to be pushed out of the way.

The odds were greatly in favour of the Upper Fourth, but Wharton & Co. were desperate. They struggled and punched, and hit out right and left, careless of the knocks they received in return, and fairly fought their way through.

With a rush they came out into the open, the enemy still crowding round them. Harry looked quickly towards the gates. The caravan was just swinging out of sight into the road.

"Run for it!" yelled Harry.

He broke into a spurt for the gates. His comrades followed fast, leaving the Upper Fourth fellows roaring with laughter. They had carried out Temple's instructions, and stopped the Famous Four till the caravan was out in the road. Most of them had had hard knocks, and weren't inclined for a foot race after the fight. They stood outside the tuck-shop yelling with laughter after the running Removites, who were pelting desperately down to the gates. And a sudden thought struck Mills, which made him roar the louder.

"Ha, ha, ha! The grub!"

He rushed back into the shop. The basket of provisions had been left there by Wharton, forgotten in the excitement. Billy Bunter had just picked it up, with the idea of conveying it to a safer place. To sling Bunter out of the way and open the basket was the work of a moment.

"To the victor, the spoils," grinned Mills.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the good things were handed out right and left, and the Upper Fourth, nearly choking between laughter and rapid eating, enjoyed themselves immensely. Meanwhile Harry Wharton & Co. were tearing on in desperate pursuit of the caravan.

Temple, who knew how to drive, was at the reins, and Dodger was pulling away gaily. Dabney, Fry, and Jones were inside the van, looking back for pursuers, and they saw the five Removites whirl out of the school gates and come pelting along the road.

"Here they come!" yelled Dabney.



"Put it on, Temple!" exclaimed Fry. "Make the old brute run!"

"What ho!" said Temple, cracking the whip.

Dodger broke into a swifter trot. The caravan, which was never intended to travel at such a speed, rocked and swayed from side to side. The tins and pans and kettles slung underneath clanked about merrily, making a din that could be heard far and wide over the countryside.

"Music hath charms," grinned Fry. "My hat, what a row! They're running well."

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

"But they won't catch us. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. certainly were running well. Hazeldene had dropped a little behind in the race; but Wharton and Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Singh were getting over the ground in splendid style. Dodger was going very nearly at a gallop now, much to the danger of the caravan when it encountered a rut in the road. But the speed of the heavy van naturally could not be equal to that of a good runner—if the juniors could stay the pace long enough to make up for the long start of the van. And they did. They came up steadily, gaining at every stride.

"Whip him up, Temple!" shouted Jones. "They're gaining!"

"Ho's going top speed now, I reckon," called back Temple.

"How far back are they?"

"Twenty yards now."

"And gaining?"

"Yes, hand over hand."

"Then you'll have to keep them off."

And Temple gave all his attention to the driving, leaving the defence of the caravan to his comrades. The driving, indeed, needed all his care, for the horse was going at a perilous speed, and the rocking of the caravan threatened every moment to whirl it into the ditch.

"Steady, kids," said Dabney. "They'll be on us soon; knock 'em off as fast as they come up!"

"Yes, rather!"

With a final burst of speed the pursuers came up. Harry Wharton made a desperate spring for the open door. Dabney leaned forward and gave him a push on the chest, and Wharton fell back into the road. He went down with a bump that made him ache in every bone, and raised a cloud of dust round him.

"Oh!"

His chums stopped, and the caravan increased its distance. From the van came back a yell of mocking merriment from the heroes of the Upper Fourth.

"We're off; good-bye!"

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### The Disappearance of the Saucy Susan.

HARRY WHARTON staggered to his feet. He was aching a little from the fall, but as resolute as ever. He gasped for breath, and wiped the stream of perspiration from his brow.

"Come on!" he said.

And he darted forward again. His chums followed him fast. From the door of the caravan the Upper Fourth fellows waved their caps.

"Come on!" sang out Fry. "Take another little run! We'll knock you down as often as you like, dear boys!"

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.

The Removites made no reply. They gained steadily on the lumbering vehicle, and Harry Wharton came within touch of the rear of the van. The defenders stood ready to knock him back as soon as he jumped. But he was not to be caught a second time in the same way.

He swerved a little to the left, and passed the van, and ran on abreast, gradually forging ahead. Bob Cherry followed him, and Nugent and Hurree Singh swerved to the right, and passed the caravan on the other side.

The Upper Fourth fellows looked a little dismayed. The object of the Removites was evidently to get ahead and stop the horse, and the raiders did not quite see how they were to be prevented.

Harry Wharton came level with the horse and cast a glance up at the driver. Temple caught up the whip.

"Keep off!" he shouted.

"Oh, rats!" gasped Harry.

"Mind the whip, then."

The lash curled round the junior. It was a stinging cut, but he did not care if he was hurt. He forged on and grasped the bit, and the galloping horse slackened down.

Slacker—slacker—with that iron grip at his head, till he dropped into a walk, and Temple could not make him go faster.

Bob Cherry was on the step by this time, and Nugent on the

shaft on the other side. Temple looked at them alternately, in doubt.

"You can come down feet first or head first," said Bob Cherry breathlessly; "but you're coming down, anyway."

Temple burst into a laugh. He didn't want to risk breaking his neck, so he allowed the horse to stop, and descended from the driver's seat.

Fry, Dabney, and Jones jumped out of the caravan, and rushed to support their leader. The Upper Fourth did not mean to give up the caravan without a struggle.

"Well, you've caught up," grinned Dabney, "and now what are you going to do? If you like to cut off at once we won't lick you."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We've a jolly good mind to lick you, anyway, for giving us this run," he said; "but we'll let you off if you bunk at once."

"Rats, and many of 'em!"

"This is our caravan; we've borrowed it for the afternoon."

"So have we," grinned Temple, and his comrades chuckled.

"You youngsters can bunk! If you set a foot on that van, Wharton, I'll have you off in a jiffy."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Wharton set a foot on the van, and Temple was as good as his word. He grasped the captain of the Remove, and whirled him off. They closed in a second, and struggled fiercely. In a twinkling the rest were engaged in combat. It was four to four, for Hazeldene was still at a considerable distance, coming on breathlessly. The Upper Fourth were somewhat older fellows, and should naturally have had the advantage. But the Famous Four were the pick of the Remove, as hard as nails and tough customers for anybody to tackle.

The combat was what Hurree Singh would have justly termed terrific. The prestige of the rival Forms was at stake, and nobody meant to give in while he had an ounce of wind or strength left. While the combat raged, Dodger walked to the roadside to crop the grass there, and finding that he was uncontrolled, he walked on further, and then the spirit of mischief seized him, and he broke into a trot. The caravan went jingling away down the road, but in the excitement of the raging combat, the juniors were deaf to it.

How the struggle would have terminated it is impossible to say, had not the arrival of Hazeldene turned the scale in favour of the Remove. Hazeldene slipped into the fight at once, collaring Temple and dragging him away from Wharton. Temple was too exhausted to resist. He was rolled over to the ditch, and rolled into it, and he yelled as he splashed into the muddy slimy water.

Harry Wharton sprang to his feet. In a moment he was helping his comrades, and between the five Removites the three Upper Fourth fellows were knocked right and left. They were driven back towards Temple, who had dragged himself out of the ditch, with all the fight taken out of him by the ducking.

"Yah!" growled Fry. "Five to four! Yah, fair play!"

"What about a dozen to four in the tuck shop?" gasped Wharton.

And Fry had no more to say on that head. As a matter of fact, he had very little breath left to say anything. The fight had been a hard one, and all the juniors were in the last stage of fag.

"Have you had enough?" demanded Wharton.

"Oh, we're done," grinned Temple. "Of course we could go on, but—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's the caravan?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Temple. "It's gone!"

The juniors stared along the deserted road in dismay. The Saucy Susan had vanished. Faintly from afar came the sound of a clink-clank-clink—afar and faint. Dodger was travelling at a good speed. The Saucy Susan was gone!

"M-m-my only hat!" gasped Wharton.

The Upper Fourth fellows gasped with laughter, and walked away. They were quite satisfied. They had been licked, but it was by odds, and the bone of contention had disappeared. The five Removites remained in the road, staring in blank dismay at the place where the gipsy caravan had been.

"Great Scott!" said Nugent. "Of all the gorgeous sells! This is what we've been fighting for!"

"Let's get after it," said Bob Cherry.

"No good," said Wharton. "Blessed if I could put up anything like a run now. We could never catch that brute on foot. We shall have to cut back to Greyfriars for the bikes."

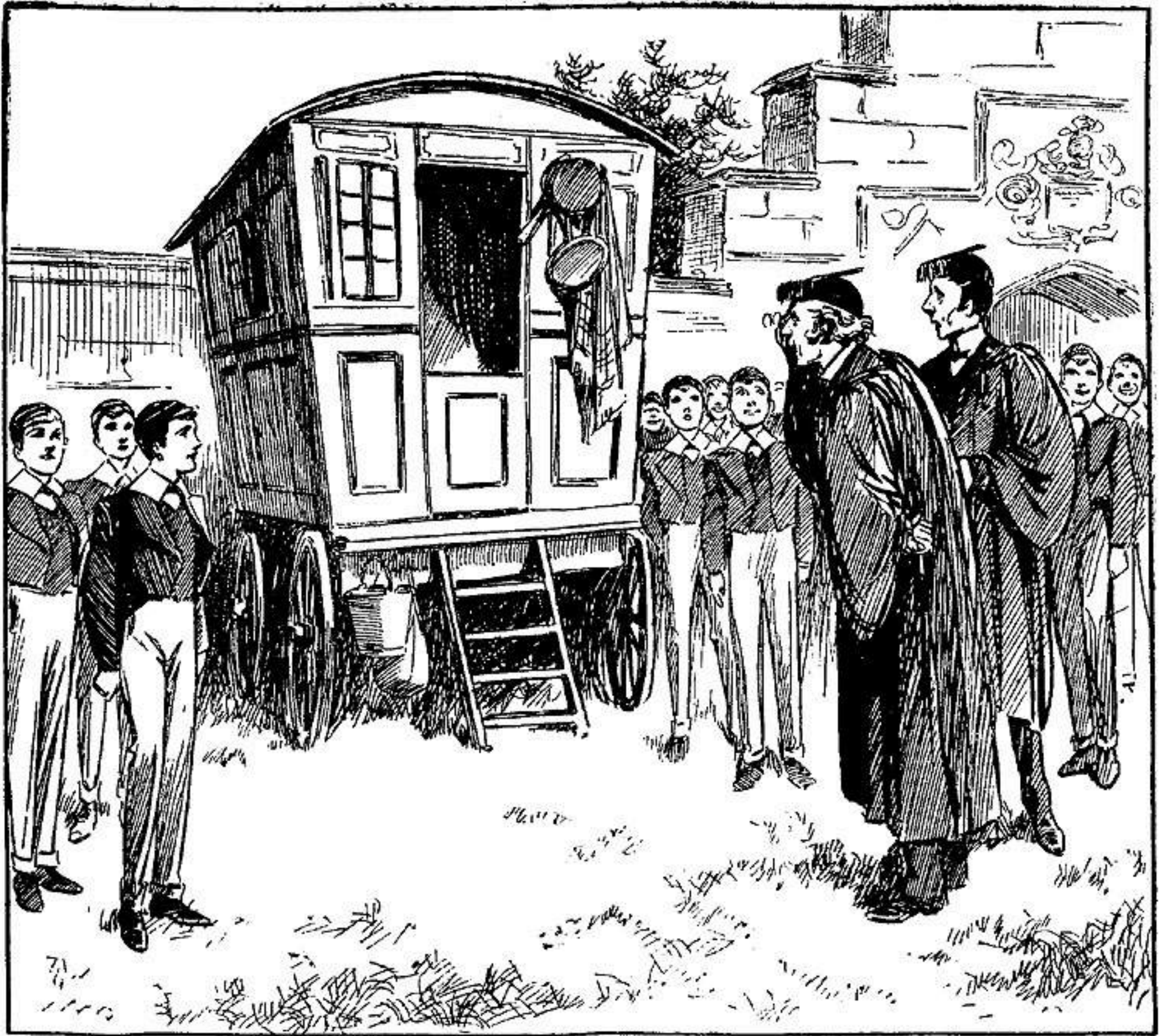
"Phow! We're nearly a mile from Greyfriars!"

"Can't be helped."

It was pretty clear that Wharton was right. The juniors were so pumped by the hard run and the harder tussle that it was quite enough effort to walk back to the school. Chasing the caravan on foot was not to be thought of. Putting their dishevelled attire a little in order as they went, they retraced their steps towards the school.

Billy Bunter was standing in the gateway, blinking lugubriously down the road in search of them. Temple & Co. had





"Dear me!" said the Head. "This is—is most extraordinary! I should guess this vehicle to be a caravan, Mr. Quelch—one of those vehicles in which itinerant merchants travel."

just gone in, and they had playfully sat Billy down in the dust. He gave a gasp of relief as the Removites came in sight."

"I say, you fellows—don't shove past a chap like that, Nugent—I say, those rottors have boned all the grub."

"Oh, blow the grub!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—all the grub—the grub!" said Bunter. "And they're making cockshies of the crockery that Inky left there in the bag."

"Blow the crockery!"

"Look here, you fellows—"

But the juniors did not stop to listen. They hurried towards the bicycle shed. There was a sound of smashing from a corner of the Close, where a crowd of Upper Fourth fellows were gathered.

Bunter's information was correct. Having demolished the substantial lunch laid in by Wharton, the Upper Fourth had next fallen upon the bag of kettles and crockery, and they were using the articles for cockshies, amid yells of laughter.

The Removites heard their property going crash on crash, but even that did not make them pause. The Saucy Susan had to be recaptured, and all reckonings with the Upper Fourth could be postponed to a later date.

In five minutes the chums of the Remove had their cycles out, and were pedalling away down the road in chase of the caravan. They left Billy Bunter standing at the gate, blinking after them, hardly knowing what was happening, and only certain of one thing—that the "feed" was off.

No. 73.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### The Chase of the Caravan.

**B**UZZ! Ting-a-ling!

Five cyclists swept down the wide country road at top speed. There was reason for haste, and excuse for scorching. What troubles the Dodger might get into with the Saucy Susan the juniors hardly ventured to think. Dodger was so very playful, and the caravan was not the steadiest of vehicles. Where was it now?

The chances were that it was overturned in a ditch, and that was one of the things least to be dreaded. It might have run over somebody, or it might be jammed in a shop-window in the next village, or Dodger might have taken it into his head to follow one of the paths which led down to the seashore, and in that case it was as likely as not that the caravan would be caught in the tide.

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, as they swept on up the dusty road. "What a day we're having!"

"Rather," grunted Nugent; and the Nabob of Bhanipur said that the ratherfulness was terrific.

They certainly were having a day of it! They had intended to spend the afternoon caravanning. They were doing it—in a way—but not in the way they had intended. The trouble with the horse had taken up some time, and then the trouble with the Upper Fourth! The chase of the caravan seemed likely to take up most of what was left of their half-holiday—even if it were successful.



"Never mind," said Wharton, cheerily. "It's fun!"

"Ahem!" said Bob. "I've no doubt that it is fun—from the point of view of the Upper Fourth, and of our friend Dodger. Blessed if I see where the fun comes in for us, though. But I'll take your word for it. I say, you chaps, this is fun!"

But the chaps did not reply. They were saving their breath for their work.

The juniors were fatigued with walking and running, but the cycling came easily enough, and they covered the ground in good style.

There was a long stretch of solitary country road to the next village, and the juniors rode over it, keeping their eyes open for the caravan.

Dodger, artful as he was, could scarcely have taken to the fields, even his powers stopping short of climbing fences and getting over stiles. But there were several turnings he might have taken, some leading inland, some down towards the sea. Still, the chances were that he had kept to the road, and the juniors went straight on to the next village. There they jumped down to inquire for the missing caravan. The main road ran straight through the village, and the Saucy Susan could scarcely have passed through the street without being stopped, or at all events seen. A merchant of ice-cream was doing some business at the end of the street, and the thirsty juniors patronised his little cart generously. Wharton asked him about the caravan, but he shook his head. He hadn't seen it, and he was quite sure that nothing of the sort had passed within the past two hours, for which time he had been selling ice-cream there.

The boys remounted, and rode slowly back towards Greyfriars.

"Well, we know the radius we've got to look for him in," Wharton remarked. "I suppose someone tried to stop him on the main road, or he may have been scared off by a motor. He's taken one of the turnings between here and Greyfriars."

"Lemme see; there's about six," said Bob Cherry.

"Yes—we shall have to explore them all in turn, I suppose."

"Better set aside the rest of the half-holidays for the term to do it in," Nugent remarked. "It will take about that time."

"We'd better separate," said Wharton quietly. "I'm afraid it's all up with the outing for this afternoon, but that doesn't matter so long as we get the horse and the van back. I daresay Nadesha wouldn't be sorry for the van to be lost, but the horse belongs to Mr. Milson, and is worth a great deal more money than we could possibly pay. So long as we recapture him, I think we can be satisfied."

"Oh, that's all right; we can have the excursion next Wednesday, for that matter," said Hazeldene. "Let's take one turning each, as we come to them."

"And if we find the caravan?" said Bob.

"Take it back to Greyfriars, or to the village. We're going to get Mr. Milson to put it up. Whether we find it or not, we're to meet outside the school-gates at six. That agreed?"

"Right you are."

And the chums separated one by one. It was the only chance they had of successfully hunting down the lost caravan. Bob Cherry took the first turning they came to, and Nugent the next one. Harry Wharton took the third, the least inviting of all. It was a rough country lane that led to a wide moor where, some time before, Wharton had had a dangerous adventure with a gang of gypsies. Over the moor, the path ran on to the coast. The moor was frequently camped upon by more or less disreputable characters, and, if the caravan arrived there unguarded, the chances were great that it would speedily find a new owner. The thought of that was in Harry's mind as he rode down the lane, and he put on speed as he thought of it.

The ground was rough, and he felt very keenly the change from the turnpike road. Deep ruts were in the lane; ruts made in mud in the wet season, and baked hard as iron by the summer sun. It was not easy to go at a good speed without danger of skidding in the ruts, and Wharton soon found that it was better to ride cautiously. As he went, he kept his eyes upon the ground. It was more than likely that the dusty mud ridges would be crushed in places by such a heavy vehicle as the gipsy caravan, and he would very likely find some track of the Saucy Susan. He uttered an exclamation suddenly, and sprang off his machine.

At a spot where the ground was more clayey, there were wheel-ruts to be seen—ruts not yet effaced by the dust of the road—fresh ruts, evidently those of a weighty vehicle. Wharton shaded his eyes with his hand and looked up the lane. The overhanging trees hid the view ahead. He listened intently, but no sound came of the clanking of the caravan.

It might be some heavy farmer's waggon that had made the ruts; or it might be the Saucy Susan. Wharton, encouraged, remounted his machine and rode on.

As he rode the trees grew scantier along the lane, and the fields on either side gave place to long, semi-barren rolling expanses of pasture-land. This merged into the moor in the distance. As the view became clearer of trees, Wharton kept his eyes ahead. He had covered the distance pretty quickly, and if the Saucy Susan was really before him, it could not be far away.

THE MAGNET, No. 73.

**Special!**

**"THE GREYFRIARS CAMP."**

By FRANK RICHARDS,  
NEXT WEEK.

"By Jove!"

The boy uttered the exclamation suddenly, with great satisfaction.

"By Jove! There she is!"

Right out on the moor, axle-deep in the fern and heather—there she was—the Saucy Susan, with Dodger still between the shafts.

There was a path over the moor, and the caravan was upon it, though from the distance she looked as if in the heather itself. Wharton strained his eyes to see whether the vehicle was still masterless. He could hardly believe that Dodger, playful as he was, had wandered so great a distance of his own accord.

In the clear sunlight he caught sight of a patch of smoke rising from beyond the caravan. He knew what that meant. Someone was in the driver's seat, and he was smoking as he drove the caravan.

Wharton set his teeth, and drove on with the bicycle. The driver might be simply some rustic who had found the caravan astray and taken charge of it; though, in that case, he should have been driving towards Friardale instead of away from it. It was more probable that the Saucy Susan had fallen into the hands of some tramp on the road.

Wharton did not ring; he rode as quietly as possible. If the caravan left the path, and plunged into the rough moor, it would be extremely difficult for him to follow on his bicycle.

He turned into the moorland path, and raced on after the Saucy Susan, his tyres making hardly a sound on the soft soil. He overtook the caravan rapidly. As he drew nearer to it, he heard the flicking of a whip, and the sound of voices. There were two men at least, in the front of the caravan; but Wharton did not hesitate.

He rode right on till he was close to the rear of the vehicle, and then jumped off his machine. Throwing the bicycle aside into the heather, he ran on past the caravan and turned at the horses' head, gripping it fast.

The two men on the caravan—one in the driver's seat and the other on the shaft, stared at the boy blankly.

"Let go!" shouted the driver.

Wharton looked at them steadily.

"I will not let go. Stop!"

"Why, you—you young——"

"This caravan does not belong to you," said Wharton calmly. "It belongs to me,—I mean, I was in charge of it when the horse ran away. You found it wandering."

The two rough-looking fellows exchanged quick glances. They were tramps, if not worse, as a glance at them was sufficient to show. It was clear that they had discovered the caravan masterless, and had taken possession of it with the intention of getting it away as quickly as possible into another district, for their own benefit.

"It's a lie," said the driver, surlily. "This here is my caravan; that there is my name painted on the door."

"Telengro is a gipsy name, and you are not a gipsy."

The man muttered an oath.

"Let go that hoss!"

"I will not. Give the caravan up to me, and no more shall be said about the matter. If you doubt my claim, come with me to Friardale, and I'll prove it. If you try to keep the van, you are a thief."

"Will you let go?" said the man, hoarsely.

"No!"

"The whip, Tadger," said the man on the shaft, in a lower voice. "The whip."

The whip went whirling aloft.

"You young hound, let go, or——"

"I won't!"

The whip descended, and Wharton gave a sharp cry. He reeled back from the horse's head; the whip was rising for another savage blow. Tadger, as the man's comrade called him, jerked at the reins, and gave the horse a cut, and the caravan lumbered on.

Wharton stood in the grassy path on the moor, his eyes blazing, his breath coming thick and fast. His shoulder was aching from the savage cut, but he did not care for the pain. But all the anger and obstinacy in his nature were aroused. He watched the van lumbering on; then glanced towards his bicycle, half-hidden in the heather. But he did not pick it up. It was safe enough there, as far as that went—and he could pursue the caravan better on foot. If the thieves turned it across the moor the bicycle would be a disadvantage.

The junior stopped for only a minute to think what he would do. Then he ran swiftly after the caravan, swiftly but silently, and caught hold of it behind. He lodged himself on the step at the back, and as the caravan swung on through the deepening sunset, it carried Harry Wharton with it.

# ANSWERS



HARRY WHARTON made no sound—it was useless to provoke a contest with the two ruffians. He meant to stick to the caravan; to keep it in sight wherever it went. If it passed through a village or a town, it would be easy for him to call for help, and get it stopped for inquiry—which would be enough for him. He was getting further and further away from Greyfriars, and it was doubtful if he would be back in time for evening call-over: but he hardly gave that a thought. The Head would probably excuse him when he learned the state of the case,—but at all events, whatever happened, Harry did not mean to allow Nadesha's caravan and the horse to be taken by the two impudent thieves.

The caravan lumbered on. Harry heard snatches of talk from the front, and once he heard the sound of clambering, as if one of the rascals were getting up to take a view backward along the path. The junior smiled slightly. He could not be seen unless the rascals came round the van, and if they were looking back, they would imagine that he had given up the chase.

"I can't see 'im, Tadger."

Harry heard the words clearly, and smiled again.

"It's all right, Duffy. The whip was enough for 'im!" growled the man with the reins. "We sha'n't see 'im ag'in."

"Won't you?" murmured Harry.

Wilder and lonelier grew the moor as the caravan lumbered on. The horse was showing signs of weariness, and the pace was very slow. The sunset was deepening towards dusk.

Harry knew the way pretty well; he had cycled on most of the paths and lanes within twenty miles of Greyfriars. By keeping on across the moor the caravan would reach the coast, and the thieves had the choice of two turnings off the route—one leading to the fishing village of Pegg, near Cliff House School, and the other towards a market town at a considerable distance. If they kept on to either place, and Harry remained with the caravan, there was no doubt that he would soon be able to turn the tables upon Messrs. Tadger and Duffy.

But if they knew enough of the country to avoid the towns was doubtful. And there was a third possibility; they might camp for the night upon the moor. That, as a matter of fact, was what the thieves intended doing. The caravan swung suddenly away from the path, and plunged axle-deep into the heather. Harry remained where he was. For a couple of hundred yards the caravan thudded on, and then she stopped. Duffy jumped off the shaft.

"This 'ere's a good place," he said.

It was a good place for a camp. Two or three big trees rose from the level of the moor, and a spring rippled and sang about their roots.

The horse plunged his muzzle immediately into the water, and Tadger descended from his seat.

Harry Wharton slipped from the caravan.

He knew what to do now. The rascals were going to camp here, in this lonely spot; and if he could get back to Friardale and give information there, the police could be on the scene before they broke camp in the morning.

But it was not to be!

As Wharton glided swiftly away into the heather, there was a sudden shout from Duffy.

"Look! My heye!"

"What's the matter?" growled the other.

"That kid!"

"What?"

The next moment both the footpads were running as hard as they could go after Harry Wharton.

The boy heard them coming, and he put on his best speed; but he was not in his best form. He had had a tiring day. And Duffy was a light-built man, and had doubtless had on more than one occasion to use his legs to save his freedom. He ran his hardest, and gained on Harry.

"Stop, you young hound!" he panted. "Follerin' us all the time, was yer? Goin' to fetch the coppers, hey? Stop, I tell yer!"

Harry ran swiftly on. But the next minute there was a hand upon his shoulder.

He wrenched himself away and faced round, his fists clenched, his eyes flashing.

"Keep off, you cad, or——"

Duffy grinned, and rushed on. He did not think that a boy of fifteen would be able to give him much trouble.

But the grin vanished from his stubbly face the next second. Harry knocked aside his outstretched hand, and delivered a right-hander which caught Mr. Duffy full upon the point of his unshaven chin.

"Ow!" gasped Mr. Duffy.

And he went staggering back, to fall and disappear in the heather with a thud. But the other ruffian was on the scene by this time, and he ran straight at Harry Wharton, hitting out savagely.

Wharton guarded his clumsy blows, and put in an upper cut that made Tadger see stars—myriads more than were coming out in the dusky sky. Tadger staggered, and sat down with a bump.

No. 73.

**Special!**

**"THE GREYFRIARS CAMP."**

By FRANK RICHARDS.  
NEXT WEEK.

But now Duffy was on his feet, springing at the boy, and his grasp closed upon him. Wharton struggled fiercely, and—boy against man as it was—he would yet have given a good account of himself. But Tadger came to his comrade's aid, and in a couple of minutes Harry was overpowered.

Breathless and bruised—for the ruffians had not used him gently—he lay in the heather, pinned down by the two ruffians.

"My heye!" gasped Mr. Duffy. "Wot a young spitfire!"

"Keep still," growled Tadger, taking out a clasp-knife and opening it with a flourish. "Look 'ere!"

Harry's lip curled.

"Bah! You dare not use it," he exclaimed. "You cannot frighten me with childish threats. Put it away!"

Mr. Duffy chuckled a little. Tadger scowled savagely, and closed the knife. He had, of course, only intended to scare the boy with the sight of it, but Wharton was not so easily scared.

"You've got too much to say, my kid!" said Tadger venomously. "Maybe I wouldn't use the sticker. But I'll use the buckle end of my belt fast enough, if I have any more of your lip, so look out. Bring him back, Duffy."

They hustled the boy back to the caravan. He made no further resistance; it was useless, and would only have caused further brutality. Tadger eyed him with a spiteful look.

"We shall have to keep the young whelp safe till morning, Duffy," he said. "Then we can be clear away afore he can walk home and peach to the coppers."

"That's so," said Duffy.

"Serve 'im right to knock 'im on the 'ead," said Tadger. "Giving us all this trouble for nothing."

"You have stolen my caravan," said Wharton.

"It ain't your van," said Duffy—"it's ours. Finding's keepings—and we found it. It's ours now, anyway."

"If you take it back to Friardale, you will be rewarded."

"'Ow much?" sneered Duffy.

"I could manage a sovereign," said Wharton, after a moment's thought.

The two ruffians laughed sneeringly.

"And the 'orse alone is worth thirty," said Tadger.

"The horse is not mine."

"Haw, haw! No, it ain't, it's ours," chuckled Tadger. "I know where we can sell it afore ten o'clock in the morning, anyway. We've got to keep this young shaver safe, Duffy. It's just as well that he follered us—safer for us. Get a rope or something out of the caravan, and tie him up."

"Right you are, Tadger."

Duffy struck a match, and groped in the caravan. He came out again with a coil of rope in his hand.

Tadger nodded with a grin. He had kept tight hold of Harry.

"That's all right. Rope him up!"

Wharton gritted his teeth; but it was useless to resist. His hands were bound, and then his ankles. Then Duffy coiled the rope round him, round and round, with a grin on his face, till Wharton looked like a mass of coiled rope.

"That'll do," grinned Tadger.

Harry Wharton breathed hard.

"You scoundrels—you shall pay for this!"

"Shall I shove him in the caravan, Tadger?"

"Yes; and shut the door."

"Kim on!" said Duffy.

Wharton was bundled into the caravan, bumped on the floor, and left there. The door was closed upon him, and he was in almost pitch darkness.

The last glimmer of the sun was disappearing in the west. In the silence of the wide moor Wharton heard the ruffians camping, and the crop-crop of the horse feeding beside the spring.

He lay there, with cramped limbs, and deep anger and impatience in his heart. There was one hope in his breast—unknown to the two thieves. His comrades would be certain to search for him. Would they find him? If they did, the tables might yet be turned on Messrs. Tadger and Duffy.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

### Wharton Missing.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

That was Bob Cherry's greeting as he came up to the rendezvous outside the school gates. A quarter past six had struck, and he was late. Hurreo Singh, Nugent, and Hazeldene were there, and Billy Bunter had sighted them, and come out to speak a word in season. But Bob Cherry looked round for Wharton in vain.

"No luck?" he asked.

"No," said Nugent. "No sign of the caravan the way I went—and the same with these chaps."

"The samefulness was terrific."

"What price you, Bob?" asked Hazeldene.

"Nothing! No sign of the van, or of the artful Dodger. Perhaps Wharton's had more luck, as he hasn't turned up."



"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunty. Did you speak, Bunty?"

"Yes, I did, Cherry," said Billy Bunter, with an indignant blink. "There isn't any tea in the study. What are we going to do?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"I know what I'm going to do," said Bob cheerfully. "I'm going to kick you through the gates if you bother me while I'm bothered about Wharton. I wish he'd turn up, you chaps. Not in sight yet!"

They looked down the road. There was no sign of their comrade, and they were vaguely uneasy.

"He may be following the caravan a jolly long way," Bob Cherry remarked. "Or he may have got into trouble."

"I was just thinking," said Nugent slowly—"if somebody found the caravan and stuck to it, why——"

"That's it. Harry may have run right into trouble. He went the lonely way, over the moor, too. Look here, if he isn't in sight by half past, we'd better go and look for him. We're all here, luckily, and we know the way he went. If he's coming back, we shall meet him on the road."

"Good idea!"

"The goodfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows, you can't go without tea, you know, and I—I'm hungry. I am getting into a low state already, from want of sufficient nourishment. Wharton has been keeping me awfully short lately. Suppose you come in and have tea, first, and then go and look for Wharton—— Ow! What are you up to, Cherry?"

Bob Cherry had taken a tight grip on one of the fat junior's fat cars.

"I'm pulling your ear," he said calmly.

"Ow! Owowow! Leggo!"

"You young rotter," said Bob wrathfully. "I believe you'd only say it was tea-time if the school was on fire, or if the Germans were landing in Pegg Bay. Go and have your tea—or get drowned. Buzz off!"

"But I say, you fellows——"

"Be off!" roared Bob Cherry, in such a formidable voice that the fat junior gasped, and broke into a run.

"That chap makes me tired," said Bob Cherry, calming down. "I know I shall knock him on the head with a cricket bat one of these days. I feel it!"

"He will feel it, too, if you do," grinned Nugent.

"All the same, we shall get jolly hungry if we have a long hunt for Wharton," said Hazeldene. "What price getting some sandwiches at Mrs. Mumble's to shove in our pockets?"

"Well, that's not a bad idea."

Bob Cherry felt in his pocket, and discovered a half-crown.

"Good! I'll buzz off and get some," he said. "You chaps wait here, in case Harry turns up."

And Bob Cherry cut off. He entered the school shop in hot haste, but spent only a few minutes there, coming out again with a bundle of sandwiches under his arm. He nearly ran into Mark Linley.

Linley stopped.

"Anything wrong?" he asked, looking at Bob's excited face. Bulstrode, who was going into the tuck-shop, paused to look at them.

"Blessed if I know," said Bob. "The caravan did a bunk, you know, after those Upper Fourth rotters collared it, and we've been hunting for it; and Harry hasn't come in. We're going to look for him. Like to come?"

"Yes, certainly; but"—Mark glanced at Bob's Norfolk jacket and knickers—"you are cycling?"

"Yes, rather."

"I haven't a bike, you know. Never mind, I hope you'll find Wharton all right," said Mark.

"You can have my bike, if you like."

Both the juniors stared. It was Bulstrode who spoke, and he turned a little red as he did so. Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, and always the bitter enemy of the Lancashire lad!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob, in his frank way. "Is that a little joke, Bulstrode, or are you ill?"

Bulstrode flushed angrily.

"It's not a joke!" he exclaimed. "Why shouldn't I lend Linley my bike, if I like?"

"No reason at all but—but——"

"Will you take it, Linley?"

"Thank you very much, but——" began Mark slowly.

"But you don't want to accept favours from me" said Bulstrode, with one of his old sneers. "Don't then! You were the only chap who treated me decently at the time the whole Form were down on me. That's all. But please yourself."

"I'll take it, and thank you very much," said Mark.

"Oh that's all right."

Bulstrode went on into the shop, and Bob Cherry gave a low whistle.

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**Special!**

**"THE GREYFRIARS CAMP."**

By FRANK RICHARDS,  
NEXT WEEK.

"Well, they say a porcupine can't change his quills—I mean, a leopard can't change his spots, or an Ethiopian his blacking," he remarked; "but Bulstrode is turning over a new leaf, anyway. Get the bike, my son, and come on; we're starting at half-past. We shall be glad of your knuckles along with us if there's a fight—and there may be."

Mark smiled, and hurried away to the bicycle shed. He was fond of cycling, but he got very little of it, for the funds of the "scholarship boy," would not run to a bicycle. He joined the chums of the Remove in the road, wheeling Bulstrode's machine, a first-rate and very expensive one.

"Here he is," said Bob Cherry. "Have some of these sandwiches. You can chew them as you ride. Let's be off! Half-past's striking."

And the five cyclists dashed down the road.

They reached the turning Harry had taken, and followed it in the sunset, till the purple moor lay wide and lonely before them. There Mark Linley jumped down and examined the ground.

"There's the track of a tyre here," he said. "There's been a cyclist over this path not long ago."

"Good!" said Nugent. "If Harry's taken the path over the moor, we're bound to run him down if we keep on. Buzz on!"

They rode on swiftly on the moorland path. The dusk was creeping over the wide expanse and objects became indistinct to the view. Suddenly Bob Cherry stopped with a sharp exclamation.

"Hold on!"

"What is it?"

"A bicycle!"

The juniors jumped down in amazement. The bicycle was almost hidden, but Bob's keen eyes had seen it. He dragged it out to view.

"It's Harry's jigger," he said as he looked at the well-known machine. "What on earth has he left it here on the path for?"

The juniors looked at the machine blankly.

It was Wharton's machine, but where was Harry Wharton?

Bob Cherry cast a nervous, troubled glance round upon the darkening moor. Where was his chum? What terrible mishap might have happened?

"Better look for him," said Hazeldene, in a low voice.

Bob nodded without speaking. With a strange and heavy fear tugging at their hearts, the juniors searched the vicinity. No trace was found of Wharton, of course. The last glimmer of daylight was going.

"We'd better go on," said Bob Cherry, in a low voice.

"Harry must have gone on—on foot for some reason."

"He may have been close behind the caravan," said Mark, "and he mayn't have wished whoever was driving it to see him. Somebody was certainly driving it. The horse would never have wandered as far as this of his own accord."

Bob Cherry brightened.

"Yes, very likely. He may be just tracking the thief down; we may come on him any minute. Don't light the lamps, though—and keep as quiet as you can. We don't know what we may run into any minute now."

In the deepening gloom they resumed their ride, the lamps unlighted. Their hearts were full of a vague uneasiness. They knew that the caravan might have left the path, and plunged into the boundless moor, and every turn of their wheels might be taking them further away from it. But there was no help for that. They kept on, their glances seeking eagerly to right and left in the gloom.

"Stop!" Mark Linley muttered the word.

"What is it?"

"Look yonder—a light! Someone is camping on the moor!"

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### The Finish!

THE juniors with beating hearts sprang off their machines. They stared intently in the direction pointed out by Mark Linley.

There certainly was a glimmer of light in the gloom of the moor. What was it?

It was not large enough for a fire, but it certainly was a light, and they knew well enough that there was no habitation in the vicinity. Was it the Saucy Susan?

"Quiet!" said Bob Cherry, in a low voice. "It's a light of some sort, so it must be somebody camping. Some tramps, as like as not—or gipsies. If the caravan's not there, we needn't disturb them. We don't want a row on our hands for nothing."

"That's jolly sensible for you, Bob," said Nugent.

"The sensefulness is terrific."

"Oh, cheese it! Let's leave the jiggers here, and go and see what's yonder."

"Good wheeze."

"Take off the pumps," added Bob. "If there's going to be a



row, we may want something to bash with—and you chaps never thought of bringing a stick or two.”

“You didn’t think yourself, old man.”

“Oh, never mind that now. Come on.”

The five juniors, armed with bicycle pumps—flimsy weapons for an encounter, but better than nothing—left the machines in the path in a group, and crept across the moor towards the light.

There was a glimmer of stars in the sky, and as they advanced in the dim light a towering object became dimly visible.

“The caravan!” muttered Nugent.

“The Saucy Susan—or another,” agreed Bob. “We shall soon see.”

They could hear now the crop-crop of the feeding horse.

As they drew nearer, they discerned the light to be that of a large lantern, swinging on the shaft of the caravan.

“Look!” muttered Bob.

Two rough-looking men were seated on the shafts eating bread and cheese, and talking in muttering tones. But what Bob was looking at was the painted name of the caravan, showing up in the glimmer of the lantern. He had painted that name himself—“SAUCY SUSAN.” It was Nadosha’s caravan, beyond a doubt.

The juniors halted in the shadows, looking at the scene with searching eyes. The two men eating their supper were the only persons visible. There was no sign of Harry Wharton.

“Well, it’s our caravan,” said Bob Cherry, in a whisper. “They’ve either found it, or stolen it. In either case we’re going to have it. We’re five to two, if they make any fuss. Come on!”

“The come-onfulness is terrific.”

And the juniors boldly advanced into the glimmer of the lantern.

“My heye! Look there, Tadger!”

The two ruffians sprang to their feet. Each of them caught up a cudgel, and eyed the approaching juniors doubtfully.

Bob Cherry waved his hand.

“It’s all right!” he called out. “We’ve been looking for this caravan. It’s ours.”

The ruffians exchanged glances.

“It’s a lie!” growled Tadger—“it’s ours! You can’t have it!”

“Rats!” said Bob Cherry cheerfully. “Better not cut up rusty, old son; we don’t mean to stand any nonsense! Look here, we’re looking for a friend of ours as well as the caravan. Have you seen him?”

“Hark!” cried Nugent.

There was a sudden shout from within the caravan.

“Help! help!”

It was Wharton’s voice! He had heard the voice of his chum outside, and had not been slow to make his presence known.

“It’s Harry!” shouted Nugent. “He’s in the caravan!”

In a moment he was tearing open the door. Within, all was darkness, and he stumbled over an unseen object on the floor. There was an expressive grunt from the object.

“Ow! Groo!”

“Hallo! Is that you Harry?”

“Yes, rather! Thank goodness you’ve come! But look out for those scoundrels; they’re dangerous!”

“Right-ho!”

Nugent dragged Wharton out of the caravan into the starlight, and slashed at the rope with his pocket-knife. Tadger and Duffy were looking sulky and savage, but uncertain. They were not inclined to give up the stolen property, but, at the same time, the boys were evidently in earnest, and there were five of them.

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“Look ‘ere” said Tadger, “we found this ‘ere caravan. You say it’s yours—”

“Yes, rather!”

“The ratherfulness is great, my esteemed rotten thief.”

“Well, we’ve took care of it for you,” said Tadger. “If you can make it five quid, we’ll give it to you.”

“And ‘earty,” said Mr. Duffy.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

“Why don’t you say five hundred?” he asked. “Or you might make it five thousand? They’re bigger sums, and you’re just as likely to get them.”

“Look ‘ere, make it a quid!”

“Don’t give them a penny, Bob!” called out Harry, struggling with the ropes which Nugent was cutting through. “Not a farthing! I offered them a pound, and they refused it. They were going to steal the horse and van! Don’t give them anything—unless it’s a hiding!”

“Good wheeze!” exclaimed Bob Cherry. “We’ll give you chaps a hiding! I don’t want you to go with nothing! Come on, kids; let’s give them a hiding!”

The juniors were nothing loth. They rushed to the attack. Messrs. Tadger and Duffy had been in doubt whether they would attack or not. When they found themselves attacked, their doubts vanished. They bolted!

But they did not bolt quite quickly enough! The active juniors were close behind, and Bob Cherry’s boot—a large size in boots too—came behind Mr. Duffy with a thud, and Duffy rolled over and over with a wild yelp. Both Nugent and Hazeldene bestowed the same attention upon Tadger as he started running, and he rolled over his comrade.

“Give ‘em another!” roared Bob.

But the two rascals were up in a twinkling, and scouring away into the darkness. They vanished from the sight of the Greyfriars juniors, followed by a roar of laughter from the victorious Removeites.

“Well done,” said Harry Wharton, stretching his cramped limbs. “Jolly lucky thing you came along in time, kids. I was getting cramped. The rotters were going to leave me here in the morning, and take away the caravan and horse and sell them. We’d better harness Dodger, and get the Saucy Susan home as soon as we can. There will be a row at Greyfriars.”

Now that the excitement was over, the juniors were thinking of that, too. It was already long past locking up. They harnessed Dodger, and the bicycles were placed inside the caravan. It was a long journey to the village of Friardale, and Mr. Milsom was gone to bed when the caravan arrived, but he was cheerfully knocked up by the juniors to take in the Saucy Susan and the artful Dodger. Mr. Milsom was not so cheerful about it. However, the caravan and the horse were safely housed, and the juniors cycled home to the school.

Gosling’s face was portentous when he let them in. So was Mr. Quelch’s as he called them into his study. But the Remove-master, though severe, was just. When he had heard Wharton’s explanation, his stern face relaxed.

“You may go to bed,” he said.

And they went—willingly enough!

“What a day we’ve had!” murmured Bob Cherry, as he dived into bed. “All the same, it was fun—great fun! But we’ll have a really ripping time with the Saucy Susan next Wednesday—what oh!”

THE END.

**Next Tuesday:**

**“THE GREYFRIARS CAMP.”**

Another Splendid, Complete School Tale of

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**By FRANK RICHARDS.**

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# ONE OF THE RANKS

**A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.**

### A BRIEF RESUMÉ OF THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Ronald Chenys, a cadet in his last term at Sandhurst, is falsely accused of cheating in an exam., so one night, packing up a few necessaries, he leaves Sandhurst with his dog Rough. He walks to London, enlists in the Royal North Wessex Regiment under the name of Chester, and is sent down as one of a draft of recruits for that regiment to Woolchester. Arrived there, the rookies are taken charge of by two old soldiers, known as Mouldy Mills and Hookey Walker, who are deputed to explain their new duties. One of the recruits, Augustus Smythe, is so quillless that one day Mouldy and Hookey, having stuffed him up with extraordinary fables, get him trussed up to a form in the barrack-room. Presently Hookey rushes in yelling that the Colonel's pet elephant, Bunny, with its electro-plated hide, has escaped. The occupants of the barrack-room all rush out, leaving Gussy helpless and in darkness.

(Now go on with the story.)

### A Battle Royal—The Capture of Ronald—A Barrack-Room Court-Martial.

Gussy could hear stentorian words of command, and the scurrying of feet, and then his hair began to rise. For on the iron staircase outside ponderous footsteps thudded; something of awful bulk was boring its way upwards, marking its progress with prodigious snorts and snufflings.

What is this? Was Bunny scenting out the trail of his enemy Mouldy? Pursuing him to wreak vengeance for his electro-plated hide? And Mouldy having fled, what might not the furious beast do to Gussy, trussed helpless as a lark upon a spit?

Gussy's heart stood still. The mighty feet had halted on the stone landing outside the barrack-room door. The snuffling was changed to a shrill trumpeting of anger, and the door shook till it threatened to fall to pieces plank by plank.

Gussy gave a yell of terror. He tugged frenziedly at the lashing which held his wrists, but the knot held fast, and the broomstick beneath his elbows hampered his efforts.

Crash! The door had burst open under some awful impact, and something bulky and huge blocked up the opening.

Gussy ceased his unavailing efforts, and sat frozen with horror.

It was Bunny, right enough. There were his gleaming tusks, the evil, piggy eyes, the mighty head and flapping ears, the ponderous legs like tree-trunks.

He could distinguish all these features in the dim light flung upwards into the room from the gas-lamps in the square.

With swinging stride the elephant ranged along the row of beds, tossing his trunk hither and thither in search of prey, uttering strange sounds of anger. Nearer he came. Fear was choking Gussy, and he felt that he was going to faint. The great brute spied him at last, and with a shrill squeal of triumph made a rush. Gussy let out a yell of terror, and flung himself recklessly forward on the neck of the brute.

Down came Gussy—broomstick, forms and all—on the elephant, hurling it to the ground and breaking it into three large chunks.

The shock had burst Gussy's bonds, and with the frenzied strength of one who has already abandoned hope of life, he set about the nearest fragment, which happened to be the head and front legs.

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The first six punches taught him nothing. Then he suddenly realised that the hide, far from being steel-plated, had the woolly softness of blankets; that the tusks were nothing more formidable than broomsticks, and the eyes the lids of blacking-tins.

Then the gas went up, and Gussy awoke to the fact that he had been sold again. He might have realised it earlier had he only listened to the yells of laughter coming from the hinder end. This had already dismembered itself, revealing the figures of Tony Truscott and Mouldy Mills, each with a leg wrapped round with blankets to make it look like the ponderous limb of an elephant. Side by side, draped with the same brown Army blankets, they had formed the back and hind-quarters of the beast.

In the doorway Ronald was standing, holding his sides with laughter. But Gussy's blood was up. Bunny's fore-quarters were still at his mercy. Inside the tangle of blankets and tusks lay Hookey somewhere, though all that could be seen of him were his padded elephantine legs waving helplessly in the air.

Gussy gave a tentative punch at the place where he imagined his tormentor's nose might be, and scored a bulls-eye with the first shot.

"Thunder and blazes!" yelled Hookey, in anguish. "That was my boko you hit then! Let me up, ye fire-eating cat! Can't you see it's a joke? Ouch!"

Gussy, however, had other views on that point. Having found a vulnerable point in Hookey's anatomy, he intended sticking to it, and, with many a vicious grunt, he belaboured his blanketed enemy until he howled and howled again.

Mouldy and Tony howled, too, but with laughter. It was Ronald who had to go to Hookey's rescue. Picking up Gussy by the collar and one leg, he dragged him to a bed, and there dumped him down and sat-upon him.

At that instant a number of men burst into the room, and, heading for Ronald with a rush, overpowered him before he quite realised what was happening.

In spite of his struggles, his wrists were hauled round behind his back and pinioned by a belt. Somebody's knuckles were being ground cruelly into his throat, almost choking him.

Once he was secured he was hauled to his feet and driven back against the wall. The man who was savaging him with such unnecessary violence was Foxey Williams.

"That's right, chums!" gasped Foxey. "Hang on to him! Now let the beast give us any of his old buck, and we'll show him! Do you hear, you long, ugly rookie?" he added, mauling Ronald's neck until he was almost black in the face.

If his victim's hands were tied, his feet were not. Crooking his toe behind the Cockney's heel, Ronald suddenly wrenched his shoulder round, and sent him staggering across the overturned forms.

Foxy's head smote the floor with a resounding thwack, which must have startled the occupants of the room beneath, for in a trice the doorway was filled with strange faces.

"Now, then, perhaps you fellows will explain the meaning of all this?" demanded Ronald, struggling hard to keep his temper.

Foxy had risen to his feet, and stood swaying on heels and toes, dazed by his fall. That he was ringleader in the attack was evident, for no one else offered to answer their prisoner's question.

There was something in Ronald's eye, and a ring in his

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By **FRANK RICHARDS,**  
**NEXT WEEK.**



voice, which made the men nearest him give ground, and those who held him relax their grip.

"Don't let him go, the hog!" yelled Foxey, seeing this. "Hold him while I pay him for that. I'll teach him to lay his claws on me, see if I don't!"

In the blindness of his rage Foxey was going to assault his helpless enemy tooth and nail, only Mouldy caught him by the arm and swung him round.

"Here, stow it, Foxey! No hitting a chap as can't hit back. What's your game? Come!"

"Game! What's that got to do with you?" snarled Foxey. "You just keep your ugly nose out of this, or you'll get it burnt, Mouldy! This ain't no game, particularly arter this. We're goin' to give that fool a barrack-room court-martial. Goin' to show him as we ain't the chaps to put up with no drorin'-room airs from him, or nobody else, or have him toadying up to the Flag and getting behind the backs of his betters, either. What say, chums?"

"Hear, hear!" shouted half a dozen, including Alf and George. The majority, however, were beginning to look a bit disgusted and sheepish, now that men of other rooms had entered the room, having been attracted by the din.

Section Four had been lured from the canteen by the attraction of a little rough horseplay at someone else's expense. For the most part, they had no grudge against Ronald, except that, as a new recruit, he could be none the worse for having his comb cut.

"Well, now, look here, chummies," said Ronald, realising that the best way out of it was to submit with an easy grace, "you've heard what that whipper-snapper has got to say. According to him I am nothing but a sneak and a snob. If either charge is true, I deserve a court-martial, and I'm going to stand my trial."

"Bravo, Chester! Can't say no better than that," shouted Mouldy, anxious to give a lead in favour of his young friend.

"Only remember this, that I want a fair field and no favour," continued Ronald. "If there's any punching to be done, I want to be able to punch back. I don't want to be set upon again like this while my hands are tied. Give me a sporting chance, and I'll warrant you you sha'n't be disappointed. Now, then, I'm ready!"

### A Topsy-Turvy Trial—Tossed in a Blanket—Foxey Gets His Own Back.

Ronald's straight-from-the-shoulder appeal found a ready answer from all except Foxey and his immediate backing.

The ringleader of the attack was quick to notice all this, and fearing to lose his grip of the crowd altogether, he swallowed down his rage, and called for the constitution of a court.

A barrack-room court-martial may serve two ends. It may be set going to while away a dull hour in harmless tomfoolery when pockets are empty, or it may be brought into play as a rough-and-ready court of justice to deal with some offender against barrack-room etiquette.

In any case, it is conducted, more or less strictly, on the lines of a proper court-martial.

There is the president, who, to add dignity to his exalted rank, may elect to wear a tin saucepan on his head, robe himself in a blanket, and hang a string of blacking-tin lids round his neck as a chain of office.

Spud Murphy, a big, good-natured Irishman, was, to Foxey's ill-concealed disgust, elected to preside.

It being a general court-martial, there were nine members, all decked out in the most ludicrous uniforms they could devise on the spur of the moment.

Foxey was the prosecutor. Mouldy was made prisoner's friend, to conduct the defence. Jarvis acted as sergeant-major in charge of the escort and prisoner, and all the minor offices were quickly filled.

Ronald was placed between the two men acting as escort. They wore helmets, turned the wrong way round, tunics turned inside out, and were armed with brooms.

"Escort and pris'ner—t'chun!" roared Jarvis, who had only too good reason for being familiar with the routine of court-martial.

Spud Murphy, arrayed in all the panoply of justice, took his seat at the head of the table, and the nine members of the court ranged themselves on either hand.

"Escort and prisoner—quick march!" bawled Jarvis. "Halt! Left turn! Prisoner, two paces step forward! March! Stand at ease!"

"Now, then, pris'ner," said Spud, drawing a long breath, "it's me dooty to inform you that if ye've anny objection to anny or all av the members constituting this coort, ye had better be airfter kaping that same to yureself. That being so, we had better pass on to the next turn on the programme, which is—your name and number?"

"No. 3445, Private Chester," answered Ronald promptly.

"Ah, Private Chestprotector!" echoed President Spud solemnly, and made an elaborate note of the fact with a bit of firewood on the bottom of a meat-tin which did duty for a desk. "Now, the charge is— Sure, I misremember phwat the charge is ag'n; but perhaps our esteemed friend

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EVERY TUESDAY, **The "Magnet"** ONE HALF PENNY. LIBRARY.

Captain Foxey Williams will be airfter telling us. Foxey, me bhoy, they tell me that ye've got it all set down mighty purtily on a bit of paper somewhere, so I bids ye rise and spout."

Foxey scowled sulkily at the humorous turn which things were inclined to take. That came of putting an irresponsible wag like Spud in the chair. One never knew on which side the sharp edge of his tongue might be used.

He found himself fumbling for the scrap of paper on which the charge was written in correct rigmarole. He had a distinct recollection of setting it on the table before him a second or two ago, and now it had vanished.

Mouldy, the prisoner's friend, was meantime lighting his pipe with a screw of paper, and shooting a wink at his pals in the crowd.

"Now, then, Captain Foxey, pull up your socks, and git on wid it!" said Spud. "Sure, we're all waiting here to know phwat this court-martial's all about."

Foxey muttered something under his breath, and started to search through his pockets again.

"The charge is that Privit Chester is a— Hang it, I'd got it somewhere, and some chap has gone and pinched it!" he exclaimed, gnashing his teeth.

"Then I'll give ye ten seconds, and if ye can't remember what crime it is ye're laying agin the pris'ner, why, I'll have to skip that unimportant detail, and ax him to plead," said Spud, taking out a four-and-sixpenny watch and laying it on the table.

"Mister President," sang out Mouldy, seeing his chance as prisoner's advocate, "I rise to a pint of order."

"Ye'll rise to the point of my boot if yez don't shut up, my friend," said Spud darkly. "Sure, it's Captain Foxey Williams has the flure till the ten seconds are up, which is—"

At this Foxey abandoned his search for the precious document on which it was all so prettily put, as Spud said, and decided to rely on his memory.

"The charge is," he cried, "that No. thingummy, Privit Chester, 2nd Battal—"

"Time!" shouted Spud. "The ten seconds is up. Ye're too late now Foxey, acushla. Ye should have thought of that before. It's now me jooty as president av this coort-martial, to ax the pris'ner to plead. Privit Chestprotector, put yure heels together and luk me in the white av me eye. Ye have heerd the accusation which the prosecutor has brought agin you—or, rather, which he would have brought agin yez, if only he could have remimbered it. Tell me now, as man to man, are yez guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty!" answered Ronald promptly.

"Not guilty of phwat?" asked the president, lighting up a very short and dirty clay pipe.

"Of the charge," answered Ronald.

"But there is no charge, ye loon! Thunder and turf! But it's a gross contempt of coort to be pleadin' whin ye don't know phwat ye are pleadin' to! It's outrageous perjury, that's phwat it is, and I foine ye two screws of 'bacca for mesilf for that same," said Spud. "And phwat's more, if ye are not guilty whin ye don't know what the crime is agin yez, the chances are that ye are guilty whin ye do. So it's guilty ye are by the rulin' of the coort, and I'll enter that same in me washin'-book."

"Now, Captain Foxey, me jool, we'll have yure witnesses, and sharp about it, or the canteen will be closed before I've time to sentence ye to drinks all round for landin' us in the most rotten, outrageous waste of toime I have ever heerd tell of in the whole history av barrack-room law."

"Hear, hear!" yelled half the crowd.

Foxey, whose pasty features had been turning pink and grey alternately with chagrin, had turned sulky, however, and even the shouts of "Buck up, Foxey!" from his pals could not get him on his legs. Spud, with his unwelcome Irish tongue, had made a fool of him.

It was easily seen, by the way he had rattled through the business of the court, that Spud had little sympathy with his attack on a raw recruit, whose only fault was that he was a cut above the rest of them in birth and breeding.

"Thin, gentlemen," said Spud, turning to the nine members of the court, "ye have heered the evidence that should have been brought before yez, but wasn't, in support of a charge which nobody seems to know anything about. It is yure solemn dooty now to consider yure verdict. The pris'ner, with the consummate impudence of an ignorant recruit, who doesn't know what he's talkin' about, has pleaded not guilty. Such levity, I need hardly say, is an insult to the dignity av the coort, and I ax you to signify the same in the usual way."

Nine hands went up at this, and Spud turned to the prisoner.

"Privit Chestprotector," he said, "ye have been found guilty of good ordher an' milingitary discipline, and the

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By FRANK RICHARDS.  
NEXT WEEK.



sentence av this coort is that yez be tossed in the blanket until ye touches the ceiling three toimes. March off the pris'ner, sergeant-major, and prepare for his immediate execution."

Having drawn the sting of Foxey's attack, and stemmed the tide of popular disfavour which the vicious little Cockney was striving to turn against his foe, Spud Murphy had capped the performance with a sentence which might, or might not, be severe, according to the temper of the crowd. For blanket-tossing may be made a pastime or a punishment, although there is a danger in it always.

As soon as President Spud had pronounced sentence the court broke up, and a ring was formed in a clear space at the end of the room. A blanket was stretched, and gripped by as many men as could lay hold of the edges, and Ronald, whose hands had been freed, was hustled forward by his escort, and pushed on to it.

He met his fate with a laugh. Tossing in a blanket had been a common feature in Sandhurst "rags," and he had bumped a higher ceiling than the one above him many a score of times.

"Take the strain!" commanded Spud. And every man gripped hold of the edge of the blanket. "All together now—heave!"

Every back straightened at the word, the blanket tightened like a drumhead, and Ronald was shot into the air a few feet.

A novice would have gone up spreadeagle fashion, with arms and legs spread out, to be sprained and bruised; but Ronald was too old a hand at the game. He rose and fell in a compact ball—arms folded, heels drawn up, and head ducked.

He landed in the tautened blanket with a thud, and instantly rebounded to a greater height. Up and down he flew until, with a thud which jarred every bone in his body, he struck the ceiling.

"One!" roared Spud. "Steady, now! Not too hard!"

"Not hard enough!" yelled Foxey, tearing at the blanket with all his strength. "Hang it! You're only playing with him!"

Once again Ronald rose, and a second time thudded against the ceiling.

"By Jove! But he's a good-plucked 'un!" grunted Mouldy, with painful memories of his own recruit days.

Two-thirds of the penalty had now been paid. But Foxey did not intend to be thus easily haulted of his vengeance. He wriggled from his place in the ring, and withdrew a couple of paces.

For the third and last time Ronald was sent crashing against the ceiling, and then, as he descended on the ton-foot drop, Foxey charged like a bull into the ring from behind.

Those in his path were flung forward, the blanket was slackened at the very instant when it should have been most taut. Ronald plunged back into it, it sagged instantly under his weight, and he struck the floor with a thud which made every heart stand still. He lay huddled up as if he were asleep.

"By the powers, but ye've done it now, wan av yez!" said Spud, with a face as white as a sheet. "Phwat murderin' villain was that that came blunderin' into the back of us just thin?"

#### The New Subaltern of "B."

"Well, if this doesn't look a little bit of orlright for yours trooly, I don't know what does. But half a mo! We'll jest read what Slaney sez again!"

Private Foxey Williams, who had been staring fixedly at the whitewashed ceiling for the last five minutes, creasing up his narrow eyes, opening and shutting his thin lips, and scratching his clipper-cropped head, suddenly leaned forward again on his seat, and spread out a letter on the table for re-examination.

The notepaper bore the crest and inscription of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, but the writing was the scrawl of an untutored fist.

Foxey recommenced from the very beginning, spelling silently to himself the Latin motto, the address, and the date, as if they all had an important bearing on the contents:

"Dere Foxey,—This from me to show you I am still alive, and hope you and the old battalion are the same, and top-notch as usual. There is a noo officer comin' to you from here—Mr. Ian Chenys. I have jest seen his name in 'The Gazette.' I was his servant here in the college, and done very well out of him. I hope to do some more, too, before I am finished.

"Meantime I am writing to put you on a good thing—meaning that you and me are to go in co. with the profits, of course. I happened to tumble acrorst something about Mr. Chenys lately which he can't afford to let out. But I will tell you more about it when I see you.

"He will be wanting a servant, though, so you put in for the job. You can work that with Bagot—how is the old gasbag?—and if Mr. Chenys doesn't like the look of you first go off, which is only nacheral, just tell him who recommended you. That will stop his music. If it don't, talk about his brother. He is dead, poor chap! Drowned hissself over a little matter of getting chucked out of here for cheating—what they said he'd done, only they don't know all I knows about it. That will stop his music, see if it don't, and he will part up all you want if you work it properly. It's a dead snip, and I know I needn't say no more to you. Only fair doos, or look out fer yourself. So no more from your old pal,

JAMES SLANEY.

"P.S.—Burn this."

"Old pal, James Slaney!" echoed Foxey, with a sniff. "Ah, you're a cunning sweep, Jim! But you never gave no picking away yet that you didn't have to! Still, a turn's a turn, and this looks like something in my line. I'll see Bagot at once, and put in for the job. So, Mr. Chenys's poor brother is dead, is he? Well, we'll see. P'r'aps I'm right, and p'r'aps I'm wrong, but either way there's splosh hanging to it, or I'm a Dutchie!"

Foxey picked up his pipe, lit it, and applied the match carefully to the blackmailer's letter. It flared up, and crumpled into a heap of feathery ash, which fell on to the floor, and Foxey scattered it with his boot.

Sergeant Bagot was on guard that night, and so was Ronald.

Three months had passed since the new draft had marched into Woolchester Barracks—three arduous months of grinding drill, made all the harder for Ronald by the petty tyranny and malice of his sergeant, and the undying feud which Foxey had declared against the gentleman ranker.

But Ronald had borne all the drudgery and persecution with a brave heart, and won more friends than he knew by his unruffled good-nature and indomitable pluck.

On the night of the blanket-tossing episode, after he had recovered his senses from the cruel fall, he had persisted in treating the matter as a mere joke, and accepted Foxey's explanation, wrung from him in a moment of panic, with apparent good faith.

Foxey's version was that he had slipped up and stumbled into the back of the crowd, but when he saw how little Ronald had been hurt, and how lightly he treated it all, he felt like kicking himself for apologising at all.

(Another long instalment of this splendid Army story next Tuesday. Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny).

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*The Editor*





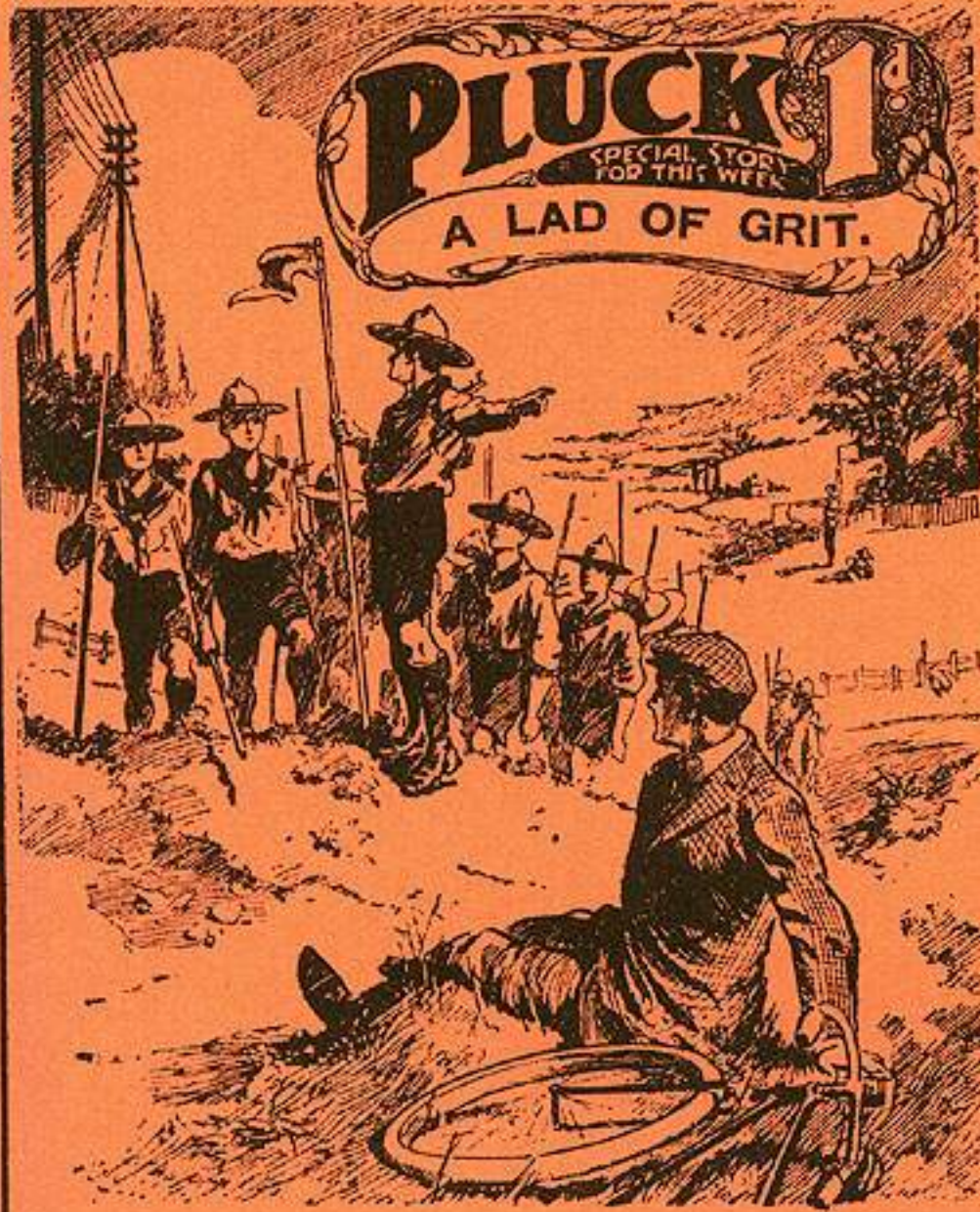
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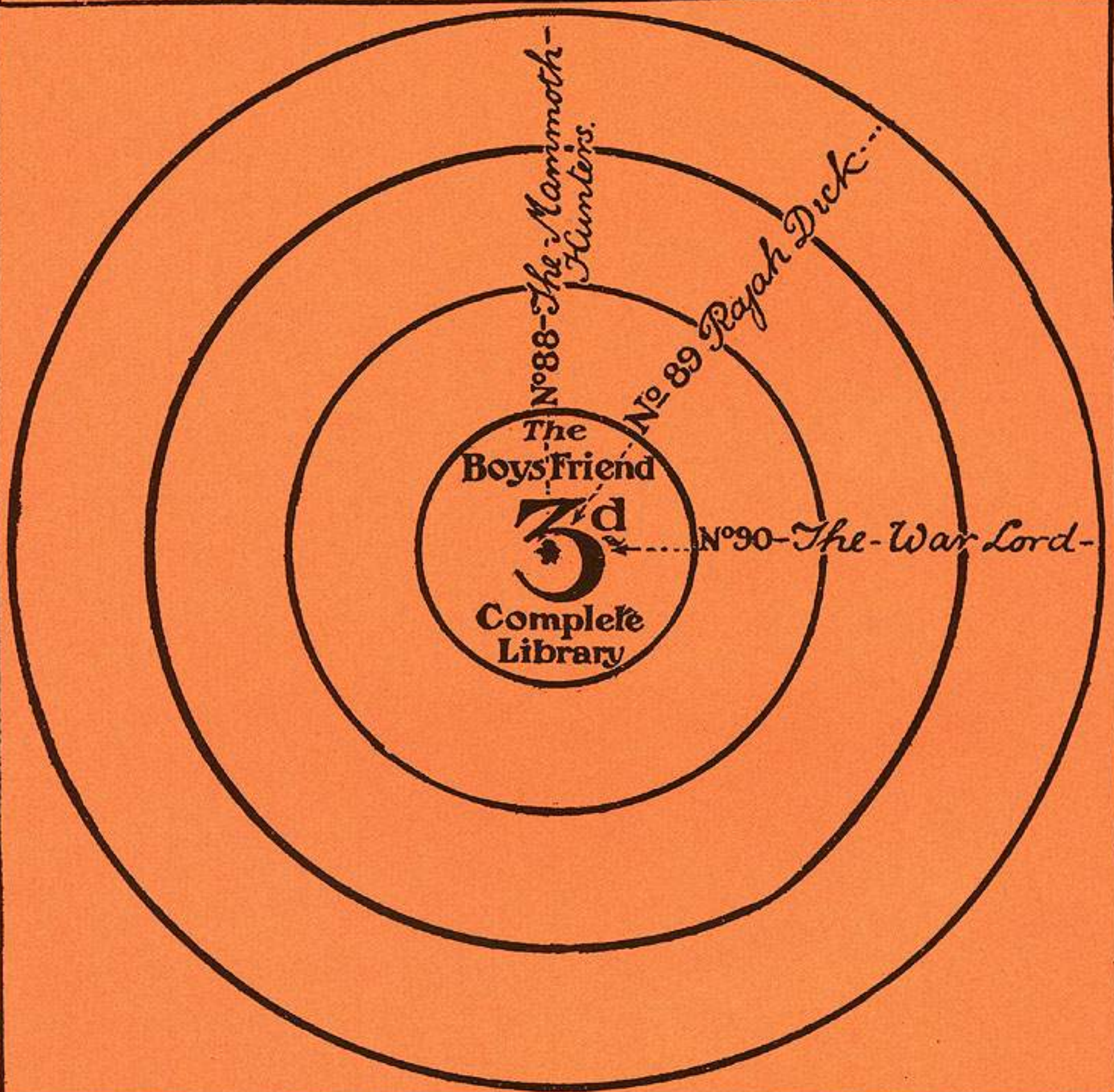
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