

The BOYS' FRIEND 1^{1d} 1^{1/2}

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending October 26th, 1918.

The Boys Who Beat the Kaiser

BY DUNCAN STORM.



THE SHOT THAT MISSED ITS MARK—BUT HIT HORACE'S HAT!

FOR NEW READERS.

THE KAISER is determined to obtain possession of the Mahdi's huge treasure which is hidden in the heart of the continent of Africa, and, to do so, he employs three desperate Germans named

BARON VON SLYDEN, CAPTAIN STOOM, and VON SNEEK.

The papers, however, containing the secret of the whereabouts of the treasure are in the possession of

CAPTAIN HANDYMAN and CY SPRAGUE, who decide to go in quest of the treasure, and to take with them the boys of the Bombay Castle, chief among whom are DICK DORRINGTON, CHIP, ARTY DOVE, SKELETON, PORKIS, and PONGO WALKER.

LAL TATA, a cheery Hindu, TOOKUM EL KOOS, a native wrestler, FLINT PASHA, a member of the Sudan Police, are also amongst the party, as well as the boys' pets, CECIL, the orang-outang, HORACE, the goat, and GUS, the crocodile.

In the last instalment Baron von Slyden and his fellow spies made strenuous efforts to secure the papers containing the secret of the Mahdi's treasure. But the boys of the Bombay Castle defeated them, and they went away empty-handed.

Last week the Germans endeavoured to obtain their revenge on the boys, but in spite of the cunning nature of their scheme the boys escaped serious hurt. Gus, the crocodile, however, suffered most; in fact, he seemed almost too bad to recover.

(Read on from here.)

Gus' Mixture!

Gus, the crocodile, was almost at his last gasp as Porkis, kneeling by the medicine-chest, fumbled amongst the many bottles, and filled up the measuring-glass with the stimulating and nauseous mixture which was either to kill or cure him.

Gus presented a sorry spectacle as he lay on his back with his stumpy little legs in the air, feebly waving them now and then to show that he was alive.

Porky, with one eye on Gus as he lay in the circle of the electric lamp, and the other eye on the medicine-chest, rapidly filled his glass.

"Strychnine!" he muttered. "That's the stuff to give 'em! Bucks up the action of the heart!"

"Don't give him much of that, or he'll croak altogether!" exclaimed Dick Dorrington. "Shove in some of that essence of ginger! That'll make him wag his tail!"

"Right-ho!" replied Porkis. And he measured out a dose of essence of ginger strong enough to scorch Gus from his neck to his tail.

"What about a little castor-oil?" said Dick. "That can't do him any harm. You can give castor-oil to a baby."

"Right-ho!" said Dr. Porkis. "And a whack of senna!" put in Chip. "Senna is a very safe medicine."

"Right-ho!" said Porkis, readily adding the senna to his mixture.

"Tincture of capsicum," said Artie, picking up one of the bottles.

"That'll make him fetch his breath. And syrup of squills—they give that to pups when they have distemper. So it's sure to do poor old Gus a bit of good."

"That's the ticket!" assented Porkis readily. "Now we'll shove some of this stuff in from this bottle. I don't know what it is, but it's sure to be all right."

"Why, you silly ass," exclaimed Dick, "that's metal-polish for cleaning up the sterilising-trays of the instruments!"

"Never mind!" said Porkis cheerfully. "Let it go in!"

And in went the metal-polish to Gus' mixture.

Then Dr. Porkis, glass in hand, looked doubtfully at his patient.

"How are we going to give him the stuff?" he asked. "When you give a dog medicine you lift the corner of his lip, and pour the stuff in with a spoon. And if you are going to give a horse medicine you twist a string round his nose. But I've never given a crocodile medicine, and—look at his teeth!"

Gus, lying on his back with his lip slightly curled up and his jaws clenched, was showing a ridge of sharp teeth that might have scared a dentist.

But Artie was not to be dismayed. "Hold him up, Pongo!" he said to Pongo Walker. "Take him under the arms and lift him, and I'll prise his mouth open with a tent-peg; and Porky can pour down the medicine."

Pongo did not much like the job,

but he hoisted Gus up, standing behind him, and lifting him by his stumpy forelegs.

Then Artie cautiously approached with the tent-peg, and, putting it between the formidable rows of teeth, levered Gus' jaws apart.

Gus was quite amiable. He allowed his wide jaws to open.

"Now, Porky," said Pongo, "look sharp, and shove the medicine down him! He's as flabby as a dead haddock."

Porkis, thus admonished, took the measuring-glass, and tipped it into Gus' enormous mouth.

The first touch of the medicine was magical in its effects.

From being a dead crocodile Gus suddenly became the liveliest crocodile that ever swam the Nile.

His jaws snapped on the tent-peg at the first half-glass of the mixture, and the stout oak peg crunched in halves like a carrot.

"That shows it's doing him good. That's warming his chest like a flannel waistcoat," said Pongo cheerfully.

"Give him the rest, Porky!" Porky gave the glass another tip. Gus gave a convulsive struggle and a snap.

The other half of the tent-peg was snatched from Artie's hand and swallowed, and, with a sudden leap and snap which sent Pongo flying, Gus grabbed at the glass, crunched it up and swallowed it, flopping about on the ground like a newly-caught fish.

Pongo picked himself up, rubbing the back of his head and his legs.

Gus, with his serrated tail, had given him a slash across the calves like the slash of a cartwhip.

"Crumbs!" exclaimed Porky. "He's swallowed glass and all!" Gus was flicking his tail now, and wriggling like an eel.

Whether it was the essence of ginger, or the strychnine, or the broken glass that was doing him so much good and making him so lively, the boys could not say.

But when Mr. Lal Tata came bustling up to see what was happening, Gus, whose eye was once more bright and sparkling, fixed it on the worthy Hindu.

"What do you do to that poor crocodile fellow, boys?" demanded Mr. Lal Tata.

"We are giving him some medicine, sir," replied Porky. "He was nearly croaking, poor chap!"

"You will kill poor crocodile chap between you," said Lal, gazing down at Gus, who had grown suddenly quiet. "Look! Behold how quiet he is now!"

And Lal turned Gus over with his foot.

Whether Gus resented being rolled over in this fashion, or whether the essence of ginger took a new and sudden hold on him, will never be known, but, with a rush and a vicious snap, he ran up Lal's leg, and tore away the leg of his pyjamas as though he were tearing tissue-paper.

(Continued on the next page.)



(Continued from the previous page.)

Lal danced about with a sudden howl. "Hi, boys! Take this crocodile fellow away!"

awnings in the last whaler, save for Horace the goat. He, being stowed in the bows, had to sit in the moonlight, which beat fiercely upon him, until Skeleton, lolling like a king in the stern, was moved to pity.

found no difficulty in getting ahead of the river-party. Now, snugly bidden in a clump of the tall, whispering papyrus reeds which lined the bank, they awaited the expedition.

A CASE OF CONSCIENCE!

is the title of the Grand Complete School Story of Billy Bunter and the Chums of the Remove, by FRANK RICHARDS, which appears in the 'MAGNET.' War-Time Price, 11d.

OBLIGE YOUR EDITOR

by showing this number of the "Green 'Un" to all your chums. When you have done so, please write and tell me what YOU think of it, and also what THEY think of it.

YOU WILL FIND— COUSIN ETHEL'S CHAMPIONS!

a top-hole School Story of Tom Merry & Co., the famous schoolboys, by your favourite author, MARTIN CLIFFORD, in this week's "GEM." War-Time Price, 11d.

There was absolute certainty in the pose of the savage as he lay there armed with the weapon of civilisation. Saleeb felt that he could not miss his mark.

At that distance the head appeared to have the face of a man, with a long and white and venerable beard. "Maw!" bleated the head, as though in derision of Saleeb's shot. Then it hobbled down again.



THE SCHOOL ON STRIKE!

(Continued from the previous page.)

Behind them the door had been opened by Black Sally, who was looking out with saucer-like eyes. But between the new headmaster and the open door there was a great gulf fixed, so to speak, represented by the insurgent schoolboys of Cedar Creek. Bob Lawless held up his hand as the two men came up. "Halt!" he said. Mr. Peckover and Old Man Gunten halted in sheer amazement. "Lawless!" shrieked the storekeeper. "What does this mean?" "It means halt!" answered Bob. "Are you mad, boy?" "I guess not." "Stand aside at once!" exclaimed Mr. Peckover, apparently making up his mind to assume his new authority at once. "How dare you speak disrespectfully to Mr. Gunten?" "We don't respect Mr. Gunten, you see," explained Bob. "What?" Old Man Gunten's fat face was suffused with rage, and his little eyes seemed to bulge from their sockets as Bob spoke. "Lawless!" he stuttered. "Listen to me!" said Bob. "Mr. Peckover, I am sorry for your disappointment. We mean no disrespect to you personally. But we have decided that Cedar Creek School shall have no head but Miss Meadows."

that he seemed hardly to know what had happened yet. He staggered up at last, however, with bulging eyes and flaming face. He realised that it was no horrid nightmare, but plain and sober fact, that he, great man as he was, had been collared and treated as if he were of no more account than any "hobo" who tramped the trails of the Thompson Valley. He spluttered with wrath. "By gad!" he gasped. "By gad! You young scoundrels! Oh, ah, oh!" Bob Lawless pointed to the gates. "There's your way, Mr. Gunten," he said. "Rascal!" "Same to you, old scout, and many of them!" answered Bob cheerily. "Better keep your hands off, Mr. Peckover," he added, for the schoolmaster seemed to be about to spring at him. "You'll get hurt if you don't." Mr. Peckover panted. "The school seems to be in a state of mutiny, Mr. Gunten!" he said, between his teeth. "By gad, it seems so! The work of Miss Meadows, I reckon!" panted the storekeeper. "That's a lie!" struck in Bob Lawless. "Miss Meadows knows nothing whatever about it. I don't even know where she is to-day. We're acting on our own, because we won't see Miss Meadows fired by a dirty trick—your dirty trick, Mr. Gunten! You're a bad egg, sir!" "What!" spluttered the storekeeper. "A bad egg!" said Bob. "That's plain Canadian; if you can understand anything plainer than your own Swiss lingo! Miss Meadows turned your son out of the school for being a gambler and a rascal, and your precious new schoolmaster wouldn't let him come back, if he did his duty, even if we let him. But we won't let him, Mr. Gunten!" "Good heavens!" stuttered Mr. Gunten. He looked helplessly at the insurgents. After his experience at their hands he was not inclined to try violence again, enraged as he was. It was only too plain that Frank Richards & Co. were prepared to send him sprawling once more if he attempted it. The two men blinked at one another, evidently at a loss. "As for you, Mr. Peckover," continued Bob, his eyes gleaming, "you're a bit too hefty with your stick, sir, and it won't work here! You're no good, sir, or you wouldn't let young Gunten come back after Miss Meadows booted him out! You're not the real white article, and I guess it looks as if you've worked it with your pardner, Old Man Gunten, to annex Miss Meadows' job here. And that's a low-down trick, my man!" Mr. Peckover seemed on the point of choking. He made a stride towards the porch, but the grim looks of the schoolboys made him pause. "Come on if you like," said Vere Beauclere. "It will be the worse for you, sir." "Boy," gasped Mr. Peckover, "I am your headmaster." "Nothing of the kind." "Rats!" "Bosh!" It was a roar of repudiation from the Cedar Creek fellows, and it made it quite plain that they did not intend to acknowledge Ephraim Peckover as their headmaster. The schoolmaster turned to Mr. Gunten. "This mutiny must be quelled, sir," he said. "I guess so!" gasped Old Man Gunten. "I reckon so, Mr. Peckover. You're empowered to take any measures you choose; you have my authority." "There are assistant masters here, I believe, and servants." "Sure!" "Call them, then, to our assistance, and these young rascals shall soon be reduced to order." "Good!" said Mr. Gunten. He gave the rebels of Cedar Creek a venomous look, and strode away to the cabins occupied by the assistant masters. Mr. Slimmey and Mr. Shepherd were outside the cabins, looking on from a distance, and conversing in low tones. They glanced rather grimly at the fat gentleman as he came puffing up. The two young men knew what he wanted, but they did not look as if Mr. Gunten would get what he wanted. Neither did Mr. Gunten address them in the most tactful way; he was too furious for that. "What are you loafing here for?" he thundered, as he came up. "What?" ejaculated Mr. Slimmey, blinking over the gold rims of his glasses at the irate storekeeper. "Can't you see what's going on?" "Perfectly well, Mr. Gunten." "Isn't it your duty to keep your confounded boys in order?" roared Mr. Gunten. "Lay hold of something—sticks or anything—and come and help!" Mr. Shepherd eyed him calmly. "Help restore order, do you mean?" he asked. "Of course I do, you pesky jay!" The Gentle Shepherd smiled. "You appear to allow yourself a very great freedom of language, sir," he said quietly. "As it happens, Mr. Slimmey has sent in his resignation, as a protest against Miss Meadows' unjust dismissal. I have decided, after consultation with him, to follow his example. We are not, therefore, under Mr. Peckover's orders, or under yours, Mr. Gunten."

furlously. "I believe you're in league with those young scoundrels!" The Gentle Shepherd made a step towards him. "Moderate your language, please!" he said sharply. "What!" "Address me civilly, or—" "Or what?" roared the storekeeper savagely. "Or I will knock you down!" said Mr. Shepherd coolly. "By gad, and so will I!" said Mr. Slimmey. "You cannot bully us, Mr. Gunten. You have caused this riot, by your shabby treatment of Miss Meadows, and you can deal with it yourself. I leave Cedar Creek this day." "And I go with you," said Mr. Shepherd. "Come, Mr. Slimmey, let us pack and get away. We cannot remain while this is going on, and countenance it, and certainly we cannot assist those who have dismissed our respected colleague." Mr. Gunten, gasping with rage, raised his fat, clenched fist. The Gentle Shepherd looked him in the eyes and waited. But the fat fist dropped again and unclenched. Mr. Shepherd smiled slightly, and went into his cabin. "You're sacked!" roared Mr. Gunten. "Do you hear? Sacked! Discharged! Fired! Get out!" He received no answer from the masters, and he strode away with a purple face. Catching sight of Black Sam, who was staring at the crowd at the porch, he called to the negro. "Come here, man!" Black Sam came up. "Your help is wanted," said Mr. Gunten. "You know me, I suppose?" "We know Mass' Gunten," agreed Black Sam, showing his teeth in a grin. "That gentleman, Mr. Peckover, is the new headmaster here. You are to assist him in dealing with those boys. Get a cart-whip." Black Sam shook his head. "Mr. Peckover's Miss Meadows," he said. "Miss Meadows gib me orders. No take orders, if Miss Meadows no come back, me go." Mr. Gunten trembled from head to foot with rage. Even the black man of all work had raised his heel against him, and to be defied by a "nigger" was the last straw. His rage overflowed, and he raised his hand and struck at the negro's black face with all his force. His blow did not reach the mark, however. A black hand gripped his wrist, so hard that the fat man gave a yell of agony, and Sam's black face grinned at him. "You white trash!" said Black Sam contemptuously. "Low white trash, Mass' Gunten! You vamoose!" He swung the fat storekeeper round by the wrist, and sent him spinning away. Mr. Gunten staggered several paces, gasping, and Black Sam walked back stolidly to his own quarters. From him, it was clear, there was no assistance to be had. Almost foaming by this time, Mr. Gunten returned to the new schoolmaster, who was waiting near the porch with a black brow. "Well, sir?" snapped Mr. Peckover. "The assistant masters refuse to help; they've resigned," choked Mr. Gunten. "Even the nigger is cheeky. Good gad!" Mr. Peckover set his lips. What was to be done in that strange conjunction of circumstances was a mystery he could not solve at present. His cold eyes were gleaming, and there was no doubt as to what he would have liked to do, but the power to do it was not in his hands. The insurgent schoolboys had watched Mr. Gunten's progress with grinning faces, a good deal encouraged by his failure to obtain help. Mr. Gunten turned to the boys at last. "You will be punished for this!" he gasped. "Come and punish us!" jeered Chunky Todgers. "We're ready for you, you foreign trash!" roared Eben Hacke. "Come on, Fatty!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "I order you to make way, and allow your schoolmaster to enter the house!" spluttered Mr. Gunten. "Rats!"

"Go and chop chips!" The storekeeper clenched his hands. "Do you know what will happen to you? If you persist in defying authority, I shall call on the sheriff for assistance." "Call, and be blowed!" answered Bob Lawless. "You will be turned out of the school, Lawless!" "Well, I'm not turned out yet," said Bob coolly; "and there'll be some trouble first, Mr. Gunten." "That's enough from you, Mr. Gunten," said Frank Richards. "You'd better go, and take your new schoolmaster with you!" "Vamoose the ranch!" hooted Lawrence. Chunky Todgers came out of the doorway with a cushion in his hand, and it whizzed through the air. There was a howl from Mr. Gunten as it caught him under his double chin. "Ha, ha, ha!" "Now light out!" shouted Chunky. "You'll get some more if you stay there, Old Man Gunten! You make us tired." "Vamoose!" came in a threatening roar. Mr. Gunten and his companion hastily backed away. They did not want any more cushions. And a jeering roar followed them from the crowd at the porch. The 5th Chapter. "Fired!" It was close upon school-time now, and more and more boys and girls were arriving at Cedar Creek. Most of them gathered round Frank Richards & Co. at the porch. It was easy to see upon which side in the dispute their sympathies lay. Even those who did not join in the revolt gave the rebels their moral support, as it were, and wished them well. There was a buzz of excited talk, while Mr. Gunten and Mr. Peckover, at a distance, were consulting desperately as to what was to be done. Outside the gates, Kern Gunten still sat in the buggy, feeling thankful that he had had the sagacity to remain there and not venture within the walls. There was no question of classes that morning. Nobody went into the school-room. The unaccounted holiday added to the general excitement, and perhaps to the general cheerfulness. Frank Richards & Co. had laid it down as a law that no more lessons were to be done at Cedar Creek until Miss Meadows came back; and in that, at least, they had hearty and unanimous support. While the buzz of discussion went on Mr. Shepherd and Mr. Slimmey were seen to leave their cabins together with bags in their hands. To stay there without interfering while the school was on strike was not feasible; and certainly they did not intend to make any attempt to get Mr. Gunten out of the difficulty he had landed himself in. It was his business and the new schoolmaster's, not theirs; and, moreover, they were well aware that their interference would not have been tolerated by the insurgents. Leaving their more bulky baggage to be sent for at a more convenient time, the two masters packed their bags, and now they departed, Mr. Gunten scowling and Frank Richards & Co. shouting a cordial good-bye. "I guess this is a cinch!" remarked Bob Lawless. "What can the galoots do? This is where they come out at the little end of the horn!" "How is it going to end?" murmured Molly Lawrence. "It's going to end in Miss Meadows coming back, I reckon!" said Bob confidently. "Don't you be afraid, Molly." "But—but—" murmured the girl. "We're going to give Old Man Gunten our ultimatum—good word that!" chuckled Bob. "Come on, you chaps!" Frank Richards & Co. marched to the spot where Mr. Gunten and Mr. Peckover were standing talking in low tones. A cheering crowd followed them. "Made up your mind yet, Mr. Gunten?" called out Bob. The storekeeper scowled by way of reply. "Is Miss Meadows coming back?" demanded Frank Richards. "No!" roared the storekeeper. "Then the school's on strike till she does come!" said Bob Lawless determinedly. "We won't have lessons, we won't allow lessons to be given, and we won't have your pesky new schoolmaster. So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, Mr. Gunten!" The storekeeper clenched his pudgy hands. "Enough of this!" he said, in a gasping voice. "For the last time, will you receive your new master and submit to his authority?" "Nope!" "Never!" "No fear!" There was no doubting the earnestness of that reply, which was yelled at Mr. Gunten by thirty voices. "Then I shall leave Mr. Peckover here, and go at once for the sheriff!" said Mr. Gunten, in a choking voice. "You can go for the sheriff, or for the governor-general if you like!" answered Bob. "But you won't leave Mr. Peckover here! We don't want him, and we won't have him! That's that!" "Mr. Peckover, kindly remain here till I return!" said Mr. Gunten, taking no heed of Bob. "Certainly, sir!" said Mr. Peckover. "You will lose no time?"

"Rely on me!" Mr. Gunten walked away to the gates, where his son was waiting in the buggy. The new schoolmaster took a step towards Mr. Slimmey's cabin, with the intention of remaining there till Old Man Gunten returned with the necessary force to restore order. But Bob Lawless meant business—and his followers meant it, too. At a sign from Bob the schoolboys made a rush and surrounded the new master. Mr. Peckover halted, his eyes glittering. "Stand back!" he said, between his teeth. "Collar him!" "Fire him out!" The angry man struck out fiercely on all sides as he was collared by the schoolboy strikers. Two or three of them yelled, but Mr. Peckover's blows were soon stopped, as he was seized from every side. He was whirled over in the grasp of many hands, and was swept from the ground and carried bodily after Mr. Gunten. In a yelling crowd the schoolboys rushed down to the gates, with Mr. Peckover struggling and wriggling in their midst. Mr. Gunten spun round in the gateway, his eyes almost starting from his head at the sight of what was happening. Without heeding the storekeeper, Frank Richards & Co. rushed Mr. Peckover up to the buggy, and tossed him bodily into it. Kern Gunten gave a loud howl as the schoolmaster crashed upon him, and they disappeared into the bottom of the buggy together. "Good gad!" stuttered Mr. Gunten dazedly. Bob Lawless and Frank Richards caught him by the arms. "Jump in!" rapped out Bob. "What?" "Jump in, or will you be chucked in! Sharp's the word!" "I—I—I—" "Oh, chuck him in!" roared Chunky Todgers. "Let me go! I—I will get in!" gasped the storekeeper. "Get a move on, then!" The fat storekeeper scrambled wildly into the buggy. Frank Richards took the horse's head, and led him round into the trail, while Mr. Gunten and his son and the schoolmaster sorted themselves out in the vehicle, gasping and furious. "Off!" shouted Bob. "Off they go!" Frank gave the horse a light flick, and the animal, startled by the shouting, dashed away up the trail, the buggy rocking behind him. Mr. Gunten made a grasp at the reins and controlled the horse, but he did not stop. The fat gentleman was glad enough to get away from the excited school, and Mr. Peckover had no desire whatever to remain there by himself—he had too much regard for his skin. A roar from the Cedar Creek crowd followed the buggy as it spun away up the trail to Thompson. The vehicle vanished from sight with a clatter of hoofs. Mr. Gunten was gone, and his new schoolmaster with him; and Cedar Creek was left to itself. "Well," said Bob Lawless, with a deep breath, "we're in for it now, you chaps!" "I guess so!" said Chunky Todgers. "Who cares?" "In for a penny, in for a pound!" said Frank Richards. "Old Man Gunten will bring the sheriff and his men. Are we going to give in?" "No fear!" "I guess we can't handle the sheriff as we did Old Man Gunten," said Tom Lawrence, with a whistle. "I guess we're not giving in unless Miss Meadows comes back!" said Bob Lawless. "Hear, hear!" "Cedar Creek is on strike, and the strike goes on till we get justice!" continued Bob. "No time to lose. The sheriff will be along before the day's much older. Every fellow that isn't ready for a fight to a finish had better hop out while he's got a chance. We're going to bar the gate and hold the school against all comers." "Bravo!" "All the girls and all the kids had better go home," said Bob, in a businesslike way. "There will be some hard knocks, most likely, and pretty faces mustn't get damaged. Every chap who stays after the gate is barred is in it to the finish, even if we wind up in the calaboose at Thompson!" And Bob Lawless, like a good general, put his plans into execution at once. The little scholars and the girls departed, accompanied by the few who did not care to keep on to the end. Frank Richards & Co. and a score of other choice spirits remained, and they barred the gate and prepared for defence. Ere long, they knew, outraged authority would be there, with force to back it up; and it would be a grim struggle. How the affair would end no one could foresee; but upon one point Frank Richards & Co. were grimly determined—there was to be no surrender, and until their beloved schoolmistress was reinstated the school would remain on strike. THE END.

The 4th Chapter. Nothing Doing.

Mr. Gunten sat up. He blinked like an owl at Frank Richards & Co. as he sat in the dust and gasped. The fat storekeeper was so surprised

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A BAFFLING MYSTERY!

(Continued from the previous page.)

gone into the sitting-room without awakening him. But—nothing could have happened to him there.

"Nothing," said Raby. "I—'d like to go on," said Raby. "Would the captain mind, do you think? We could tell him what we've done so far."

"Lovell may have come as far as this, and gone back." "Why should he, without doing what he came to do? And we know he didn't do it," answered Raby.

The 6th Chapter. Mysterious!

"Locked!" repeated Raby and Newcome, in a breath. "Locked!" said Jimmy. The three juniors stayed at the door, and at one another, in surprise.

Head, you know, at seven, and it gets dark early now." "It beats me!" said Newcome.

"It's possible," he said. "I can't help feeling uneasy, and if he should be ill—locked in there—" "Better speak to somebody," said Raby.

"We'll speak to Mr. Bootles," said Jimmy Silver decidedly. "If he's ill, he can't be left. He may have fainted on the floor. Come on!"

The three juniors left the door of the Oak Room, and hurried down the corridor towards the lower staircase. But Raby paused.

All his former dislike of the captain, founded chiefly upon Lovell's unlucky frolics with him, had vanished long ago; he was anxious and concerned for the one-armed man.

The 7th Chapter. What Has Happened?

"Mr. Bootles!" Jimmy Silver and Arthur Newcome spoke together, breathlessly. In their hurry they had entered the Form-master's study without knocking; and Mr. Bootles, laying down his book, blinked at them severely over his spectacles.

it," said Mr. Bootles. "This is very careless, and most reprehensible." "Sorry, sir—very sorry. But—" "The fact is, sir—" "I am glad that you are sorry," said Mr. Bootles.

"That is no excuse for disrespectful carelessness, Silver," said Mr. Bootles, in his ponderous manner. "However, you may proceed."

"We're afraid Captain Lagden is ill, sir." "What?" Mr. Bootles blinked at them in surprise.

"Quite so," he assented. "You have done rightly, my boys. You are sure there was no light in the rooms?" "I looked at both windows, sir, from the corridor."

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"And you knocked loudly enough to be heard in the inner room?" "Quite, sir!"

"The captain may merely have fallen asleep in his chair," said Mr. Bootles. "I don't see how it can be so, sir," said Jimmy.

The master of the Fourth left his study with a look of concern upon his kind face, and the two juniors followed him upstairs.

In a few minutes they reached the door of the Oak Room, but to the surprise of Jimmy Silver and Newcome, Raby was no longer there.

"What are you looking for?" asked Mr. Bootles, as the two juniors stared up and down the passage in surprise.

"We left Raby here, sir!" said Jimmy Silver. "He was to listen if Captain Lagden called out."

Mr. Bootles opened the door. Captain Lagden was seated at the table in the oak-panelled sitting-room, with a large map spread out before him, upon which he was engaged in pinning little flags.

Evidently the captain was entertaining himself by marking the progress of the British troops on the Flanders front, a very natural occupation for a man who had been through the fighting.

He rose to his feet, with a look of surprise, as he saw Mr. Bootles, with the two startled juniors behind him.

"Pray come in, Mr. Bootles!" he said cordially. "Take a seat, my dear sir. You are interested in my map, perhaps?"

"Very much so, Captain Lagden," replied the Form-master. "But I came up here—I apologise for disturbing you—on account of what these two boys told me. They fancied you were ill."

"Ill!" exclaimed the captain. He glanced past the Form-master at the two juniors in the doorway. Jimmy and Newcome coloured.

It was only too evident that Basil Lagden was not ill, and that their alarm had been groundless.

"You thought I was ill, my boys?" said the captain, with a good-natured smile. "What put that idea into your heads, may I ask?"

"We—we thought—" stammered Jimmy. "We—we came here to speak to you, sir, but couldn't make you hear, and there was no light in either room."

"You must be mistaken about that, Silver!" snapped Mr. Bootles. "No, no, the boy is quite right!"

"No, no, the boy is quite right!" said the captain, smiling. "I felt very tired when I came up after dinner, and decided to have a nap. So I turned out the gas and laid on the bed for a time. I must have slept very soundly, if the boys tried to make me hear, for I certainly did not hear them."

Jimmy and Newcome looked—and felt—very sheepish. That simple explanation, which accounted for everything, made them realise how they had put their foot in it; and they were conscious, too, that Mr. Bootles was very irritated.

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy. "I suppose that is why Master Raby was standing outside my door!" said the captain, laughing. "I came back into this room when I woke up and lighted the gas, and heard someone knocking, and when I opened the door your young friend was standing there, staring at me."

"How absurd!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "I fear that I spoke rather sharply to Raby," said the captain. "Finding him there, with apparently nothing to say, I could not help suspecting that he had come here to play some trick, such as—"

Master Lovell intended to play upon me last night." "Oh, no!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Nothing of the sort, sir! We only thought you were ill, and we were a bit alarmed."

"I am very much obliged to you, then," said Captain Lagden, still smiling. "If I ever fall ill, I shall know that my young friends will feel concerned about me. Come, come; don't look so troubled, my lads! I understand. You found the door locked, and you could not make me hear. That is it, I suppose? Locking my door is an old habit, learned in billets in Flanders, where you never know what may happen in the night."

"We—we're sorry, sir!" stammered Newcome.

"Not at all, my boy. I am much obliged to you. Will you tell Raby that I am sorry I spoke to him sharply and sent him away? I did not understand."

"Certainly, sir!" "You will excuse these boys, Mr. Bootles, I am sure. They meant well, as you see," said the captain.

"They have acted very absurdly, and disturbed you," said Mr. Bootles. "However, nothing more shall be said about the matter. Good-night, Captain Lagden!"

"Good-night, Mr. Bootles; and good-night to you, my lads!" said the captain kindly. "Don't forget to tell Raby I am sorry I was a little abrupt with him when I found him at my door."

"Yes, sir! Good-night!" said the juniors. "Go to your dormitory!" said Mr. Bootles as they left the Oak Room. "It is your bedtime. And kindly do not act in such a ridiculous manner again!"

Mr. Bootles went downstairs, and Jimmy Silver and Newcome hurried away by the little creaking staircase to the dormitory passage, where they met the Classical Fourth coming up to bed.

There was no opportunity that night to explain to the captain why they had wanted to speak to him, and the story of the ink finger-prints that had led them to his room.

That could be done on the morrow. "Hallo, here you chaps are!" said Morningson. "Where did you vanish to? Bulkeley was asking where you were, you bouncers! It's bedtime."

"Well, here we are," said Jimmy. The chums went into the Fourth-Form dormitory with the rest, looking about them for Raby.

Raby was not in the dormitory, however, neither was he with the crowd of juniors that poured in.

"Seen Raby, anybody?" called out Jimmy Silver. "Not since I was in your study," said Morningson.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came in. "Now, then, turn in!" he said. "All here?" He glanced over the crowd of juniors. "Hallo, Raby's not here!"

"He hasn't come up yet," said Oswald. "He'd better come up before I come in to turn out the light," said Bulkeley, frowning. "Five minutes!"

Bulkeley left the dormitory, and the juniors turned in, rather puzzled by George Raby's failure to put in an appearance.

There was one empty bed in the room when the captain of Rookwood came back to turn out the light.

Bulkeley's eyes rested on it at once. "Hasn't Raby come up?" he exclaimed. "No, Bulkeley."

"The young rascal! Do you know where he is, Silver?" "No," said Jimmy, with a faint, vague apprehension in his breast, for which he could hardly account. "I don't know."

"By gad! I'll warm him!" Leaving the light still burning, Bulkeley hurried out, frowning. The juniors waited, discussing the absence of Raby, in great wonder. It was very unusual—in fact, unknown—for a junior to fail to appear at bedtime.

The minutes passed, and Raby did not come up, and Bulkeley did not return. The dormitory door opened at last, but it was not Bulkeley who came in—it was Mr. Bootles, with a troubled and perplexed face.

"Silver," he said quietly, "do you know where Raby is?" "No, sir." "Or you, Newcome?" "No, sir," said Newcome, his face paling.

"You have not seen him since Captain Lagden sent him away from his room?" asked Mr. Bootles. "No, sir!" said the two juniors together, and their voices were husky now. A nameless dread was tugging at their hearts.

"I will put your light out," said Mr. Bootles in a low voice. "Go to sleep, my boys."

"But Raby, sir!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, starting up in bed. "It is very strange, Silver, but there can be nothing to be alarmed about," said Mr. Bootles. "You are forbidden to leave the dormitory, any of you."

"But, sir—" "Raby cannot be found!" Mr. Bootles retired, leaving the dormitory in darkness, and Jimmy Silver with a chill at his heart.

ALL IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. Tell me about yourself: let me know what you think of the BOYS' FRIEND. All readers who write to me, and enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of receiving a prompt and kindly reply by post. All letters should be addressed: 'The Editor, the BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.'

FOR NEXT MONDAY! 'THE VANISHING OF NEW-COME!' By Owen Conquest. I expect most of my readers are puzzling their brains to discover what has happened to Lovell and Raby. Possibly a few of you may have guessed where they have gone, and what really was the cause of their disappearance.

'THE STRIKERS' TRIUMPH!' By Martin Clifford. The barring-out at the school in the backwoods is in full swing in next Monday's splendid story. Frank Richards and his chums refuse to give in until their schoolmistress is reinstated. Needless to say, Old Man Gunten is in a furious rage, and in spite of the fact that he gains the assistance of the sheriff and some of his men, the schoolboy strikers are in no way perturbed.

'THE BOYS WHO BEAT THE KAISER!' By Duncan Storm. This week's instalment of our amazing adventure serial concludes with Baron von Snyden in a perilous position. I do not think I shall be spoiling your interest in the story if I tell you that he is

rescued by Captain Handyman. But the baron, Hun that he is, refuses to reward good for good. He is filled with the desire to obtain his revenge on the boys of the Bombay Castle. He is mad with rage and disappointment, and I feel sure that you will have no sympathy for him when you read of the further predicament in which he becomes involved.

'BARKER, THE BOUNDER!' By Herbert Britton. In next Monday's grand instalment of our new school serial you will read of how Bob Travers & Co. received an invitation to tea, how they were detained for an offence of Barker's, how they took French leave, how the bouncer plotted to get them into further trouble, and of the ultimate result.

Your Editor

NEXT MONDAY.

'THE VANISHING OF NEWCOME!' By OWEN CONQUEST. DON'T MISS IT!